

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE AT THE

BERKSHIRE JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

SIX MONDAYS
JULY 8 - AUGUST 12



presented by
CONGREGATION KNESSET ISRAEL
www.berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org



BERKSHIRE JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

On behalf of Knesset Israel and the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival, we extend a warm Welcome Back to you as BJFF embarks upon its 38th season. We are so happy to be able to present six Mondays of excellent film programming in person at the Duffin Theater at the Lenox Memorial Middle and High School.

Our screening committee has chosen the best of the many films they watched this year. We are excited to bring you a wide range of documentaries and narrative films from the US, Israel, Germany, Italy and Canada.

Please visit our website to read about the films and speakers, sign up for our e-newsletter, make a much-appreciated donation, and purchase your Season Pass. As in past years, individual tickets can only be purchased on the day of the show.

(Cash or Check Only)

**IT'S YEAR 38
AND
IT'S GONNA BE GREAT!**

The Berkshire Jewish Film Festival Committee

berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org

The Film Festival Committee

Our sincere appreciation to all of our committee members who work very hard throughout the year to bring you an exciting and successful festival!

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Welcome.

Thank you for attending the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival, which in turn supports the Hebrew School and family programming at Knesset Israel. Knesset Israel is an innovator in the rapidly changing world of American Judaism. We create authentic and meaningful points of connection and spiritual experience for contemporary Jews and cultivate a community to make a positive difference in the world. Affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, our flourishing congregation is inclusive and supportive, accepting a wide range of beliefs and Jewish practice. People of all ages, religious backgrounds, genders and orientations find a supportive community here.

We hope that Film Festival attendees will participate in other Knesset Israel programming this summer.

Highlights include:

- Weekly shabbat morning services and kiddush luncheon.
- Spirited Friday night services, often accompanied by musical instruments and followed by a community shabbat dinner.
- JTS in the Berkshires with Chancellor Shuly Rubin Schwartz, Professor Sarah Wolf & Professor Yitz Landes.
- A countywide weekend of learning with Ruth Messinger.
- Aaron Kula and the Klezmer Company Jazz Orchestra, August 19.
- "Ramblin' with the Rav" hikes.

See www.knessetisrael.org/rsvp for details and to sign up. We welcome broad participation in our programming throughout the year. And we appreciate the generous support of every participant in the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival.

L'shalom
Rabbi David Weiner
rabbiweiner@outlook.com

Congregation Knesset Israel Religious Service Schedule

Monday Evening Minyan
Preceding the evening film at Duffin Theater
7:00 PM

Evening Services
Tues & Thurs - 7:00 PM (ZOOM)

Sunday Morning Services:
Sun - 8:45 AM

Shabbat Evening
5:45 PM

*For more information,
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Shabbat Morning
9:30 AM
A kiddush luncheon follows the service



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JULY 8, 4 PM



Vishniac

Vishniac Eastern Europe to the Princeton offices of Albert Einstein. We see it all through the lens of the groundbreaking 20th-century photographer Roman Vishniac. For the first time, the story of this brilliant and flamboyant character comes to life in this compelling feature-length documentary, made by Laura Bialis. She traces his emergence in Weimar Berlin as a biologist who goes on to transform scientific photography. But, as she highlights, Vishniac is best known for his images of shtetl life in Central and Eastern Europe from 1935-1938; these iconic pictures were called a "haunting eulogy for a world on the brink of destruction." The film follows his family's escape in 1940 from Europe to the United States and his return after the war, when he documents a Berlin in ruins and the haunted children in displaced persons camps. This clear-eyed portrait of a complex man is narrated movingly by his daughter, Mara Kohn Vishniac, who says her father viewed himself as "a mixture of Moses and Superman."

USA 2023, English, Documentary, 90 minutes

Director: Laura Bialis





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JULY 8, 8 PM



Seven Blessings

Jewish tradition honors a new bride and groom with seven days of festive meals, and this bittersweet comedy focuses on the family secrets and lies at the heart of what should be a happy and celebratory week. Winner of Israeli Academy awards, *Seven Blessings* also is a rich and knowing portrait of Moroccan Israeli culture in the '90s. At 40, successful bank executive Marie has returned from France with her French Jewish fiancé to marry and then feast at one overcrowded home after another of her exuberant but dysfunctional Moroccan clan. Each meal exposes more of her story and the wounds at its core, along with the jealousies, guilt and resentments of her family.

Israel 2023, Hebrew (English subtitles) Narrative, 111 minutes
Director: Ayelet Menahemi





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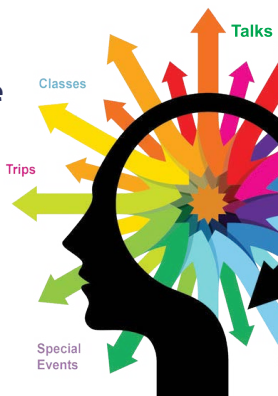
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JULY 15, 4 PM



The Caretaker (short)

Based on a true story, this suspenseful 18-minute film celebrates the bravery of an otherwise ordinary caretaker in a Hamburg museum in the '30s who rescues art that is designated "degenerate" and slated for confiscation by the Nazis. The film depicts the connection the man feels to the art and its creators, including the avant-garde Jewish painter Anita Ree. It shows us the risks he is willing to assume in the face of that connection and of the responsibility he feels for the art.

Germany 2023, German (English subtitles), Narrative, 18 minutes
Director: Roland Puknat



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JULY 15, 4 PM



Children of Peace

Children of Peace documents the Israeli experiment of Neve-Shalom or Oasis of Peace - Wahat al Salam in Arabic - and is especially compelling, challenging and relevant now. The film tracks the vision of Utopians who sought in the 70's to create a community between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem where Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel could grow up and live side by side governed by the principles of equality, mutual respect and partnership. Through archival film footage and contemporary interviews, the documentary chronicles the experience of the children who came of age in this utopia and who candidly and poignantly reflect on its impact. Director Ma'ayan Schwartz, one of the member- "children," doesn't flinch as he looks at the project's complexity and the challenges posed over the years - by Jewish members serving and dying in the IDF, the failure of the Oslo Accords, and the conflicts between Arabs and Jews in the Israel beyond their village. Viewers are left to grapple with whether this was a singular social experiment or a living model for peaceful co-existence for larger Israeli society.

Israel 2022, Hebrew (English subtitles)

Documentary, 60 minutes

Director: Ma'ayan Schwartz



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JULY 15, 8 PM



Supernova Massacre: The Music Festival Massacre

This 52-minute film documents in harrowing, minute by-minute detail the cold-blooded and methodical Hamas massacre of young revelers at the Israeli Supernova music festival on October 7. The rampage left 360 dead and more than 40 who were taken hostage. The documentary weaves retrospective interviews of survivors with real-time footage from the cameras of the terrorists, concert-goers and first responders, chronicling the tragedy as well as the resilience of the human spirit. Made by veteran Israeli documentarian Duki Dror, this is disturbing to watch but compelling in its demand that history not look away. "I think it is the hardest film I ever made," Dror has said.

Israel 2023, Hebrew (English subtitles) Documentary, 60 minutes
Director: Yossi Bloch





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JULY 22, 4 PM



The Anne Frank Gift Shop (short)

How can the gift shop at this iconic house museum in Amsterdam be reimaged in a way that will appeal more to Gen Z? How do you update the “brand” for Anne Frank? Answering these questions is the charge of the motley crew in the design firm who are at the center of this dark comedy. With provocative, fast-past writing, this film covers a lot of ground in 15 minutes with dialogue about history, anti-semitism, trauma and tote bags. By Mickey Rapkin, whose book “Pitch Perfect” was made into a film by that name, *The Anne Frank Gift Shop* is edgy. It raises important questions about.

USA 2023, English, Narrative, 15 minutes

Director: Mickey Rapkin



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JULY 22, 4 PM



Without Precedent: The Supreme Life of Rosalie Abella

A Holocaust survivor's daughter becomes Canada's first female Jewish Supreme Court judge, reshaping the legal world with landmark decisions on inclusivity, diversity, and equity. Rosalie Abella studied law in Toronto, achieving success as an attorney before being appointed as a judge at the age of 29 in 1976. Her historic appointment to Canada's highest court came in 2004, capping off a long and distinguished career. Her remarkable journey, marked by intelligence, accessibility, and a spirited nature, established her not only as a respected jurist but as a national treasure, often compared to Ruth Bader Ginsburg. This edifying, inspiring profile provides candid insights into both her arc from refugee child to profoundly impacting Canadian human rights, and her marriage to famed historian Irving Abella, featuring interviews with a diverse array of admirers who celebrate her lasting legacy. *Credit Atlanta Jewish Film Festival*

Canada 2023, English, Documentary, 85 minutes

Director: Barry Avrich

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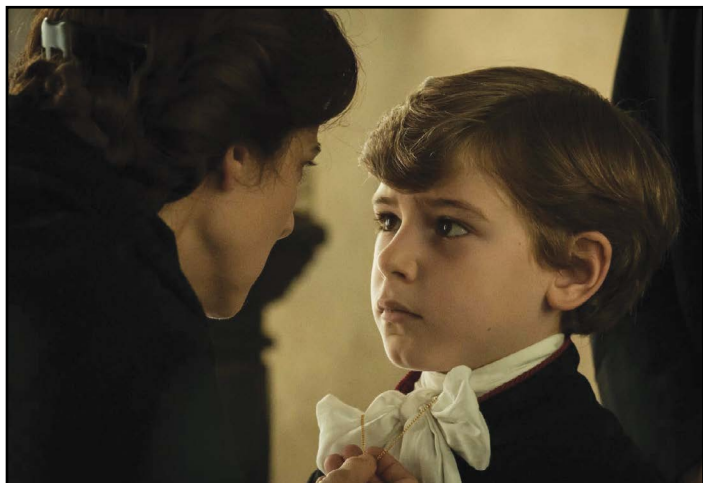
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JULY 22, 8 PM



Kidnapped

Edgardo Mortara, a six-year-old Jewish boy in mid-19th century Italy, is abducted and forcibly converted to Christianity by virtue of papal decree after it comes to the attention of authorities that his housekeeper secretly baptizes him. This richly filmed and suspenseful period drama is based on true events that created an international scandal. The struggle by Edgardo's parents to free their son became part of a larger - and triumphant - battle by a revolutionary nationalist campaign to end the dominance of the Catholic Church and establish a modern and unified secular Italian state. Director Marco Bellocchio's film is gripping and operatic, featuring a powerful and painful clash of two faiths.

Italy 2023, Italian (English subtitles) Narrative, 134 minutes
Director: Marco Bellocchio





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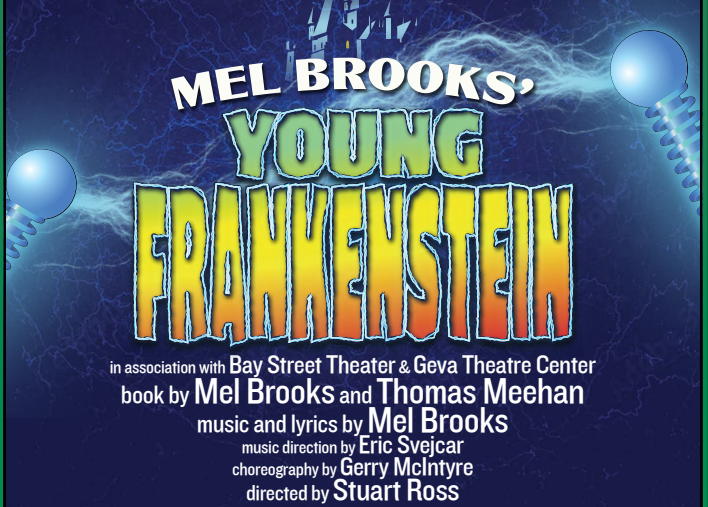
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JULY 29, 4 PM



Unbroken

Against all odds, the seven Weber siblings who are the subject of *Unbroken* manage to stay together through the Holocaust thanks to acts of courage, resilience and a series of miracles. After their mother is deported from Berlin to Auschwitz for being Jewish and part of the resistance, the children are slated to follow days later on a different transport. Instead, their father arranges to baptize and then hide them on the farm of a Christian couple outside the city, where they fend for themselves for two years before ending up in a displaced person's camp. The youngest child, Ginger, is the mother of Beth Lane, the documentary's writer, producer and director. Relying on journal entries, archival film footage, photos and interviews, Lane lovingly documents this poignant story of the siblings who arrive in the United States together, only to be separated for many decades. She leaves us understanding the impact of courageous individual choices through a film that inspires hope and compassion.

USA 2023, English, Documentary, 96 minutes
Director: Beth Lane





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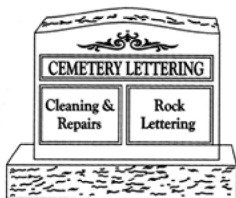
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JULY 29, 8 PM



The CATSKILLS

The Catskills

This film is a loving and nostalgic tribute to the family-run Jewish resort and bungalow culture that became known as the Borsht Belt, the inspiration for iconic films like *Dirty Dancing*. Through the archival film footage and reminiscences of patrons and proprietors, we see the legendary comedians, the all-you-can-eat meals served by eligible college-boy waiters, and the seductive dance instructors, and we learn this was the backdrop of an important chapter in American Jewish history. Jews were denied access to hotel and resort life and resisted their exclusion by forming their own enclaves in the scenic and welcoming Catskill mountains. These places, where Jews flocked after summer, offered refuge along with fun, and celebrated Yiddishkeit without restraint. More than anything they served up the power of community, both for the poor Jewish immigrants who needed to get out of the crowded city, and the well heeled crowd who wanted a lavish playground. Director Lex Gillespie is a three-time Peabody award-winning public radio journalist-turned filmmaker; this is his second film.

USA 2024, English, Documentary, 86 minutes
Director: Lex Gillespie



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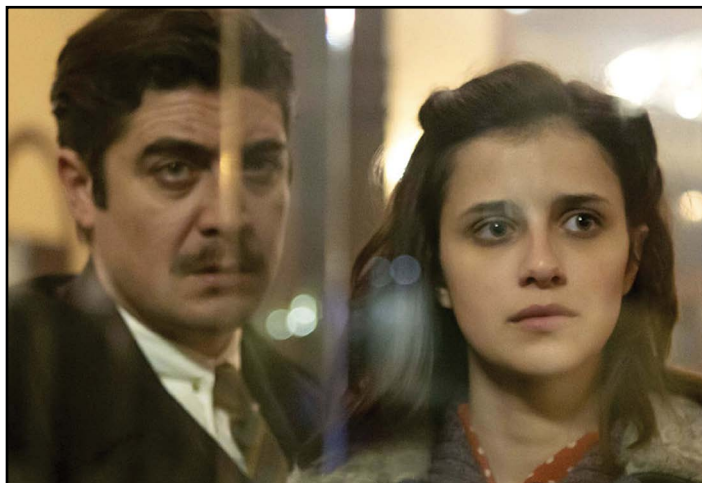
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AUGUST 5, 4 PM



Shadow of the Day

Shadow of the Day is a dramatic story of love and redemption set in a turbulent Italy amid the anti-semitic racial laws promulgated by Mussolini's fascist government. A provincial restaurant manager with fascist sympathies finds his reputation at risk after a mysterious woman shows up at his doorstep looking for work. A wounded war veteran, he finds himself challenged by the woman's lively spirit and intellect. Ultimately, he has to decide between his growing feelings for her (and doing what he knows is right) and his need to protect his livelihood against thuggish local officials intent on exposing and punishing renegades. This is a beautifully acted and cinematic tour de force by director Giuseppe Piccioni.

Italy 2022, Italian (English subtitles) Narrative, 120 minutes
Director: Giuseppe Piccioni



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When Our Community Needs Us, We Are There

For over 80 years, in times of triumph and times of despair, the Jewish Federation has sustained our community and provided the resources to care for those in need and ensure a safe and strong Jewish community.

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Help Us Be There!

Donate to the Annual Campaign Today!

jewishberkshires.org



Jewish Federation
OF THE BERKSHIRES



AUGUST 5, 8 PM



How Saba Kept Singing

David Wisnia had never told his family the whole story of how he survived Auschwitz for two-and-a-half years - while his parents and younger brother were murdered - and this film by Sarah Taksler fills in the gaps. As he travels with his grandson Avi back to Poland to mark the 75th anniversary of the camp's liberation, Wisnia, a cantor, recounts how his operatic singing entertained the Nazi guards and saved his life; before he was deported to the camp at 16, he was a musical prodigy who had been a soloist in his Poland synagogue choir. But it turns out there was more. He had also found love with a fellow inmate, a Jewish woman who was kept alive because of her skills as a graphic artist and mandolin player. Wisnia reports that she played a role in keeping him off the lists that would have spelled his end. The two made plans to meet after the war but did not reunite until 2019. Some of her Holocaust testimony is featured in the film. Hillary Clinton and her daughter, Chelsea, were the executive producers of this poignant testament to love and resilience.

USA 2023, English, Documentary, 80 minutes

Director: Sara Taksler





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AUGUST 12, 4 PM



Jack and Sam (short)

Jack Waksal and Sam Ron met in 1943 as teenagers when they were sent to a Polish labor camp. Day after day they shoveled coal into boilers to power a factory making munitions for the Nazi war effort. Sam escaped in 1944, surviving in a forest, while Jack was liberated by U.S. troops the following year. Unbeknownst to them, they both landed in Ohio after the war, and they did not see each other until a chance encounter at a Florida Holocaust event 80 years after their last meeting. This 20-minute award-winning film documents their friendship and their reunion in interviews, film footage and animation that artfully fleshes out the narrative. Director Jordan Horowitz describes his film as a story of positivity, hope and love, more crucial than ever in times when so many people are guided by hatred. This uplifting film, whose executive producers include Sarah Silverman and Juliana Margulies, celebrates the legacy of two friends determined to share their story.

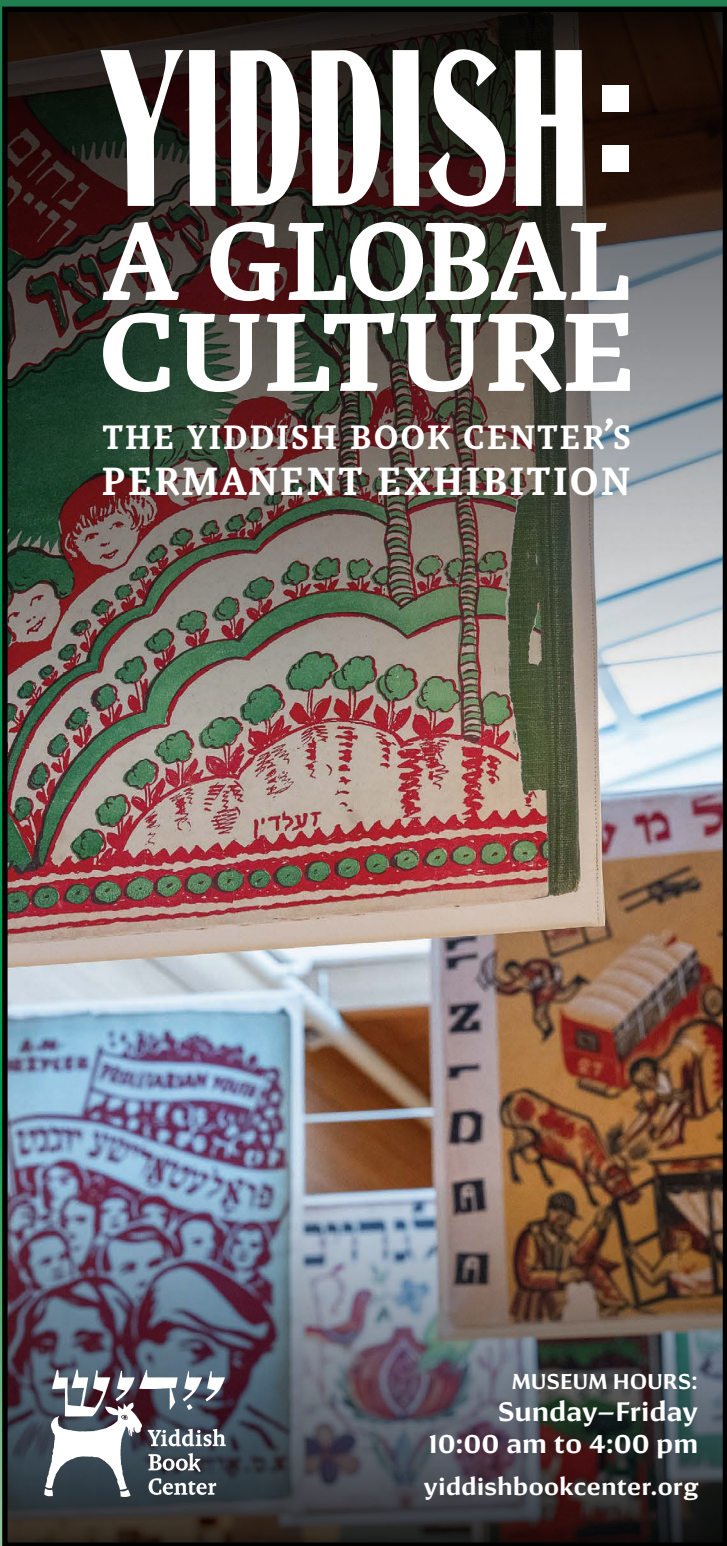
USA 2023, English, Documentary, 20 minutes

Director: Jordan Matthew Horowitz



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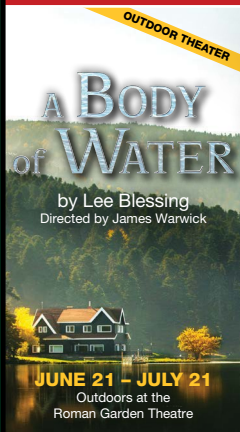
SEASON 2024 SHAKESPEARE & COMPANY

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OUTDOOR THEATER

A BODY of WATER

by Lee Blessing
Directed by James Warwick

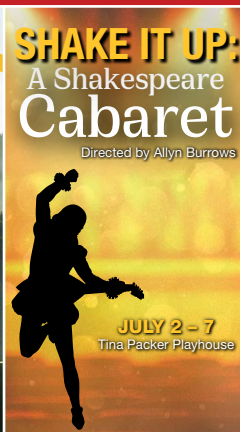


JUNE 21 – JULY 21
Outdoors at the
Roman Garden Theatre

SHAKE IT UP!

A Shakespeare Cabaret

Directed by Allyn Burrows



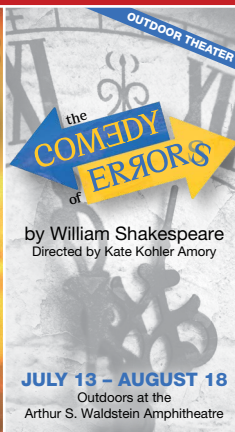
JULY 2 – 7
Tina Packer Playhouse

OUTDOOR THEATER

the COMEDY ERRORS

of

by William Shakespeare
Directed by Kate Kohler Amory

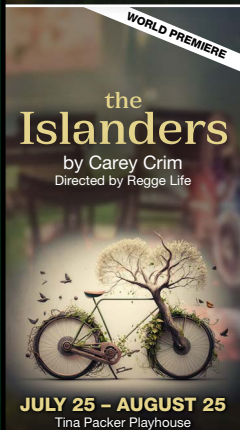


JULY 13 – AUGUST 18
Outdoors at the
Arthur S. Waldstein Amphitheatre

WORLD PREMIERE

the Islanders

by Carey Crim
Directed by Regge Life

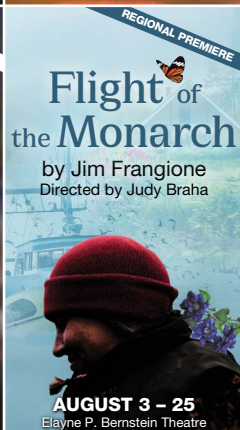


JULY 25 – AUGUST 25
Tina Packer Playhouse

REGIONAL PREMIERE

Flight of the Monarch

by Jim Frangione
Directed by Judy Braha



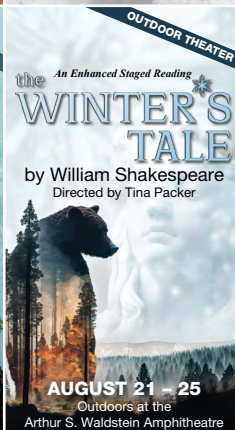
AUGUST 3 – 25
Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre

OUTDOOR THEATER

An Enhanced Staged Reading

the WINTER'S TALE

by William Shakespeare
Directed by Tina Packer

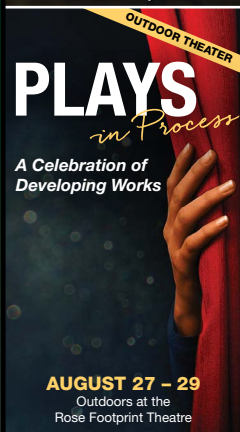


AUGUST 21 – 25
Outdoors at the
Arthur S. Waldstein Amphitheatre

OUTDOOR THEATER

PLAYS in Process

A Celebration of
Developing Works



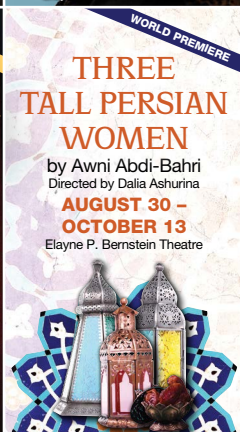
AUGUST 27 – 29
Outdoors at the
Rose Footprint Theatre

WORLD PREMIERE

THREE TALL PERSIAN WOMEN

by Awni Abdi-Bahri
Directed by Dalia Ashurina

AUGUST 30 – OCTOBER 13
Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre

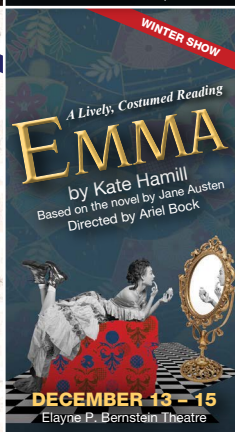


WINTER SHOW

A Lively, Costumed Reading

EMMA

by Kate Hamill
Based on the novel by Jane Austen
Directed by Ariel Bock



DECEMBER 13 – 15
Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre

70 Kemble Street
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AUGUST 12, 4 PM



Less Than Kosher

This is a look at contemporary Jewish life at its most irreverent – hence its “less-than-kosher” title and a comic film in which Jewish norms are turned on their head. Thirty-year-old Viv was once a rising singing star but now finds herself back in her Jewish mother’s house, with her career hitting one sour note after another. Her life, set in Toronto, takes an unexpected turn when this self-proclaimed Bad Jew reluctantly accepts a position as a cantor at her family’s synagogue, where she escaped in the middle of her own Bat Mitzvah many years before and never looked back. Her antics and adventures as a cantor, which include an affair with the rabbi’s married son and success on TikTok, form a lighthearted, very modern and sometimes absurd take on the spiritual journey and self-discovery of a secular Jew.

(Rated R - Language)

USA 2023, English, Narrative, 60 minutes

Director: Daniel Am Roenberg



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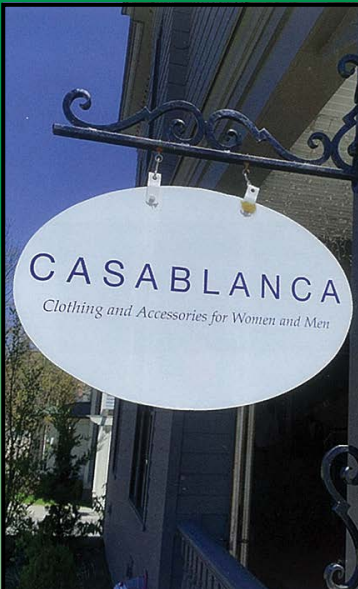
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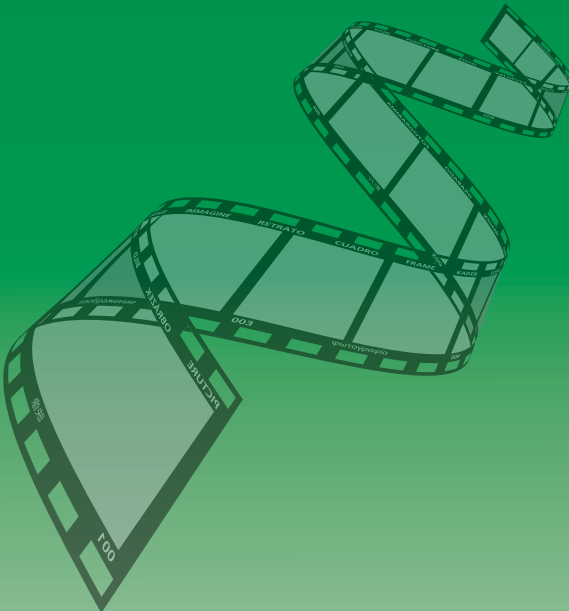
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- A Bag of Marbles
- A Classy Broad
- A Crime on the Bayou
- A Father's Kaddish
- Across the Waters
- The Adventures of Saul Bellow
- Ahead of Time
- Alien VI
- Americaner Shakhan
- The Angel Levine
- The Anne Frank Gift Shop
- Anita
- At the Crossroads
- Au Revoir Les Enfants
- The Automat
- Ave Maria
- Bang! The Bert Berns Story
- Barney's Version
- Beau Jest
- Because of That War
- Becoming Nakuset
- Belle and Sebastian
- Berlin '36
- Bernie
- Bespoke Overcoat
- Best Man
- Big Sonia
- Black Box
- Black to the Promised Land
- Blessed is the Match
- The Blum Affair
- Bogdan's Journey
- Bonjour Monsieur Shlomi
- Book of Days
- Boynton Beach Club
- Breakfast at Ina's
- Bride Flight
- Brighton Beach
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- Brothers
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- Buzz
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- The Cage
- The Cakemaker
- The Caretaker
- The Catskills
- La Camera Obscura
- Castel: Portrait of an Artist
- Castles in the Sky
- Charlotte
- Chicks in White Satin
- Children of Peace
- Cinema Rex
- Cinema Sabaya
- The Clown and the Fuhrer
- Commissar
- Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter
- Comrade Dov
- The Concert
- Constantine's Sword
- The Counterfeiters
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- The Cummington Story
- Cup Final
- David
- The Day I Saw Your Heart
- Deadly Currents
- Dogs: The Rise and Fall of an All Girls Bookie Joint
- Don't Get Involved
- Eddy's World
- Eichmann
- Ellis Island
- Empty Spaces
- Farewell, Mister Haffmann
- Fictious Marriage
- 51 Birch Street
- The First Israeli in Space
- Focus
- Follow Me: The Jonathan Netanyahu Story
- For My Father
- Foreign Letters
- Four Winters
- Foxtrot
- Freedom Runners
- Free Men
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- How Saba Kept Singing
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