

# YIDDISH

אַנאַרַכִּיזם אויף ייִדיש

# ANARCHISM

*New Scholarship on a Forgotten Tradition*



YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

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YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH PRESENTS

# YIDDISH

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# ANARCHISM

*New Scholarship on a Forgotten Tradition*

CONFERENCE  
JANUARY 20, 2019

CO-SPONSORED BY

*IN GEVEB: A JOURNAL OF YIDDISH STUDIES*  
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YIDDISH BOOK CENTER

**YIDDISH-SPEAKING JEWISH ANARCHISTS** were one of the pillars of the U.S. anarchist movement before World War Two. This largely immigrant radical milieu was centered in New York City and opposed capitalism, the state, and organized religion. Yiddish-speaking anarchists built militant unions, anarchist newspapers, and other organizations to further their cause. Many famous anarchists were linked to this movement, including Johann Most, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and Rudolf Rocker. Yiddish-speaking anarchists played a pivotal role in unions like the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), while the Yiddish anarchist newspaper the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (*The Free Voice of Labor*) was the largest and longest-lasting U.S. anarchist publication and formed a significant part of the Yiddish cultural landscape. In the 1930s a second generation of bilingual Jewish anarchists emerged, including Sam and Esther Dolgoff, and Audrey Goodfriend, whose influence is still felt in today's anarchist movement.

Despite the importance of Yiddish anarchism to the histories of both the U.S. Left and the Jewish community, it has been largely forgotten and written out of historical scholarship. This conference, the first of its kind, highlights the emerging new scholarship on the forgotten world of Yiddish-speaking anarchists. It brings together an interdisciplinary group of scholars whose multilingual research examines the origin, evolution, and contributions of Jewish anarchism in New York City and beyond.

# SCHEDULE

**10:00am** Check In / Coffee

**10:30am** **JONATHAN BRENT**  
Welcome

**SPENCER SUNSHINE**  
Introductory Remarks

**11:00am** **KENYON ZIMMER**  
**PANEL 1** The Lost World of Yiddish Anarchism: An Introduction

Place, Protest,  
and Poetry:  
Foundations  
of Yiddish  
Anarchism

**TOM GOYENS**  
Radical Neighbors: New York's German  
and Yiddish Anarchists, 1880–1906

**ANNA ELENA TORRES**  
'The Horizon Blossoms and the Borders Vanish':  
Anarchist Aesthetics in Yiddish Poetry

**12:30pm** Lunch Break [on your own]

**2:00pm** **REYNOLDS HAHAMOVITCH**  
**PANEL 2** The 'Time of Storms'—New York Yiddish Anarchists  
from Kishinev to the 1905 Revolution

Against Tsar  
and Commissar:  
Russian  
Revolutions  
and Yiddish  
Anarchism

**MARK GRUETER**  
The Russian-Jewish Anarchist Movement in the 1910s

**NINA GURIANOVA**  
Moscow Anarchists: The Brothers Gordin and  
the Newspaper *Anarkhia*, 1917–1918

**4:00pm** **BEN GIDLEY**  
**PANEL 3** Rudolf Rocker and Transnational Yiddish Anarchism in the 1910s

Language,  
Identity,  
and Culture:  
Transformations  
of Yiddish  
Anarchism

**LILIAN TÜRK**  
Abba Gordin and the Dispute on Religious  
Anarchism in *Fraye Arbeter Shtime*

**DIANA CLARKE**  
Postvernacular Anarchisms: The Politics  
of Flagging with Yiddish

**6:00pm** **ANATOLE DOLGOFF**  
**KEYNOTE** Disobedient Jews

# WELCOME

## JONATHAN BRENT

JONATHAN BRENT is the Executive Director of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City. From 1991 to 2009 he was Editorial Director and Associate Director of Yale Press. He is the founder of the world acclaimed Annals of Communism series, which he established at Yale Press in 1991. Brent is the co-author of *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors, 1948-1953* (Harper-Collins, 2003) and *Inside the Stalin Archives* (Atlas Books, 2008). He is now working on a biography of the Soviet-Jewish writer Isaac Babel. Brent teaches history and literature at Bard College.



# INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

## SPENCER SUNSHINE

SPENCER SUNSHINE is the co-organizer of the "Yiddish Anarchism" conference. His PhD dissertation, "Post-1960 U.S. Anarchism and Social Theory," addresses the ontological and epistemological implications of the transition from classical to contemporary anarchism. He is also the associate editor of the anthology "*I Am Not A Man, I Am Dynamite!*" *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Anarchist Tradition* (Autonomedia, 2004). For the last several years he has been engaged in counter-Far Right research and activism, focusing on unorthodox fascists, the Alt Right, and antisemites. You can follow him on Twitter [@transform6789](https://twitter.com/transform6789).



## THE LOST WORLD OF YIDDISH ANARCHISM: AN INTRODUCTION

**KENYON ZIMMER**

This presentation will briefly survey the history of the Yiddish-speaking anarchist movement from its emergence in the 1880s to World War Two, primarily focusing on New York City. It will introduce prominent figures like Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, David Edelstadt, Saul Yanovsky, and labor leader Morris Sigman, as well as the leading Yiddish anarchist newspaper, the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (*Free Voice of Labor*). The primary focus will be on anarchists' largely forgotten influence on the Jewish labor movement and Yiddish culture. ■

KENYON ZIMMER is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Texas at Arlington and is the co-organizer of the "Yiddish Anarchism" conference. He is the author of *Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America* (University of Illinois Press, 2015) and numerous articles on the history of anarchism. He is currently working on a book about the deportees of America's First Red Scare.



## RADICAL NEIGHBORS: NEW YORK'S GERMAN AND YIDDISH ANARCHISTS, 1880-1906

**TOM GOYENS**

The close relationship between the German anarchist movement in New York and the emerging Jewish movement during the 1880s and 1890s enabled anarchism to expand into the 20th century. Johann Most, who came to the United States in 1882, played a key role in this story by inspiring many Russian-Jewish radical intellectuals who had settled in the same neighborhood as the older German movement. The Haymarket affair inspired even more younger Jewish radicals like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, both disciples of Most. Increased immigration from Russia and Eastern Europe allowed a spatial and linguistic proximity that did not exist between, say, German and Italian radicals. Many Yiddish-speaking newcomers could follow an angry speech by Most enough to be converted to revolutionary anarchism. Both groups also shared an affinity for militant atheism, and both celebrated their respective languages. Jewish anarchists initially built their club life within the structure of the International Working People's Association (IWPA), relaunched in 1883. During the

1890s, the German movement aged and splintered, but the youthful Jewish movement expanded out of its ethnic confines partly because it was grounded in the dreams and demands of exploited garment workers, intellectuals, and bohemians. ■

TOM GOYENS is an Associate Professor of History at Salisbury University in Maryland. His research focuses on immigrant anarchism in the United States. He is the author of *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880–1914* (Illinois, 2007), editor of Helene Minkin’s memoir, *Storm in My Heart: Memories from the Widow of Johann Most* (AK Press, 2015), and editor of *Radical Gotham: Anarchism in New York City from Schwab’s Saloon to Occupy Wall Street* (Illinois, 2018). His articles have appeared in *Social Anarchism, Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, and the *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*. He is currently writing a new biography of Johann Most.



## ‘THE HORIZON BLOSSOMS AND THE BORDERS VANISH’: ANARCHIST AESTHETICS IN YIDDISH POETRY

ANNA ELENA TORRES

From the avant-garde manifestos of Warsaw and Moscow to elegies for Sacco and Vanzetti, Yiddish Modernist writing has been deeply informed by anarchist thought and aesthetics. This talk will explore how Modernists reinvented tropes from the earlier Proletarian (*svetshop*) generation of writers and developed new anarchist critiques and visions. ■

ANNA ELENA TORRES is an Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Chicago. Her forthcoming book is titled *Any Minute Now The World Streams Over Its Border!: Anarchism and Yiddish Literature* (Yale University Press). This project examines the literary production, language politics, and religious thought of Jewish anarchist movements from 1870 to the present in Moscow, Tel Aviv, London, Buenos Aires, New York City, and elsewhere. Torres’ work has appeared in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, *In geveb*, *Nashim*, *make/shift*, and the anthology *Feminisms in Motion: A Decade of Intersectional Feminist Media* (AK Press, 2018).



## THE ‘TIME OF STORMS’—NEW YORK YIDDISH ANARCHISTS FROM KISHINEV TO THE 1905 REVOLUTION

REYNOLDS HAHAMOVITCH

The Kishinev Pogrom of 1903 plunged Jews into a crisis that resulted in outrage from Jews across the political spectrum and led to the rampant growth of many Jewish nationalist movements that raced to find a permanent solution to the violence facing Eastern European Jewry. The impact on Yiddish anarchism was far more ambiguous. Rifts formed among Yiddish anarchists in America, with many refusing to privilege violence against Jews as more important than any other form of violent oppression. It was only the onset of the hundreds of pogroms in the Russian Revolution of 1905 that forced Yiddish anarchists to come to terms with anti-Jewish violence, a tumultuous change that brought a new phase of political and cultural activity within Yiddish anarchism. ■

REYNOLDS HAHAMOVITCH is a recently graduated history and Jewish studies Masters student from Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. He specializes in the history of Jewish radicalism, Eastern European Jewish migration to the United States, Yiddish language, literature, and publishing, and working-class culture. His work on Yiddish anarchism has led him to the history of urban utopianism, science fiction, and social engineering in the 20th century. Hahamovitch currently teaches about Yiddish anarchism, among other historical Jewish topics, at a high school in Budapest and conducts research as a Visegrad Fellow at the Open Society Archivum.



## THE RUSSIAN-JEWISH ANARCHIST MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, 1910S

MARK GRUETER

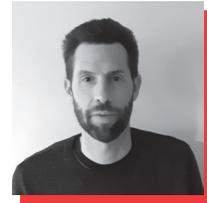
Jewish anarchists played a major role in inspiring and leading a Russian-speaking anarchist movement in the United States, a movement that has been overlooked by scholars and activists. The Union of Russian Workers (URW) was an anarchist federation of several thousand members organized primarily by Jews from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. The group included William Shatov, V.M. Eikhenbaum (better known as Voline), Lev Fischelev (aka Maksim Raevsky), and Aron and Fanya Baron. “Russified” Jewish as well as Yiddish-speaking anarchists helped spearhead a national strike movement in the 1910s, often alongside the Industrial Workers of the World and

other unions. Additionally, many of these radicals were active in both the 1905 and 1917 Russian revolutions.

*Fraye Arbeter Shtime* editor Saul Yanovsky, moreover, has been cited as a primary influence over the Russian anarchists in the United States. My presentation sheds light on the URW, the connections between the Yiddish and Russian-speaking anarchists, their joint work in mutual aid societies such as the Anarchist Red Cross and the Workmen’s Circle (Arbeter Ring) and in the garment industry unions, and the shared histories that brought about these convergences. ■

MARK GRUETER received a PhD in history from Simon Fraser University in 2018. His dissertation draws attention to the working-class character of the historical anarchist movement through a study of the Union of Russian Workers (URW), a North American-based anarchist federation and labor organization in the 1910s composed of several thousand political exiles and peasant migrants from tsarist Russia who formed dozens of branches across the continent.

Grueter was a peace corps volunteer in Blagoveshchensk, Russia from 2000 to 2002 where he taught English at Amur State University. In 2005 and 2006, he worked in Vladivostok, Russia as a journalist and English instructor at Vladivostok State University. Grueter also holds a master’s degree from the New School for Social Research in Manhattan.

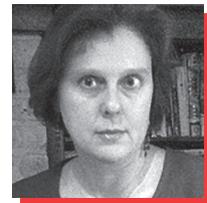


## MOSCOW ANARCHISTS: THE BROTHERS GORDIN AND THE NEWSPAPER *ANARKHIA*, 1917–1918

NINA GURIANOVA

This presentation is focused on the Gordin brothers and their role in setting up the newspaper *Anarkhia* in the rich context of Moscow anarchist groups and movements during the period of the Russian Revolution. The newspaper editorials by the Gordins allow us to discuss the particular aspects of what can be called a “Jewish trend” within anarchism in revolutionary Moscow. ■

NINA GURIANOVA teaches at the department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Northwestern University (USA). Her scholarship in the fields of literature and art history encompasses both Russian and European modernist and avant-garde movements, with a specific emphasis on the interrelation of aesthetics and politics. She has authored and edited six books on the Russian avant-garde and published extensively in Europe, the United States, and Russia. Gurianova served as the primary exhibition consultant for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, and participated in the organization of many exhibitions. Gurianova’s most recent book, *The Aesthetics of Anarchy* (University of California Press, 2012), won AATSEEL Best Book in Literary/Cultural Studies annual award.



## RUDOLF ROCKER AND TRANSNATIONAL YIDDISH ANARCHISM IN THE 1910S

**BEN GIDLEY**

Anarchism was one of the most prominent ideological currents in London's Yiddish-speaking community in late 19th and early 20th century, and probably the dominant ideological current in the 1910s, largely due to the influence of the non-Jewish Yiddish anarchist Rudolf Rocker. This paper places London Yiddish anarchism in the period leading up to WWI and the Russian revolution in a historical and transnational context, showing how Rocker's involvement with the Yiddish movement would influence his later development of anarchist and syndicalist theory and how Yiddish anarchists navigated the tensions between a diasporic Yiddish frame of belonging and a "cosmopolitan" proletarian internationalism. ■

BEN GIDLEY is a Senior Lecturer and Assistant Dean in the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy at Birkbeck University of London, as well as an associate of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism. His publications include *Turbulent Times: The British Jewish Community Today* (Bloomsbury, with Keith Kahn-Harris, 2010) and *Antisemitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A Shared Story?* (Palgrave, with James Renton, 2017). He is currently completing a manuscript on Jewish radicalism in early twentieth century London for Manchester University Press.



## ABBA GORDIN AND THE DISPUTE ON RELIGIOUS ANARCHISM IN *FRAYE ARBETER SHTIME*

**LILIAN TÜRK**

Yiddish anarchism was perceived as an explicitly anti-religious and atheist part of the multi-faceted Jewish labor movement—a widespread perception, which testifies to the effectiveness of the anarchists' sensational anti-religious activities. However it does not correspond to differing currents within Yiddish anarchism. In my paper I will give a brief account of Abba Gordin's (1887–1964) writings on anarchism as the essence of Jewishness, and show how his thought sparked a debate in *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* (*Free Voice of Labor*) between 1937 and 1945. Instead of promulgating a clearly anti-religious point of view, the weekly paper hosted heated debates on different shades of religious anarchism, illustrating an openness towards uncommon and sometimes contradictory radical ideas. ■

LILIAN TÜRK is Research Associate at the Institute for Jewish Philosophy and Religion at Hamburg University. Her research focuses on theories of religion and religious anarchism in Yiddish literature. She holds a Magister in Jewish Studies and Political Sciences and wrote her PhD thesis on “Religious Non-Conformism and Cultural Dynamics” at Leipzig University. This thesis locates the writings of the Russian-Yiddish anarchist Abba Gordin among his contemporaries and looks his role in defining anarchist boundaries towards religious ideas. Türk is currently preparing a monograph on the concept of God in Gordin’s writings.

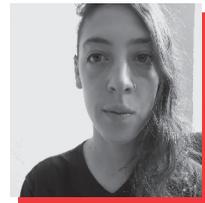


## POSTVERNACULAR ANARCHISMS: THE POLITICS OF FLAGGING WITH YIDDISH

DIANA CLARKE

From the radical queer chicken farm Linke Fligl, to the punk band Koyt Far Dayn Fardakht, this talk will examine the function of Yiddish in contemporary anarchist and anarchist-adjacent projects at the intersection of organizing, art, and politics. How is postvernacular Yiddish—that is, Yiddish which is not a necessary language for communication, but rather an element of performance—being used to signal anarchist politics and build Jewish anarchist community? How are Yiddish associations with anarchism used to build leftist credibility? What are the limits of this phenomenon? ■

DIANA CLARKE is a doctoral student in history at the University of Pittsburgh and a managing editor at *In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies*. Their research interrogates the borders of whiteness in rural spaces, particularly the way Jews immigrating from Europe to the United States in the early twentieth century understood and negotiated their own racialization, and were racialized, in Appalachia and the American South. Clarke is currently translating the work of the Yiddish poet Rajzel Zychlinsky, and is working on a book about diners. Their writing and translations have appeared in *World Literature Today*, the *Village Voice*, *Dissent*, and *A Rainbow Thread: An Anthology of Queer Jewish Texts* (Print-o-Craft, 2018).



# DISOBEDIENT JEWS

ANATOLE DOLGOFF

I am not a historian of Jewish anarchism, or of any other form of anarchism for that matter. I come to you as an accident of birth. My parents, Sam and Esther Dolgoff, spent more than seventy years in the radical movement, from the World War One-era until their deaths in 1990 and 1989. The range of the organizations and publications they were active in, some of which they helped found, was enormous. They included the Socialist Party, the IWW, the *Road to Freedom*, the Free Society, Vanguard, *Spanish Revolution*, the United Libertarian Organizations (ULO), *Why?*, the Libertarian League, and of course the *Fraye Arbeter Shtime* and the Libertarian Book Club. The range of people they came to know during a lifetime of anarchism—some intimately, while others from close association with their friends, rivals, and enemies—was enormous as well. Perhaps vast is the better word. One can write a book about these friendships and associations, and as a matter of fact I have.

I spent my child and young adulthood among these comrades and groups, and absorbed their knowledge, character, and deep humanity by a social process akin to osmosis. My purpose today is to pass some of these things on to you. ■

ANATOLE DOLGOFF was born into a family of lifetime anarchists and Wobblies who occupied a pivotal position within twentieth-century anarchism. He was Associate Professor of Physics and Science at New York City Technical College, a branch of City University of New York (CUNY), from 1961 until his retirement in 1998. For then, until the present, he has been Adjunct Professor of Geology at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. He is author of *Left of the Left: My Memories of Sam Dolgoff* (AK Press, 2016).



# UPCOMING PROGRAMS

TUESDAY  
**FEB 05**

7:00pm

BOOK TALK &  
LIVE PODCAST  
RECORDING

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## MICHAEL WALZER DISCUSSION WITH THE TEL AVIV REVIEW

An in-depth conversation between acclaimed author and scholar Michael Walzer and the *Tel Aviv Review* podcast's Gilad Halpern, where they will be discussing Walzer's new critically-acclaimed book *A Foreign Policy for the Left*.

THURSDAY  
**FEB 07**

3:00pm

BOOK TALK

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## MOTOR CITY MUSIC: A DETROITER LOOKS BACK

Mark Slobin discusses his recently published *Motor City Music: A Detroiter Looks Back*. *Motor City Music* examines the melting pot of musical life throughout Detroit, including its Jewish, African American, and Southern white roots.

WEDNESDAY  
**FEB 13**

7:00pm

CONCERT

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## ANDY STATMAN AND ZEV FELDMAN: KLEZMER PIONEERS REUNITED!

Legendary klezmer duo of Andy Statman (clarinet/mandolin) and Walter Zev Feldman (tsimbl/hammered dulcimer) reunites for the first time in 35 years! The evening will include a performance and multimedia presentation celebrating the duo's work in the 1970s with legendary klezmer clarinetist Dave Tarras and other important immigrant musicians. *Presented in partnership with the Center for Traditional Music and Dance (CTMD)*.

THURSDAY  
**FEB 21**

6:00pm

IN DIALOGUE  
SERIES  
LECTURE &  
CONVERSATION

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## IN DIALOGUE: POLISH JEWISH RELATIONS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The third program in the "In Dialogue: Polish Jewish Relations" series, presented by Samuel Kassow and Piotr Wróbel, focuses on the history of World War II and the Holocaust. *Co-presented by Fordham University, Columbia University, and the YIVO Institute. THIS EVENT WILL TAKE PLACE AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.*

SUNDAY  
**MAR 17**

11:00am

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## CHILDREN'S DAY

Join us for our annual Children's Day, where visitors of all ages will enjoy a wonderful selection of Purim-themed activities and performances. This year's program will have something for everybody—sing-alongs of Yiddish folk staples, a magic show, and delicious treats, among other activities—to enjoy.

SUNDAY  
**MAR 24**

6:00pm

BOOK TALK &  
CONCERT

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## SARAH SCHENIRER AND BAIS YAAKOV: A REVOLUTION IN THE NAME OF TRADITION

This book talk and concert will explore the emergence of the Bais Yaakov schools in interwar Poland, when it grew from a one-room school in Sarah Schenirer's living quarters to a school system with over 200 schools, 36,000 students, and an international reach. *Co-sponsored by the Center for Jewish History.*

WEDNESDAY  
**MAR 27**  
7:00pm  
BOOK LAUNCH

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## AVROM GOLDFADEN AND THE RISE OF THE MODERN YIDDISH THEATER

*The Rise of the Modern Yiddish Theater* examines its origins, from roughly 1876 to 1883, through the works of one of its best-known and most colorful figures, Avrom Goldfaden. Join us for the launch of this new book with a discussion of this rich theatrical tradition as well as the broader social life that its study sheds light on.

WEDNESDAY  
**APR 10**  
7:00pm  
LECTURE

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## CARNEGIE HALL'S MIGRATIONS FESTIVAL COMES TO YIVO: THE MUSICAL LEGACY OF EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWS

Mark Slobin, acclaimed scholar of East European and American Jewish music, will discuss Carnegie Hall's April 15th musical program, *From Shtetl to Stage*. In his presentation he will use images and recordings and cover a range of Yiddish theater songs, novelty numbers, concert music, and songs of social movements.

SUNDAY  
**MAY 05**  
9:00am  
CONFERENCE

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## IN DIALOGUE: POLISH JEWISH RELATIONS

The "In Dialogue" series culminates in a daylong symposium discussing Polish Jewish relations in the post-war era, also touching on contemporary issues including Poland's controversial law concerning World War II and the Holocaust that, according to the U.S. State Department, "could undermine free speech and academic discourse." Co-presented by Columbia University, Fordham University, and the YIVO Institute.

SUNDAY  
**MAY 19**  
7:00pm  
CONCERT

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## SECULAR SACRED MUSIC: MORTON FELDMAN, DAVID LANG, ADAM ROBERTS

A performance of two choral masterworks, Morton Feldman's *Rothko's Chapel* and David Lang's *Little March Girl Passion*, featuring the young artists of the OS Ensemble, led by Raquel Acevedo-Klein, including the performance of a new secular sacred work by composer Adam Roberts, commissioned for the occasion.

TUESDAY  
**JUNE 04**  
7:00pm  
CONCERT

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## A HEBREW LIEDERABEND – AN EVENING OF HEBREW SONG

An elegant illuminating program of classic treasures of secular Hebrew song and the poetry that inspired this rich musical expression for over a century. The recital features leading interpreters: Ilana Davidson, Raphael Frieder, and Elizabeth Shammash with world-renowned virtuoso pianist Yehudi Wyner. YIVO's Anne E. Leibowitz Visiting Professor-in-Residence in Music, Neil W. Levin presents a pre-concert lecture at 6:00pm.

## Your support makes all the difference!

YIVO offers cultural events and programs throughout the year, including lectures, concerts, films, and symposia. We also offer adult education and Yiddish language programs, research opportunities, and fellowships. You can help YIVO fulfill its mission with your support.

Please make your contribution to YIVO by visiting [yivo.org/Donate](https://yivo.org/Donate), or to become a member please contact the YIVO Membership Office at 212.294.6131.

THANK YOU.



The YIVO Institute for Jewish Research is dedicated to the preservation and study of the history and culture of East European Jewry worldwide. For nearly a century, YIVO has pioneered new forms of Jewish scholarship, research, education, and cultural expression. Our public programs and exhibitions, as well as online and on-site courses, extend our global outreach and enable us to share our vast resources. The YIVO Archives contains more than 23 million original items and YIVO's Library has over 400,000 volumes—the single largest resource for such study in the world.

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