

SHALOM ALEICHEM CONFERENCE

Presented by
The Institute for Judaic Studies of the Pacific Northwest
Congregation Neveh Shalom
and
Reed College

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Joseph Butwin
Natan Meir
Marat Grinberg
Friderike Heuer
George Lederer

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March 14 and 15, 2010

Reed College & Congregation Neveh Shalom

Sholem Aleichem (1859-1916) is regarded as the most popular and beloved of Yiddish writers. He composed stories, novels and plays that captured life in the shtetl, the traditional Jewish village in Eastern Europe. The writer, born Solomon Rabinovitz, (Sholem Aleichem was a penname) grew up in the Ukrainian town of Pereyaslav. Although he studied Hebrew, the sacred and literary language of Jews, in school, he spoke Yiddish at home. At the outbreak of World War I, Sholem Aleichem escaped with his family to Copenhagen and then to the United States. He died in 1916. His funeral procession brought 150,000 mourners onto the streets of New York City. It took another three years for the first successful production of his work, a performance of *Tevye der Milhiker* (*Tevye the Milkman*), the story later made into *Fiddler on the Roof*.

CONFERENCE PRESENTERS

Aliza Shevrin, the leading translator of Sholem Aleichem, grew up in a Yiddish-speaking household in Brooklyn, New York. Shevrin frequently teaches Yiddish classes and lectures throughout the country on the challenge and art of translating. She has translated eight novels of Sholem Aleichem as well as three collections of his children's stories.

Joseph Butwin has been teaching English and Jewish Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle since 1970. His parents were early translators of Sholem Aleichem in the 1940s. Joseph collaborated with his mother, Frances Butwin, in the writing of a critical biography of the author, in 1978, and is currently writing a dual biography of his parents.

Natan Meir is the Lorry I. Lokey Assistant Professor of Judaic Studies at Portland State University. His scholarly interest focuses on the social and cultural history of East European Jewry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His first book, *Kiev: Jewish Metropolis, 1861-1914*, is forthcoming from Indiana University Press. His articles have appeared in *Jewish Quarterly Review* and *Slavic Review*.

Marat Grinberg has been Assistant Professor of Russian and Humanities at Reed College since 2006. Grinberg specializes in Russian Jewish literature and culture, Russian and European Modernism, Soviet literature, poetics and cinema studies. He is the author of many articles on modern Jewish culture and politics, Russian Jewish literary historiography and 20th century Russian poetry and prose.

Friderike Heuer was born in post-war Germany where she later worked as a criminal defense attorney. She received her Ph.D. in experimental psychology at the New School for Social Research in 1987 and taught cognitive and social psychology at Lewis & Clark College until 2003. Her translations include Jerome Bruner's autobiography *In Search of Mind*, articles on philosophy and political science and various Holocaust correspondences and diaries for private clients.

George Lederer, a descendant of Viennese Jews, has loved the stories of Sholem Aleichem since his grandfather read them to him more than 50 years ago in Brooklyn. Formerly the librarian at Portland Jewish Academy, he worked in schools and libraries for over 25 years. As an actor and storyteller, he brings to life the characters and settings of the shtetls of Jewish Eastern Europe of more than a century ago. He is currently at work on a history of his own family's diaspora in the wake of the Holocaust.

Sunday, March 14, 2010 Vollum Lounge at Reed College

- Noon** Lunch
- 1:00 pm** Lecture by JOSEPH BUTWIN, "Lives of the Translators: Sholem Aleichem in English, 1946"
- 2:30 – 3:30 pm** Break
- 3:30 pm** Movie: Tevye, followed by discussion led by Marat Grinberg

Sunday evening

Stampfer Chapel, Congregation Neveh Shalom

- 7:00 pm** Stage reading: "The Competitors" by GEORGE LEDERER and ALIZA SHEVRIN
Music by Neveh Shalom's "Percy Bernstein Klezmerim"

Monday, March 15, 2010 Vollum Lounge at Reed College

- Noon** Lunch
- 1:00 pm** Lecture by NATAN MEIR, "This Hole which is Yehupets: Sholem Aleichem and Jewish Culture in Fin-de-Siecle Kiev"
- 3:30 pm** Panel of translators: Joseph Butwin, Aliza Shevrin and Frederike Heuer

Monday evening

Stampfer Chapel, Congregation Neveh Shalom

- 7:00 pm** Lecture by ALIZA SHEVRIN, "Is the Translator Still the Traitor?"

The Original Fiddler: Sholem Aleichem's Theater, Photographs from the Yiddish Theater of New York are on display at the Oregon Jewish Museum, 1953 NW Kearney Street, Portland, OR 97209

These theatrical photographs, in the collection of the Oregon Jewish Museum, show scenes from productions staged between 1920-1940, until the destruction of Yiddish speaking communities in Europe and the supplanting of Yiddish by English, especially in the United States. Sholem Aleichem's legacy serves as a powerful icon of folk language, culture and spirit.