

Progress Made

JNF Pacific region visits several projects in Israel / 4

Resource Fair

Vancouver Island Federation launches campaign / 7

Life Lessons

Learning improv can build confidence, and more / 12



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Occupying the same space

Symbolism encircles photographs at Zack Gallery exhibit.

OLGA LIVSHIN

Megs Gatus – whose solo show, *Leaves in Space*, opened at the Zack Gallery on Aug. 24 – unexpectedly stumbled onto an artistic path.

“It started for me when I saw a photograph of a butterfly,” she said in an interview with the *Independent*. “It was in 2010. I was fascinated by that picture. I thought maybe I could be a photographer too.”

She had never taken photos before that day. She came to Canada in 2002 from the Philippines and worked (and still works) for the City of Vancouver. “But there is a creative gene in my family,” she said. “My brother is a contemporary dancer. My sister sings. I decided I wanted to be a photographer.”



PHOTOS COURTESY MEGS GATUS

Above: Megs Gatus's solo exhibit, *Leaves in Space*, runs until Sept. 22 at the Zack Gallery.

Left: “Edges” by Megs Gatus.



In 2011, Gatus signed up for a photography workshop at a local community centre. “I bought my first camera from Craigslist,” she recalled. “It was only a hundred dollars.”

After that, she started taking photos. Portraits, flowers and landscapes were among her favourite subjects.

“I joined an online photography group on meetup.com because I wanted to share my pictures with the others,” she said. “I was amazed when the group picked my photos to display on their website. It was so encouraging. Later, a friend told me I had an eye for composition. I was elated. I wanted to learn more about the photographic art, so I enrolled in the Emily Carr certificate program, evening classes.”

She kept up her daytime job through it all, even as she graduated from Emily Carr University of Art + Design in 2018.

“I never stopped taking photos,” she continued, “but, by that time, I stopped being interested in reality photography. I didn’t want my photos to reflect the objects by themselves, the way they are off camera. I wanted people to see my photographs as an art form, different from reality. I wanted my pictures to invite curiosity in viewers.”

Gatus began experimenting with her camera settings. She also tried to move the camera while taking the photos, and the results meshed perfectly with her artistic vision. No recognizable objects manifested in her images when she used the technique called intentional camera movement, combining it with multi-exposures.

Each image is a play of colours and patterns, abstract and bright. The lines and the colours dance together in her photographs, which look more like paintings. She seems to invite viewers to use their imagination, while she herself explores every possible hue and shape to convey her ideas. Her camera is her paintbrush. “I do everything inside my camera. No Photoshop,” she said.

Please see **GATUS** on page 4

Gili Yalo returns to city

Israeli Ethiopian brings his unique music to Rothstein.

CYNTHIA RAMSAY

Israeli singer-songwriter Gili Yalo returns to Vancouver for a Chutzpah! Plus concert on Sept. 24. It’s his first time back in the city since 2015, when he was part of the band Zvuloon Dub System. Yalo said he can’t wait – “the last time at the Chutzpah! Festival was wonderful!” he told the *Independent*.

In 2015, Zvuloon Dub was touring the United States and other countries. “Part of the tour was the Chutzpah! Festival,” said Yalo, “and we finished the tour in Montego Bay, Jamaica, performing in the legendary festival SumFest. After being part of Zvuloon Dub for seven years, I felt that it was the right time and the right spot to start something new. I came back to Tel Aviv and started working on new songs for my solo career.”

Yalo’s eponymous first solo album, released in 2017, was very well-received and he followed it up in 2019 with the EP *Made in Amharica*, on which he collaborated with Dallas-based musicians in Niles City Sound, a studio in Fort Worth. He has released several singles and has played on stages and in festivals around the world.

But, even though he has been a singer his whole life and performing almost as long – including in children’s choirs and during his time in the Israel Defence Forces – Yalo resisted making music a career. Among his alternate endeavours was being a club owner.

“I opened the club for Israeli Ethiopian people, who didn’t feel safe to stand in line at Israeli clubs; back then we got a lot of refusal just because of the colour of our skin,” he explained. “At the club, there were two floors, one of R&B and reggae/dancehall music, the other one was Ethiopian music. It really affected me because I have heard and learned lots of Ethiopian music.”

“After several years of running the club, I felt that I needed to do something different in my life ... and I told myself, you don’t want to regret not trying to achieve your biggest dream, and I decided that I had to try and overcome my fears. It was natural for me to make a fusion of Ethiopian music and Western music such as jazz, funk, R&B and reggae, because that was my life between home and the outside.”

Born in Ethiopia, Yalo was 4 or 5 years old when he and his family fled to escape famine in 1984. Traveling by foot, it took them about two months to walk from the Gondar region, in northern Ethiopia, to refugee camps in Sudan, where they stayed for several months, until being airlifted to



COURTESY CHUTZPAH!

Gili Yalo performs in Vancouver on Sept. 24 for a Chutzpah! Plus event.

Israel as part of Operation Moses.

“Lots of the songs that I’m writing are talking about identity, journey and integration into society, so I think all of it came from the experience of making aliyah and the difficulty in the process,” Yalo told the *Independent*.

There are many things that Yalo would still like to accomplish, but, right now, he said, “I especially want to share music.” He wants to write good songs, collaborate “with musicians that I appreciate, and take my music to a place that it can inspire lots of people.”

Playing in Vancouver with Yalo will be Nadav Peled (guitar), Dor Heled (keys), Billy Aukstik (trumpet), Eran Fink (drums) and Geoffrey Muller (bass).

About coming to the city, Yalo said, “I want to say that Vancouver is one of the best places in the world. I’ve seen so many places thanks to music and, if it wasn’t so far away from my family, I would definitely consider living there.”

For tickets to the Sept. 24, 8 p.m., concert at the Rothstein Theatre, visit chutzpahfestival.com. 🎵



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This Week

Holocaust

6 The VHEC updates its Shanghai Oral History Project, parts of which were exhibited in 1999.

Jewish Life

10 Vancouver has a new Sephardi congregation, which meets in a laneway house for services.

Opinion

14 Letter writer takes issues with editorial that discusses Polish actions during the Holocaust.



After an acclaimed run at the Vancouver Fringe Festival in 2021 and the Edmonton and Montreal Fringes this year, *Everybody Knows* returns to its creator's hometown and the Vancouver Fringe Festival. In this semiautobiographical, one-woman musical set to nine covers of Leonard Cohen songs, Rita Sheena creates a spiraling narrative using contemporary dance, post-modern quirk and the haunting melodies of First Aid Kit.

In 2015, Jem Rolls brought his one-man show about Hungarian Jewish physicist Leo Szilard, *The Inventor of All Things*, to the Vancouver Fringe Festival. This year, he's back with another show about a forgotten Jewish nuclear physicist – Lise Meitner. *The Walk in the Snow: The True Story of Lise Meitner* explores how a shy Austrian, who only graduated high school at 23, opened so many doors and achieved so much; how she pushed against age-old sexism and murderous antisemitism; how she was the first or second woman through a whole series of doors; and how she was one of the very few physicists to refuse work on the bomb.





Vancouver-born, Jewish writer and performer ira cooper of Spec Theatre stars in the one-man show *mr.coffeehead*, which is arriving at the Vancouver Fringe Festival after a series of successful premieres at the Winnipeg, Victoria, Edmonton and Montreal Fringes. In Montreal, the "foot-fueled, slapstick tragedy about bikepacking, dreaming big and giving up in your 30s," which was written by cooper, was nominated for Outstanding Clown Show.

For the whole Fringe lineup, including Katherine Matlashewski's *Disclosure* (jewishindependent.ca/the-journey-to-healing), visit vancouverfringe.com.

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Israel Connections 4 | Back-to-School 11 |
| Music 5 | Education / Reflections 12 |
| British Columbia 7 | Community Calendar 13 |
| Performing Arts 10 | Obituaries 15 |

Coming Up...

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GATUS from page 1

In 2016, Gatus joined Photoclub Vancouver. Since then, she has participated in many of their group exhibitions, including those the group held annually at the Zack Gallery. She liked the energy of the gallery, so, a few months ago, put forward the idea of a solo show and it was accepted.

"This is my first solo exhibition in a gallery space," she said. "But I had a show recently in the Britannia Art Gallery, together with another photo artist, and I often display my works in several coffee shops."

Gatus created all the work displayed in the current show during the pandemic. "We all felt so isolated, but we all >occupy the same space. We are all responsible for our environment: plants, leaves, flowers. That's why I used the shape of a circle," she explained. "I took photos of nature: autumn leaves and spring flowers, and the circles enclose them. The circles symbolize all of us. That's what the name of the show means: Leaves in Space."

No image in the show looks like a standard photograph. One doesn't see leaves or trees, but rather abstract compositions throbbing with life and fantasy. They could be science fiction illustrations of distant galaxies, visual representations of a soul or screenshots from a computer game. Or just beauty emerging from the artist's insight.

"I like taking photos of organic matter. Leaves, plants, flowers – they are all alive," she said. "I take photos in parks and gardens around B.C. I only enhance the colours a little inside the camera. Through my technique, the images become abstract, and I try to find ways to present them differently. I want to engage viewers."

Besides the images hanging on the gallery walls, Gatus also offers large silk scarves for sale. All the scarves are imprinted with the photographs she used in the exhibit. The same swirls of colours in a different medium look surprisingly different, almost unrecognizable, but still pretty and vibrant.

"Sales are not my motivation," she said. "I want to show my pictures, to share them with people." That's why she enjoys commissions. "A client of mine liked one of the pictures in this show so much, she asked me to enlarge it and she put it in her spa office."

Gatus has big plans for these works after their run at the Zack Gallery.

"I'd like to exhibit this collection in other B.C. cities: Surrey, Port Moody, Langley. Later on, maybe even in Toronto and Montreal. I'm going to retire soon, and then I will dedicate all my time to my art."

Leaves in Space continues until Sept. 22. The official opening reception will be held at the gallery on Sept. 8, at 7 p.m. To learn more, visit the website megsgatus-abstract.myportfolio.com. ■

Olga Livshin is a Vancouver freelance writer. She can be reached at olgagodim@gmail.com.

Several JNF projects advance

Initiatives supported by B.C. donors help improve the lives of Israelis.

PAT JOHNSON

Three Israeli projects supported by the Pacific region of the Jewish National Fund of Canada are advancing well, according to Michael Sachs.

Sachs, executive director of JNF Pacific region, visited the initiatives July 7-18. He was joined on the Israel trip by local JNF supporters Lisa and Mike Averbach. The trio surveyed projects in Rishon LeZion, in Jerusalem and at Nir Galim, a moshav near Ashdod.

The project in Rishon LeZion, south of Tel Aviv, is a women's shelter that has faced challenges in reaching completion. In collaboration with the Israeli group No2Violence, the



Above: JNF Pacific region executive director Michael Sachs, left, in a meeting at Aviv House for autistic adults in Israel.

Left: Mike Averbach, left, and Michael Sachs at the construction site of the Vancouver/Winnipeg-supported women's shelter in Israel.



facility was supported by two Negev dinners in 2016 – one in Vancouver, honouring Shirley Barnett, and one in Winnipeg, honouring Peter Leipsic.

The shelter is envisioned to welcome 10 to 12 families and provide victims of domestic violence with a safe environment where they can access therapy, secure income and new housing.

Emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence is gravely lacking in Israel, where it is estimated that 65% to 70% of women and children escaping domestic abuse cannot access alternative housing due to lack of availability.

"I wanted to go and see with my eyes, with my feet on the ground, how it's progressing," said Sachs of the project. "Finally, shovels have started going into the ground and the foundation has been laid. This project, it had been stalled for multiple reasons, COVID included, but I wanted to go and see the progress because we have a commitment that we make to our donors in our com-

munity to fulfil the project no matter what."

One of the things that impressed Sachs most about the shelter is that it is adjacent to a community centre.

"For women and children who are in crisis, the ability to have a community centre, a place to go, a place for their kids to go, is extremely important, on top of just the safe haven," he said.

Last year's Negev campaign in the Pacific region raised funds for ALUT, the Israeli Society for Autistic Children, to renovate Aviv House, or *Beit Aviv*, in Jerusalem. This "home for life" for autistic adults was established in 1992 and is home to about 14 residents who require assistance in aspects of everyday life.

The building, more than 50 years old, was not wheelchair accessible and had infrastructural challenges. "It needed a lot of work," said Sachs. The project, championed by honorary project co-chairs Penny Sprackman and David Goldman, saw a new roof put on the building, new bathrooms and doorways, among other upgrades.

Autism has co-morbidities and one of the residents at Aviv House has what is described as the most complex case of epilepsy in the state of Israel.

"This individual had not been able to have a real, proper shower until the renovation," said Sachs. The renovated facility allows an assistant to accompany the resident in the new shower. "That's just one example of how it made a difference," he said. "The effect that

we are having on the life of these individuals is immense."

The ALUT project was especially meaningful for Sachs, he said, because it was the first initiative that took place after he became regional executive director, in April 2021. The fact that it also raised autism awareness in Canada was a bonus, he added.

A third project that Sachs and the Averbachs visited was Beit Haedut, the Testimony House Museum, on Moshav Nir Galim. The museum, located in a community founded by survivors of the Holocaust, focuses on the lives survivors made in the state of Israel.

This project is the focus of the current Pacific region Negev campaign and will involve an especially meaningful Vancouver component. In an interactive space, Vancouverite Marie Doduck, a child survivor of the Holocaust, will present virtually to visitors about her life. She will be the only English-language presenter in the virtual space, meaning that every Anglo visitor to the museum will "meet" her and hear her testimony.

Sachs has heard the question before: Why a Holocaust education centre so close to Yad Vashem, the world's foremost education, commemoration and research centre on the topic?

"My answer is, why not?" he replied. "Why not have more places teaching people about the Holocaust, the tragedy that happened? It's our responsibility to make sure that more and more of these centres are supported and able to function and teach a population that is starting to forget. It's not that because you have one, you can't have the other."

The quality of the museum is also significant, he said: "It is a Holocaust centre

Please see JNF on page 11



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Broza releases *Tefila*

SAM MARGOLIS



David Broza has a new album out, and more.

This past spring, Israeli singer-songwriter David Broza, with the support of Temple Emanu-El in New York City, released *Tefila*, a collection of traditional prayers with new musical compositions by Broza and orchestral arrangements by his musical collaborator, Omer Avital.

Tefila (prayer in Hebrew) incorporates various forms: pop and jazz, gospel, folk and classical. While adhering to the intentions of the prayers themselves, the compositions attempt to recreate and re-imagine the experience of the typical Shabbat service, making it, as the album notes suggest, “contemplative, but also ecstatic and wholly engaging.”

The album’s release coincided with a monthly Kabbalat Shabbat celebration, Friday Night Hub, at Temple Emanu-El, a Reform synagogue located in Manhattan. Both the music and the event are geared to young professional Jewish adults between the ages of 21 and 39.

In a recent interview with the *Independent*, Broza explained how the album came about.

“I got a call from the program director of Temple Emanu-El, Gady Levy. He asked me if I would consider writing new music to the prayers of Kabbalat Shabbat,” said Broza. “I must admit that I was somewhat reluctant as I am not very familiar with the prayers, although I know them from my father. However, after a few months of quarantine, I opened the file with the prayers and started composing the melodies. It was as if the moment had arrived and what just a few months back I thought I would never be able to accomplish, here I was composing and writing a prayer a day for 14 days. Magical.”

With this project, Broza said he ventured into the journey of *Kabbalat Shabbat*, the receiving of Shabbat, and he fell in love “with the Hebrew scriptures that were written so many generations ago.”

“Now,” he said, “I have given them a new interpretation from someone

who was born and raised in Israel. These prayers were written long before Israel existed, and long before the culture of the Hebrew language became a common language, my mother tongue. My voice and melodies blended the words and delivered the new version of these formidable and emblematic sacred verses.”

As for how the musicians came together for the album, Broza said, “I was very lucky to meet Omer, who is an incredibly talented jazz musician, on a New York City sidewalk – literally, by chance. He knew who I was, as he is Israeli, and I love his music. So, I asked him immediately to join me on the challenge of orchestrating the 14 pieces I had just composed. This was my first obstacle and Omer agreed to take it on himself.”

The pair started meeting at Avital’s studio in Brooklyn. In the process, Avital brought in musicians he performs with – all Israeli jazz musicians living in the area.

“It was so inspiring. We would play the songs, prayers, and I got to hear them interpreted in a very lively and profound way. The whole process took about a year before we were ready to record,” Broza said.

The album features 22 musicians, including string and horn sections, piano, percussion, as well as Broza on guitar and Avital on bass. Also appearing on the album is the 25-piece Moran Choir from Israel, which is conducted by Naomi Faran and with whom Broza has worked many times in his decades-long career. While in New York, Broza recruited gospel singers, too, as he wanted to add that fusion to the recording.

At the time Broza spoke with the *Independent*, he and his fellow musicians had performed the prayers from *Tefila* twice in front of a live audience at Temple Emanu-El.

“We have had about a thousand people attend each time. It’s been amazing. The rabbi of the synagogue, Joshua Davidson, leads the prayer and

Please see **BROZA** on page 13

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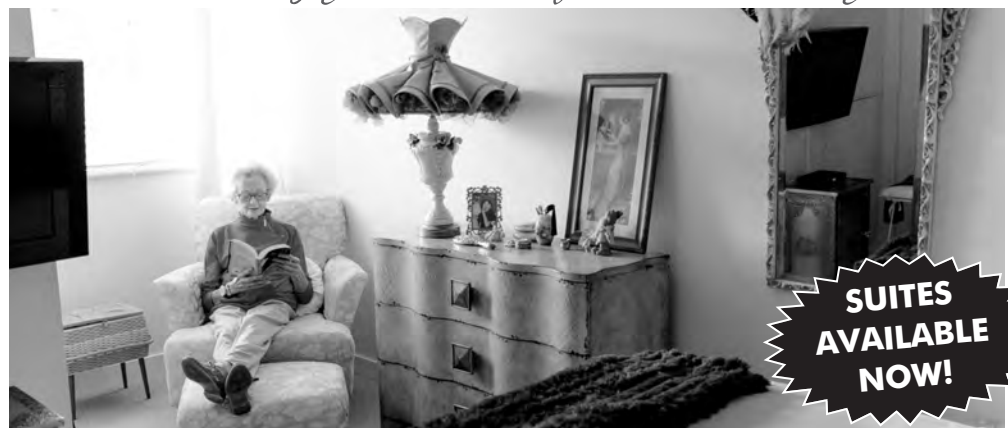
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Revisiting oral histories

VHEC's Shanghai project is made more accessible.

RYAN CHEUK HIM SUN

A little over 20 years ago, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre started the Shanghai Oral History Project. Led by Roberta Kremer and Daniel Fromowitz, the project recorded the oral histories of Vancouver's small Shanghai Jewish survivor community. They interviewed 10 survivors and/or their descendants, learning about their rich and unique experiences of survival in Shanghai.

This project, along with loaned artifacts and memorabilia, became the basis for VHEC's 1999 exhibition Shanghai: A Refuge During the Holocaust. It opened alongside another exhibition, Visas for Life: The Story of Feng Shan Ho. Both were well received, and included film screenings on the topic of Jewish refugees in Shanghai, and a demonstration of mahjong, a game which remains popular in the Jewish community in Vancouver. Once the exhibitions concluded, materials were returned to their lenders or safely placed under the VHEC's care, and

the interviews were catalogued and filed away.

In January 2022, I began my co-op position as digital projects coordinator with the VHEC. One of the first tasks assigned to me was to help improve accessibility to the Shanghai interviews and the audio-tape transcriptions. In the 20 years since these oral history transcriptions were created, the VHEC has changed its digital file management and storage system. Some files were missing while others were mislabeled. Many files would no longer open within the current version of Microsoft Word. At the top of some transcriptions was a disclaimer: "The whole tape is not transcribed, only that which is related to Shanghai." Throughout the transcriptions, comments like "(side discussions)" denote what the original transcriber believed to be unrelated to the subject matter.

Rummaging through these transcriptions, it became apparent that I would not simply be "tidying up." By revisiting the Shanghai Oral History Project, my goal was to do more



Manfred Gottfried and a group of men on the stairs to the Dr. Sun Yat-sen mausoleum.

than just emphasize the unique experiences of this small group of individuals. As I listened to their interviews and transcribed their words, I wanted to offer a glimpse into how Shanghai Jewish survivors expressed themselves and reflected on their time in Shanghai, while also highlighting things that weren't considered when the exhibition first opened 20 years ago.

On the list of possible interviewees for the Shanghai Oral History Project, George Melcor's was the only name with "very elderly" added beside it in parentheses. Listening to George's interview, it became clear that this would be a challenging transcription. George sometimes mumbled, which made it difficult to comprehend his words, or he would mix up his stories. But, for 88-year-



Gerda Gottfried Kraus, 1940s.

old George, Shanghai left an impression. When asked by interviewer

Please see SHANGHAI on page 16

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Vancouver Island campaign

SAM MARGOLIS

The Jewish Federation of Victoria and Vancouver Island (JFVVI) is trying something a little different for its annual United Jewish Appeal campaign launch this year. On Sept. 18, they will celebrate Jewish diversity in British Columbia with a community resource fair. The event will be held at the Jewish Community Centre of Victoria, from 1 to 4 p.m., and will feature presenters from both Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland.

“We are changing things up this year,” said Coral Grant, executive director of JFVVI. “Usually, we have a guest speaker. The past few years, it has been on Zoom. This year, we wanted to reach the wider community by having a launch we could do in person. We are really hoping that, with this fair, we can encourage people to come out and see what is available in the Jewish community in British Columbia, as well as locally.”

As it does every year, the JFVVI campaign runs from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31. Mailings and outreach through fliers to members of the community are currently underway and, soon, volunteer canvassers will continue these fundraising efforts. For 2022/23, the campaign’s objective is to raise \$175,000 – or \$10,000 more than it did in 2021/22. The previous year’s campaign exceeded its target, as it included a separate campaign raising funds for Ukraine.

The response to the call for fair presenters was tremendous – JFVVI quickly ran out of available display space at the Victoria JCC. The fair will take place in the main area of the building, the same location as the Lox, Stock and Bagel Deli, which ordinarily operates Tuesdays to Fridays, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

Many of the 20 tables will be operated by representatives from Vancouver-area organizations, such as the Jewish Museum and Archives, the Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, the pluralistic Jewish teen movement BBYO, the Canadian Jewish Political Action Committee (CJPAC), Birthright Israel and March of the Living.

Among the local groups will be the JFVVI, the Victoria Jewish Choir, PJ Library, the Victoria Shoah Project, Canadian Hadassah-WIZO, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA), the Jewish Burial Society, the theatre group Bema Productions and the Hebrew school from Congregation Emanu-El. All of the Victoria congregations – Chabad of Vancouver

Island, Congregation Emanu-El and Kolot Mayim Reform Temple – will be participating and the Mekorah Institute, co-founded by Rabbi Matt Ponak and dedicated to bringing integrated and sustainable spiritual transformation to individuals and religious lineages, will be there, too.

At the fair, the Victoria JCC will highlight the Victoria International Jewish Film Festival, now in its eighth year, which takes place both online and in person at the Vic Theatre in downtown Victoria Nov. 1-6. Jewish Family

and supports organizations, individuals and families both regionally and in Israel with grants and scholarships and through partnerships with community leaders. It coordinates, plans and promotes social, educational, cultural, health and welfare programs and activities in the Jewish community. The JFVVI is committed to building strong, vibrant Jewish communities throughout the Island.

For more information about how to donate to the Jewish Federation of Victoria and Vancouver Island, visit jewishvictoria.ca.

Sam Margolis has written for the Globe and Mail, the National Post, UPI and MSNBC.



Jewish Family Services Vancouver Island will extend its hours for the Sept. 18 community resource fair that launches the Jewish Federation of Victoria and Vancouver Island’s annual campaign this year.

Services Vancouver Island, which sells fresh produce at wholesale prices every second Sunday in the summertime from the JCC parking lot, will extend its hours for the occasion.

Recent estimates on the size of the Jewish community in Victoria range from 1,500 to 3,000 people. One point on which most can agree, however, is that, whatever the number, it has been increasing. The city is now home to three synagogues, a secular humanist group, a kosher bakery and numerous other organizations and social and cultural activities.

“There are a lot of folks who have moved here recently, and it may be interesting for them to find out what is happening here,” Grant said. “For the locals, having some of the organizations from the Mainland may be an eye-opener. We are really hopeful that, in covering a broad spectrum of organizations, the community will find something which is new and exciting for them.”

“I am really excited,” she said, “because this is an in-person gathering and I’m excited that we have been able to collaborate with people on the Mainland to showcase the diversity in the province and bring some of that to the Island. To do this as a campaign launch is kind of a novelty for us and, hopefully, it will all come together and work.”

About to embark on its 36th year of operation, JFVVI is the umbrella organization of the Jewish community in the capital region and Vancouver Island. It raises funds for local groups

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JWest Announces Capital Campaign Leadership

**Gordon & Leslie Diamond, Honorary Co-Chairs
Alex Cristall, Capital Campaign Chair**



We are delighted to welcome this highly respected group of leaders to the JWest Capital Campaign Cabinet, and we are deeply grateful to them for taking on this important role."

—LESLIE DIAMOND, O.B.C.



(L-R) Michael Averbach, Michelle Pollock, Marcie Flom, Eldad Goldfarb, Neil Pollock, Lana Marks Pulver, Barry Glotman, Leslie and Gordon Diamond, Alex Cristall, Shirley Barnett, Frances Belzberg, Lisa Pullan, Josephine Nadel, Russ Klein, Ezra S. Shanken, Jonathon Leipsic, Hodie Kahn



Once in a lifetime, an opportunity arises that will truly influence the lives of generations to come. JWest is that opportunity. A Jewish community project at heart, its legacy will stretch beyond, creating an invaluable asset for all."

—GORDON DIAMOND, O.B.C., O.C.

A diverse group of community leaders and philanthropists has been selected to lead the capital campaign for JWest—one of the largest capital projects currently underway in Vancouver.

The Diamonds will work closely with the JWest Capital Campaign Cabinet, which will act as the main fundraising body for the capital campaign.

Capital Campaign Cabinet chair, Alex Cristall, has proven leadership experience and deeply rooted connections with all three key partners involved in the project.

Members of the JWest Capital Campaign Cabinet span multiple generations and professional industries and have held a variety of leadership roles locally and globally.



The three lead organizations involved in JWest, The Jewish Community Centre, Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver, and King David High School have signed a memorandum of understanding. This important document will see them work together to fulfill a shared vision rooted in extensive community and public consultation.

"JWest is an ambitious project," said Cristall, "and it will take commitments from all levels of government as well as from private donors to bring it to life. I am confident that the team we have brought together will be successful."

"We are grateful to The Government of British Columbia, which has generously provided \$25 million to support the first phase of construction. We are also extremely pleased to see a forthcoming commitment from the Government of Canada," said Cristall.

JWest Key Partners:



Transforming the Oakridge neighbourhood, JWest will include a vital multi-use community centre, best-in-class daycare, expanded seniors programs, an enlarged Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, a new King David High School, as well as 500+ residential rental homes. It is also expected to include new office space for more than 20 not-for-profit community organizations.

For information and updates visit **JWestNow.com**

New Sephardi congregation

PAT JOHNSON

Vancouver has a new Sephardi congregation – and, while unique in the city, its structure would be familiar to plenty of Israelis and to Jews from places with a larger Orthodox population.

In recent years, alternative housing options have expanded in Vancouver, including coach houses and laneway homes. In an alley behind a home on 12th Avenue, just east of Cambie, passersby might notice a building that resembles one of these newfangled domiciles. Were it not for the mezuzah and the modest sign, they might have no idea that the space is a place for communal gatherings. According to the builder, who does triple duty as the president and leader of daily services, it is not a synagogue.

“A synagogue is a little bit tricky,” said Yoseph Hayun. “I could get [approval for] that, but it’s going to take a long time and I would have to go to a board of variance. We said this was kind of a book club.”

It’s not a lie. “There are lots of books and we all read the books,” he said. “Then we talk about them.”

The *kehillah* (congregation or community), called Klal Israel, gathers in the backyard of Shimon Kalhon. The idea started after an informal group of Sephardi families, many of them Israeli, had been getting together for holidays for some time. In Israel, and in places of dense Orthodox populations like parts of the United States, intimate gathering places serving neighbourhood families are not uncommon.

Kalhon said Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and other holidays have taken place under tents and they decided to make it more permanent.

The founders – Kalhon, Hayun and Brian Libin – have nothing against the existing Sephardi synagogue, Beth Hamidrash. They just enjoy the sense of family they get from their small congregation. Kalhon and Hayun also wanted something more like they were familiar with from their upbringing – Kalhon in Tripoli, Libya, and Hayun in Ramat Gan, Israel. (Libin is from Edmonton.)

“For us, we are like a family,” said Kalhon. “We don’t have any politics in the synagogue. We don’t have any membership. Every day after [services] we provide breakfast. Every Shabbat, we have lunch.



Left to right are Yoseph Hayun, Brian Libin and Shimon Kalhon, founders of Kehillat Klal Israel.

We do all the holidays together.”

Hayun leads most services, unless Rabbi Yechiel (Helik) Orihman is available. Hayun does not have a rabbinic *semichah* (ordination), but has served as a cantor almost his entire adult life. He also leads classes and has a conversion group of five at present.

Attendance at morning minyan varies. “Sometimes we have 10, sometimes 12, sometimes 15,” Hayun said. “On the holidays, thank God, we have a beautiful minyan. Sometimes we have 30 people.”

The building itself is about 500 square feet, with air conditioning for summers like the 2021 heat dome, area heaters for winter, plumbing for a washroom and a handwashing station. There is also a fully operational kitchen in a covered patio space of about 400 square feet. There is a screen for presentations and classes, as well as room for cozy meals together.

Kalhon jokes about his family’s long walk to services – out the back door and down a few steps.

Kalhon is known to many Vancouver Jews as the owner of Sabra Kosher Restaurant and Bakery, which he opened in 1991 on arrival in the city after a lifetime in the food sector in Israel. At Klal Israel, he is the *gabbai* (lay leader).

For Libin, the treasurer, the new congregation has been an opportunity to improve his Hebrew skills.

“All the prayers are in Hebrew,” he said. “There’s not much English. There are times where Yossi [Hayun] will explain things, but, for the most part, I’m using a book that’s all in Hebrew. I didn’t used to. Most of us who aren’t native

speakers of Hebrew, our Hebrew has improved.”

The linguistic choice is deliberate.

“This is the idea: to bring the young Israelis,” Hayun said, adding that he meets many Israelis on his soccer team, playing golf and around town who do not attend shul. “My vision is to bring them in, to try once a week, once a month, doesn’t matter. Just bring them in. That’s basically the idea and people are coming... slowly, slowly.”

Funds for the building and its operations come from the three founders and anyone else who wants to make an out-of-pocket contribution.

“We have others who are regulars who help out whenever they can,” Libin said.

While the place technically houses a book club, Hayun said it was designed following the religious laws for how a synagogue must be built.

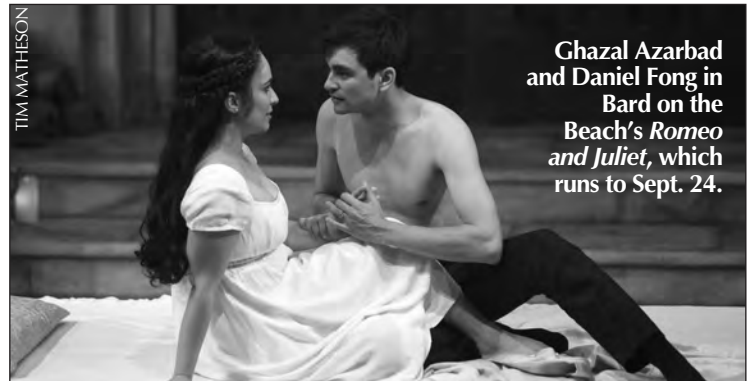
“It’s not like you do whatever,” he said. “There are rules that you need to follow. I know the rules and I went over the books again and again to make sure that we followed the whole thing.”

The *aron kodesh*, the Torah ark, is the focus of the modest structure and the Torah covers were commissioned by local people for scrolls that were purchased from Israel.

The trio have already mooted what will happen if success renders the space – which seats 40 – too small. They shrug and say they’ll find a bigger place. In the meantime, Klal Israel is open for anyone who wants to join – and stay for a shmooze and refreshments after services. ■

Romeo & Juliet sublime

TOVA KORNFELD



Ghazal Azarbad and Daniel Fong in Bard on the Beach’s *Romeo and Juliet*, which runs to Sept. 24.

William Shakespeare’s tragic love story, *Romeo and Juliet*, about teenaged lovers who come together despite the objections of their families, resonates with contemporary audiences as much as it did with the Elizabethan crowd.

Since it was written in 1595, *Romeo and Juliet* has spawned countless adaptations, including the musical *West Side Story*, the animated feature *Gnomeo and Juliet* and even a Palestinian girl meets Israeli boy version. So how do you present this well-known tale from a different angle? You do what director Anita Rochon did for this year’s Bard on the Beach production – start at the end, when Juliet wakes up in the family crypt next to dead Romeo, and flash back to the beginning. As well, tell the story from Juliet’s perspective, as she grapples with the question of how this situation came to be.

Rochon has taken some creative liberties with Shakespeare’s text, nipping and tucking here and there, and leaving out the characters of Lord Capulet and the Montague parents. Purists may not appreciate that surgery but will like that the play is set in its proper era. However, if you don’t know the story, the time line is a bit confusing, as the scenes jump around a bit, unlike the linear unfolding of the original text, so you should read the program summary beforehand.

From the minute you walk into the small tent and are met with the sight of the set, you know you’re in for a treat. Front and centre is an elevated marble-like tomb surrounded by 300 skulls strategically stacked around the macabre crypt, all bathed in flickering candlelight. The crypt’s massive iron doors open and close on an ever-changing backdrop as actors make their entries and exits. The tomb disappears into the ground on scene changes while a balustrade rises from the ground for the iconic balcony scene. Kudos to set designer Pam Johnson for a job well done.

The acting in this production is also first rate. Each and every one of the nine actors gets the job done. Daniel Fong as Romeo, Ghazal Azarbad as Juliet and Jennifer Lines as Lady Capulet are particularly strong in their roles. Fong nicely portrays the naïve confusion of the young swain while Azarbad shows strength of character and resolve not normally seen in depictions of teenage girls. The chemistry between the eponymous duo is palpable.

But it is Lines – morphing from gracious and charming party host to ferocious tiger mother when she gives Juliet the disinheritance ultimatum – who captures the essence of the play’s unspoken dilemma: Do we marry who our parents/families pick for us or do we marry who we love, no matter the consequences.

In a nod to role reversal, which seems to be the flavour of the season for Bard, Andrew McNee plays Juliet’s nurse, Sara Vickruck does double duty as the doomed Mercutio and the Apothecary and Anita Wittenberg plays Friar Laurence. McNee is one of the best comedic actors this city has, and his antics on the boards inject much-needed comic relief into an otherwise dark script.

Raising the production to sublime are the costumes (richly coloured, textured gowns for the ladies and sexy doublets and britches for the men), the dramatic lighting and the trio of choreographed sword fights – all backgrounded by the haunting tones of handheld bells that herald scene changes.

As Rochon points out in the program notes: “We know how their story ends and, in a way, we know how all our stories will end. The way we get there is where the mystery begins.”

You don’t have to be a hopeless romantic to appreciate the beauty of this production, which runs to Sept. 24 on the Howard Family Stage at Vanier Park. For tickets, visit bardonthebeach.org or call 604-739-0559. ■

Tova Kornfeld is a Vancouver freelance writer and lawyer.

Be a cautious online shopper

As students prepare for the upcoming school year, supply shortages may limit the options available to shoppers – and make them more vulnerable to scams when shopping online.

“Last year, nearly one-third of scams reported by Canadians to BBB [Better Business Bureau] Scam Tracker were about online purchase scams, with a little over 73% of those targeted losing money,” said Simone Lis, president and chief executive officer of BBB, serving Mainland British Columbia.

Online purchase scams often start when scammers target shoppers with phony deals, enticing ads and attractive but fake websites. Once an order is placed, victims find they receive nothing or the items they do receive are counterfeit or inferior to what the ads promised.

To ensure you have a pleasant back-to-school shopping experience, BBB advises shoppers to keep the following tips in mind when shopping for supplies:

Shop with familiar retailers. Shop with businesses you know and trust to ensure you’re getting a quality product and good customer service.

Know what you’re shopping for. Set a budget, identify what tech (or other) capabilities will benefit your student and compare your options. Then, shop around for a reliable seller.

Avoid making quick purchases

while browsing social media. Scammers advertise websites that offer great deals or hard-to-find products, but either don’t deliver the product at all or deliver counterfeit products. Do more research on those products by doing an online search for more information and reviews.

Don’t buy from impostors. Fraudsters may use the name, logo and other characteristics of brands you trust. Closely examine the website to verify that they are who they say they are. Make sure the website has “https” in the URL (the extra s is for “secure”) and a small lock icon on the address bar.

Pay by credit card. Credit cards often provide more protection against fraud than other payment methods. Never use debit cards for online purchases.

Keep a record of what you ordered. Make a note of the website where you ordered goods. Take a screenshot of the item ordered, in case the website disappears or you receive an item that differs from what was advertised.

Approach “too good to be true prices” with caution. If the price seems too good to be true, it probably is.

Research the website before making a purchase. Some fake companies may copy the BBB seal to legitimize themselves. If it is real, clicking on the seal will lead to the company’s BBB profile. And do an internet search with the company name and the words

“complaint,” “scam” and “review.” This may locate other complaints about the site or let you know if they are legitimate or not.

Scamadviser.com can often tell you how long a website has been in operation. Scammers create and close websites regularly, so a site that has only been operating for a short time could raise red flags.

Verify customer reviews. Scammers frequently post positive reviews on their websites, either copied from honest sites or created by scammers (fake profiles, bots, etc.). Look at the bad reviews first, as these are more likely to be real and can help identify scams.

If you think you’ve encountered an online shopping scam, be sure to report it to the right place and protect other unsuspecting consumers:

- file a complaint with the Better Business Bureau at bbb.org or bbb.org/scamtracker,
- file a report at Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre, antifraudcentre-centreantifraude.ca or 1-888-495-8501,
- report ads that violate standards, copyright or other policies to the correct source such as Facebook (facebook.com/business/help), Instagram (help.instagram.com) or Amazon, and
- call the phone number on the back of the credit card to report a fraud and request your money back. ❏

– Courtesy Better Business Bureau

Help teens with their English

Want to make a difference in the lives of Israeli teens? Consider joining Israel Connect,

a program where local adult volunteers connect online, one-on-one, via Zoom, with Israeli high school students who want to improve their English conversation and reading skills. The program starts on Oct. 23 and is organized by Chabad Richmond, in partnership with the Israeli Ministry of Education. It entails a small and rewarding commitment of 45 minutes once a week.

There are currently 15 local volunteers participating in the Israel Connect program as tutors/mentors, and Chabad Richmond is looking to increase that number, since the need continues to grow.

“We’re looking for volunteer retirees, seniors or any adults with flexible schedules to join the Israel Connect program. No previous tutoring or teaching experience is necessary and the curriculum is provided for tutors/mentors,” said Shelley Civkin, local program coordinator. “If you’re an adult and a fluent English speaker, you have basic computer skills and you own a computer with a camera, that’s pretty much all you need. Oh, and, of course, a strong desire to help Israeli youth.”

Volunteers do not need to speak

Hebrew and can tutor from home. Basic training and technical support are available.

Time preferences of volunteer tutors/mentors will be coordinated beforehand and sessions take place in the morning between 7 and 11 a.m. Vancouver time, any day between Sunday to Thursday. “All Israel Connect asks is a minimum commitment of one school year, in order to ensure consistency for the students,” said Civkin.

“It’s a meaningful and practical way for community members to support Israel and build bridges between diaspora Jews and Israelis,” said Rabbi Yechiel Baitelman of Chabad Richmond. “You’ll be doing a mitzvah, while investing in Israel and its young people. Plus, good English skills will give them an advantage in accessing post-secondary education and getting better jobs. English proficiency is crucial to Israeli students, since it accounts for a third of their entrance exam marks for university.”

“Partnering with the Israeli Ministry of Education, the Israel Connect program targets teens from less advantaged neighbourhoods in Israel. Most volunteers really enjoy helping their Israeli students and develop a lasting bond with them. It often goes beyond simply tutoring the curriculum, and turns into friendship and mentorship,” added

Civkin. “Conversations sometimes continue long after the school year is over. This kind of one-on-one tutoring makes a huge difference in their lives, both educationally and personally. . . . Estimating the impact of this program on Israeli youth is, of course, speculative, but we do know for certain that it helps improve their school grades. It’s incredibly satisfying to know that you’re doing something concrete to help Israeli students better their lives.”

The curriculum consists mainly of a tour of Israel, focusing on the wealth of historically, culturally and biblically significant cities and sites. It’s not uncommon for both the students and the tutors to learn something new about Israel at each lesson.

To volunteer, or for more information, contact Deborah Freedman at Chabad Richmond, 604-277-6427, or email programs@chabadrichmond.com.

For anyone who can’t participate as a tutor, Chabad Richmond welcomes financial support for the Israel Connect program, which covers overhead costs like technical support, staffing and other administrative costs. To support the program call Chabad Richmond or email admin@chabadrichmond.com. ❏

– Courtesy Chabad Richmond

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JNF from page 4

that, in my eyes, punches above its weight class.”

Being close to Ashdod, where many cruise ships arrive, and near the Negev Desert, the location is also easily accessible for visitors.

Sachs hand-delivered Doduck’s recorded testimony to the museum. He credited the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre for its assistance in making the technically complex project possible.

Returning from his first trip to Israel as JNF Pacific region executive director, Sachs was rejuvenated.

“Most people come back from Israel and they’re drained,” he said. “I came back with a newfound energy because, when you see the fingerprint JNF Canada has on the state of Israel and you see the efforts, the progress, the impact that our local community – our tiny little local community – is having on the ground there and for the people in Israel, it’s awe-inspiring. It really is. You come out of it and you are more energized than ever to continue to make a difference.”

Lance Davis, chief executive officer of JNF Canada, commended the Pacific region in a statement to the *Independent*.

“On behalf of JNF Canada, I am so proud that we have advanced two key projects for our organization, the Vancouver/Winnipeg women’s shelter and the renovation of the Aviv House supporting autistic individuals,” said Davis. “Thanks to the generosity of donors from the Pacific region, we are able to help build the facilities that will transform the lives of vulnerable Israelis in a profound manner. Our JNF supporters can take great pride in the fact that together we are building the foundation for Israel’s future.”

Due to COVID, JNF has not held a Negev Dinner in Vancouver since 2019, opting instead to run campaigns without the traditional gala event. Sachs hopes 2023 will see a return to normalcy.

“God willing, we’ll all be able to be back together next year for a wonderful and beautiful Negev Dinner with a wonderful honoree,” he said.

Many reasons to learn improv

CYNTHIA RAMSAY

“When I teach a series of eight classes, I see people who are quite scared and nervous and sometimes very shy, and watch them become daring and playful improvisers towards the last class, and that is quite satisfying,” Cass Freeman told the *Independent*.

Freeman and her husband, Irwin Levin, are teaching an improv workshop with a focus on teamwork at Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House Sept. 13. As well, Freeman is teaching a series at the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre that runs eight Tuesday nights, starting Sept. 20.

“We really care about our students’ experiences,” said Freeman, who has taught improv comedy games on and off since the early 1990s. “We really want them to enjoy themselves and relax so they can be spontaneous. We rarely put people on the spot and, when we do, we coach them, so they don’t have to struggle up there alone.”

Freeman was an injured dancer when she found Vancouver Theatresports, now called the Improv Centre. “I saw them perform one night in the 1980s,” she said, “and I thought, ‘I can do that!’ So, I took a series of classes there and ended up performing in their first-ever Rookie Night. I was terrified, but I remember the audience endowing me as embarrassed, so I just hid behind the other players for a whole scene and did OK.”

“Improv is such a positive form of theatre,” she added. “The people are really great, very playful and intelligent. I was quite a negative person in some ways, during my 20s especially. Improv really turned around my life. I was much more accepting of other people’s ideas. And I found the work to be really healing.”

Levin first heard about improv from Freeman. “I was doing standup comedy when I met Cass and found out that she was doing improv,” he said. “I was attracted to both Cass and improv simultaneously! (We met in 1994 and were married in 2000.) Now I will be taking a standup course as well as assisting Cass in improv workshops, so I will be getting the best of both comedy worlds.”

The couple has recently started their own improv business.

“We’d like to spread some playfulness, laughter and joy around our little corner of the world,” said Freeman about the venture. “We’d like to teach improv games for teamwork, stress reduction and creativity or just plain fun in as many different organizations as we can. People in the Jewish community have an amazing sense of humour, so we’d love to teach anyone in the community who is interested.”

Freeman has worked as a freelance journalist in radio, television and print since 1987. Her first article in the *Jewish Independent*, which was then called the *Jewish Western Bulletin*, was in 1982 – about human rights activist Judy Feld Carr and her efforts over some 30 years to bring Jews out of Syria. Her most recent article was this past April, a profile of Vancouver Playback Theatre.

Local readers may also know Freeman’s name from *The World According to Keith*, a 2004 documentary for Bravo TV that she co-produced, about Theatresports creator and instructor Keith Johnstone.

“Keith Johnstone created Theatresports, along with his university students in Calgary, during the late 1970s,” explained Freeman. “He has also taught improv all over the world and there are now more than 150 theatre troupes who perform Theatresports and other formats he has created, like Maestro Impro and his favourite format, called the Life Game. You can see Maestro Impro at Tighrope Theatre in Vancouver.”

“Keith trusted me to make a documentary about him because after I watched his righthand man, Dennis Cahill, do a weekend workshop in Calgary, he said to me, ‘You were great, you were like a fly on the wall. We’ve had other journalists here and they were quite obnoxious.’

“Keith became like a second father to me,” said Freeman. “My dad came from England and Keith has the same wicked British sense of humour. We still keep in touch and I have an autographed book



ADAM ABRAMS

Students Adrienne Fitch and Brian Nguyen, with instructor Irwin Levin behind them. Levin and Cass Freeman teach a free workshop on Sept. 13.

Far left: Cass Freeman teaches an eight-class improv course at the Roundhouse this month, starting Sept. 20.



IRWIN LEVIN

from him that says, ‘Be average, Cassandra,’ since he noticed that when I was in his workshops that I tried too hard.”

Another memorable moment in her career came when she was teaching at the Vancouver School Board night school, which she did for about five years. “One night,” said Freeman, “the administrator called me into his office and said, ‘The instructor next door to you is complaining that his students can’t concentrate because your students are laughing too much.’ It was the best insult anyone has ever given me.”

Levin recalled a private workshop he and Freeman did this past July. “One of the students was so inspired,” said Levin, “he has decided to pursue a career in acting.”

But aspirations to be an actor are not the main reason to learn improv.

“Improv can relieve stress, reduce stage fright and improve self-esteem,” said Freeman. “Improv games encourage creativity, quick thinking and communication skills, and are a great tool for breaking the ice, having fun and building team spirit.”

She described improv as a team sport, with almost all the games being about supporting the other person or people onstage with you. This is why it’s a great way to get over stage fright, she said, “because the focus will rarely be on you alone, like it is in standup comedy.”

Freeman and Levin welcome people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to take their classes, as well as members of the LGBTQ+ community. And, as mentioned previously, fellow members of the Jewish community.

“We’d love to hear someone say ‘oy!’ on our stage. Or any other Yiddish or Hebrew phrases,” said Freeman. “There aren’t many improvisers out there who are Jewish and we’d like to change that.”

There are also not many improv instructors who are Jewish, she said. Nor instructors who have a disability.

“I’m among the many people who have an invisible disability,” she shared. “I’ve had it since I was 19. The way it affects me today, a few decades later, is that I can’t stand in line on pavement and I can’t walk at all unless I’m wearing a very shock absorbing running shoe. So, when I teach, I have to wear runners. At our last workshop, nine out of the 14 people participating said they had something physically wrong with them. We are delighted to be able to teach people with varying physical abilities.”

The free team-focused workshop on Sept. 13, 6-7:30 p.m., is part of Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House’s Generations Moving Together (GMT) program, which “encourage[s] community involvement, movement, learning and connection between younger and older generations.” To register for the workshop, contact GMT coordinator Daniela Gunn-Doerge at dgunndoerge@mpnh.org or call 604-879-8208, ext. 225. (Refreshments are provided.)

The improv classes at the Roundhouse run on Tuesdays from Sept. 20 to Nov. 8, 6:30-8:30 p.m. It’s \$160, but half price for people who have a Leisure Access Card. Freeman and Levin can be reached at casan@shaw.ca or 604-872-4638. ♫

Finding my “why”

TIA SACKS

As a former World Jewish Congress Ronald S. Lauder Fellow, I attended the first Ronald S. Lauder Fellowship Diplomacy Summit. The fellowship is an international cohort of top Jewish students with an interest in global Jewish advocacy who are invited to Europe to participate in high-level meetings with government institutions. From the moment I arrived at the summit in Brussels, the excitement felt by the other fellows and staff was infectious.

We began the trip in the European Union offices, hearing from EU members about the state of Europe and advocating for the European Jewish community. This was followed by a visit to NATO. The number of brilliant minds in these rooms was astounding, and it was such a privilege to watch as my small cohort of young Jewish students and professionals posed challenging questions to EU and NATO leaders regarding the state of European Jewry, global antisemitism and recent world tensions.

The same can be said about our visit to UNESCO in Paris the following day. As a media and information studies student with a niche interest in big tech policies, I was intrigued to learn about the organization’s recent report, *History Under Attack: Holocaust Distortion and Denial Within Social Media*, directly from its writers. I am hopeful that, combined with efforts to address online harms in countries such as Canada, the UNESCO report will spur positive change in hate speech regulation worldwide.

Once the summit concluded, with my Jewish pride at an all-time high, I hopped on a plane to Israel for a much-needed reunion with family and friends, celebrating Shabbat with my great-aunt and others at her beautiful Jerusalem apartment.

After we studied the week’s *parashah* (Torah portion), a neighbour began to translate a book written in Hebrew by our relative about our family’s history in Israel. Although I had heard these names growing up, I had not fully understood their weight or meaning. It was there, sitting with family and friends, and with the WJC experience fresh in my mind, that I began to appreciate their significance and what my Jewish heritage really means to me.

My great-great-grandfather was Zvi Pesach Frank, chief rabbi of Jerusalem during the end of the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate of Palestine. He was instrumental in the creation of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, and in the appointment of Rav Kook (Abraham Isaac Kook) as the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi. I learned more of his historic contributions and my family’s legacy of working to build and protect Israel.

My experience as a World Jewish Congress Lauder Fellow and attending the summit took on a new layer of meaning. Not only am I inspired and committed to continuing my work in global Jewish advocacy, but I have also developed a determination to follow this path, grounded in my profound pride in my family and their accomplishments over the generations. For that, I am grateful to World Jewish Congress, to my great-aunt and to the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. I look forward to what’s ahead, fully appreciating the rationale supporting my aspirations, and I will hold the summer of 2022 near and dear to my heart.

Following the conference and my visit to Israel, it became clear to me that, in high school – when I found my footing in Jewish leadership and learned more about my intersecting Muslim and Jewish background – I had found the “what” of my life’s passion. It was this summer that I found the “why.” ♫

Tia Sacks is a Vancouver native going into her fourth year at Western University in the faculty of media and information studies. She participated in the World Jewish Congress Lauder Fellowship and is currently the vice-president of the Israel committee at Hillel Western and an intern at the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

Community Calendar

Vancouver International Flamenco Festival includes Henry Garf (guitar) from Kara Miranda's Montreal-based company. Sept. 3-25. Tickets/info: vancouverflamenco-festival.org.

Historic Jewish Walking Tour of Gastown and Strathcona with Jewish Museum. Sept. 4 & 18, 10:30am, starting at 700 E Pender St. \$20 via eventbrite.com.

Peace Talks, which addresses the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, is performed by Bema Productions at Victoria Fringe Festival. Until Sept. 4 at Emanu-El Synagogue's Black Box Theatre. \$13/\$11 from victoriafringe.com.

When I Have Wings to Fly, solo exhibit of sculptures & paintings by Suzy Birstein. Works are inspired by Frida Kahlo. Until Sept. 4 at PoMoArts. pomoarts.ca.

JunkOy! Klezmer Band performs in MacLean Park Music concert. Sept. 5, 2-4pm, at MacLean Park.

Labour Day falafel picnic with the Bayit. Sept. 5, 4-7pm, at South Arm Park. Come with the whole family! facebook.com/pg/the-bayit/events.

Riding the Crest of the Wave, featuring the art of Diana Zoe Coop. Until Sept. 5 at Hearth Gallery. theheartartsonbowen.ca.

After School Movie Night. Sept. 6, 3:45pm, at Waldman Library: *A Series of Unfortunate Events*.

Vancouver Mayoral Pre-Election Townhall, hosted by CIJA & SUCCESS. Hear from candidates on various topics. Sept. 7, 6pm, at Temple Shalom. Email questions in advance to vancouver@cija.ca.

Shrinkflation: An Even Bigger Problem Than Inflation? A webinar with Keil Investment Group on tax & investment tips to keep more money in your pocket. Register for Sept. 8, 9am, 1pm or 5pm, via keilinvestmentgroup.com.

Jewish Federation campaign launch with Fran Drescher in-person and, live from Los Angeles, Mayim Bialik and Jonathan Cohen. Focus of conversation is mental health. Sept. 8, 7:30 p.m., at Beth Israel. Tickets (\$18): jewishvancouver.ca.

Vancouver Fringe Festival includes Katherine Matlashewski (*Disclosure*), Jem Rolls (*The Walk in the Snow: The True Story of Lise Meitner*) & Rita Sheena (*Everybody Knows*, set to Leonard Cohen covers) & ira cooper (*mr.coffeehead*). Sept. 8-18. vancouverfringe.com.

Shabbat with a Difference musical service with optional BBQ. Sept. 9, 5:30pm, at Beth Israel. \$50m/\$65nm, \$36/teen, \$18/youth (6-12); optional \$25 per wine bottle. Register at bethisrael.ca.

Community Kabbalat Shabbat dinner & service led by Rabbi Gibbs. All ages, friends & family invited. Sept. 9, 6pm, at Har El. harel.org.

Got Kabbalat Shabbat? Bring food, chairs, blankets. Challah & grape juice provided. Sept. 9, 6:30pm, at Garry Point. RSVP by midday Thursday before so Beth Tikvah can order challah: 604-271-6262 or via btikvah.ca.

Take This Waltz, celebrating music of Leonard Cohen, staged by Idan Cohen (Ne Sans Opera & Dance), set by Amir Ofek, lighting by Itai Erdal, presented by Chutzpah! Festival. Vancouver Opera & Pacific Opera Victoria. Sept. 10-11, 8pm, at Rothstein Theatre. \$40/\$34. chutzpahfestival.com.

Beth Israel Hebrew School, Geshet Club (ages 3 & 4) to Grade 7. Starts Sept. 11. Register: bethisrael.ca.

Challah Prince family baking event with Beth Israel, PJ Library & PJ Our Way. Pizza lunch & a challah to take home included. Sept. 11, 12:15pm, at BI. \$36/family; \$10/person. Questions: rabbidavidbluman@bethisrael.ca. Register: bethisrael.ca.

For families: Sunday storytime for children ages 2-5. Sept. 11, 1pm, at Waldman Library.

Book launch: But I Live: Three Stories of Child Survivors of the Holocaust. Discussion with survivor David Schaffer, artist Miriam Libicki & UVic professor Charlotte Schallie. Sept. 11, 2pm, at Esquimalt Gorge Park Pavilion in Victoria. Books for sale & signing. Register at lib.uvic.ca/live.

Maariv & book launch: Gloria Levi, gerontologist, author, politician, social activist & adventurer, launches her new novel, *The Hotelkeeper's Daughter*. Sept. 11, 7pm, at Or Shalom. orshalom.ca.

Election Boot Camp with CJPAC & CIJA. Learn about the policy issues facing the community this municipal election. Sept. 12, 6:30pm, at Beth Israel & Sept. 13, 6:30pm, at Burquest. All ages welcome. Registration: cjpac.ca/event/bootcamp.

Improv Workshop: Teamwork, taught by Cass Freeman & Irwin Levin. Sept. 13, 6pm, at Mt. Pleasant Neighbourhood House. Register with Daniela, dgunndoegeempnh.org, or call 604-879-8208, ext. 225.

An Interfaith Dialogue: Repentance & Responsibility, with Rabbi Infeld & Fr. Meisl. Sept. 13, 6:30pm optional church tour & 7pm dinner, at St. Mary Ukrainian Catholic Church. \$36/person from bethisrael.ca.

Chutzpah! The Lisa Nemetz Festival of International Jewish Performing Arts. Ticket sales start Sept. 14, 10am, for Nov. 3-24 shows. chutzpahfestival.com or 604-257-5145.

Identity, Food & Culture: Michael W. Twitty (*KosherSoul: The Faith and Food Journey of an African American Jew*) speaks with Adeena Sussman. In partnership with JCC Jewish Book Festival. Sept. 15, 9:30am, online. Register at jewishbookcouncil.org/events.

Real Leaders, Real Journeys a night of inspiration for young professionals ages 19-45. Hosted by CJPAC & Axis. Kosher/vegan food will be served. Sept. 15, 7pm, at Museum of Vancouver (Joyce Walley Room). By donation (canned food or cash) for JFS's the Kitchen.

Itzhak Perlman & the VSO Sept. 15, 8pm, at Orpheum. Tickets: vancouver-symphony.ca.

Art Downtown festival includes daily musical shows. Until Sept. 16: Wed, at Lor 19, 855 W. Hastings, & Fri, Jack Poole Plaza, Vancouver Convention Centre West, 11am-5pm. vanvaf.com/art-downtown.

Fraytik tsu nakht: Shabbes for Cultural Jews. Sept. 16, time & details TBA. 604-325-1812 ext. 1 or dbecker@peretz-centre.org.

White Rock South Surrey JCC Shabbat services Sept. 16, 7:30pm, at the centre. More event info, as well as info on Tot Shabbat programming & High Holiday services: wrjcc.org.

CJPAC Fellowship program for university students interested in politics. Applications close Sept. 16: cjpac.ca/fellowship.

Leil Selichot: Return Again, Three Axes of Teshuvah. An evening of liturgy, bodily practice & reflection led by Rabbi Dresner, Avri Orloff, Shivani Wells & Or Shalom singers. Tea & social to follow. Sept. 17, 8pm, at Or Shalom.

Selichot: Emerging from the Past Two Years, a panel discussion on rebuilding relationship through understanding & forgiveness. Evening includes unveiling of new High Holidays Torah covers & curtain. Sept. 17, 8:30pm, at Beth Israel. bethisraelvan.ca.

Iraqi High Holiday Hits online class with musician & author Loolwa Khazzoom. Open to people of all backgrounds. No Hebrew or Jewish knowledge is required. Sept. 18, 11:30am. \$52. Register khazzoom.com/iraqihits.

Dedication of the Lethbridge Torah. Sept. 18, 1pm buffet lunch & Torah inscriptions at Thompson Community Centre & 2:15pm escort Torah to Chabad Richmond. Special kids program. RSVP & dedication opportunities: chabadrichmond/torahdedication.

Community fair/symposium, hosted by Jewish Federation of Victoria & Vancouver Island to celebrate Jewish diversity in BC as its UJA campaign launch. Sept. 18, 1-4pm, at JCC of Victoria. jewishvictoria.ca.

Hebrew-language sing-along with Miriam Benny & friends, accompanied by Moshe Denburg & Yona Bar-Saber. Israeli snacks served. Sept. 18, 7pm, at JCC. \$10m/\$15nm. Register: israel@jccgv.bc.ca.

For families: make Rosh Hashanah cards for seniors in the community. Sept. 19, drop-in at Waldman Library.

Jewish Book Club at Waldman Library, chaired by Helen Pinsky. Sept. 20, 1pm: *this is how it always is* by Laurie Frankel. Email library@jccgv.bc.ca to join.

Improv Comedy Games with Cass Freeman. Learn how to give & accept offers, create an environment & develop storytelling skills. No experience necessary. Eight Tues. 6:30-8:30pm, Sept. 20-Nov. 8, at Roundhouse. \$160 (\$80 if have Leisure Access Card). Register by calling Roundhouse (604-713-1800) on Sept. 17 or search "Improv Comedy Games" at caapm.activecommunities.com/vancouver.

Broza Records releases "So Long, Marianne" (listen at bit.ly/3Qdug7U), the first track in the three-song collection *David Broza Sings Leonard Cohen*, on Sept. 21, which would have been Cohen's 88th birthday. davidbroza.net.

Leaves in Space, a series of abstract photographs by Mecs Gatus. Until Sept. 22 at Zack Gallery.

Gili Yalo live in concert, presented by Chutzpah! Festival. Sept. 24, 8pm, at Rothstein Theatre. \$40/\$34. chutzpahfestival.com.

Vancouver International Guitar Festival includes Itamar Erez (Vancouver) & Erez Perelman (Israel). Sept. 24-25, 10am-4pm, at Creekside community centre. vancouver-guitarfestival.com.

Bard on the Beach presents *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Advah Soudack plays Snug, Amir Ofek is scenery designer, Mishelle Cutler sound designer & Tara Cheyenne Friedenberg choreographer), as well as *Romeo & Juliet*. Until Sept. 24. From \$27. bardonthebeach.org.

Jewish National Fund annual High Holiday campaign supports Ukrainian orphans who have found refuge at the Nes Harim Field & Forest Education Centre in the Jerusalem Hills. jnf.ca/high-holiday-campaign.

Rosh Hashanah in a Box: sponsor a senior's holiday meal. \$40/person. Until Sept. 25. scharatzedeck.com or 604-736-7607.

Meet your Next Mayor, where the Vancouver mayoral candidates will address questions & engage with community members. All ages welcome. Sept. 29, 6pm, at VTT. Hosted by CJPAC & CIJA. Registration: cjpac.ca/event/meetmayor.

Journeys: The Shabbat & Meditation Projects, an exhibit of New York-based artist Laurie Wohl's Unweavings. Sept. 29-Nov. 8 at Zack Gallery.

Vancouver International Film Festival Sept. 29-Oct. 9. viff.org.

Campaign training or volunteer for B.C. municipal elections Oct. 15. Sign up with CJPAC: cjpac.ca/elections.

More ...

The Bayit Tanya class, Torah Café, Talmud class, Mommy & Me, Youth Club (grades K-4) & other happenings: thebayit.ca.

Beth Hamidrash Daf Hayomi Talmud class, Chumash Rashi class, Torah Talk Kiddush: 604-872-4222 or info@bethhamidrash.com.

Beth Israel Shabbat programs, mussar class, games afternoons: bethisrael.ca. Youth programs: email rabbidavidbluman@bethisrael.ca.

Beth Tikvah Talmud Tales, mussar class, ScholarStream, etc.: btikvah.ca.

Chabad of Richmond Minyanairs Club & other offerings: chabadrichmond.com.

Har El yoga, hiking & other events: harel.org.

Jewish Academy events & classes: chabadcitycentre.com.

Vancouver JCC offers in-person and virtual options for adults 55+: jccgv.com/adults.

Jewish Museum online exhibits: jewishmuseum.ca.

JACS Vancouver: Here to Help, online recovery support group for women & family support group, alternate Tues, 7pm. Other online therapy sessions & support groups available. Contact shelley@jacsvancouver.com or 778-882-2994.

Peretz Centre Sholem Aleichem Speakers Series (email gydachud@gmail.com); Exploring Jewish Writers (email alstein577@gmail.com); Yiddish lessons &/or reading group; Vancouver Jewish Folk Choir, call Donna at 604-325-1812, ext. 1, or dbecker@peretz-centre.org.

Schara Tzedek: programs for children ages 2 to 11; Women's Book Club Thurs, 7pm. scharatzedeck.com or 604-736-7607.

Temple Shalom Torah study, Tot Shabbat, Havdalah, Talmud class: templeholom.ca.

Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre: exhibits & online educational resources: vhcc.org.

Vancouver NCSY programs: email ariel@ncsy.ca.

Deadline for Sept. 16 issue - Sept. 6, 5 p.m.



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FOLLOWED BY AN UPLIFTING MUSICAL SELICHOT SERVICE WITH HARLEY ROTHSTEIN & DEBBY FENSON

The evening will include the unveiling of the new High Holydays Torah covers and curtain. Refreshments to follow. No registration required.



BROZA from page 5

comes on stage to tell some stories and other comments in a very tasteful way so it is all a very profound experience," Broza said.

An internationally recognized musician, Broza's oeuvre includes songs in Hebrew, Spanish and English, with the influence of Spanish flamenco, American folk, rock and roll, and verse.

Social justice and peace advocacy are mainstays of his work, and his 1977 song "Yihye Tov" is considered an Israeli peace anthem. He has released more than 40 albums, many of which are multi-platinum.

Broza spoke highly of past visits to Vancouver and would welcome the chance to perform here again.

The album was released on Broza Records and distributed digitally by MNRK Music Group.

On Sept. 21, Broza Records will release a cover of "So Long, Marianne," the first track in a three-song collection entitled *David Broza Sings Leonard Cohen*. Cover versions of Cohen's "Famous Blue Raincoat" and "Dance Me to the End of Love" will be released on Oct. 21 and Nov. 21, respectively.

For more information, visit davidbroza.net.

Sam Margolis has written for the *Globe and Mail*, *the National Post*, *UPI* and *MSNBC*.

Must confront lies

Leslyn Lewis, a candidate for the Conservative Party of Canada leadership that will be decided in the coming days, made a stir last week when she invoked the Nuremberg Code, apparently with regard to coronavirus vaccines.

The Nuremberg Code is a postwar set of principles on medical ethics arising from the horrific medical experimentations of the Nazi era. Although Lewis did not explicitly mention COVID-19, the issue was clear in context. She warned of government overreach, saying, “even in modern times the tenets of informed consent and voluntary participation in scientific experiments can be easily undermined by even our modern governments.”

If for no better reason than avoiding a communications crisis, reasonable candidates for elective office should avoid comparing things to Nazism. In almost every instance, there is nothing to be gained. In this instance, where the candidate appeared to be referring to a vaccine that can prevent or seriously reduce the impacts of a potentially deadly virus, the comparison is irresponsible and base.

Around the same time as Lewis was causing controversy here in Canada, Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, stood next to the German chancellor, Olaf Scholz, and declared that Israel had perpetrated “50 holocausts” on the Palestinians. Scholz has been criticized for not immediately condemning Abbas’s atrocious act of Holocaust desecration – words that took place on German soil.

This incident was a flashback to the time, in 1999, when Hillary Clinton, then the U.S. first lady, got in trouble for standing on stage with Suha Arafat, wife of Yasser, when Mrs. Arafat accused Israel of poisoning the Palestinian water supply. This accusation, an unoriginal claim pilfered straight from antisemitic Medieval European well-poisoning canards, was akin to the latest outrage from Abbas in both form and international reaction.

About the only time the West expresses any concern about such defamations is when they are uttered in the presence of world leaders in front of less credulous media than the Palestinian leaders face at home. While Clinton and Scholz certainly deserve some censure for not speaking out instantly in the face of such overt libels, their presence is a sideshow to the main event: a narrative that is founded on grotesque demonizations.

Abbas is no newcomer to Holocaust revisionism and defilement. His PhD dissertation at a Soviet university contests the number of Jewish dead and accuses Zionists of participating in the Shoah to advance their nefarious aims.

These sorts of lies – “holocausts,” poisonings, genocide, even Zionist sharks attacking tourists – are routine fodder for Palestinian leaders, newscasters, media and even the United Nations-funded Palestinian education system. It is the nature of dictatorial leaders and undemocratic movements that they grow intellectually lazy, having groomed an audience so inured to lies and exaggerations that they will accept, or at least not contest, the most depraved allegations. After 70-plus years of exposure to increasingly preposterous conspiracies like Zionist-trained sharks snapping at European tourists at beach resorts, many are ready to accept and repeat them.

“A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on,” Winston Churchill colourfully said. Churchill died before the internet was born. Today, a lie gets even farther even faster.

Mix the range and speed of the internet with millennia of conspiracies about Jews and the reality that most people are inundated with Israel-Palestine news without context, and it is easier to understand why people who are overwhelmed by complexity and who seek simple solutions don’t resist or even question such lies.

For similar reasons, we must both keep a critical eye on how science evolves with coronavirus and vaccines, as well as encourage people to get vaccinated, to reduce the risks of disease. Terrible experiments have been done on marginalized populations so, as a society, we must be sensitive to these experiences and traumas. The mistrust has a real history, but some people are using this fact to sow more mistrust in institutions and governments, which adds to the fires of conspiracy, which is bad for everyone, but in particular marginalized and minority populations.

While miles apart in quality, the remarks by Lewis and by Abbas deserve condemnation. The world, especially now, tends to move on quickly from one moral atrocity to the next, from this outrage to the next. But we cannot let these things go unchallenged – whether they come from dictators or from potential leaders in a democracy. The job of decent people is to come along and clean things up. It’s a dirty job. But somebody has got to do it. ■

Introspection’s the hard stuff

JOANNE SEIFF

Before the pandemic, we were once at synagogue on Shabbat when the clergy person leading the family service reminded us that, hey, Elul was here, and we could hear the shofar blown if we came to morning minyan. The next day, Sunday, one of my kids decided we needed to go hear the shofar. It was just a normal Sunday. The minyan was small, largely comprised of senior citizens. My elementary school-aged kid rocked and wiggled in his seat. Most of the adults there smiled and gave him high fives and handshakes and made him feel welcome.

When I explained our shofar mission, they nodded. They all understood why we were there. My kid was given honours and made to feel special. When it was time to hear the shofar, he sat up and listened intently. It was one of those times when I thought, “Oh, we should try to come to minyan to hear this every day.”

This was one of those moments when my aspirations were much higher than my capabilities. Years later, I can’t pretend we’ve ever made it to morning minyan regularly again, even virtually, even during Elul. Maybe, someday, I’ll be one of those senior citizens in the frequent minyan attendee club. For now, I’m rushing to get everyone up, fed and out the door to school and work.

Still, I think that morning minyan experience may stick in a kid’s mind. The Elul shofar is a quintessential wake-up sound for many Jews. It’s the time to think about how the year has gone. We can focus on what’s ahead on the Jewish calendar, how we can make amends and do better in the future. What will change next year? What, most likely, will stay the same?

Is this wake-up ritual true of everyone? No, of course not. I recently saw

a TikTok reel of a man, probably in his 20s or early 30s, with a beard. The guy was joking that he observed Jewish holidays through food, and then jokingly said, “Rosh Hashanah? That’s the one with the matzo balls, right?” Maybe I haven’t remembered the skit’s details quite right, but I wasn’t its intended audience. I inadvertently cringed. It was grating to me, jarring, like driving the wrong way down a one-way street.

Here was this guy, probably an influencer, showing everyone that he not only wasn’t religiously literate, but also thought Ashkenazi food was the only essential part of the ritual or the holiday. I mean, food is part of Jewish ritual, don’t get me wrong, but it rubbed me the wrong way.

Here is a full-blown Jewish adult. And yet, he doesn’t think knowing anything about his ethno-religious identity or choosing to observe anything in regards to its religious context is his responsibility. As a Jewish woman who cares about this stuff, this irked me, because with his masculinity comes a lot of privilege in some parts of the Jewish world. He might be so privileged that he doesn’t even have to know any of this but he still would count in an Orthodox minyan and I don’t.

Our household philosophy is that, if people may potentially harass us or kill us for our Jewish identities, we should know more about who we are and why – and try to find joy or meaning in it. Focusing on Jewish knowledge and joy is kind of a “thing” for us.

This is when I have to remind myself, hey, it doesn’t matter how knowledgeable or observant or ignorant this guy on TikTok is. He’s still Jewish. I am no more or less Jewish than he is. It’s not a competition.

Elul is for introspection. It’s also the

time to admit that we are all works in progress. I sure need to keep working. As we grow, learn and age, we can recognize and understand new and different things. Hardest, of course, is to recognize what we don’t know: our biases, intolerances and prejudices. We all have these blind spots. This emphasis, each year, on working on ourselves is valuable in many ways, not least of which is trying to be more inclusive and kind.

Elul is also about wonder – through our senses, when we hear, see, touch, smell and, yes, taste the holiday. It’s the primal feeling we get when hearing the shofar, or the release one gets after a heartfelt apology to a loved one. That wonder continues into Tishri, throwing our bread (like sins) in the water at Tashlich. The wonder is in sweet honey on apples and other holiday symbols. It’s in this season, in the northern hemisphere, when the days shorten and get cooler, the trees lose their leaves and we start again.

As I write this, it’s still summer. I’m the first to say that I’m not ready to embrace Elul. It’s coming though, no matter what. In preparation, we’ve already been apple picking at a neighbour’s tree. We got honey from a local farm. The food part is easy. It’s the introspection that’s the work – and I’m looking forward to hearing the shofar remind me to get busy doing it.

L’shanah tovah (Happy New Year) in advance. May the year ahead be sweet. ■

Joanne Seiff has written regularly for CBC Manitoba and various Jewish publications. She is the author of three books, including From the Outside In: Jewish Post Columns 2015-2016, a collection of essays available for digital download or as a paperback from Amazon. Check her out on Instagram @yrns spinner or at joanneseiff.blogspot.com.

Belief in a future Poland

Editor:

Your editorial of Aug. 19 entitled “Does history matter?” recounts some of the terrain of recent right-wing Polish political machinations against an open, self-critical approach to Shoah research and discourse in the country. It is sad, unfortunate and, I dare say, stupid of many Polish politicians to think that avoiding rigorous debate will somehow improve the standing of Poland and Polish culture internationally.

I am a proud Polish Canadian, raised in an amazing, secular Catholic family, and now for the last decade-and-a-half (officially, anyway): a Jew. I love the choice I made and I love Judaism, however the world does look very odd from where I stand. I am often too Jewish for Poles and too Polish for Jews.

An artist by schooling and a software engineer by profession, I am not an historian. However, I have to be one just to muddle through my own life. Poland has always been a cultural floodplain between great powers. Most Poles, perhaps like most Israelis, have to be very finely tuned both to history and to current geopolitical rumblings. To be otherwise would be existentially precarious. Because of my conversion to Judaism, a significant portion of the last two decades of my life has been spent studying topics relating to Polish Jewish history, Polish/Jewish relations, Israeli history and contemporary Polish politics (especially as they relate to Israel, the diaspora and the history of the Shoah).

It is quite exhausting to sit between two communities that I love very much (the now thinly overlapping Polish and Jewish Venn diagram) and have to read occasional inaccuracies, such as the one sadly published in your fine publication in an otherwise excellent text.

When your editorial asserted that Poland is “the society that bears more blame for complicity with the Nazis than any other,” I got quite angry. It is simply not true. This claim is pernicious misinformation that Poles regularly have to dissipate. It is not true on the level of governance, nor is it true on the level of day-to-day street life at the time.

Obituaries

Poland was the only Allied force to fight Germany from the very first day of the war to the very last. It never surrendered to Germany as did France. It never made any secret collaborative pacts with Germany as did Russia. Poland knew that Germany was planning the Shoah and it shared solid evidence with Allied command as early as 1942. That the Allies *did not act upon this* is another story.

Poland was a massive net contributor to the Allied war effort. One source I read suggested that over half of British wartime intelligence reports came from Polish field agents. The Polish army was very active outside of Poland as a key member of the Allied forces during the war, commanded from their government-in-exile in London. The Polish army under General Wladyslaw Anders in fact made a famous march all the way to Israel, where its Jewish soldiers were offered the option of decommissioning and settling down there. The Polish resistance effort was also very active throughout the war throughout occupied Polish territory, where they applied lethal punishments upon those who collaborated with the Germans – matching the brutality that the Germans applied to any Pole who provided shelter to their Jewish neighbours. It was a dangerous time for everyone.

To your editorial's point about Poland's historical reputational ranking, I submit here a few other societies that "bear more blame for complicity with the Nazis" than Poland: Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Greek, Romanian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Slovakian, Danish, Finnish, Burmese, Thai, Iraqi, Russian, French, Oh, and German.

Perhaps some of these are debatable, others much less so. I certainly agree with your editorial that history is important and should be open to public argument.

We live in different times today. To remember is important and we must remember well, but we must also be nimble enough not to get stuck in the ruts of history. One of my favourite Polish Jews, Shimon Peres, once said: "don't be like us. Be different.... I have very little patience for history. I believe that to imagine is more important than to remember." In that vein, I would like to echo the words of another Polish Jew I admire. Julian Tuwim, one of Poland's best writers. He dared imagine: "I believe in a future Poland in which that star of your armbands will become the highest order bestowed upon the bravest among Polish officers and soldiers. They will wear it proudly upon their breast next to the old Virtuti Militari."

I, too, believe in a future Poland. With criticism, I imagine that it could be something very good indeed.

Ian Wojtowicz

ISABELLE BRISKI SOMEKH

With much sadness we announce the passing of Isabelle Briski Somekh on July 26, 2022. She leaves behind her loving husband of nearly 50 years, Moshe Somekh.

Born Oct. 26, 1953, in Montreal, she lost her father at age 7 and was raised by her mother. Just three years later, at age 10, Isabelle met Moshe playing tetherball at their neighbourhood park. Together they would eventually share everything in this life, including a kidney. With her love of travel and meticulous planning, the couple held hands and set foot on nearly every continent together.

It was an unbreakable bond extending beyond their personal life, as Isabelle spent 30-plus years working alongside Moshe. Although their business is a commercial success, Isabelle was best known for her community service. She had an uncanny ability to connect with vulnerable groups, and offer unique support for each situation.

In her early 20s, Isabelle spent 10 years at Vancouver Mental Health, working the front lines of suicide prevention. Concurrently, she volunteered at Lions Gate Hospital, assisting long-term pediatric patients. Never content to sit still, Isabelle became a director of B.C.'s Disabled Skier Association, and spent four years instructing on Grouse Mountain. During the 1990s, she fostered babies suffering from neonatal abstinence syndrome at B.C. Women's Hospital.

Isabelle's contributions extended beyond the front lines, and included more than two dozen executive roles: president, Temple Sholom Sisterhood, Vancouver-Richmond Health Board, Federal Domestic Violence Task Force; chair, B.C. Mental Health Committee, Canadian Diabetes Association, Jewish Federation Disabilities Task Force and Louis Brier Ethics Committee.

She was very active at Jewish Women International, and held roles on their provincial and federal boards. In 1997, Isabelle founded Noah's Ark project within the JWI B.C. chapter. Under her leadership for 25 years, Noah's Ark made an enduring contribution by supplying hundreds of rear-facing infant car seats to hospitals for distribution to working poor and refugee families.

Isabelle and Moshe were fortunate enough to enjoy the warmth and joy of kids as they watched Rabbi Philip and Cathy Bregman's three children (Shai, Jordana, Shira) grow up. Throughout her life, Isabelle shared a special connection to the youngest, Shira, who is their goddaughter.

Living with diabetes for decades, Isabelle managed multiple health issues throughout life with an uncommon strength of spirit and physical determination. Regrettably, her final seven months were spent in hospital due to COVID complications, and her funeral occurred July 27 at Temple Sholom Cemetery, officiated by Rabbi Bregman.

The great American poet Maya Angelou wrote: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." By this measure, Isabelle left an indelible mark on this world by providing consolation, inspiration, encouragement, relief and reassurance to so many in her life's orbit. In 2001, she received the JWI Canada National Volunteer of the Year Award, and was recognized with similar honours from Jewish Family Services Agency in 2004 and JWI-BC in 2005.

Isabelle was the epitome of tikkun olam. Her strength, kindness, wisdom and humour were four legs of a bench that provided comfort for many weary travelers on their path through this world. She now rests peacefully, and will be sorely missed by the many lives she touched over decades. Donations in her honour may be directed to Canadian Diabetes Association. ❖

AVA LEE MILLMAN FISHER

It is with deep sadness that we inform you of the unexpected passing of Ava Lee Millman Fisher of Vancouver, B.C., on Sunday, May 22, 2022, at the age of 76.

Born in Montreal to the late Philip and Sarah Millman, Ava was the beloved sister to Marc z'l (Dorothy) and Michael (Carol); loving and totally devoted mother of Jori, Teri (Kim), Dari (Ashleigh) and Nuri (Denise); and phenomenal Safta to her grandchildren, whom she adored. She also leaves an extended family who she loved dearly.

Through good times and bad, Ava was a relentless advocate and cheerleader for each and every member of her family. She was truly a woman of valor and virtue.

Ava was deeply traditional when it came to her Jewish heritage and instilled that in her children. Ava Lee Millman was a graduate of the faculty of music of McGill University, where she specialized in classical voice performance, in opera and lieder, and became an accomplished soprano.

She later became a teacher at the elementary and high school levels before becoming a music therapist, working with children and adults with severe mental illness and developmental disabilities. Later in life, Ava used her overall artistic gifts to become a prolific painter and mixed media artist, focusing on Jewish and musical themes.

In 2018, Ava Lee's "Herstory" was included in *Living Legacies: A Collection of Narratives by Contemporary Canadian Jewish Women*.

Memorial donations may be made to Jewish Family Services of Vancouver or Congregation Beth Israel. May her memory always be for a blessing. ❖



ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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in loving memory of

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SZAJMAN**

will take place
Sept. 11, 2022
at 1 p.m.
at the

**Schara Tzedek
Cemetery**

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New Westminster, B.C..

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DEATH ANNOUNCEMENTS

ROSE BRAITHWAITE
AUG. 12

ANITA KIRSON
AUG. 19

LEONARD ANGEL
AUG. 21

JUDITH KALLA
FRANCINE ANTECOL
AUG. 16



GAIL WHITLEY
AUG. 24

Rosh Hashanah

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5⁹⁹
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Assorted Varieties,
450g

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ea
sale



Yehuda Gelilte Fish
Original or Sweet,
680g

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ea
sale



Motola Pickled Cucumbers
650g

3⁹⁹
ea
sale



Achva Tahini
Original, 500g

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ea
sale



Streit's Matzo Ball & Soup and Matzo Ball Mix, 128g

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ea
sale



Streit's Matzo Whole Wheat
Lightly Salted &
Unsalted, 312g

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ea
sale



Crown Couscous Traditional
750g

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ea
sale



Ferencz's Mama Farfel
227g

2⁴⁹
ea
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Gefen Beets
Vacuum Packed, Red,
498g

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ea
sale



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175g

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sale



Streit's Soup Mix
170g

2⁹⁹
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Ushia Sauces
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300ml

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ea
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SHANGHAI from page 6

Daniel Fromowitz what memories of Shanghai come to mind, George lit up with excitement. “Shanghai was alive all the time. Never closed, always open... Clubs and gambling, everything was free. Shanghai was a very free city.” At this point, the slow progression of the interview sped up: the emotions in George’s voice suggest that he was reliving his 16-year-old self. For a moment, George was not elderly.

What is striking listening to the Shanghai audiotapes is the dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. Lore Marie Wiener was interviewed about her experiences in Shanghai by both Roberta and Daniel. But rather than just giving answers, Lore proceeded to converse with both interviewers, asking about where they were born, their experiences growing up and whether they faced antisemitism. Lore was also very reflective. She questioned the nature of Jewishness and what it consists of; she questioned “... why did we not interfere in Rwanda, and we do interfere in Yugoslavia?” With the former, there was a back-and-forth between Roberta and Lore, but, with the latter, Daniel was not sure how much to engage. These side stories



In 1999, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre held the exhibit Shanghai: A Refuge During the Holocaust.

provide a picture of Lore that is more than just her experiences of escaping the threat of Nazi violence and survival in Shanghai; it is the continuation of her life after the Holocaust.

Lastly, how did the interviewees recall, if any, their connection to the local Chinese and Japanese communities? In general, although interviewees were in Shanghai, Chinese people featured only in the background. They were acquaintances,

as was the case for Anne Chick and the two Chinese kids living in her neighbourhood. For most interviewees who did interact with Chinese people, it was through a working relationship with Chinese servants, workers or amahs.

For Lore, she employed several Chinese tailors in her shop, as well as a chauffeur and a cook called Dunzen. Interracial relationships were also possible. Kurt Weiss noted that, after divorcing his first wife, he had a Chinese girlfriend until he left Shanghai. Gerda Gottfried Kraus mentioned in passing how, in postwar Shanghai, one of her acquaintances married a Chinese woman and wanted to bring her with him to the United States. Knowledge of some Chinese, particularly Shanghaiese, was also a common theme found in these interviews, though many interviewees state that they’ve either forgotten it after not using it for so long, or knew only the absolute basics. Additionally, they never learned how to read Chinese characters.

Knowledge of Japanese people was more limited. Kurt’s success as a suit salesman was due to his patron relationship with a Japanese engineer named Kato. Lore mentioned

she was helped by a Japanese engineer when she and her mother were stranded in Harbin. But the one individual whom most interviewees referenced was Ghoya, the Japanese commandant of Hongkew ghetto. Ghoya developed a reputation as an unpredictable ruler: while Lore mentioned that her father and husband were treated well by Ghoya due to their academic connections, other interviewees mentioned episodes of violence committed by Ghoya and his guards against the Hongkew inhabitants. Their brutality is matched only by their treatment of the local Chinese. Most interviewees mentioned the mistreatment that local Chinese faced.

The experiences of Shanghai Jewish survivors are often overlooked when compared to those who survived in Europe. Lore was very concerned about this. At the end of her interview, she stated: “I’m not uncomfortable with anything. [But] ... just try to be careful about the parts where I am too pleased with my life because there are so many people who suffered.” With the “global turn” in academic research into the Holocaust, the sub-category of “Shanghai survivor” has been

gaining strength. It is a term that validates the experiences of refugee Jews and others who survived the Holocaust in Shanghai, while also acknowledging the unique circumstances and challenges they faced.

It is heartening to know that, in the 20-plus years since the VHEC’s Shanghai exhibition, research into this dimension of the Holocaust and the voices of these survivors have not been obscured, but, instead, have expanded into a vibrant subfield. By revisiting past projects and exhibitions, and making them more accessible, we can hopefully glean new information about the Holocaust and the multiplicity of survivors’ experiences. ■

Ryan Cheuk Him Sun is a PhD candidate in the University of British Columbia department of history. His research examines the entangled histories between Jewish refugees escaping Nazi oppression and the British colonies of Hong Kong and Singapore. He is also interested in the journeys that took Jewish refugees to East Asia, and their experiences in transit onboard ships and trains. He can be reached at rch-sun29@student.ubc.ca. This article was originally published in the VHEC’s Spring 2022 issue of Zachor.