

FIRSTHAND THEATRICAL

presents

And Then What? The Children of Velvel and Sheina-Gitel Averbukh

A new play by Kevin Olson and Bena Shklyanoy

Based on Bena Shklyanoy's historical family memoir

appledoesnotfall.com

Staged reading directed by Kevin Olson



Cast (in order of appearance)

Bena.....Katya Ginzburg-Bram
Khanah.....Shanna Wells
Avrum.....Mark Bram
Dinah.....Amy Olson
Kutsya.....Steven Pennell
Esther.....Victoria Jessop
Leib.....Gershon Levine
Polina.....Erin Archer

Assistant Director and Stage Manager.....Shoshana Adler

Music Coordinator.....Michael Goldberg

***The play is performed without an Intermission. The running time is 90 minutes.
You are invited to stay and share your reactions and questions following the performance.***

Poem excerpts recited in play

“Fun Finster” by Kadya Molodowsky tr. Unknown

“Ships That Sail Forth.” by Yury Terapiano tr. Bradley Jordan

“From Here to There” by Rachel Korn tr. Seymour & Rivka Augenfeld

“The Banks of a River” by Abraham Sutskever; tr. Unknown

“The Clothes” by Rayzel Aychlinska tr. Marc Kaminsky

“The Russian Mind” by Vyacheslav Ivanovich Ivanov; tr. Unknown
“The Unfinished Sewing” by Evdokiya Rostopchina; tr. Unknown

PROGRAM NOTE

Bena Shklyanoy spent 11 years researching her vast family history. She tells their stories on her website appledoesnotfall.com. In creating this play with her, I focused on one chapter of those stories – the children of her great-grandparents Velvel and Sheina-Gitel Averbukh.

The history of the Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union forms the background of their lives. Each person’s story is told more or less chronologically – some are shorter, some longer. As Bena says in the play “researching family history is not an exact science.”

Our staged reading explores how those stories -- which were written to be read -- might best be presented theatrically. We are using photos, music and poetry to enhance the material. I am grateful to this wonderful ensemble who are supporting this exploration.

Thanks for listening to these stories and for being here!

Kevin Olson

SPECIAL THANKS

AS220

Kimberlee Beggs

Mark Bram

Community College of Rhode Island

Michael Goldberg

Mathewson Street Methodist Church

Milo Macphail

Steven Pennell

Deanna Shoss

Bert Silverberg

Judith Lynn Stillman

DONORS

Eleanor & Rev. Jonathan Ralston Almond

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Allen D. & Joan Olson

Amy & Kevin Olson

Carolyn Patierno

COMPANY BIOS

SHOSHANA ADLER (Assistant Director and Stage Manager) is a Cranston High School East graduate where she was the President of the Drama Club. She directed two plays at Cranston High School East and Hugh B. Bain Middle School. Shoshana is currently attending Community College of Rhode Island earning an Associates Degree in Technical Theater. She was the Assistant Stage Manager for CCRI’s productions of “The Haberdasher,” “When We Were Young And Unafraid,” and “Romeo And Juliet.” She recently assistant stage managed “Lonely Planet” with Counter- Productions Theater Company.

ERIN ARCHER (Polina) has been acting for the past 20 years. She is earning a Theater Performance degree from CCRI. She won the 2011 Region 1 Irene Ryan Acting competition and performed nationally at the Kennedy Center. In 2015, she portrayed The Decaffinator in

“Pickles” at the New York Fringe Festival. Past favorite roles include the Wicked Witch in the “Wizard of Oz,” Beverly in “The Receptionist,” and Evelyn in “Cephalopod.”

MARK BRAM (Avrum) and his alter ego/band Ruby Topaz have a long and colorful history on the Rhode Island music scene. They have performed at CBGB’s, Gildersleeves and L’Amour in New York and have opened for many national acts including for John Entwistle of The Who. Mark cowrote “A Piece of Our Hearts” with Al Gomes of Bignoise Records for Rhode Island Bandwagon, a project to feed the homeless. Mark has produced seven CDs, available on the web at cdbaby.com, iTunes, Amazon and other sites. Mark started acting in junior high school. He has acted in local cable productions, has done music and voice-over work for commercials, appeared in music videos for Ruby Topaz and played a juror in the movie “Amistad.” Mark lives in Providence with his wife Katya and his cat Buddy. Mark has a son Adam and daughter-in-law Carissa.

YEKATERINA "KATYA" GINZBURG-BRAM (Bena) was born in Moscow, USSR, in 1982 and immigrated to Rhode Island with her parents and paternal grandmother when she was 10. Katya received a B.F.A. in Illustration in 2004 and an M.A.T. (Master of Arts in Teaching) in 2005, both from the Rhode Island School of Design. She is a Visual Arts teacher at the elementary level for the Providence Public School District. She and her husband Mark Bram have been married for almost 10 years.

MICHAEL GOLDBERG (Music Coordinator) is thrilled to be working with First Hand Theatrical again after creating and performing the soundscape for its 2016 Providence Fringe production of “Lifepoems in Motion.” He began playing drums at 5, received his B.A. in Music from URI in 1974 and performed with jazz ensembles, orchestras, rock groups, klezmer, and polka bands in the years since. Michael also enjoys choral singing, where he can leave the drum set behind and only needs to carry his music folder and water bottle.

VICTORIA JESSOP (Esther) is from Swansea, MA and is a Performing Arts major at the Community College of Rhode Island. She has an A.F.A. in music, and is earning a second degree in theatre. She has appeared as Juliet in “Romeo and Juliet,” Magenta in “The Rocky Horror Show,” as well as Orfeo in the Italian opera “Orfeo ed Euridice.” On top of being an active performer, she is also the Assistant Percussion Director for the Joseph Case High School Marching Band.

GERSHON LEVINE (Leib) was born and bred in Brooklyn New York. He attended yeshiva from kindergarten through 12th grade, and was very active in the Save Soviet Jewry movement of the 1970s. After graduating from New York University with a degree in film and television production, he moved to Israel in 1981. There he served in the Israel Defense Forces, worked a few odd jobs and met the love of his life Rabbi Andrea Gouze. Upon their return from Israel, Gershon studied for his Masters in Jewish Communal Service from Brandeis University and has worked in the Jewish communal field for the past 26 years. He has four children Eitan, Daniella, Nili and Aurora as well as a dog Shnitzle, and a cat Metukah.

AMY OLSON (Dinah) earned her B.A. in Theater from Washington University and her M.F.A. in Theater Directing from the University of Minnesota. She appeared in First Hand Theatrical’s production of “Lifepoems in Motion” as part of the 2016 Providence Fringe Festival. A specialist in Broadway, Yiddish and Hebrew songs, Amy is the vocalist in a trio with percussionist Michael Goldberg and accordionist Christina Crowder. Amy is the Director of Hillel (the Jewish Student

Center) at the University of Rhode Island where she also serves as the chairperson of the Chaplains Association.

KEVIN OLSON & FIRST HAND THEATRICAL (Director & Co-Playwright) established First Hand Theatrical in 2013 and has created three original scripts for the company – “Lifepoems in Motion” (presented at the Providence Fringe Festival in July 2016), “Interrupting The Sermon” (presented at the Indianapolis Fringe Festival in 2015) and “This Is My Story: Mayses, 1938-1948” (presented at URI Feinstein Campus Arts and Culture in 2016). First Hand Theatrical creates original theater productions using primary source material drawn mainly from diverse personal, cultural and social histories.

Kevin holds a M.F.A. in Theatre Directing from the University of Minnesota and a B.S. in Speech and Theatre from SUNY Oneonta. He received a Twin Cities Drama Critics Circle KUDOS Award for his production of Brian Friel’s “Translations” at University of Minnesota Theatre. He serves as Part-Time Faculty at the U.R.I and as Adjunct Faculty at the Community College of Rhode Island and at the New England Institute of Technology.

STEVEN PENNELL (Yankel-Shmul, “Kutsya”) is the Coordinator of the URI Providence Campus Urban Arts and Culture Program. He has degrees from Rhode Island College, NYU and OSU in Theatre. It has been his pleasure to work as an Arts Administrator, theatre director, designer and educator for the past 40 years. He is committed to giving voice to social justice issues and to underserved, under recognized individuals especially through oral history based performance works. It has been a pleasure to work with this dynamic, talented group of artists.

BENA SHKLYANOY (Co-Playwright and Creator of “The Apple Does Not Fall” website) was born in Kiev, the capital of Ukraine, when it was part of the Soviet Union. After finishing the Kiev State University with a graduate degree in Russian Language she worked as a technical translator and editor. In 1976, she immigrated to the United States with her husband and two young daughters. Her family was featured on the cover of the Chicago Tribune when her parents arrived one year later, as the 1000th Soviet Jews to arrive to Chicago. A career change landed her in Information Technology in the US. In 2004, her family story project began. It spans over 150 years and took eleven years to complete -- and is now documented along with ongoing insights into Soviet culture and culture clash on www.appledoesnotfall.com. She is a wise and witty story teller, with deep insights into the impact of government and history and how they shape, influence and drive personal decisions that last for generations.

SHANNA WELLS (Khanah) holds a Bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts from Lyndon State College. Beginning with the Just As We Are Players in Cranston, RI, Shanna has performed up and down the East Coast. Notable roles include: Fred in "Once Upon A Mattress," Marie Antoinette in "French Gray," Natalya in "Three Sisters," and Catherine in "Arms and the Man." Acting and singing since the age of 12, Shanna comes from a performing family, and her paternal great-grandfather, Sam Silverbush, was a star on the Yiddish stage in NYC during the early 1900s.



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