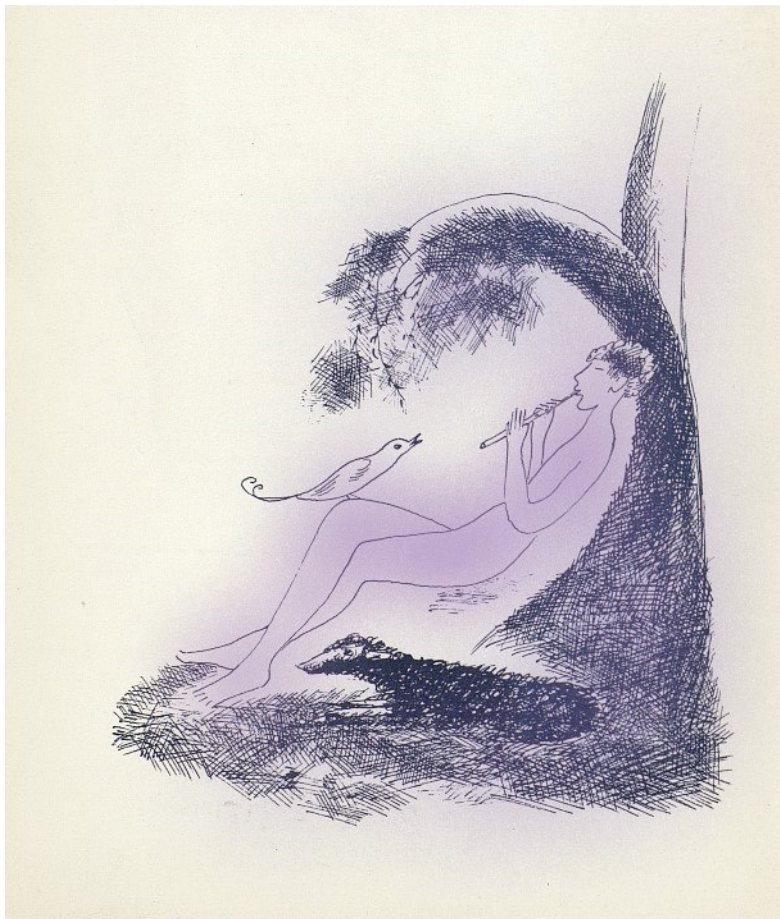


The Tales of the Alchemysts Theatre presents

**“Somewhere Very Far Away:
Stories from *Honey On The Page*”**

Edited and Translated by Miriam Udel

Adapted and Directed by Laura Ferri



Performers: Maia Brown, Laura Ferri, David S. Klein, Isaac Levin-Delson, & Shellie Shulkin.

Musicians: Carl Shutoff, clarinet & Laurie Andres, accordion of *The Kesselgarden Klezmer Duo*; Stefanie Brendler, accordion & vocals, Maia Brown, vocals, and Hannah Hamavid, violin and vocals of *Brivele*.

ORDER OF SCENES & SONGS

“Innocent When You Dream” [.43]

Brivele

“Where Stories Come From” by Ida Maze [1.50]

David S. Klein, Shellie Shulkin & Maia Brown

“Lecha Dodi” [3.33]

Maia Brown, vocals

“A Sabbath in the Forest” by Yaakov Fichmann [3.52]

David S. Klein with Stefanie Brendler, Maia Brown, Hannah Hamavid & Isaac Levin-Delson, vocals

“Mayn Rue Platz” [25.51]

Brivele

“The Boy and His Samovar” by Jacob Reisdorf [27.11]

Narrator: Shellie Shulkin
Ruler: David S. Klein
Guard: Isaac Levin-Delson

“Why O” [37.46]

Brivele

“A Deal’s a Deal” by Solomon Simon [38.27]

Avrohom: David S. Klein
Mirtl: Shellie Shulkin
Thief #1: Maia Brown
Thief #2/Barber: Isaac Levin-Delson

“Stanton Street” [48.25]

Brivele

“The Teacher” by Mashe Shtuker-Payuk [49.49]

Maia Brown

“Sha Shtil” [50.45]

Brivele

AN UNUSUAL GIRL FROM BROOKLYN:

“That’s Shprintse!” by David Rodin [51.14]

David S. Klein, Shellie Shulkin,
Laura Ferri, Isaac Levin-Delson &
Maia Brown

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

The Klezmer music performed by Carl Shutoff and Laurie Andres in these audio plays was taken from the repertoires and collections of German Goldenshteyn, Leon Schwartz, Moishe Beregovski, the Kammen International Series, Wolf and Nat Kostakowsky, and Dave Tarras. These performances are punctuated with excerpts of other instrumental folk melodies from Moldova, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, and Hungary.

PRODUCTION TEAM

Adaptor/Director

Laura Ferri

Music Director

Carl Shutoff

Editors

Carl Shutoff & Laura Ferri

Sound Designer & Audio Engineer

Robertson Witmer

Dialects

Michael J. Loggins

This production was recorded in the actors' homes and at the Jack Straw Cultural Center with Joel Maddox serving as Audio Engineer.

ARTISTS BIOS

Miriam Udel is associate professor of German Studies and Jewish Studies at Emory University, where her teaching focuses on Yiddish language, literature, and culture. She holds an AB in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and a PhD in Comparative Literature, both from Harvard University. She was ordained in 2019 as part of the first cohort of the Executive Ordination Track at Yeshivat Maharat, a program designed to bring qualified mid-career women into the Orthodox rabbinate.

Udel's academic research interests include 20th-century Yiddish literature and culture, Jewish children's literature, and American-Jewish literature. She is the author of *Never Better!: The Modern Jewish Picaresque* (University of Michigan Press), winner of the 2017 National Jewish Book Award in Modern Jewish Thought and Experience. She is the editor and translator of *Honey on the Page: A Treasury of Yiddish Children's Literature* (NYU Press, 2020), winner of the Reference Award of the Association of Jewish Libraries. The 2021 puppet film *Labzik: Tales of a Clever Pup*, released by Theater Emory, was based on her translation. Awarded an NEH Public Scholar grant this year, she is currently working on a critical study of Yiddish children's literature.

Brivele is a Seattle-based, anti-fascist, klezmer folk-punk trio who braid together oral history, Yiddish language, contemporary and old-country musical genres, American Vaudeville, and visual arts. The group consists of Stefanie Brendler, accordion and vocals, Maia Brown, banjo and vocals, and Hannah Hamavid, violin and vocals. For more information, please check out their website: www.brivele.com.

The Kesselgarden Klezmer Duo: Carl Shutoff (clarinet) and Laurie Andres (accordion) constitute *The Kesselgarden Klezmer Duo* in Seattle, WA, where they have been playing together for the last 18 years. The name comes from the way Yiddish-speaking Jews pronounced "Castle Garden," the facility where Jewish immigrants entered this country prior to the opening of Ellis Island in 1892. The term Kesselgarden was eventually generalized among Eastern European Jews to mean any situation that was noisy, confusing and chaotic ("There was a special at Bamberger's today, and it was a real Kesselgarden!"). Kesselgarden is a traditional band, playing Eastern European instrumental Jewish music of the 19th and early 20th centuries, with original, sweet and joyful arrangements which are neither noisy nor confusing.

Home page: <https://sites.google.com/site/kesselgardenhomepage/>
<https://kesselgarden.bandcamp.com/releases>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Kesselgarden-Klezmer-%20Duo-125092664215936>

Maia Brown (she/her) is a Yiddish musician and educator with a background in history and fine art. A recipient of a Watson Fellowship, she researched anticolonial arts and storytelling in communities in the North of Ireland and South Africa. A member of the anti-fascist Yiddish trio, *Brivele*, and elementary art teacher, Maia wears different hats as a cultural worker and organizer in communities combining research, direct action, art, education, and celebration in the work of getting free.

Laura Ferri (she/her) is the Artistic Director for Tales of the Alchemysts, where she most recently wrote and directed the *Monsters, Magic and Mysticism* series. A professional theatre artist, renowned for her attention to period detail and her skill in creating performances from primary source documents, she just finished editing the filmed production of her play, "Friends Across the Wires," based on the stories of two local women whose friendship survived the American Incarceration of the Japanese during WWII. She is looking forward to staging her adaptation of women's Holocaust literature, "The Ruins of Memory," when the company returns to live theatre this year. She was awarded a 2022 US/UK Fulbright to create a play about WWII in Northern Ireland where she is presently researching and writing in Belfast.

David S. Klein (he/him) has been a professional actor for a long time. His very first gig – doing summer stock in 1969 – ended up at the Woodstock Festival which happened just 10 miles from where the theater was! He then acted, directed and taught in Boston for eight years, after which he ran a small children's theater in Vermont for another eight, moving to Seattle in 1985. He has worked in all of Seattle's biggest theaters, and in many smaller ones, including some that (alas!) no longer exist. He and Laura met as early members of Book-It, working on several shows together, including one they adapted themselves from the writings of Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz. He started working with Shellie a few years after that, with adaptations of stories by Jewish writers. So it felt very natural to become part of the Alchemysts.

Isaac Levin-Delson (he/him) is a Seattle based actor and singer, and he is grateful for the opportunity to help bring you "Somewhere Very Far Away." Isaac is Jewish but was never exposed to much Jewish storytelling in his childhood. The tales told in "Somewhere Very Far Away" are stories that Isaac wishes he had heard growing up! Some of Isaac's favorite performance credits include Thénardier in *Les Misérables*, and Orsino in *Twelfth Night* at Studio East; The Happy Prince of *Wilde Tales* in Seattle Opera's Youth Opera Program; and performing at the Boston Early Music

Festival, Berkeley Festival of Early Music, and Nordstrom Recital Hall at Benaroya Hall with Seattle Historical Arts for Kids.

Michael J. Loggins (he/him) recently coached dialects for Pony World's production of *What We Were* and TOTA's production of *Dreaming in American*. He also designed and coached accents/dialects for *Crates of Thunder*, which toured England in 2014 and 2016. He has served as the dialect coach in a variety of dialects/accents for Book-It Repertory Theatre's productions of *Broken for You*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Elemental*, and *I am of Ireland*. He coached *The Birthday Party* with Capitol Hill Arts Center and for the following Seattle Children's Theatre productions: *Tibet through the Red Box*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Shakespeare Stealer*, *BFG*, *Holes*, *Into the West*, *The King of Ireland's Son*. He also worked with Northern Lights/ Gael Force Theatre on *Shadow of a Gunman*, *Our Lady of Sligo*, *Big Maggie*, and *Making History*. Michael coaches dialects for educational theatres and other organizations, as well as privately in the Northwest.

Shellie Shulkin (she/her) is the Managing Director and Founding member of Tales of the Alchemysts Theatre. Shellie has been a theatre artist for nearly 40 years performing in numerous productions both locally (Seattle) and nationally. Favorite plays and roles include: *August: Osage County* as Violet Weston, at Balagan Theatre, *The Diary of Anne Frank* as Mrs. Van Daan, at Intiman, *The Birthday Party* as Meg, at CHAC, *Three Viewings* as Virginia, with theater simple at the Spoleto Festival in South Carolina, *Our Lady of Sligo* as Mai, with Gael Force Theatre, and Raymond Carver's *I Could See The Smallest Things* at Seattle Mime Theatre. Ms. Shulkin is also the recipient of the Gregory Award, The Broadway World Critic's Pick Award, and a Gypsy Rose Lee Award for Outstanding Actress in a Lead Role for her portrayal of Violet Weston in *August: Osage County* at Balagan.

Carl Shutoff (he/him) is a retired teacher with a formal educational background in French Literature and Special Education. He serves as a docent at the Holocaust Center for Humanity and volunteers at the East African Community Services where he helps immigrants and refugees prepare for their naturalization interviews. Carl has also done French interpreting for the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project. He met fellow Alchemysts back in 2003-2004 while performing staged readings as part of the Nextbook Jewish Cultural Arts program. In addition to being the musical director for Tales of the Alchemysts, Carl has played clarinet for the last 18 years in a local Klezmer duo called Kesselgarden with friend and associate, Laurie Andres. He and his spouse Frances have been married since 1978 and have two grown children.

Robertson Witmer (he/him) is a musician, composer, and sound designer from Seattle, Washington. Theatrical credits include *Dracula*, *Romeo + Juliet* (ACT); *Black Beauty*, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, (Seattle Children's Theatre); *Tosca* (filmed production, Seattle Opera); *Comedy of Errors*, *Bring Down the House* (Seattle Shakespeare Company); *The Ghost of Splinter Cove* (Children's Theatre of Charlotte); and *Greenwood* (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater). His sound designs have also been heard at Seattle Rep, Village Theatre, Spectrum Dance Theatre, and Teatro ZinZanni. Rob also plays accordion with several bands, including The Love Markets, "Awesome" and Carrie Clark and the Lonesome Lovers. Rob is a lecturer in sound design at the University of Washington School of Drama, and a member of United Scenic Artists, Local USA-829.

COMMENTS FROM MIRIAM UDEL

The Alchemysts Theater production “Somewhere Very Far Away” brings together two great traditions of modern Yiddish culture: children’s literature and the radio play.

A lively corpus of nearly one thousand free-standing books and several periodicals grew up in tandem with the Yiddish secular school systems in Europe and the Americas between the World Wars. While these texts span continents and ideologies (including socialism, communism, Zionism), they share in the overarching goal of their creators: to write a better world into being in a distinctively Yiddish key. These works helped families to locate themselves in Jewish modernity, offering a secure anchor during a period of dizzying social and political change that was complicated by secularization, urbanization, mass migration, and economic modernization. These stories and poems represented a global publishing phenomenon over six decades, with publishers following their readers from Warsaw and Vilna to Kharkov and Moscow, New York, Detroit and Montreal, Tel Aviv, Buenos Aires and Havana.

Sometimes the political messaging was explicit, as in Jacob Reisfeder’s pacifist story, “The Boy and His Samovar.” At other times, it was subtler, as when the socialist-Zionist Yankev (remembered fittingly by the Hebrew pronunciation of his name, Yaakov) Fichman wrote about a simple tailor’s magical Sabbath in an enchanted forest palace. The traditional Sabbath observance portrayed in the story offered a counterweight to the demands of modern capitalism. Some of the material is offers whimsical fun, like the squabbling of stubborn spouses Mirtl and Avrohom about who should get up on a chilly fall night to shut the rattling door, or the plans of a class clown suddenly foiled by a kindred spirit in “The Teacher.” The program ends with a late story that gestures toward a feminist future: an excerpt from Dovid Rodin’s “An Unusual Girl From Brooklyn” (originally published in Tel Aviv in 1973). Protagonist Shprintse is an intrepid, independent-minded girl who wants nothing more than to read in peace.

The high tide of Yiddish children’s publishing corresponds almost exactly to the flourishing of American Yiddish radio—on about 180 stations from coast to coast, according to musicologist Henry Sapoznik. Like the work of the Alchemysts, the radio programs that ran from 1925-1955 helped Jewish cultural life to thrive far beyond the largest population centers.

Through my work as a translator and critic, I have tried to offer the wisdom and fun of Yiddish children’s literature to new generations. What a thrill it is to hear the Alchemysts bring them to new life—now accessible to English speakers, inviting for audiences of all ages, and even a bit less crackly than they sounded on the radio long ago!

Links to learn more:

<https://miriamudel.com/>
<https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/yiddish-book-centers-noah-cotsen-library-yiddish-childrens-literature>
<https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2021/05/american-yiddish-radio/>
<https://www.yiddishradioproject.org/>
<https://www.loc.gov/folklife/events/BotkinArchives/2009htmlflyers/SapoznikFlyer.html?l=oclr=blogflt>

To purchase *Honey on the Page*, please use the discount code **Honey20** at:
<https://nyupress.org/9781479874132/honey-on-the-page/>

For further information on Tales of the Alchemysts Theatre, please go to our website:
www.alchemysts.org where donations can be made to support our work.

“Performed by Special Arrangement with
Susan Schulman Literary Agency
454 West 44th St. New York, N.Y. 10036”

*We acknowledge that we have recorded this production on the unceded, ancestral land of the Coast Salish and
Duwamish People and honor the Land and the People both past and present.*

*“Funding for Tales of the Alchemysts Theatre was made possible, in part, by a grant
from the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle.”*



The Jewish Federation
OF GREATER SEATTLE