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Nearly 70 years since the Yiddish stage was silenced by World War II, voices rose again to revive Avrom Goldfaden’s Yiddish operetta, Shulamis, which premiered at Harvard University’s historic Agassiz Theater, December 2-6, 2009.

This landmark bilingual production of Shulamis premiered a century since the death of Goldfaden, considered by many critics the father of Yiddish Theater. Shulamis was the very last production of interwar Yiddish theatre in Warsaw in 1939.

While wandering thirsty through the desert, beautiful young Shulamis is rescued by handsome Avsholem, who swears to marry her upon his return from Jerusalem. When Avsholem fails to come for her, Shulamis pretends to go mad in order to keep her vow to him, yearning both for his return and for revenge.

According to producer/director Debra Caplan and co-director Cecilia Raker, the play is the story of a broken vow, and a young woman’s loyalty to that vow over time. Shulamis has served as a metaphor for the Jewish people waiting for redemption, the two Harvard students said.

“Shulamis was the most popular Yiddish play of all time,” said Caplan, a graduate student in Yiddish literature who also holds production credit for the show. “As the first full-scale production of this play involving young people since 1939, we are uniquely poised to bring this historically significant operetta...
to a new generation of artists and audience members who did not grow up with the Yiddish theater.”

Caplan shared the directing credit with Cecelia Raker, an undergraduate student studying stage directing at Harvard, an accomplished director and actor who has worked extensively with the Lowell House Opera and Dunster House Opera at Harvard.

The return of Shulamis is yet another example of a resurgence of interest in Yiddish among young people. Caplan noted an increasing number of young people are studying Yiddish, the lingua franca of Eastern European Jews for centuries. Colleges, high schools, synagogues, music festivals, and Jewish community centers worldwide are devoting more programming concerning Yiddish language and culture, once considered by an older generation to be dying or even dead. Harvard offers a thriving Yiddish language program.

The production of Shulamis featured a new English translation by renowned Yiddish translator Nahma Sandrow and a haunting musical score by Folksbiene artistic director Zalmen Mlotek.

“The music of Shulamis represents an unusual conglomeration of styles: nineteenth-century opera, Yiddish folk music, Jewish synagogue chant, and popular music of the day,” said music director Lidiya Yankovskaya. “The presence of so many influences creates the constant need for delicate balance in interpretation. However, when the balance is just right, the best qualities of each of these styles are combined into a new realm of expressivity.”

All of the dialogue was in English, while all of the 25 songs were performed in Yiddish. English supertitles were provided for all of the Yiddish material. Caplan said the production team chose to keep the music in Yiddish because “the music is at the heart of the show, and it simply does not sound the same in English.”

“Keeping the music in Yiddish allows the audience to experience something akin to the original feeling of the piece, while the English dialogue makes the characters and story approachable,” she said.

“A full production including orchestra, masks, and innovative choreography, Harvard’s revival of Shulamis will charm and inspire both Yiddish theater aficionados and those who are new to the Yiddish theater,” Raker said.

“I regard Shulamis as one of the biggest and brightest diamonds yielded by the rich mine of Yiddish culture,” said cast member Anton Eriera. “I can’t get the music out of my head, and my heart!”

Performances were held in Harvard’s historic Agassiz Theater in picturesque Radcliffe Yard in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The production was sponsored by the Office for the Arts at Harvard, Learning from Performers, Harvard’s Center for Jewish Studies, the Harvard Library Judaica Division, and the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation.

In conjunction with this production, Harvard held an academic symposium, “Goldfaden and the Yiddish Theatre: Shulamis and its Legacy” on December 4, 2009. The symposium featured a roundtable with Joel Berkowitz of SUNY Albany, translator Nahma Sandrow of CUNY Bronx, composer Zalmen Mlotek of the Folksbiene Yiddish Theater in New York, Alyssa Quint of Princeton, and Seth L. Wolitz of the University of Texas at Austin.

For more information, please visit the Shulamis website below. This article was adapted from the Shulamis press kit, www.shulamis.org.
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2009  4:00 pm
REUVEN HAZAN
Associate Professor in Political Science, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Nachshon Visiting Professor, Department of Government, Harvard University
“Israeli Politics Since the Rabin Assassination”
October 29, 2009 marked the 14th Memorial Day of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin

Sponsored by:
Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar, The Harvard Center for the Humanities, and The Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, William Landau Lecture and Publication Fund

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2009  4:00 pm
PETER COLE
2007 MacArthur Fellow, Poet, Translator, and Founder of Ibis Editions in Jerusalem
“The Dream of the Poem”

Sponsored by:
Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar, The Harvard Center for the Humanities, and The Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, Yanoff-Taylor Lecture Fund

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2009  7:00 pm
ROY HOROVITZ
in a performance of the acclaimed Israeli novel “My First Sony” in English—An award-winning monodrama, which has toured Israel to great acclaim for more than 13 years now, and enjoyed raving reviews.

Sponsored by:

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2009  4:00 pm
ISRAEL KNOHL
Yehezkel Kaufmann Professor of Biblical studies, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
From “Ephraim” the Suffering Son of God to the Dead Messiah “Son of Joseph”

Sponsored by:
Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar, The Harvard Center for the Humanities, and The Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, Harry Elson Lecture and Publication Fund

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2009  4:15 pm
ADAM KIRSCH
Contributing editor to Harvard Magazine, regular contributor to The New Yorker and The Times Literary Supplement
“On The Publication of Gertrude Himmelfarb’s The Jewish Odyssey of George Eliot”

A Conversation with Professor Ruth R. Wisse

Sponsored by:
Study Group on the Jews in Modern Europe, Jewish Societies and Cultures Seminar, The Harvard Center for the Humanities, and The Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies, The Martin D. and Helen B. Schwartz Lecture Fund
ABOVE LEFT & RIGHT: Students and faculty gather to meet at the Harvard University Center for Jewish Studies and Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations joint welcome reception, September 29, 2009.

BELOW LEFT: (left to right): CJS Silver Fellow Rabbi John S. Friedman, CJS Director Shaye J.D. Cohen, and CJS Starr Fellow Joshua Karlip
BELOW CENTER: Hancock Professor of Hebrew and other Oriental Languages and CJS Executive Steering Committee member Peter Machinist. BELOW RIGHT: (left to right): Silver Fellow Rabbi John S. Friedman and Starr Fellow Joshua Karlip in discussion with CJS Executive Steering Committee member and Jacob E. Safra Professor of Jewish History and Sephardic Civilization Bernard Septimus.
The Center for Jewish Studies hosted two Visiting Professors during the fall of 2009 semester. With the support of visiting professorships, the Center is able to host leading scholars in Jewish studies to supplement the courses offered by our full-time faculty at Harvard.

VISITING PROFESSORS

SAMUEL D. KASSOW, at left, Charles Northam Professor of Judaic Studies at Trinity College, was our Leon I Mirell Visiting Professor in the Department of History. Professor Kassow taught a seminar entitled “The Holocaust.”

REUVEN HAZAN, at right, Associate Professor in Political Science, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was our Nachson Visiting Professor in the Department of Government. Professor Hazan offered a course in “Politics and Society in Israel.”

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER FELLOW

RABBI JOHN S. FRIEDMAN of Judea Reform Congregation in Durham, NC, was our sixteenth Daniel Jeremy Silver Fellow during the fall semester of 2009. The Silver Fellowship was established in memory of Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver (’48), to an “active congregational rabbi who has demonstrated exceptional intellectual and academic interest, originality, and energy in the pursuit of Jewish scholarship.” The recipient spends at least one semester at Harvard engaged in full-time academic research.

During his stay at Harvard, Rabbi Friedman worked on a study entitled “The Disputation of Our Rabbi Yechiel of Paris with the Heretic Nicholas Donin: A Translation with Commentary.”
Jonathan Kaplan just earned his PhD in May 2010. Before coming to Harvard, he earned his A.B. at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he majored in History and Religious Studies with a focus on ancient Mediterranean religions and American religious History. He then earned an M.Div. degree with a focus in Biblical Studies at Columbia Theological Seminary and considered pursuing a Ph.D. in New Testament studies but became interested in the history of biblical interpretation, particularly the ways in which the Bible was received in different classical and modern communities. In his M.A. program at Emory, he studied modern Hebrew, classical Rabbinic literature and Midrash to help him in this endeavor.

Jonathan Kaplan completed his doctoral dissertation in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations entitled “A Divine Love Song: The Emergence of the Theo-Erotic Interpretation of the Song of Songs,” a study of the early interpretation of the Song of Songs in Second Temple and early Rabbinic literature. He describes his three primary aims in this project as: (1) to try to solve the difficult historical question of when the first interpretations of the Song of Songs appeared in extant literature; (2) to adopt a new terminology to describe appropriately classical interpretations of the Song of Songs. Rather than view these interpretations of the Song of Songs as “allegorical,” Kaplan prefers the phenomenological term “theo-erotic;” and (3) to explore the various hermeneutical methods ancient Jews employed to interpret the Song of Songs as a divine love song, including allusion, echo, and typology.

Jonathan Kaplan also lauds the tremendous Judaica collections in the library. “You can find anything you want and then some.” He is particularly grateful to Professor Jon Levenson, his advisor, who he describes as a “key guiding force in my education” who helped to “shape my intellectual perspective.” In addition, he thanks Professors Shaye Cohen, Peter Machinist and Jonathan Schofer for their contributions to his intellectual development and their professional guidance.

This fall, Jonathan Kaplan will begin a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at Yale University. As Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Postdoctoral Associate in Jewish Studies, he will have an opportunity to continue his research in biblical interpretation, hermeneutics and Midrash, and will teach a course during three of the four semesters in which he will be in residence. He is looking forward to the move to New Haven in late July with his wife and two young children.

“Harvard has tremendous faculty resources. ...When you have a question about a particular area, you can go to the experts. And they’re willing to help.”
### Core Curriculum

- **Literature and Arts A-48.** Moral Imagination in Modern Jewish Literature
- **Literature and Arts C-70.** From the Hebrew Bible to Judaism, From the Old Testament to Christianity
- **Moral Reasoning 54.** "If There is No God, All is Permitted": Theism and Moral Reasoning

### Freshman Seminar

- **Freshman Seminar 30u.** Ancient Interpretive Traditions and the Great Stories of the Bible
- **Freshman Seminar 42s.** Jews on the Tube: Images and Integration in American Jewry

### Dramatic Arts

- **Dramatic Arts 113.** The History and Practice of Non-Traditional Theater in America - (New Course)

### General Education

- **Culture and Belief**
- **Culture and Belief 27 (formerly Jewish Studies 55).** Text and Context: Jews and their Books in Pagan, Christian and Muslim Surroundings

### Government

- **Government 98jn.** Politics and Society in Israel - (New Course)
- **Government 1094.** The Jewish Political Tradition - (New Course)
- **Government 1732.** The Origins of Modern Wars

### Literature and Comparative Literature

- **Literature 163.** Jewish Languages and Literature
- **Comparative Literature 252.** The Literatures of Medieval Iberia: Approaches and Debates in their Comparative Study - (New Course)

### History

- **History 70g.** Modern Jewish Religious Movements - (New Course)
- **History 81f (formerly History 1127).** Women’s Voices in Medieval and Early Modern Europe
- **History 1020 (formerly History 1091).** Jews and Judaism in the Ancient World
- **History 1025.** Overlapping Spheres: Jewish Life in Early Modern Europe - (New Course)
- **History 1891.** Understanding the Middle East since 1945: The Basic Socio-Economic and Political Structures - (New Course)
- **History 2266.** The Holocaust: Seminar - (New Course)

### Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

- **Ancient Near East 117.** Biblical Archaeology
- **Ancient Near East 120a.** Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 1: Pentateuch and Former Prophets
- **Ancient Near East 120b.** Introduction to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament 2: Latter Prophets and Writings - (New Course)
- **Ancient Near East 124.** Myth and Myth-Making in the Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern World
- **Ancient Near East 126.** History of the Religion of Ancient Israel
- **Ancient Near East 132.** Ancient Jewish Wisdom Literature
- **Ancient Near East 134.** Genesis: Narrative Artistry and Theological Meanings

### Postbiblical Jewish Studies

- **Jewish Studies 104.** Introduction to Yiddish Culture
- **Jewish Studies 105.** Modern Yiddish Poetry - (New Course)
- **Jewish Studies 109 (formerly Yiddish 109).** The Yiddish Novel Under Tsars and Stripes
- **Jewish Studies 111.** Modern Jewish Thought
- **Jewish Studies 140.** Deconstruction and Questions of Jewish Identity: Seminar
- **Jewish Studies 144.** History and Memory: Modes of Jewish Discourse
- **Jewish Studies 149.** Topics in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Exegesis at Qumran - (New Course)
- **Jewish Studies 168.** Eighth-Century Prophets - (New Course)
- **Jewish Studies 170.** Job and the Problem of Suffering - (New Course)
- **Jewish Studies 200r.** Guided Readings in Jewish History
- **Jewish Studies 206.** The Origins of Mishnaic Law
### GRADUATE COURSES OF READING AND RESEARCH

#### HEBREW LANGUAGE COURSES
- Classical Hebrew A. Elementary Classical Hebrew
- Classical Hebrew 120a. Intermediate Classical Hebrew
- Classical Hebrew 120b. Intermediate Classical Hebrew
- Classical Hebrew 130ar. Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew I
- Classical Hebrew 130br. Rapid Reading Classical Hebrew II
- Modern Hebrew B. Elementary Modern Hebrew
- Modern Hebrew 120a. Intermediate Modern Hebrew I
- Modern Hebrew 120b. Intermediate Modern Hebrew II
- Modern Hebrew 125. Advanced Modern Hebrew I: “All About Boys and Girls”
- Modern Hebrew 130r. Advanced Seminar in Modern Hebrew
- Modern Hebrew 136ar (formerly Modern Hebrew 136r). Hebrew for Academic Reading

#### HEBREW LITERATURE AND HISTORY COURSES
- Hebrew 130. Scriptural Interpretation in Ancient Israel: Inner-Biblical Exegesis - (New Course)
- Hebrew 140. The Poetics of Midrash: Approaches to Rabbinic Hermeneutics - (New Course)
- Hebrew 143. Deuteronomy - (New Course)
- Hebrew 177. Introduction to Critical Talmud Scholarship
- Hebrew 200r. Problems in the Literature, History, and Religion of Israel: Seminar
- Hebrew 217. The Medieval Torah Commentary: A Practical Introduction: Seminar
- Hebrew 218. Joseph and Esther: Seminar
- Hebrew 300. Classical Hebrew Language and Literature
- Hebrew 350. Postbiblical Hebrew Language and Literature

#### YIDDISH
- Yiddish A. Elementary Yiddish
- Yiddish Ba. Intermediate Yiddish I
- Yiddish Bb. Intermediate Yiddish II
- Yiddish Ca. Advanced Yiddish I
- Yiddish Cb. Advanced Yiddish II
- Yiddish 200r. Modern Yiddish Literature: Seminar

#### THE STUDY OF RELIGION
- Religion 1411. Seminar: Saints, Sanctity, and Society in Ancient and Medieval Christianity
- Religion 1414. Gospel Stories of Wo/men
- Religion 2550. Women and Religion in Contemporary America: Seminar

### HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL
- 1469 Reading Midrash
- 1536 Apocalyptic Literature
- HDS 2159_4235 Advanced Greek: Martyrdom
- HDS 4221 Intermediate Greek II

### HARVARD LAW SCHOOL
- Jewish Law’s Responses to Gentile Law: Internal Views of External Influences: Advanced
- Holocaust Litigation
- Talmudic Law for Beginners

### HARVARD EXTENSION SCHOOL
- RELI E-1010 World Religions Today: Diaspora, Diversity and Dialogue (13481)
- RELI E-1028 Introduction to the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) (13388)
- RELI E-1047 Religion, the Arts, and Social Change (23093)
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