Spotlight on Research: Jewish Theatre

Jewish Studies is immeasurably enriched by visiting scholars, who inject fresh intellectual energy and new expertise into our community. This year, one particular area of expertise stands out: Jewish Theatre. Bader Postdoctoral Fellow Vassili Schedrin is writing a biography of Solomon Mikhoels, the pre-eminent Yiddish actor of the Soviet Union, famous for his role as the ‘Jewish King Lear,’ and his wartime work on the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. You may remember seeing Mikhoels on the screen in the film series Vassili organized in 2017 with the support of the Harvey and Sylvia Rosen symposium fund. Jewish theatre is also the subject of Diego Rotman’s research. Diego, the Regina Rosen Artist in Residence, is the author of The Stage as a Temporary Home, a study of the Yiddish comedians Shimen Dzigan and Isroel Shumacher, whose theatrical careers spanned pre and post-war Poland, the Soviet Union, and Israel. This winter, we will be screening a film featuring the two actors produced in Poland in 1948. The last Yiddish film ever made in Poland, Our Children is also one of the first films to address the Holocaust. Diego will introduce the film, sharing his research on Jewish Theatre, the Holocaust, and the famous Yiddish comic duo of Dzigan and Shumacher.

A message from Rebecca Manley, Acting Director

This Fall Jewish studies showcased the culture, music, and history of Sephardic Jewry. It happened organically, thanks to the input and contributions of people from within the University and the Community. In the Harvey and Sylvia Rosen Symposium Lecture, co-organized by the KJC, Dr. Judith Cohen took us on a musical journey from the medieval Spanish court through the Sephardic diaspora, treating us to her renditions of traditional Sephardic songs. Our collaboration with Muslim Societies, Global Perspectives brought us Dr. Dana Lightfoot, who joined Dr. Alexandra Guerson for a stimulating discussion of Women and Conversion in the Multi-Religious Society of Late Medieval Spain. Last but not least, our Irving and Regina Rosen lecturer Dr. Ruth Behar, a masterful storyteller, shared the story of Cuba’s Jews, Ashkenazi and Sephardic, drawing on her own family history and reflecting in the process on the way stories are woven and memories preserved. We look forward to more stimulating events that bring the University and the Community together!