Joel Berkowitz - Staged play reading: Kadya Molodowsky’s After the Desert God

In the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, Yiddish poet Kadya Molodowsky wrote her drama After the Desert God, inspired by true events in the life of Doña Gracia Mendes Nasi (1510-69). This famous late-medieval philanthropist and community leader also wrestled with how to rebuild in the aftermath of a catastrophe — in her case, the Inquisition and Expulsion. Molodowsky brings history to life with vivid characters, taut dialogue, intrigue, and romance. The world premiere of Joel Berkowitz’s English translation of Molodowsky’s drama will be performed by the Vanity Theatre Company.

May 22

Robin Judd - “Love at the Zero Hour: Jewish War Brides in WWII” (Faye Sigman “Woman of Valor” Lecture)

Historian Robin Judd tells the story of Jewish female survivors in postwar Europe who married American military personnel. In the aftermath of tremendous devastation, many of these women married the Jewish and gentile GIs who liberated them, and soldiers they met in other ways. Once romantically entangled, the war brides and their fiancés faced many challenges. In its examination of Jewish war brides, this lecture will provide unique insight into the complex, transnational character of an often overlooked group of survivors of the Nazi persecution.
Henry Sapoznik - “Jewish Roots and Restlessness in American Yiddish Music and Radio”  
Henry Sapoznik, director of the Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture at UW-Madison, will take the audience on a whirlwind tour of the Yiddish-American arts and letters and their place in contemporary American cultural literacy. This presentation will showcase highlights of the Mayrent Institute’s extensive collection of Yiddish recordings. Offered in conjunction with the Milwaukee Jewish Film Festival; a screening of Sholem Aleichem: Laughing in the Darkness will follow the presentation.

November 9  
Jewish Museum Milwaukee - 7pm  
Lisa Silverman - “From Falling to Jumping: Philipp Halsmann and the Austrian ‘Dreyfus Affair’”  
By 1959, noted photographer and American success story Philipp Halsmann counted 101 covers of Life magazine to his credit. Best known for his charming “jump portraits” featuring celebrities posed in mid-air, Halsmann overcame a shocking past. In 1928, when he was a Latvian Jewish engineering student on a hiking trip in the Alps, Halsmann was tried and convicted of brutally murdering his father. In what later became known as the “Austrian Dreyfus Affair,” the jury found him guilty despite the absence of evidence or motive. This presentation examines the role photography played in the trials, enabling a jury to re-imagine an act of patricide that never happened, and an accused son to plead the case for his defense.

December 7  
Greene Hall, UWM - 7pm  
Tim Crain - “Franklin Roosevelt and the Jews”  
FDR’s impact on American Jews is both legendary and controversial. He appointed Jews in unprecedented numbers to prominent positions in New Deal agencies, the Cabinet, and the Supreme Court, and received great support from a Jewish community that still had extensive personal ties to Europe. Nevertheless, historians continue to debate what some argue was his tepid response to the annihilation of European Jewry. This lecture assesses FDR’s relationship with Jewish Americans, his support for German Jews in the 1930s, and his response to the Holocaust.

February 1  
Sister Camille Kliebhan Conference Center, Cardinal Stritch University - 7pm  
Rachel Baum - “A Second Life for the Jews of Europe: Shoah & Virtual Memory”  
In Spring 2009, a Jewish magazine dedicated an issue to memory—noteworthy only because the magazine, 2Life, exists on Second Life (SL), a simulated world. Several new developments on Second Life had made the issue of memory particularly pressing to its Jewish residents: the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum opened an exhibit on Kristallnacht; an elderly Holocaust survivor gave her testimony; and a new “sim” (simulated reality) offered an experience of the Eastern European shtetl. This lecture builds upon recent scholarship of Second Life by anthropologists, film scholars, and philosophers to argue that SL has radically changed the categories of “home,” “memory,” and even “human” in ways that are of vital significance to the study of the Shoah.

March 5  
Congregation Sinai, Fox Point - 7pm  
Lev Raphael - “My Germany: A Jewish Writer Returns to the World His Parents Escaped”  
A son of Holocaust survivors, writer Lev Raphael was certain that Germany was one place he would never visit. But after his mother’s death, Raphael’s research led him to a distant relative living in the very city where she had been a slave laborer. What would he learn if he actually traveled to the place where his mother had found freedom and met his father? After his own books started appearing in German, Raphael’s frequent book tours led him to encounter not so much a new Germany, but a new self: someone unafraid to face the past and transcend it.
May 6 + 8
5/6 - Music Building, UWM - 3pm
5/8 - Ritz Theatre, Milwaukee JCC - 7pm

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May 22
Golda Meir Library Conference Center, UWM - 7pm

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