

BUBBY'S KITCHEN

CREATED AND PERFORMED BY
SHIRA GINSBURG

PRESS KIT



A STORY OF LOSS, SURVIVAL,
FOOD, AND FAMILY.

INSPIRED BY THE HEROIC ACTS OF RESISTANCE HER
GRANDPARENTS TOOK AGAINST THE NAZIS AS PARTISANS,
SURVIVING YEARS IN THE FORESTS OF BELARUS.

YOU'LL LAUGH, YOU'LL CRY, YOU'LL WANT A RUGALACH...

DIRECTED BY SCHELE WILLIAMS
MUSICAL DIRECTION BY RICK BERTONE
WITH ORIGINAL MUSIC BY JONATHAN COMISAR

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Fulfilling Bubby's hopes

Cantor Shira Ginsburg performs her grandparents' story

By **ABIGAIL KLEIN LEICHMAN**

15 December 2022, 9:54 am | 



Cantor Shira Ginsburg plays her grandmother in "Bubby's Kitchen." (Phillip Merritt)

Yudis Koszeinska and Motke Ginsburg fought with different bands of partisans in World War II, courageously overcoming unimaginable life-threatening dangers. Many of their family members did not survive.

Meeting after the war, Yudis and Motke married and eventually made their way to Troy, New York. They renamed themselves Judith and Marvin and raised four children on their dairy farm.

To Shira Ginsburg and the other nine grandchildren, this heroic couple were simply Bubby and Zayde.

“We were a very tight-knit family, with our paternal grandparents at the center of our lives,” she said. “After what they went through, they were very intentional about creating a family that stuck together through everything. My father was the eldest and the only boy, so he took over the farm, and I was in my grandmother’s house every day.”

Naturally, much of that time was spent hearing Bubby’s stories in the kitchen as she cooked up classic Jewish Eastern European fare like rugelach, babka, blintzes and matzah balls.

Shira Ginsburg, the senior cantor at East End Temple in Manhattan, therefore titled her one-woman musical show “Bubby’s Kitchen.” On January 8, she will present a concert version of the show at Temple B’nai Abraham in Livingston.

“It’s my passion project,” Cantor Ginsburg said.

She originally conceived of the show for her cantorial ordination recital at Hebrew Union College in April 2009 and rewrote it over the next five years, adding new music by her friend and fellow cantor Jonathan Comisar.

“The first performance was in 2016 at the JCC on the Upper West Side,” she said. “I’ve continued to tweak it because it’s my life.”

In the fully staged version of “Bubby’s Kitchen,” Cantor Ginsburg plays seven characters. She has performed the play on stages in Israel, England, and all over the United States.

“What is different about this show than other shows dealing with the Holocaust is that this is presented from the perspective of the third generation, and what we who inherit that legacy do with it,” she said. “It’s really me in the driver’s seat looking in the rearview mirror.”

An active member of the Jewish Partisans Educational Foundation, Cantor Ginsburg does a lot of Holocaust education in schools. She tells students that her grandmother was only 16 when she escaped from a line of Jews being marched to the trains bound for Majdanek and became a resistance fighter living in the woods.

“When I speak to teenagers, I want to imprint on them that they are powerful and their voice matters, that one person can make a huge difference, and not to turn a blind eye to antisemitism or any form of discrimination,” she said.

The play, however, is laced with humor as Cantor Ginsburg interweaves Bubby’s story with songs and stories depicting her own metamorphosis from selling Ginsu knives to becoming an actor and cantor, in some way trying to live up to the impossibly high bar set by Bubby and Zayde’s example.

“Jewish humor is a well-known entity, but the degree to which the humor is so intermingled with loss and sorrow may be surprising,” she said. “You’re laughing and crying in one moment.”

She credits director Schele Williams and musical director Rick Bertone, both well-known Broadway names, for giving the production professional polish.

This summer, after 18 years at East End Temple, Cantor Ginsburg will leave to focus on the show full time and to work on a television adaptation.

Although her Zayde died in 2004, her Bubby saw the play many times before her death last year, at 96.

Here’s a letter that Bubby wrote to her musical granddaughter after seeing the production.

“To my Dearest Shira,

“I am so proud of all of your accomplishments and I know that Zayde is watching you today and every day. I can feel him kvelling from all the naches you bring us!

“Words cannot express how humbled I am that you feel my life has had such an impact on yours. Thank you for seeing to it that our stories be told and our family remembered.

“I was hopeful after the Holocaust that my legacy would be my family and the good they would contribute to the world.

“You, my darling Shira, have fulfilled those hopes of mine!”

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'Bubby's Kitchen': A one-woman musical about family resilience shows at UCLA

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Shira Ginsburg sets a table on the stage of her one-woman musical, "Bubby's Kitchen." The production will take place in Macgowan Hall 1340 on Saturday. (Courtesy of Shira Ginsburg)



By **Victoria Munck**

Oct. 27, 2023 7:58 p.m.

With a recipe 14 years in the making, "Bubby's Kitchen" is bringing a tale of love and legacy to UCLA.

"Bubby's Kitchen"

Oct. 28

Macgowan Hall 1340

Presented by the Lowell Milken Center for Music of American Jewish Experience at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, cantor Shira Ginsburg's one-woman musical will be staged in Macgowan Hall 1340 on Saturday. The production depicts young Ginsburg's struggle to live up to her grandparents, who survived the Holocaust by fleeing from Nazis in the Belarus forests alongside Partisan resistance fighters. Ginsburg said the show amalgamates various elements including flashbacks, comedy and self-reflection to share a story that centers courage and personal growth.

"It's the story of what it means to be a grandchild of Holocaust survivors who were also such incredible heroes in so many ways, and how I took on that legacy," Ginsburg said.

“(It’s about) how you propel it forward in positive ways and really become your best self and who you are meant to be, which is, in itself, a journey and a struggle.”

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Ginsburg said she always knew she wanted to share her family’s history in some way, especially because the Partisans are less frequently acknowledged in discussions of World War II. However, it wasn’t until 2009 when she was tasked with creating a performance piece for her master’s thesis that she found an opportunity to bring their story to fruition, Ginsburg said. Because she was pursuing cantorial arts and not theater, she said she didn’t consider expanding the musical until viewers of her thesis production requested a tour.

The support Ginsburg received from early audiences inspired her to take charge of the show’s development, and she said its growth has felt very organic since then. She and her team have continuously tweaked the musical over the years, she said, as they are dedicated to consistently heightening the production. Steven West, who joined “Bubby’s Kitchen” as the production manager in 2014, said it has been touching to see the musical’s prosperity align with Ginsburg’s personal success.

“I have loved watching the show grow as Shira grows in her comfortability with this,” West said. “Inevitably, it has grown because she has grown. ... Every time a life event happens for Shira, this show is formed.”

While Ginsburg’s thesis project mandated the incorporation of traditional cantorial music, she said she teamed up with friend and composer Jonathan Comisar to update subsequent performances with original songs. Rick Bertone, the show’s music director, said the songs serve as an effective way to address the production’s occasionally dark subject matter. However, they also welcome viewers into a cheerful celebration of life that could not be as easily accomplished without music, he added.

To maintain the authenticity of her family’s history, Ginsburg said she included music in Hebrew and Yiddish, her grandparents’ native language. One song, which she performs as the character of her bubby, illustrates a flashback about her experience with the Partisans at 16 years old, she said. Because the piece is particularly impassioned, Ginsburg said Yiddish was the only language that seemed to properly capture the gravity of the moment.

Still, Ginsburg said the musical is performed primarily in English. The show's penultimate song – entitled "Who Am I?" – allows Ginsburg to express her initial doubt in her ability to tell her grandparents' story, she said. However, she said by the end of the number, she gathers her courage and recognizes the significance of her work.

"It is incumbent upon all of us to step into these shoes and ... take responsibility for our legacies," Ginsburg said. "It's terrifying, and you get over it, and you recognize the importance is more important than being scared."

Despite "Bubby's Kitchen" being a one-woman show, Ginsburg said it is the product of extensive efforts from a sizable, gifted group. It has been heartening to know that her teammates – even those with different backgrounds – feel equally passionate about the musical and its message, she said. Bertone, who has been working on the show for about 11 years, said he truly feels like the crew is a family.

"I don't know if you can put a show together without a sense of community, and this team has been really special and easygoing – just a love fest at every juncture," Bertone said. "When I'm booked with another project, and I can't make a performance of 'Bubby's Kitchen,' I'm very sad because I love being with these people so much."

Moreover, Ginsburg said another rewarding aspect of her time with the musical has been sharing it with different communities across the country. She loves speaking with audience members after performances and hearing about how they resonated with the piece, she added. One attendee was inspired to reconcile with their estranged brother after the show – an anecdote that Ginsburg said still stands out to her today.

Reflecting on the production's journey to UCLA, Ginsburg said she feels honored and privileged to bring her story to the campus. "Bubby's Kitchen" has always been a relevant journey, and its message of family connection is important to share today, West added. Ultimately, Ginsburg said she hopes viewers of Saturday's performance will be empowered to generate change with their voices, just as she and her family have.

"I really want people to leave with a sense of awe that one woman, at 16 years old, could have survived what she survived and created so much good in the world afterwards," Ginsburg said. "That's the power of one person. We have got to use our voices for good."

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Cantor Shira Ginsburg '09 created *Bubby's Kitchen*, the story of one young woman's journey to live up to her grandparents' incredible legacy, for her cantorial ordination recital in 2009. Since then, the show has evolved and has been performed in more than 50 communities around the country. *Bubby's Kitchen* is inspired by the heroic actions of resistance Cantor Ginsburg's grandparents, Yudis and Motke Ginsburg, took against the Nazis as Partisans as they survived years in the forests of Belarus on bravery, camaraderie, and the sheer will to live. Cantor Ginsburg weaves together a story of loss, survival, food, and family into this musical that explores the balance between the new and the old, responsibility and desire, and life and love.

Cantor Ginsburg has a theatrical background from Syracuse University and was a professional actress before attending HUC-JIR. In *Bubby's Kitchen*, she beautifully bridges her formal training to create a moving and educational performance.

She explains, "It was a story that I was always going to tell, I just didn't know how or when. Creating *Bubby's Kitchen* was an ownership of my past, present, and future, an ultimate synthesis that I didn't fully understand until the moment I performed it for the first time. I was overwhelmed by the positive response from so many people who said it had profound meaning and asked where I was performing it next. It took off from there."

The show is unique in that it presents the story from the point of view of the third generation, rather than from the perspective of a Holocaust survivor or child of a survivor. Cantor Ginsburg believes it is her responsibility, and the responsibility of other descendants, to tell their stories.

Cantor Ginsburg feels a tremendous responsibility to tell her grandparents' stories and to do good in the world. She says, "When you're growing up, it's very tempting to yield to the weight of that legacy. I believe we must first recognize that we each have our own spark and gift, a unique path and mission for which we are set on this earth. My grandparents survived to provide their family with a better life, never wanting the

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have that first, second, and third-hand knowledge, offering perspectives that people and communities may never have had the opportunity to hear. For every survivor and their families, Yom Hashoah is 365 days a year. After our communal day of commemoration and mourning, we Jewish professionals, lay leaders, and community members must continue to honor, remember and educate, on each of the other 364 days.

“The Jewish practices of burial, grieving, and mourning that carry us through the lifecycle of death, are as much for the mourners as for the deceased,” she continues. “While we say Kaddish to ensure that the soul can ascend to a place of rest under the wings of God, we are also saying Kaddish to be held up by our community in our time of deepest grief. There is immense power and deep comfort in communal mourning. So too must we communally say Kaddish for those who have no one else to say Kaddish for them.”

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After completing her studies at HUC, Cantor Ginsburg became involved with Facing History and Ourselves and was in the first cohort of participants being trained to teach in classrooms through the lens of personal storytelling. Upon completion of the training, Cantor Ginsburg taught and continues to teach whenever she can across New York City and the Tri-state area, balancing it with her work at her congregation.

She describes this teaching as incredibly rewarding work. “Many of my students are teenagers. When I make the distinction that my Bubby was exactly their age when she lived through the Holocaust, their eyes quite literally light up. Suddenly they see Bubby’s story through their own life experiences. Bubby always encouraged me to share her personal message with students, never to underestimate what one person can do.”

She adds, “Holocaust education is critical for so many reasons, but what is offered in schools is widely variable, some classes touching on the Holocaust for an inadequate and insufficient mere one to three days. When children take on the prejudices of their families, they have no reason to doubt what they have been taught until they are exposed to education and different reasoning. Having grown up in my grandparents’ home living their stories and reverberations of their trauma, I know that there is no better way to dispel such lies and ignorance than with firsthand knowledge. If I can’t be that first-hand knowledge, at least I can be second-hand and personalize the lessons of the Holocaust in an impactful and efficacious way.”

After 18 years as the Senior Cantor at East End Temple in Manhattan, Cantor Ginsburg is leaving this position to focus on *Bubby’s Kitchen*. She will begin touring again and is currently in the development of a television series based on *Bubby’s Kitchen*. Cantor Ginsburg is now in the process of engaging investors.

For more information about *Bubby’s Kitchen* or to help propel this story forward, visit bubbyskitchen.com.

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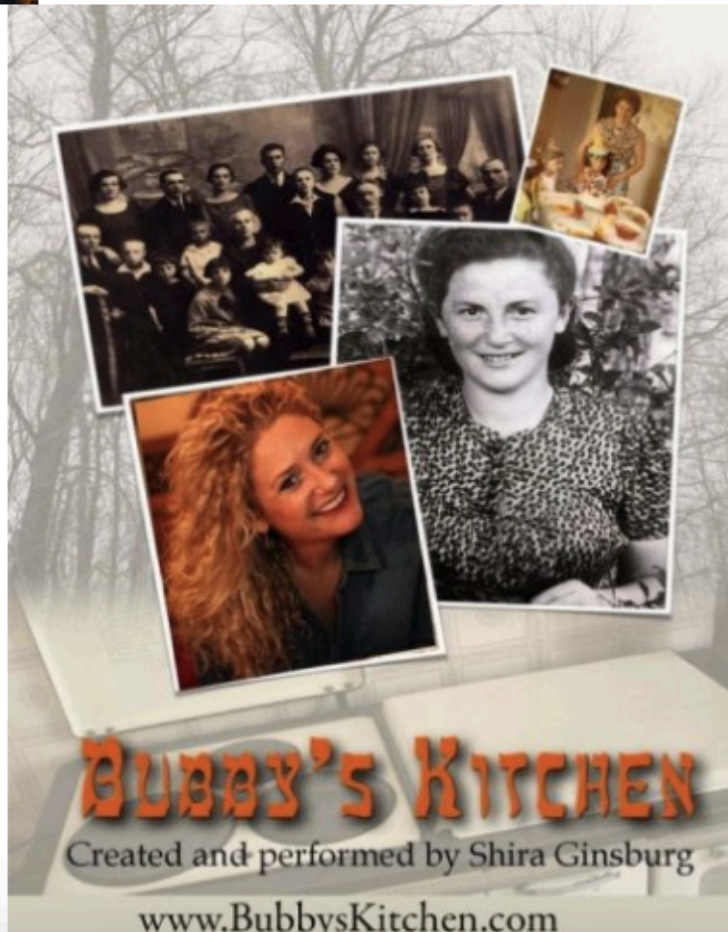
News

Theatre Review: 'Bubby's Kitchen' at JCC Manhattan

Posted By: Jacquelyn Claire on: May 01, 2016

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Bubby's Kitchen is an autobiographical one-woman musical main course by Shira Ginsburg. Shira invites us into her home where she's cooking a Shabbat feast and we are welcome at the table. Over the next 90 minutes she will share stories of her family and how they have navigated the world as the descendants of two Holocaust survivors. Her Bubby and Zayde managed to escape the clutches of the Nazi's and joined the Partisan resistance fighters finally making their way to the U.S. four years after the war ended. This hearty dish pays homage to their indomitable spirits and the love they fed their offspring through the power of good food and soulful wisdom.

“ . . . a mouth watering rugelach of familiarity and nostalgia.

We are introduced to seven different family members through the piece and Shira excavates their stories with tenderness and deep reverence. Shira sings them into being. Each song really epitomizing the essence of each individual in her family tree. The style of the song and the vocal quality used are totally different for each person. We meet the grandparents, the ambitious/high flying aunt, the super efficient/to-do list/maternal aunt, her mischievous actress aunt and her history teacher/farm manager/formidable father. As she introduces us to her lifelines she also weaves in her own narrative of how her life evolved through the guidance of this support system.

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Ginsberg studied to become an actor and musical theatre performer and was a struggling artist in New York. Her absolutely brilliant song, *"Broadway is just around the corner,"* that charts her journey as a jobbing actress, was hilarious and sensationally executed. It is quite obvious why she chose a career in the arts. However, through a chance encounter, she started on a path towards becoming a Cantor, earning her Masters, Cantorial degrees, and ordination from the Hebrew Union College. At the end of the piece we hear an exquisite religious song that shows her mammoth skill in this regard.

I enjoyed sitting at her table, listening to her memories and observations. Shira has such an ease on stage, making you feel immediately comfortable in her presence. Her powerful charisma explodes through her singing and she manages to embody a wide range of complex emotions in her music. I think she needs to make a show album. I wanted to take one home with me so I could taste the aromatic flavors all over again, on repeat, in my own kitchen.

The show was delicately directed by Schele Williams who created a mouth watering rugelach of familiarity and nostalgia. The musical direction by Rick Bertone was excellent and he managed to be unobtrusive but sensitively present, holding the space for Shira to shine. The original, heart wrenching, memorable music was composed by Jonathan Comisar. The captivating lyrics were written by Shira and Jonathan.

As I sat in the auditorium, a few days after Yom Kippur and a few days before international Holocaust Remembrance day, I felt the heady atmosphere of community, ritual, reverence and respect. However, in these moments, no matter what our faith, we can all connect through the shared and recognizable experience of a home cooked meal with our loved ones around a well worn kitchen table sharing secrets, sadness, and survivor stories to make us stronger.

Running time: 90 minutes with no intermission

Bubby's Kitchen played April 28 -30, 2016 at Manhattan JCC, 334 Amsterdam Ave. For more information on touring dates please click [here](#).



Shira Ginsburg's **BUBBY'S KITCHEN** Coming to NYC

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by BWW News Desk



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Mixing three cups of wisdom for every two cups of matzo meal, singer/songwriter/cantor Shira Ginsburg proudly presents her one-woman musical *Bubby's Kitchen*. This touching and tuneful production is directed by [Schele Williams](#), with musical direction by Rick Bertone featuring music by Jonathan Comisar and lyrics by Shira Ginsburg and Jonathan Comisar. *Bubby's Kitchen* will play a three performance only on April 28 - 30, at 7:30pm at the Manhattan JCC (334 Amsterdam Ave). Tickets are \$22 and can be purchased by visiting bubbyskitchen.com.

Bubby's Kitchen is the true story of one young woman's struggle to live up to her grandparents' incredible legacy. The New York struggle of one

cantor/aspiring Broadway star/granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor cuts straight to both the

heart and the funny bone like a Ginsu knife - Shira Ginsburg shares songs and stories from her journey in this one-woman show, depicting her ties to her family's past, her financially unstable present (including odd jobs like selling Ginsu knives) and her aspirations for a musical future.

This one-woman production holds a poignant and heartfelt mirror up to anyone who has ever sat around the kitchen table and been filled with the richness of relatives and recipes. Having grown up in a family of Partisan resistance fighters and Holocaust survivors, Shira Ginsburg shares these bittersweet memories that illustrate the balance between new and old, responsibility and desire, and life and love. These moving moments are woven together on a sparse stage, with only a box full of familiar kitchen items, through the magic of monologue, Yiddish humor and musical theatre songs. Whether struggling to find real happiness in life or discovering the key to the "svelt" Ginsburg figure, the answers overflow like mandel bread and rugelach in Bubby's Kitchen.

Shira Ginsburg is an ordained Cantor celebrating her 10th year of service at East End Temple in Manhattan. As a Messinger Scholar, Shira earned her Masters, Cantorial degrees and ordination from Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion. Shira is the recipient of the Women of Reform Judaism Award, Cantorial Alumni Association Prize, and Sylvia Davidson Memorial Award for extraordinary diligence in mastering Chazanut. Prior to her Cantorial studies, Shira received her BFA from [Syracuse University's](#) Drama and Musical Theatre program and spent a number of years in New York working as a professional actress, singer, and songwriter. Over the last five years she has toured the country extensively and performed in over 25 communities with her one-woman musical, Bubby's Kitchen. In addition to performing numerous other works on stages in Israel, England and all over the United States, Shira has been the chosen soloist for The Jewish Partisans Educational Foundation at numerous benefits and featured in their documentary 'Reunion.' She is featured on the albums of Gerard Edery and Noah Aaronson and was recently a featured performer alongside Alan Richman and Joan Nathan in 'Beyond Bubbie: 6 Word Memoirs.' She also mentors and coaches Cantorial students at Hebrew Union College.

[Schele Williams](#) (Director) is the current Associate Director for the Broadway production of Motown the Musical. She was also the Associate Choreographer and Production Dance Supervisor for the Broadway, Touring and International productions of Rent. Other Directing credits include My Heart Is The Drum ([Village Theatre](#), WA), Lift (NAMT), [Ben Vereen](#) (The Kennedy Center, Washington, D.C).

Rick Bertone (Musical Director) is currently the Music Director of Avenue Q at New World Stages in NYC. Other Broadway/First National credits include Gotta Dance (Pre-B'way), If/Then, Porgy and Bess, Next To Normal, Spamalot, Avenue Q, Chicago, Mamma Mia, and Disney's On The Record.

In 'Bubby's Kitchen' with Shira Ginsburg

By Jeff
Myhre



Shira Ginsburg is an ordained Cantor who just celebrated her 10th anniversary of service at East End Temple in Manhattan. A graduate of Syracuse University's Drama and Musical Theatre program, Shira spent a number of years in New York working as a professional actress, singer, and songwriter before being invested as Cantor from Hebrew Union College. Shira has performed on stages in Israel, England and all over the United States, and has been thrilled to most recently bring her show *Bubby's Kitchen* to communities across the nation.

Despite the demands on her time as she prepares the show for a run in New York City, she talked with NYTheatreGuide.com about the production and her family, which is the core of the show.

NYTG: When did you decide to turn your grandmother's story into a performance piece? Did anything special happen that got you to put pen to paper, or was this an idea that just happened?

SG: I initially wrote *Bubby's Kitchen* in partial fulfillment of my Masters thesis and ordination for Cantorial School at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. My grandparent's stories of survival have been perpetually churning inside of me as far back as I can remember, but only when challenged with this thesis did I finally find the courage of voice to take ownership of their legacy in this way. Once I started writing it, the stories came pouring out of me, and the script basically wrote itself.

NYTG: In the opening number, there is a terrifying line "hide and seek was never just a game," but you also sing of

words unspoken. At what point in your life did you learn, for want of a better term, “the whole story?” How did it affect you?

SG: Stories were always told in fragmented ways in my grandparent’s home, and because the stories were often so painful for my Bubby and Zayde to tell, when they spoke, we just listened and didn’t ask very many questions if any at all. We never wanted to cause them pain by bringing the subject up, so we would wait for them to initiate. Just as in any conversation, there are stops and starts, interruptions and tangents. Once you had heard a particular story told a dozen or more times in its various iterations, you could piece together the whole story like a puzzle. I had a very good grasp of the whole picture by high school, and in college, I began to really question what this legacy meant for me. Life as a child or grandchild of Holocaust survivors is ultimately a tremendous balance between obligation and desire; a constant checking of one’s personal wants against the needs and expectations of the family. To be honest, I am still learning stories and at 91, my Bubby is still revealing details and incredible stories to us that we’ve never heard before.

NYTG: How supportive was your grandmother in your pursuit of a BFA? The rest of the family? I ask because that generation had, by necessity, a pragmatic streak and the arts were often considered frivolous.

SG: My grandparents have always been incredibly supportive of me at every phase of my life and career path. My Bubby especially is a very liberal thinker, a woman always ahead of her time. She has guided me since I can remember to choose what I love, but to choose that love wisely. She instinctively understands the need to nurture one’s passions, and always encouraged me to go out in the world and try things, which never by the way, obviated her from worrying about me. She was proud of me when I was an actress, a waitress, a knife saleswoman, and now as a Cantor. As long as I work hard, work honestly, and work morally, she is always proud.

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NYTG: Where did you train to become cantor? What did the family think of that?

SG: I studied and trained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Reform movement’s seminary for Rabbis and Cantors. The day I was accepted into Cantorial school was the third proudest my family has ever been of me, topped only by the day I was ordained Cantor, and the first time I performed *Bubby’s Kitchen*.

NYTG: To survive as partisans, your grandparents had to have a very tough aspect to their characters. How much of that did you see?

SG: My Bubby and Zayde are my heroes and always have been. Neither of them ever feared anything, which as a child always made me feel incredibly safe and well taken care of. From the youngest age, I can remember knowing that there was nothing they couldn’t handle or take care of, and there was no problem too big for them to be able to fix, solve or help me with. Their strength and resilience was a constant in my life. It is important to tell you that as heroic and brave as they were, they never ever boasted of their accomplishments, never saw themselves as heroes, and certainly never viewed themselves as better than anyone in any way.

NYTG: Was there a reason they settled in America instead of Israel?

SG: They had family that sponsored them here in America, and after four years in Ferenvald, a displaced persons camp in Germany, their papers finally came through and they were able to come here.

NYTG: How much has the show evolved since you first performed it?

SG: The show has evolved in so many ways since the first performance seven years ago. It now features all original music composed primarily by Jonathan Comisar with whom I co-wrote the lyrics. More and more stories have been added over the years grounding the show in a profoundly new way, and, I have been blessed to put together and work with one of the most wonderful Artistic teams I could ever dream of.

NYTG: What sorts of stories did you leave out of the show?

SG: Ha – You'll have to see the sequel . . . *Bubby's Living Room*.

NYTG: Has Bubby seen the show? What did she think of it?

SG: Thankfully, Bubby is very much still with us, but Zayde passed away 11 years ago, I miss him every day. But Bubby is always busy dancing at simchas, making vegetable soup special just for me, and of course, doling out expert advice over rugalach and tea at her kitchen table. She has seen the show many times and is incredibly proud not only of the work that I have done both artistically and on the production end, but also that I have chosen to take on our family legacy, and her story in particular in this way. It is always very emotional for her when she watches the show, especially the scenes in which I become her on stage in the most devastating and difficult moments of her life. She relishes in the love that pours out towards her from so many people, and kvells in disbelief when I tell her that she is now an inspiration to so many people whom she has never met her.

NYTG: Have you any other stage projects in the works?

SG: I am currently working on a screenplay adaptation of *Bubby's Kitchen* and also have one other project in the works.

NYTG: Cantor Ginburg, this has been a genuine pleasure. You've been more than generous with your time and insights, and the readers of New York Theatre Guide thank you.

You can see Shira Ginsburg perform *Bubby's Kitchen*, April 28-30, 2016, at Jewish Community Center, 334 Amsterdam Ave, New York, NY 10023. For more information and tickets, click [here](#).



- Wiley Maple wins Nor Am Downhill in Aspen. | Main | Bubby is Coming -

Jews Gone Wild. Total Mishegas in Aspen, 2016

It was total mishegas in Aspen and a BIG night for the Aspen Jewish Congregation.

Cantor Shira Ginsburg performed her one-woman show **BUBBY'S KITCHEN** at the Aspen District Theatre.

[Bubby's Kitchen](#) (click 4 info) explores Ginsburg's relationship with her Bubby (grandmother) who fought the Nazi's in WW II and survive the holocaust. It's a happy story of love, terror, survival, family and food set to music and delivered straight from her Bubby's Kitchen.



Shira Ginsburg performed Bubby's Kitchen in Aspen.

Members of the [Aspen Jewish Congregation](#)

(AJC) sat mezmorized (no shpilkes) as Ms. Ginsburg spun the tale of her family during the time of the Nazi occupation and their eventual triumph. Bubby was the only member of her immediate family to survive the terror, and she fought for freedom as a 16 year old girl. She eventually made it to America to become a family matriarch, a grand mother of 10 and an incredible cook. It was as if you could smell the matzo ball soup simmering on-stage as Ms. Ginsburg brought her Bubby to life. Actually Bubby is still alive and cooking at 91 in Boca Raton, Florida, the land of our people...and she loves the show.

Almost everyone in the jammed packed audience could relate to Bubby's stories of perseverance, dedication to life and her deep love for her family. True in many families...Bubby was always there with a sweet hug, a heavy dose of encouragement and a cinnamon rugelach to ease the pain. Ms. Ginsburg, a trained actress and professional Cantor portrayed her Bubby, her Zayde (grampa), her parents her aunts and cousins (even the skinny one) on the stage. It was a festival of family, food and music.

Click 4 pix: [JEWS GONE WILD in ASPEN](#)



Jewish Soul Food from Katz's Deli in NYC.

While the show was fantastic, the after-party was unbelievable. It was a HUGE nosh. Rabbi David Segal and AJC Executive Director Jason Schnissel brought in an amazing array of taste treats from **KATZ's 2nd Avenue Deli in NYC**. It was the best meal of the year (in my opinion). Corned Beef, pastrami, brisket, matzoh ball soup, 3 types of knishes and the best-ever kosher hot dogs. All authentic and flown in from New York. I've never seen a more beautiful buffet line.

It was like manna from heaven. With a line-up of Jewish soul food set out deliciously at the brand new Cooking School of Aspen, I started kvelling. Some people thought I was meshuganah when I went back for third's and fourth's and then fifth's. According to Ms. Ginsburg's Bubby...who faced true hunger in Eastern Europe...an empty plate was a sin. The AJC and I made Bubby proud...everybody ate like chazers. There was plenty to go around...not a kvetch was heard...the leftovers were bubkes.

It was a beautiful night of community for AJC...filled with history, mishpochah, friendship, laughter, a few tears and the best corned beef this side of 2nd Avenue. I am looking forward to Pesach.

Mazel Tov AJC.

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A Holocaust Tale, Set to Music



How a heroic story made its way to the musical stage
by heather stein

Written by and starring Shira Ginsburg - whose day job is as a Cantor at a Manhattan synagogue -- "Bubby's Kitchen" is a one-woman musical about Ginsburg's grandparents.

The show chronicles their work as resistance fighters against the Nazis as they survived for years in the forests of Belarus during World War II.

More than 30,000 Jews emerged from the forests at the end of the war, and the show details their fight against the Nazis, their liberation, and their eventual move to America.

Ginsburg talks about the show -- scheduled for the Manhattan JCC in April -- and what it means, along with musical director Rick Bertone and lyricist Jonathan Comisar.

What is Bubby's Kitchen about?

Shira Ginsburg: Bubby's Kitchen is about the most special place on earth to me -- my grandparents' home and kitchen, a little brick house on a little sweet street. On the outside, it was nothing particularly unique, but on the inside was the center of my world, and the Jewish world of Troy, N.Y. It's about the journey of learning how to process all of the people, stories and experiences swirling around you when you're a child and how those things synthesize in you as you figure out how to become your true self. It's at once poignant, lighthearted, heartbreaking and hilarious.

Rick Bertone: Bubby's Kitchen is a glimpse into the family of holocaust survivors and how that life experience shaped future generations of the Ginsburg family. To me, it is a story of hope, love, and faith set against one of mankind's darkest moments.

Jonathan Comisar: It's about Shira Ginsburg's special relationship with the women in her family, emphasizing the influence her remarkable bubby Yudis Ginsburg has had on Shira's life. As Shira tells us in one of her monologues, all the lessons of life and love and Jewishness, she learned in her grandmother's kitchen.

How did the show take shape?

Ginsburg: As soon as I decided I would tell this story, it basically wrote itself. Choosing just a few stories to highlight out of the hundreds that I had swirling in my mind was the challenge. Directly after the first performance, audience members came up to me telling me how much it resonated for them, and asked if I would come perform in their communities. In that moment, Bubby's Kitchen took on a life of its own and has traveled to over 25 communities, entirely on word of mouth.

Bertone: I came on board in 2013 with the previous director, a colleague of mine from "Spamalot" and a classmate of Shira's from undergrad.

Comisar: Shira and I met through the Cantor world. I too am an ordained Cantor. Shira had an inkling that my musical backgrounds and composition style would be good fits for the show she was developing.

When Shira approached me and asked if I would consider writing original music for this, I gave her an open-ended response: 'Let's sit together in a room with a piano and see if we can come up with something together. Let's see if the chemistry is there.' And after we wrote our first song together, we both were proud of our collaboration and realized we were a match.

What message in the show is critical for a New York audience to hear now?

Ginsburg: We are so polarized as a nation politically, I think it is crucial that we take time to appreciate that the diversity of our neighbors and our ability to live together in such close proximity of each other in such a peaceful way is precisely what makes us so great. New York City is exemplary in so many ways. I hope we can serve as a model to our nation of tolerance and unity as we stand at this crucial political precipice.

Comisar: New York is a Jewish city, over 10% of the city is Jewish ... And whether you are Jewish or not, Jewish ethnicity, humor, and food are part of the lifeblood of this city. The genre of the musical is a New York phenomenon. New Yorkers of all races and ethnicity can step into the world of Bubby's Kitchen and feel right at home.

What was most challenging about working on Bubby's?

Bertone: Being raised Catholic, grasping some of the musical styles definitely came as a challenge in the beginning. Now, the challenge lies in having the strength to access these dark moments in history for each performance.

Comisar: The most challenging thing for me has been striking the right tone in the creating of the music and lyric-writing.

A musical that involves the Holocaust is a huge challenge. How does one write music that touches the darkness without wallowing in it? How to be poignant without crossing over to maudlin? It is a balancing act. And knowing that the show has moments of darkness, how do we find the right places to bring in comedy and levity.

What part of your own background fed into this story?

Ginsburg: I grew up on my grandparent's dairy farm in Troy, N.Y., and spent every day of my life in their home. It was an incredible gift. As a grandchild of Holocaust survivors, my cousins and I were brought up as if we were siblings. We are an incredibly tight-knit, close, and wildly colorful family that has been brought up to value the bonds and connections to family, friends and community as the most valuable thing in life. Professionally, I have my BFA in drama from Syracuse University and was a professional actress, singer and songwriter here in New York before going back to Hebrew Union College for my Master's Degree and Cantorial Ordination. I just celebrated my tenth year as Cantor at East End Temple in Gramercy, and I have been traveling Bubby's Kitchen around the country for the last five years. Marrying my two greatest passions in life and being able to work as both Cantor and actor carrying forth the same messages and missions from two different platforms has been more rewarding than I could have ever imagined.

Bertone: I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago and studied music at NYU. I am a professional musician working in the theater industry in NYC and have played keyboards and/or conducted for numerous shows either here in town or on tour.

Comisar: I am not the grandchild of a Holocaust survivor, but the stories of the Shoah were hauntingly formative to me in my growing up years. I have distant relatives who were murdered by the Nazis, so the stories of the partisans are not immediately familiar to me personally. But my consciousness of the Holocaust and the imperative of memory and storytelling are at the very core of my Jewish self.

Jewish Community Voice

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'Bubby's Kitchen' inspires families of survivors to dish out their stories

By JAYNE JACOVA FELD Voice staff

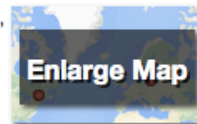


At the JCRC's Goodwin Holocaust Museum & Education Center (GHMEC) performance of "Bubby's Kitchen" were (from left), GHMEC Steering Committee Co-chair Renee Siegel; Event Co-chair Eva Schlanger; Cantor Shira Ginsburg; Event Co-chair Betty Klear; and Carol Orwitz, GHMEC Steering Committee co-chair.

Shira Ginsburg learned far more than how to cook a brisket and bake mandel bread during the countless hours she spent in her Bubby's kitchen.

"Most everything I learned in life, I learned in this kitchen," Ginsburg stated. It was the opening line of her one-woman performance aptly named "Bubby's Kitchen." One could almost smell the sizzling garlic and onions.

Through a combination of monologue, Yiddish, and song, Ginsburg, 37, a Manhattan-based cantor, kept spellbound a large audience at the Katz JCC on May 19 with her yarn of growing up in a family strongly influenced by her bubby, a Holocaust survivor. The show was presented as a fundraiser to support the Jewish Community Relations Council's Goodwin Holocaust Museum & Education Center (GHMEC.)



A native of Poland, Judith (Bubby) was the sole member of her family to survive. At age 16, she lived in the forest and fought alongside members of the Jewish resistance. In 1949, after four years in a Displaced Persons camp, Ginsburg's grandparents immigrated to Troy, NY, where they operated a dairy farm.

Having experienced hunger and starvation during those dark years, Bubby always had rugelach or mandel bread baking in the oven and soup cooking on the stove. Just as memorable were the stories and wisdom imparted by Bubby, other family members around the table. Like many of the second- and third-generation Holocaust survivors, Ginsburg said she always knew she had a story to tell, but never was sure how to do it. The show evolved from her cantorial thesis, which was an autobiographical performance piece.

"It was a leap of faith," explained Ginsburg, 37, now a fulltime cantor at East End Temple.

"The truth is once I did write it and started performing, my relationship to my family's story no longer overwhelmed me."

Helen Kirschbaum, GHMEC director, said Ginsburg's tale was an inspiration to the many second- and third-generation survivors who also are grappling with their family histories.

"Clearly she has a talent many people don't have," noted Kirschbaum. We're working with many grandchildren and children to find ways they're comfortable with sharing and preserving their family legacies so future generations will understand what happened during the Holocaust."



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February 6, 2013, 10:27am

Bubby's Cooking Takes to the Stage

By **Lucy Cohen Blatter**

THINKSTOCK

When you picture the quintessential Jewish “Bubby,” someone like Shira Ginsburg’s grandmother, Judith, probably springs to mind.

Mrs. Ginsburg, the subject of her granddaughter’s one-woman show “[Bubby’s Kitchen](#),” developed a reputation in her Troy, New York, community for her endless, delicious cooking (she’s since moved to Florida, where she still cooks and teaches her grandchildren her culinary ways). “Growing up there was always rugelach or mandelbread in the oven and soup on the stove. There were also two freezers down in the basement that were full of food,” Ginsburg says of her grandmother’s house, which was located five minutes from her childhood home.

While her ceaseless cooking might seem typical in a Jewish grandmother, the elder Mrs. Ginsburg’s early life was anything but typical. She lost her entire family in the Holocaust and was a resistance fighter in Eastern Europe — a story that takes center stage in the show.

Ginsburg sets her performance around the table of her grandmother’s home — the stage is set with a lone table and six chairs. She tells her family’s story through monologue, Yiddish, liturgical and musical theatre songs, and plays several different family members. “A lot of life lessons were learned around table at my grandparents’ house. It was the place people came to seek guidance, to laugh and to cry,” Ginsburg says, so it

was a logical place from which to set the show.

In the show and during our interview, Ginsburg draws a direct connection between her grandmother's past — including her experience with starvation — and her focus on food later in life. “The deprivation led to the desire to always have an abundance of food. For her, food was really life and the ability to provide food for anyone who walked in the door was a gift,” she says of her grandmother.

“Bubby’s Kitchen,” which Ginsburg has performed in Philadelphia, New Jersey, New York and Miami and will perform in Seattle and Miami again this year, was originally created as part of her cantorial thesis. (She is the cantor at East End Temple, a Reform synagogue on Manhattan’s Lower East Side.)

She soon realized, though, that her’s was an important story to tell to larger audiences. “It’s about the cross-generational conversation for me,” she says. “My grandmother is someone who’s offered me incredible guidance. She’s 88 and I’m 35, but she has a lot to teach me.” Audience members often approach her after the show to tell their own bubby stories. It’s something that crosses cultures, she says. “A friend of mine has a dad who’s a pastor and he said the play reminded him of his grandmother in Italy.”

Growing up, Ginsburg would eat dinner at her grandparents’ house three of four nights a week, often on Friday nights (the family owned a dairy farm and ran it together). Asked which of her grandmother’s dishes are her favorite, Ginsburg pointed to the ubiquitous mandel bread (“No evening was complete without a cup of tea and a piece of mandel bread”), her soups (used to cure sickness) and challah she makes on special occasions.

While her grandmother taught her some tricks of the trade, Ginsburg admits that as a single woman in New York City, she rarely cooks. Yet, she’s confident that if and when she has a need to cook, she’ll be able to do it, thanks to Bubby.

But there is one dish from Ginsburg’s childhood she’s unlikely to attempt replicating: P’tcha, a traditional Ashkenazi dish comprising of jellied calves feet, garlic and sliced eggs, served with vinegar. “My grandfather loved it but none of the kids could stomach it,” she says. “We always joke that to marry into the family, one of the things you have to do — besides sit through a holiday meal with everyone — is eat P’tcha.

Spend an afternoon in 'Bubby's Kitchen'

Troy grandmother's story is told through humor and song

By [Kristen V. Brown](#) Published 8:48 pm, Thursday, April 25, 2013



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Conjure an image of the archetypal Jewish "Bubby" and she likely resembles [Shira Ginsburg](#)'s grandmother, who, from her kitchen table in Troy, was known for dishing out heaps of Jewish comfort food, alongside hearty helpings of sage advice and humor.

"Everything significant seemed to unfold in that kitchen around the table," Ginsburg recalled.

Her grandmother, her history and her kitchen are all the subject of Ginsburg's one-woman show, "Bubby's Kitchen," which will hit the stage at Proctors this Sunday.

Through a combination of monologue, Yiddish, liturgical and musical theater songs, Ginsburg, 35, recounts growing up in and around her Bubby's kitchen, in a family of Holocaust survivors and one-time resistance fighters from Eastern Europe.

Her grandmother, Judith, a native of present-day Belarus, survived World War II by living and fighting in the forest. She lost her entire family. In 1949, after four years in a displaced persons camp, Ginsburg's grandparents immigrated to Troy.

"As a child you just soak it in," said Ginsburg. "You don't realize how important those formative years are and how much they impact who you are and how you grow up."

More Information

"Bubby's Kitchen"

When: 1 p.m. Sunday

Where: Proctors, 432 State St.,
Schenectady

Tickets: Free; to reserve a seat email
Bonnie Cramer at cramerb@union.edu

For Ginsburg, writing "Bubby's Kitchen" was as much about telling the hard-fought story of her grandparents as it was about processing that family history and exploring how it helped shape the woman she eventually became.

After growing up on a dairy farm in Brunswick, Ginsburg studied drama and musical theater at [Syracuse University](#) before eventually becoming an invested cantor at East End Temple in Manhattan.

Growing up, her grandmother's kitchen table was often a place she received wisdom, as well as frequent meals – favorites included her grandmother's soups and rugelach. The kitchen is the setting of her play,

just as, she said, it was the setting for many of the climactic moments in her life.

The show originally began as part of her cantorial thesis, but since then "has taken on a life of its own," said Ginsburg, spawning performances throughout the Northeast, as well as Miami and Seattle. Union College Hillel was able to bring the show to Proctors – and provide free admission – with the help of a Holocaust Remembrance Grant it received.

"We all have to find these ways to keep our stories alive," said Ginsburg. "This is my modality."

As for Bubby, now 88, her kitchen has since moved to Florida, though it still dispenses the same familiar mix of cookery and wisdom.


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MY URBAN KVETCH

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All the World's a Kitchen: Cantor Shares Music and Tradition "In Bubby's Kitchen"

East End Temple proudly presents, singer/cantor/songwriter Shira Ginsburg's New York premiere of:



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SATURDAY, DEC. 5, 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, DEC. 6, 2:00 PM
www.eastendtemple.org/bubbyskitchen 212-477-6444

When you imagine a kitchen, you focus on its potential to serve not just food, but entertainment, conversation and tradition. The foods prepared in a kitchen are chosen by the chef-in-residence for their pragmatic nutritional value, fueling and sustaining a family. But as the ingredients are assembled, equally important is the deeper resonance: the passing on of family custom, the forging of an atmosphere that binds people together over food and occasionally wine. You might think of your own kitchen, or your mother's, or your grandmother's; the further back you go, the more likely that your food memories are saturated not just with nutritional value, but with a significance that approximates religion.

Shira Ginsburg remembers her grandmother's kitchen, (for 40+ years located in Troy, NY), as a special place: a meeting place for family, friends and neighbors, with what she describes as a "soundtrack" of stories "of survival and hope, of

joy and sorrow shared, of love of family and Judaism, all woven in an aroma of cooking and baking."

It is this fusion of food, family, tradition and song that Ginsburg brings to her one-woman show, "[In Bubby's Kitchen](#)," running twice this weekend as a benefit for East End Temple in New York City, where she is the cantor. The show will be performed downtown, at the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Shira's grandparents were Jewish partisans, members of the Bielski partisan group depicted in the film "Defiance." This part of her heritage provided some of the Yiddish songs that appear as part of the show, and Ginsburg notes that the entire musical performance reflects her theater training, her family, and her history.

"Bubby's kitchen was a strong link in our family -- where sweet, sour, bitter and salty mixed-and the memories of those endless meals remains on all of our tongues," she reflects. "This is a story about owning your family stories and how it shapes you, how I became this strong professional Jewish woman. I was channeling stories from my childhood, created a show, and became each of the different women in my family."

"Bubby's Kitchen" was originally conceived and performed in fulfillment of Ginsburg's cantorial investiture and degree at Hebrew Union College on April 1st 2009.

[Tickets](#) ranging from \$18 - \$180, with handicapped seating available for \$36, [are on sale now for the two benefit performances this weekend:](#)

Saturday night, December 5 at 7:30pm - followed by a dessert reception

Sunday, December 6 at 2pm - followed by a talkback discussion with Rabbi David Adelson. .

And - thanks to Shira for hooking me up with the tickets - I'll be at the Saturday night performance - perhaps I'll see you there!

December 01, 2009 in [Friends Doing Cool Stuff](#), [Music](#), [My NYC](#), [Theater](#) | [Permalink](#)

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By, Esther Kustanowitz

estherkustanowitz.typepad.com/myurbankvetch2005/2009/11/all-the-worlds-a-kitchen-cantor-shares-music-and-tradition-in-bubbys-kitchen.html

Someone's in the 'Kitchen' With Shira

APRIL 28, 2011

By: *Michael Elkin*



[Enlarge Image »](#)

So, what are they serving up in "Bubby's Kitchen"?

Pots full of smarts, says Shira Ginsburg.

"A lot of it," she says proudly of her family, "other people's wisdom."

Someone's in the "Kitchen" with Shira -- her bubby and five other family female members -- in this six-pack of a party that is so laden with happiness and tears, Golda herself reportedly saw it in Anatevka five times.

American shtetl sideshow? "Bubby's Kitchen" is the main attraction, as Syracuse U. grad, professionally-trained actress and New York cantor Ginsburg, 33, dishes and delivers, bringing her one-woman show and a multiple of tidbits to Congregation Beth Am Israel in Penn Valley www.bethamisrael.org, the evening of May 7.

Untie the apron strings and sit a spell, gestures Ginsburg, even as she reties them to her own past, including what it means to be the grandchild of Holocaust survivors, whose roles as renegades -- foraging in the forests of Poland as resistance fighters -- provides irresistibly rich anecdotes.

The show's creation is a story unto itself: "I actually created it as part of my thesis at cantorial school," recalls Ginsburg, who began service to East End Temple in Manhattan six years ago as a student cantor.

Two years ago, she became bimah-ready full-time. Shofar, show good? Yes, she avers, good as gold.

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Which is also what she could say about her bubby's rugelah, a regular star itself during Shira's summer-camp days, where it was worth its weight in gold.

It had great trade value, she remembers.

Not that Shira would trade it then -- or now: Indeed, "Bubby's Kitchen" isn't a trade-off of her past as much as an appreciation, in which Ginsburg, as the six very different women in her family, kibitzes, kvetches and carries on at the table, making for a kitchen cabinet of characters many in the audience allegedly identify with.

Including her own congregation, which premiered "Bubby's Kitchen" as a benefit at New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage -- a Living Memorial to the Holocaust two years ago.

And what do audiences get to nosh on for 75 minutes? A little bit of this -- Yiddish music; a little bit of that -- show music and liturgical tunes; and a cart of kosher comedy.

It is all done with a sense of adventure. But, hold the capers? No, intones the cantor; after all, it all takes place in a kitchen.

And just why the kitchen? What better place for a Jewish table of contents, she says, recalling her own Bubby Judith Ginsburg's sylvan setting at the family dairy farm, where stories were churned out grandiloquently.

After all, in so many homes, "Food is love; food is life." And here, on stage -- it is all food for thought.

NYTG: What sorts of stories did you leave out of the show?

SG: Ha – You'll have to see the sequel . . . *Bubby's Living Room*.

NYTG: Has Bubby seen the show? What did she think of it?

SG: Thankfully, Bubby is very much still with us, but Zayde passed away 11 years ago, I miss him every day. But Bubby is always busy dancing at simchas, making vegetable soup special just for me, and of course, doling out expert advice over rugalach and tea at her kitchen table. She has seen the show many times and is incredibly proud not only of the work that I have done both artistically and on the production end, but also that I have chosen to take on our family legacy, and her story in particular in this way. It is always very emotional for her when she watches the show, especially the scenes in which I become her on stage in the most devastating and difficult moments of her life. She relishes in the love that pours out towards her from so many people, and kvells in disbelief when I tell her that she is now an inspiration to so many people whom she has never met her.

NYTG: Have you any other stage projects in the works?

SG: I am currently working on a screenplay adaptation of *Bubby's Kitchen* and also have one other project in the works.

NYTG: Cantor Ginburg, this has been a genuine pleasure. You've been more than generous with your time and insights, and the readers of New York Theatre Guide thank you.

You can see Shira Ginsburg perform *Bubby's Kitchen*, April 28-30, 2016, at Jewish Community Center, 334 Amsterdam Ave, New York, NY 10023. For more information and tickets, click [here](#).