

**March 20-22, 2018**

# **UNTOLD STORIES OF JEWISH WOMEN**

A Festival of Plays, Music and Conversation

## **STUDY GUIDE**

### **ABZUG, BELLA**

PLAYING HOUSE by CONI KOEPFINGER

Bella Savitzky Abzug (July 24, 1920 – March 31, 1998), nicknamed "Battling Bella", was a lawyer, US Representative, social activist and a leader in the Women's Movement. In 1971, she and her colleagues founded the National Women's Political Caucus.

We meet Bella as she lectures, remembers, speaks to her dead husband close to her death in 1998 and finally from beyond the grave.

"Battling Bella" Abzug, an inspiration to me since I heard her speak in 1976, has been a force of nature empowering women for decades. She realized the need for feminism in law and in life, and made certain that people listened to her.

### **ADAMS, EVE**

THE SPRING AND FALL OF EVE ADAMS by BARBARA KAHN

Eve Adams, born Chava Zloczower, left her native Poland for freedom in the United States. By 1926, Eve, a Jewish lesbian, was proprietor of "Eve's Hangout", a tearoom at 129 Macdougal Street, where local artists shared their work in salon evenings. Her haven of artistic and sexual freedom was soon threatened by religious and governmental authorities..

The play sheds light on current threats by holding a mirror to the past. The 1920's saw an upsurge in anti-immigrant and anti-Semitic public opinion in the United States that led to lower immigration quotas from targeted countries, particularly from Eastern Europe.

As the daughter of a child refugee from war, I have devoted my career to writing plays that tell the untold stories of a number of people from oppressed or marginalized groups. The Spring and Fall of Eve Adams is the first of three plays I wrote that complete the journey of Eve Adams (Chava Zloczower) from New York City to pre-war Paris and ultimately back to Poland.

### **ADLER, STELLA**

AFTER THE THIN MAN by SHELLLEN LUBIN

The daughter of the most famous acting family in Yiddish theatre, Stella Adler was one of the three major interpreters of the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky in this country. All three became acting teachers, and all disagreed with each other's methods, but none more vehemently than

Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg. She is considered by many to be the greatest acting teacher, and purveyor of acting technique, in the history of the profession.

Sylvia Gassell was in Joe Papp's first acting company at the Public Theatre, and his first Juliet. Her husband, Joel Friedman, the Public's first director, taught Papp everything he knew about Shakespeare (said by many).

This is the moment when Stella Adler has returned from Hollywood, disillusioned about the chance to be a great Hollywood actress. For Sylvia Gassell, it is the moment when she is choosing her acting career path.

When I became a director, the actors who had the most depth and presence, and were the most prepared, had almost all studied with Stella Adler, and so I went and studied with her as well. Everyone who has worked with her has complex feelings about her, and I am no exception. When Sylvia Gassell was in my musical, *Molly's Daughters*, she told me about one moment in one interaction with Stella, who was a colleague and mentor of hers. That one moment became the inspiration for this play.

### **ARENDR, HANNAH**

MRS. STERN WANDERS THE PRUSSIAN STATE LIBRARY by JENNY LYN BADER

Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) was arguably the most influential political thinker of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She authored many books including *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *Thinking in Dark Times*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, and *The Human Condition*. Born in Germany, she spent part of World War II in a concentration camp in France, managed to escape, and later fled Nazi Europe, emigrating to the U.S. in 1941.

*Mrs. Stern Wanders the Prussian State Library* takes place in 1933, before Arendt has embarked on her career, when she is still completing her graduate studies in Berlin.

This piece is inspired by a real event: her arrest by the Gestapo. It's interesting to look at her early on before she became "Hannah Arendt"... and especially to look at this turning point in her life, an episode she mentioned in later interviews but never fully explained. The play imagines what is missing from the historical record.

### **BERGMAN, GRETEL**

GRETEL BERGMANN by CYNTHIA L.COOPER

MARGERTHE (GRETEL) BERGMANN (1914-2017) excelled in sports as a young Jewish woman growing up in Laupheim, Germany in the late 1920s. A track-and-field stand out, she was denied university admission because she was Jewish. Instead, Gretel went to school in England, where she won the British championship in high jump in 1934. Because Nazi Germany wanted to gather world support for the Olympics in Berlin in 1936, they pressured her to return to Germany. She was unable to train in the same way as the Aryan athletes but still earned a spot on the German Olympics team with the highest marks in the high jump. Her addition to the German team caused the United States to reverse a vote to boycott the Berlin Olympics

because of discrimination against Jews; as soon as the world turned its attention away, Gretel was denied the right to compete. Gretel later moved to the United States, but was never able to rebuild her sports career.

: In "Gretel Bergmann," a mature Gretel, now called Margaret, reflects on her life as a Jewish athlete in Germany and how moral quandaries and human rights concerns follow people into every arena.

The Holocaust and other genocides are often told in large, sweeping stories. I wanted to show how discrimination takes prisoners in big and small ways, in interrupted lives and stolen dreams, even in an area as familiar as sports.

### **BOTTNER, BARBARA**

HEBREW SCHOOL, 1961(EXCERPT)

After WWII, a primary need of first generation Jews was to become integrated into American Society. To that end, the focus of the religion was to encourage people to be practical; successful, give money to Israel, and remember our history.

It was typical that the more mystical teachings of the religion were not promoted post Holocaust because the need of the congregants was interpreted to be a kind of social imperative. However, because of these dynamics, the character's connection to the spiritual aspects of Judaism, could not take place

The main character is fourteen. She is full of need and longing. She goes to study Judaism against her will. It is a pivotal moment; will the religion help her and will she find something to anchor her in the future, or will she turn away.

### CHILDREN OF SURVIVORS, WW2

#### **FRANKLIN, ROSALIND**

BURN OUT by NAOMI ELSTER

"Rosalind Franklin was an extraordinarily gifted scientist, who discovered the structure of DNA, one of medicine's most significant breakthroughs. Unfortunately, as a woman in a time when science was extremely male dominated, she was never given the respect she deserved. Without her consent, data was taken from her lab and shown to two male scientists - James Watson and Francis Crick - who subsequently claimed credit for the discovery.

This story is well known within molecular biology research, in which I work. Many scientists consider Franklin a hero and the cancer research laboratory in which I work has a picture of her on the wall. I wanted to write this piece because I don't believe Franklin's story is well-known outside of the research community, and tell it through the eyes of a modern young scientist because women scientists still have challenges. If Franklin had received the credit she deserved, modern STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) women would probably receive more respect."

**GERTNER, ALA**

LETTERS TO SALA BY ARLENE HUTTON

During her five years in seven Nazi work camps, Sala Garncarz saved over 350 letters and photos, but didn't tell her family about it until she was in her 70s. There was great dissension between Sala's daughter and granddaughters. Should they keep the letters for the family or donate them to a library? Three generations of Kirschner women must work together to sift through the past and come to terms with the true gravity of Sala's letters.

One of Sala's friends in the camps was Ala Gertner, who was later hanged at Auschwitz for conspiracy. Sala's cache of letters from Ala contain the only known photo of Ala Gertner and the only letters in her handwriting.

Sala Garncarz Kirshner passed away March 7th, the day after her 94th birthday. The obituary in the New York Times describes her five years in seven Nazi work camps. During that time Sala Garncarz received and 350 letters and photos, risking her life to hold on to them. She then kept them secret from her family for over fifty years. The letters are now in the Dorot Jewish Collection at the New York Public Library.

**GASSELL, SYLVIA**

SEE: STELLA ADLER

**GOLDMAN, EMMA**

RED EMMA BY MAXINE KERN

Emma Goldman immigrated to America with her immigrant dream of freedom and justice for all. Her personal revolution to come to America in spite of her father's objections, set her on a path of bold leadership in spite of unjust authority and arbitrary treatment of American citizens. Telling her story is a roadmap for all passionate, thinking Americans today.

Emma Goldman immigrated to America with dreams of freedom and justice alive and kicking. When she arrived and saw that freedom fighters for truth and justice called Anarchists were summarily arrested and several executed by the US Justice System, she swore to become an Anarchist and redeem the dream of America and those who had been sacrificed in it's name.

The moments of personal revolution in the life of a true revolutionary describe the story that takes place in this play. In this excerpt, Emma revolutionizes the life of her inmates in Blackwell Prison where she has been incarcerated for one year for "challenging the government and inciting a riot".

I have been haunted by the image of Emma Goldman as a bold woman leader of strength from long ago, whose untold story leads us towards a fair and just society today.

**HANDLER, RUTH**

FUTURE GIRL VISITS BARBIE'S MOM BY ELLEN SULLIVAN:

Ruth Handler was the driving spirit who created the Barbie Doll and Mattel Toys. After she had a mastectomy and lost her toy empire due to questionable accounting practices, Ruth found a new mission as a crusader for breast cancer survivors.

)The play takes place in 1978 while Ruth is waiting for a judge to sentence her for federal securities law violations related to Mattel's accounting.

I chose to write about Ruth because she had a genius for marketing and grabbed the reins of Mattel, competing against men in business in a way few other women of her generation even conceived of doing. In the face of failure, in part due to her own actions, she started a new company to produce improved prosthetic breasts.

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### **JACKSON, SHIRLEY**

NEVER FORGET BY DONNA HOKE

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Shirley Jackson was not Jewish, but her husband, literary critic Stanley Edgar Hyman was, and she identified with him as an outsider in the small New England town where they lived. (She was also taught to cook several signature dishes by her Brooklyn mother-in-law.) When "The Lottery," Jackson's most famous short story was published, she insisted--as you'll see in this play--that she didn't know where the idea came from. Years later, she confided to a friend that it was allegory for anti-Semitism and blind obedience to senseless violence. Focusing the play on her flagship story seemed the perfect way to reveal much about Jackson in just a few pages.

### **KAIDANOW, ELLEN**

SHIFRA by Sarah Kaidanow

Ellen is a Holocaust survivor from Dubno, Poland who immigrated to the United States in 1948.. In 1959, Ellen was living in the Bronx with two young children and her husband, Jerry, also a Holocaust survivor. At this time, she was grappling with the traumatic aftermath of the Holocaust while also trying to raise two American children.

Growing up, my grandma would tell me stories of how she survived the Holocaust. I was always amazed that she was able to lead such a, relatively, normal life after all that she endured. One story she always tells, that has stuck with me through the years, is how she would sit in PTA meetings at her son's school feeling lost and detached.

This image of my grandma trying to find her place in this strange new world is something I wanted to explore in this play. Her strength, courage, and perseverance have always inspired me to share her story.

### **KRASNER, LEE**

SCENES FROM THE LIFE BY GLENDA FRANK

SEASON TO SEASON BY RICHARD RASHKE

Lee Krasner was the daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants. She was one of the young, gifted leaders of the Abstract Expressionist movement in 1941, when she met Jackson Pollock. They married and moved to East Hampton, Long Island, where her husband worked on

the paintings we find in MoMA and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. After a three year drought Lee Krasner began her breakthrough Little Image series and, as a widow, moved on to the large canvases collected by major museums.

Like many other women artists, Lee Krasner's work has, even to this day, been eclipsed by her male contemporaries. Although she continued to paint, the world saw her as a wife. Galleries and collectors preferred work by males, but she persevered and people paid attention.

## **LESBIAN COMMUNITY WW2**

VESSELS, LESBIANS OF THE HOLOCAUST BY KIM YAGED

When I was approached to write a short play about lesbians in the Holocaust for the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust in conjunction with the United States Memorial Museums' exhibition, "The Nazi persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945", my first thought was, "Now there's something I never thought about." But, I jumped at the opportunity to research and discover a part of history I hadn't previously considered. Most books and scholars were reluctant to acknowledge the oppression of lesbians during the German Holocaust. This is likely because Section 175 of the German criminal code made homosexual acts only between men a crime, and the Nazis didn't designate a special triangle for lesbians.

*vessels* is my attempt to document and honor some of their experiences.

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## **LEWINSKY, MONICA**

MARVEL-OUS MONICA, IN WHICH MONICA LEWINSKY IS A SUPERHERO HELL-BENT ON REVENGE BY SARAH TUFT

My play MARVEL-OUS MONICA, IN WHICH MONICA LEWINSKY IS A SUPERHERO HELL-BENT ON REVENGE is about Monica Lewinsky as she struggles to make peace with her traumatic past to evolve from victim to survivor.

MARVEL-OUS MONICA opens in 2015 as Monica rehearses her celebrated TED Talk, which forces her to look at the traumatic events of her life, leading up to and including her grand jury testimony of 1998.

I chose to write about Monica in 2015 because I had a "Monica story" of my own and although I celebrated Monica's attempt to "reclaim her narrative" in her TED Talk, I also had a gnawing feeling she needed to delve further. MARVEL-OUS MONICA, IN WHICH MONICA LEWINSKY IS A SUPERHERO HELL-BENT ON REVENGE is the journey I wanted Monica to go on. Happily, in her recent *Vanity Fair* article and thanks to the #MeToo movement, she has.

This is a long-overdue look at the slut-shamed young woman at the center of a notorious political scandal. However, as the recent #MeToo movement has shown us, MARVEL-OUS MONICA is the story of more young women than we'd like to admit, even now. Times Up!

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**LUBETKIN, ZIVIA**

**SEE: IDA NUDEL**

Zivia Lubetkin not only survived the Holocaust, she was in the Jewish Underground in Warsaw and the only female in high command of the Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa.

**LUBIN, SHIRLEY**

**IN THE EVENINGS by SUSAN MERSON**

Louise is based on my mother- Sureh Rifke Sara Shirley Rebecca Feldman Fields Rubenstein Merson Lubin- and her mighty struggle against her debilitating clinical depression. Born a child of Russian Jewish immigrants on a Zionist farm commune in Winnepeg Canada, she made her way to America and a middle class, post war life full of promise, aspiration and challenge—she was widowed four times.

The piece focuses on survival and survivors. In meeting her illness and circumstance head on, she always reached out to support those around her, including Survivors of the Other War (ww2), to continually sort out how this dance with death and depression proved worthy and hopeful in the most difficult of times.

As the daughter chronicles the mother's struggles, they both find hope, humor and a sense of purpose in the act of moving through the middle of the worst of times.

**NUDEL, IDA**

**BREAD AND THREE ROSES by Jessica Eisenberg**

Ida Nudel is a former refusenik and Israeli activist. She fought to escape the Soviet Union and was known as the "Guardian Angel" of the "Prisoners of Zion" who were trapped there. All three women are reflecting back on the most tumultuous times of their lives. Their bravery in facing the impossible is the through line of the piece and why I chose them to be together and reflect together.

Ida Nudel, Rose Schneiderman, and Zivia Lubetkin were women facing the impossible. Escaping the Soviet Union, Nazis, and fighting for human rights across the world ties their journeys together. We must remember them.

**LISE MEITNER**

**ELEMENT 109 BY ERIN MOUGHTON**

Dr. Lise Meitner was instrumental in the discovery of nuclear fission, but she was denied the Nobel Prize because she had to leave Germany in 1938. Later radioactive element 109 was named after her.

Dr. Lise Meitner moved from her home in Austria to Berlin in 1908 to continue her studies in physics. There she met Otto Hahn, a chemist with whom she would complete most of her early professional work. In 1938, she was forced to leave Germany for the Netherlands due to the Nazi rise in power. It was there that she was able to explain nuclear fission to Hahn, but because of her displacement, she was denied the Nobel Prize for her work. Later the chemical element 109 was named after her, the only element that year to have unanimous agreement about the name.

The moment I wrote about is during World War II, when President Roosevelt personally asked her to help with the Manhattan Project, and she was only one of two scientists asked who refused. The piece is about her refusal and the effect of that.

I have loved Dr. Meitner since high school physics when I found out about how she was instrumental in the discovery in nuclear fission, but that the scientific community overlooked her because she was not physically present for the experiments as they were in Germany, and she was Jewish.

I picked this moment because there is power in her refusal to weaponize her science. Anyone who will declare "I will not build a bomb!" is someone worth writing about. I chose to include information about element 109 because it is named after her and no significant experiments have been performed with it.

Dr. Lise Meitner was instrumental in the discovery of nuclear fission, but she was denied the Nobel Prize because she had to leave Germany in 1938. Later radioactive element 109 was named after her.

### **MERSON, SUSAN**

CHICKEN NOODLE NIGHTFLIGHTS, (excerpt from REFLECTIONS OF A CHINA DOLL) by Susan Merson

Rosie is a child of the 1950's, growing up in post war America and discovering herself in her differences with those she adores and admires.

She discovers how strange it is that the things that give comfort to her beautiful blonde blue eyed pal remain foreign to her. In seeing this difference, she begins to see herself for who she is.

Though the tidy life of her very best Christian friend attracts and compels young Rosie, she realizes that the warmth of her own family, culture and warm pumpernickel treats are essential in making it through the night. This quintessential moment reminds her that she is who she is no matter who she might want to be.

### **PAPPENHEIM, BERTHA**

ANNA O. BY PAUL PASULKA

*Anna O.* tells the story of Bertha Pappenheim, quite arguably the cofounder of psychoanalysis. In 1880 Fraulein Pappenheim, a young woman from an orthodox Jewish family cares for her father who is dying of tuberculosis. She develops an illness and when she refuses a stay in a removal to a sanitarium for treatment she and Josef Breuer stay in a sanatorium, she embarks on a wholly unorthodox method of treatment, involving daily therapy sessions of discussion, storytelling, and free association.

In 1896 *Studies on Hysteria* appears; 'Anna O', a pseudonym for Bertha Pappenheim, is the subject of the first chapter. Fraulein Pappenheim subsequently becomes a fierce champion of women's and children's rights throughout Europe, until she and her work come under the deadly scrutiny of the Nazi's.

*Anna O.* depicts the resilience of an intelligent, passionate, and sensitive woman in a protective but repressive society.

### **PAVLOVA, ANNA**

Anna Pavlova, a Russian prima ballerina who is most recognized for her creation of the role The Dying Swan.

The play takes place at the moment of her death in 1931.

Anna Pavlova is an incredibly fascinating woman, who is most known for her talent as a ballerina and her signature role as The Dying Swan. She fell in love with the ballet when she went to see The Sleeping Beauty at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg when she was 8 years old. Her career lasted until her death at the age of 50. It was then, that she took a train back to The Hague, where she planned to resume dancing. There was a terrible train accident, which left her stranded on the platform for 12 hours and left her with pneumonia. Days later, on her death bed, she had one final request: to see her swan costume one final time. For her, it was all about the ballet and the fantasies she created in her head.

### **PICON, MOLLY**

MIT A FIDDLE in the middle by CJ EHRLICH

Molly Picon was superstar in Yiddish theatre, for decades. A beloved comedian, singer, actress and writer, she moved easily from stage, to film, to radio and TV. Molly eventually crossed into English-speaking entertainment, and is probably best known to this generation for playing Yenta the Matchmaker in the film version of Fiddler on the Roof.

It's 1936. Molly is a huge box office draw, at 38 still doing cartwheels and ten shows a day. Shooting a movie in Poland is practically a vacation. It's a sunny day on the set. Grey clouds may hang over Europe, but neither she, nor anyone in the film, have any idea what they are bringing.

To supplement a Yiddish class I was taking at the local temple, I borrowed a random film from the Yiddish language holdings in our library, *Yidl mitn Fiddle*. I was fascinated by its lead, a 38-year old pixie with thechutzpah to carry a movie as a 15-year old girl. Who was she? I love vaudeville, but Molly led me into a whole new world of Yiddish theatre.

**PIEPER, GISA**  
**AT THE TRAIN STATION IN MUNICH by Cynthia L. Cooper**

Gisa Peiper ( 1910-2005) (later Gisa Konopka) grew up as an idealistic teenager in a struggling Jewish family in Berlin. When Hitler's "Brown Shirts" started attacking people at labor rallies, she and her group devoted themselves to resisting the rise of the Nazis, and Gisa was arrested by the Gestapo in 1936. When she is released, she manages to escape to Austria until the Anschluss, when her escape to Paris is arranged. The glitch in her travel arrangements is a layover at the train station in Munich

If the Nazis discover her identity as a Jew, as a former political prisoner, or as an anti-Nazi resistance worker, she surely will be detained.

As I thought about difficulties in our own times, and looked back on the struggles in Germany, I wondered, like so many others: 'What would I do?'

**POLITKIVSKAYA, ANNA**

Anna Politkovskaya was a ferocious, independent journalist, murdered in Moscow, 2006, the 13<sup>th</sup> journalist to be killed. She shed light on the "invisible war" in Chechnya in her exposes and books *A Dirty War* and *A Small Corner of Hell*. Coincidences abound surrounding her execution-style death.

With the ongoing demonization of a free press not only in Russia, but here in the U.S., it seems fitting to revisit her early warnings to a more naive world.

I heard her speak once and it was impossible to turn away.

**RABINOWITZ, MATILDA**  
**STRIKE 1912 ( EXCERPT FROM IMMIGRANT GIRL, RADICAL GIRL)**  
**COMPILED BY ROBBINS HENDERSON**

Matilda Rabinowitz (Robbins) January 9, 1887 to January 9, 1963.

Matilda Rabinowitz, was radicalized by the obligation to help support her family working in sweatshops of the needle trades from the age of fourteen, eventually becoming a Socialist; My mother, Vita Robbins Légère, contributed Matilda's papers to the Walter Reuther Library's Labor Archive at Wayne State University after her mother died, and Matilda appears in labor histories and more recently on websites and even in Wikipedia. Now the complete text of her autobiography is available from Cornell University Press,

Today's reading is an excerpt from Matilda's memoir, "Immigrant Girl, Radical Woman," and describes her leading her first strike as an organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World on behalf of 1300 textile mill workers, mostly Slavic and Italian women, in Little Falls, New York from November 1912 to February 1913. It was one of the few strikes won by the IWW, and Matilda was one of only 2 paid women organizers during the Wobblies heyday. The excerpt also touches on Matilda's nearly 10-year affair with fellow Wobbly, Ben Légère, the father of my

mother, Vita.

Matilda Rabinowitz was my grandmother, and if she had been yours you'd want her remembered, too—want others to know about her brave life and strong and loving nature. I have come to share her political beliefs, her love of nature and beauty, her connection to family and her struggle for peace, solidarity among workers, and her advocacy for civil rights and women's social and sexual autonomy. She was tiny in stature—under 5 feet tall with a delicate frame—but her strength and character loom large in my life. She has been an inspiration to me as an activist, feminist, artist, writer and grandmother. Vivat Matilda!

### **ROSENBERG, ETHEL**

The Passion of Ethel Rosenberg by Edward Morris

“I was a senior in high school when the Rosenbergs were executed in 1953. Even then it seemed to me a monumental injustice--a case of anti-Communist hysteria. Although much of the publicity during and after the execution focused on Julius Rosenberg as the spymaster, it was always Ethel who drew my attention. Depicted in the press as cold and mousy, I discovered she was, in reality, intelligent, high spirited and good humored, even in the darkest times. When I set about writing the play in 2015, I chose to show her wit, complexity and strength--all evident in the prison letters she and Julius exchanged. I honor her courage and hope I have done her justice.”

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### **MARTINE ROTHBLATT**

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARTINE ROTHBLATT, AS PERFORMED BY HER FOUR CHILDREN, ALONG WITH A ROBOT NAMED BINA48 BY KAT MUSTATEA

Martine Rothblatt is a larger-than-life figure. Born a Jewish man in San Diego, she eventually changed genders in her 40's, but not before first founding Sirius Radio, making herself into a multi-millionaire, marrying a real estate agent named Bina Aspen, fathering two children with her, and cross-adopting two others.

When Martine's youngest daughter Jenesis was diagnosed with a rare pulmonary disorder, Martine left her job and founded a pharmaceutical company dedicated to finding a treatment, and in the process in 2014 became the highest paid female CEO in the United States. She also founded a trans religion named Terasem and built an AI robot named Bina48 in the image of her wife Bina.

The play is set in 2014, the year Martine became the highest paid female CEO in the US and also the year of her sixtieth birthday. It examines a life lived at the cutting edge of technology, the drive to transcend the body's limitations, post-racial and post-gender idealism, and the meaning of family.

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### **SCHLANGER, CAROL**

THE GOATHERD'S WIFE ( excerpt from memoir FAR OUT) BY CROL SCHLANGER

In the early 1970's a time of seismic social change and political unrest Carol Schlanger is an ambitious young actress who leaves her NY urban life and career to live to live at Flores Creek, a back-to-the-land commune in the the Oregon Wilderness. She survived and thrived in the isolated Coastal Mountain range for 5 years without benefit of running water, phones or electricity and depended only on a small group all the benefits previously granted by modern civilization.

In this excerpt, Carol is 23 years old, has completed graduate school at Yale Drama and fallen in love with a stoner Texan cowboy and the beauty of Oregon.

GOATHERD'S WIFE, is the first shining moment of my wilderness communal life. Lacking in survival skills ( hunting, fishing, building, gardening) and not enjoying the traditional female roles of cooking and cleaning for a large group, my contributions to the whole are lacking. But in playing a role to acquire foodstamps, able to supply the tribe with much needed nourishment and to achieve prosperity for all. However, during the process, I am called out by an anti-semite for being a Jew and am reminded that no matter how "FAR OUT" I go, being Jewish is what I am and what I'll always be proud to be.

**SCHNEIDERMAN, ROSE**  
**SEEL NUDEL, IDA**

Rose Schneiderman was one of the most important labor union leaders of all time. She was a feminist, activist, suffragette, and never stopped fighting for human rights.

**SZENES, HANNAH**

DEVIL ON THE WALL by Danielle Wirsansky

Hannah Szenes is known as a poet, a playwright, and most notably a spy for the British during WWII. Originally from Hungary, she had moved to the British Mandate of Palestine when she was recruited by the British Special Operations Executive Intelligence organization.

This piece takes place after Hannah has been captured and charged with treason for her work as a spy. She is in prison, being interrogated in an attempt to get information from her for the Gestapo.

Hannah has always been a significant role model in my life. As a History major, my focus was on WWII/the Holocaust, and my thesis was actually written on the contributions of female spies for the British of this time. Hannah's story has always struck me as particularly powerful. The moment that I chose to write about in her life is one of the moments that truly made her story extraordinary.

**SOKOLOW, ANNA**

TRUTH IN MOVEMENT By CYNTHIA CHAPMAN

Ferocious, ground-breaking, rebellious, this was Anna Sokolow, the American-born daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants, an unparalleled international choreographer of modern dance. Anna created compositions inspired by her Jewish roots and the social issues of her day, including the Depression, the Holocaust and the isolation of modern life. Beyond her own

dance companies, Anna choreographed for Broadway, worked with Elia Kazan at the Actors Studio, taught for years at The Juilliard School.

I met Anna when she was 81 and this is when the play takes place. This is when my journey as an artist truly began.

### **STOECHEL, HANNAH**

#### **FIBERS: Who was Hannah Stochel?**

**By Amy Oestreicher**

**Hannah Stochel** (1923-2006) was born on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1923, in Hanusovce N.T. (on the Topla River) in Slovakia which at the time was known as Czechoslovakia.

She was a Holocaust survivor, grandmother, established seamstress, and a founder of the MYRA corporation along with her husband, Irving Stochel, a successful sewing corporation in Brooklyn, New York.

My grandmother, at 18 years old, was really Hannah Schachne - blonde, brown eyed and living in Czechoslovakia. She had just married her first love before she was taken from her family and sent to the death camps of Auschwitz. As an excellent seamstress, she survived the camps because Nazis forced her to sew their uniforms. When the camps were finally liberated, a soldier told grandma she was free. She didn't know what that meant.

In reweaving Hannah's life, fusing monologues curated from 300+ pages of transcribed oral histories and audio recordings, I learned what true resilience was, not only to survive trauma, but to celebrate when the times *are* good.

### **SURVIVORS, WW2**

#### **SEARCHING FOR A NEW SUNRISE ( excerpt) by Robin Rice**

The play is about five women. One is a survivor; four have ancestors who didn't survive the Holocaust. The characters are based on extensive interviews with real people. The action of the play is October 18, 2012.

I have always wondered how the Holocaust affected second- and third-generation descendants of survivors. I wrote this play to discover some answers.

### **PLAY: THE SPOKEN AND THE UNSPOKEN by Cynthia L. Cooper**

THE SPOKEN AND THE UNSPOKEN probes the truth about sexual violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust and why it was hidden for decades. Sixty years after the Holocaust, the topic was still taboo. The male Holocaust scholars had no interest in sexual violence against women and saw it as a divisive topic in the Jewish community. Widespread myths held that women had not been sexually abused because Nazi laws forbade sexual relations between Jews and Aryans. Women who suffered abuse and survived were silent about sexual victimization, and were often shamed if they did speak out.

Against this backdrop, women scholars began to gather and collect documentation of the sexual violence experienced by Jewish women. THE SPOKEN AND THE UNSPOKEN, a documentary play, is drawn from a 2010 book of 17 essays, *Sexual Violence Against Jewish*

*Women During the Holocaust*, edited by Dr. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Dr. Rochelle G. Saidel of Remember the Women Institute.

After reading the book edited by Dr. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Dr. Rochelle G. Saidel, and writing a feature article about their work, I understood how deeply buried were the stories of sexual violence against Jewish women. As a playwright, I believed that the theatrical medium would build understanding and awareness of the topic and shine a light on the difficulties facing all survivors of sexual violence.

**SZOLD, HENRIETTA**  
HADASSAH BY ELSA RAEL

U.S. Jewish Zionist leader and founder of Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. In 1942, she co-founded Ihud, a political party in Mandatory Palestine dedicated to a binational solution.

This play takes place in Israel in approximately 1940, when Hitler has just invaded Poland. Henrietta is in Jerusalem, trying to save as many lives as she can.

I wrote the play because learning about Henrietta's history is when I became a Zionist, and I am a lifetime member.

**TAMAR**  
TAMAR BY EMMA GOLDMAN SHERMAN

The story of Tamar is found in Samuel II, Chapter 13. The Concubine's story is found in Judges 19. Both of these stories are rarely read in synagogues or churches. Tamar's story, if taken literally, would have happened around 990 B.C.E. and her namesake niece (who is actually mentioned as Absalom's daughter) would have been married about 15-20 years later (970 B.C.E.). I wrote the play to explore how the Bible might be re-interpreted from a feminist lens to give us permission to find new ways to understand rape, patriarchy and internalized oppression from several perspectives.

**TAMIR**  
NOW BY TAMIR

Serving in the Israeli Army in a culture of guns and grenades with war at home and in the streets many turned to suicide as a way to blot it out. The play (and this excerpt) depicts the use of Theater and a love of language as a road to healing and being present in the now.

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The woman I am writing about is myself and my story. That moment in time is serving in the Israeli Army, pointing and firing a gun at myself despite being a conscientious objector. The irony and contradiction is apparent but such is the complexity of human nature.

I survived and thrived in great part because of my deep love of theater especially Shakespeare, through the kindness of strangers and the mystery of a higher guidance.

It is a personal story but one that simmers in the hearts of many who live in a culture of violence with a history of persecution and easy access to guns.

Serving in the Israeli Army in a culture of guns and grenades with war at home and in the streets many turned to suicide as a way to blot it out. The play (and this excerpt) depicts the use of Theater and a love of language as a road to healing and being present in the now.

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TRUMP, IVANKA

**YEZIERSKA, ANNA**

EXCERPT From MIXED RELIEF (co-written by NewShoe Writers Group and commissioned by WomenArts) EXCERPT BY DANA LESLIE GOLDSTEIN

Anzia Yeziarska, a Jewish novelist, screenwriter, essayist and critic, grew up on the Lower East Side after immigrating from Eastern Europe. Her novel "Hungry Hearts" brought her to Hollywood and was made into a film. During the depression, her assignment was to catalogue the trees in Central Park for the WPA American Guide series.

Anzia Yeziarska shared my grandmother's background and I chose her because she felt enigmatic and mysterious, in the way that one can be when they've chosen to reinvent themselves. She used her writing to try to become the American woman she never quite felt she deserved to be.

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