

Living Traditions

פּײַסאַך 2008 • 5768

Tayere khevre –

Go ahead. Ask us the “fir kashes”.

Why is Living Traditions different from all other Jewish cultural organizations?

- ◆ Is it because we're the only national non-profit committed to celebrating and continuing community-based, traditional Yiddish culture?
- ◆ Is it because we're the world's oldest existing organization teaching young and old about klezmer, Yiddish song, dance, language, literature, radio, visual arts, foodways, and more?
- ◆ Is it because our unique and innovative programming has inspired new generations around the country and the world to successfully copy our model?
- ◆ Or is it because we use every means available, from hands-on instruction and in-person lectures to state-of-the-art technology – from digitalizing vintage audio discs and recording CDs of living legends to podcasts, blogs, and online digital sound archives – to share and preserve our yidishkayt?

Like the “wise child” at a Peysakh seder, we know the answer to all these kashes. Yes!

For more than two decades, Living Traditions and KlezKamp have reached across generations — to those remembering a once-vanishing culture, and to others searching for personal identity in our multi-cultural world — to restore to them their own cultural legacy in ways inspiring and relevant to contemporary Jewish life. Like *Peysakh*, our KlezKamp comes once a year – yet another benchmark on Jewish calendars that reassures us that our cultural continuity is in good hands.

How do we do it?

- ◆ We do our CD series, “A Living Tradition”, preserving live performances of legendary *klezmorim* and other Yiddish artists, such as Moldavian klezmer clarinetist German Goldenshteyn, clarinet master Ray Musiker (CD on sale now!), and Elaine Hoffman Watts (recorded at KlezKamp 23).
- ◆ We do our KlezKamp Roadshow, bringing one-day, weekend, or week-long immersions in the KlezKamp experience to communities nationwide.
- ◆ And of course, we do KlezKamp. This past December, our 23rd annual Yiddish Folk Arts Program captivated 425 adults, kids, seniors, and teenagers from around the world – 70% of them first-timers – who flocked to the Catskills to share our week-long bounty of Yiddish culture classes and concerts. Our 2007 theme, “*Mame-Loshn: Women in Yiddish Culture*” drew two NEH National Heritage Folklife Award Winners – poet Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman and klezmer drummer Elaine Hoffman Watts – and other remarkable women folk artists to teach our Kampers.

We do all this and more. But we can't do anything without you.

The money we earn from KlezKamp only pays for one week's hotel costs and teaching staff fees. It doesn't pay for \$68,000 of planning and organizing KlezKamp for 8 months by our tiny 3-person staff. Nor does it pay for \$20,000 in KlezKamp work-study/scholarships we offer to young adults and students.

We also urgently need to raise another \$40,000 this year to build on a recent grant from The Righteous Persons Foundation for our “Rabbi Rubin's Court of the Air” project. Thanks to their partial support, we've begun digitizing 400 discs of Rabbi Shmuel Aaron Rubin's long-running “reality” Yiddish radio show for online download next year. Without our efforts to save this 1930s-1950s Jewish “People's Court” from disintegration, a priceless window into the human drama of 20th century Jewish-American urban life would have been destined for the dumpster.

We can use your help with our Online Digital Sound Archive, our project-in-progress where we're digitally preserving more than 3,000 vintage records of early 20th century klezmer music, folk and theater songs, comic dialogues, and Hebrew cantorial works for download from an online archive later this year.

And we need just \$5,000 to complete and release our Elaine Hoffman Watts CD, recorded in December 2007 and featuring Susan Watts (trumpet), Mike Cohen (clarinet), Ken Maltz (alto sax), Adrian Banner (piano), Dan Blacksberg (trombone), Mark Rubin (tuba), and me on tenor banjo – all produced by Aaron Alexander.

So make a tax-deductible contribution today to Living Traditions via our enclosed response envelope, or via credit card on our website. You can earmark your gift to support KlezKamp or projects like the Rabbi Rubin archive or Elaine Hoffman Watts CD, or even better – make an unrestricted donation for our general operations.

So don't be the “wicked” or “simple child” at Peysakh this year. Be the “wise child” and answer our “fir kashes” with an *afikomen* — a gift to Living Traditions. Help us sustain Yiddish culture for today's and tomorrow's generations. (You sure can't say we're the “child that doesn't know how to ask”!)

A gitn Peysakh!



Henry (“Hank”) Sapoznik
Executive Director/Founder



Baby bubbehs at KlezKamp's 2007 KlezKids program (Photo by Bob Blacksberg)



KLEZKAMP TO GO!

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TAKE US WITH YOU!



KlezKamp 24: December 21-26, 2008

YIDDISHE MAMES, MEYDLEKH UN YAM-MEYDLEKH CELEBRATE “MAME-LOSHN: WOMEN IN YIDDISH CULTURE” AT KLEZKAMP 23

(clockwise from top L): *A shmues* with old friends; mermaids Joanne Borts and Jenny Romaine *shvimen bay Kuni Ayland*; a KinderNester; Cookie Segelstein *fidlt*; Adrienne Greenbaum *fayflt*; Avia Moore, Esther Gottesman and Heather Klein share a group hug; *tsvey doyles*; Susan Watts blasts on her *trube*.

(Photos courtesy of Bob Blacksberg, Bonnie Greenberg and Alan Lankin)



“Rabbi Rubin’s Court of the Air”

Son (Accused): “My mother lives around the corner, but she is angry with my wife and never comes to see my family. If I give her the \$6 a week I promised her, she stays more away from the house. It’s like a rupture in my heart.”

Mother (Plaintiff): “When I go to her house, my daughter-in-law shouts at me -- she accuses me of beating my son! My daughter-in-law, she doesn’t even act like a Jew! Oy, how I have suffered!”

Rabbi Rubin: “If the mother-in-law is disrespectful of her children, and her grandchildren see this, it is not a good thing. In this case, we side with the son and his wife... Mister, give your money to your mother, and we beseech your mother to respect you and stop ignoring your wife.”

These are voices from our past, telling of their daily struggles, heartaches, and triumphs in making a new life in a city where Jewish and American cultures collided. We can still hear their stories on disintegrating recordings of Rabbi Shmuel Aaron Rubin’s “Jewish American Board of Peace and Justice” – an early-day “People’s Court” which ran for more than 25 years on Yiddish-language radio.

The weekly dealings of “Rabbi Rubin’s Court of the Air” were recorded and broadcast in English and Yiddish on radio stations WLTH, WBYN, WBNX and WEVD from the late 1930s until 1956. These surviving recordings eavesdrop on unforgettable personal stories revealing the sociology, history, culture of poverty, and language of an era rapidly fading from memory.

This ground-breaking half-hour program featured Rabbi Rubin, Director of House of the Sages on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, who presided over a free mediation court or *beys din* adjudicating everything from complaints from abandoned parents and spouses to altercations over ill-fitting sheets. Immigrant plaintiffs who brought their cases to the Board were often too poor or unfamiliar with the American justice system to take their case to official claims courts. But before Rabbi Rubin’s “bench”, disputants could present their complaints in their own language and appeal for ethical justice, even where no legal issues pertained.

Sadly, time is running out for the 500 16-inch aluminum acetate discs of these early, live, and uncut “reality shows” which Living Traditions’ founder Henry Sapoznik salvaged last-minute from destruction. At least ninety percent of this collection is showing signs of deterioration.

But thanks to a recent grant from The Righteous Persons Foundation, Living Traditions is beginning to digitally preserve and remaster these irreplaceable recordings. In 2009, we’ll make these aural “slices of life” accessible to everyone by through a searchable online archive where visitors can listen to and download these programs (with simultaneous English translations). This “Yiddish Radio Online Digital Archive” will provide scholars, researchers, historians, and the general public with an invaluable cultural and historical resource. (Click on www.yiddishradioproject.org/exhibits/rubin) to hear “Rabbi Rubin” selections from our 2002 Peabody Award-winning National Public Radio series, “The Yiddish Radio Project”.)

However, we still need to raise \$40,000 now to finish digitizing the recordings, translate radio transcripts into English, record narrated translations, design the online archive, and begin downloading the classic programs for your enjoyment.

While we’re asking other foundations and corporations to help meet these costs, we hope you’ll make your own personal gift today to support “Rabbi Rubin’s Court of the Air” and our Yiddish Radio Online Digital Archive Project. Just use the enclosed response envelope, or donate via credit card online at www.livingtraditions.org. Help Living Traditions bring back these vivid voices from our past to enjoy today and share with future generations.



A Sheynem Dank to Our Major Donors

Living Traditions is immensely grateful to the following institutions and individuals for their significant financial support:

The Corners Fund for Traditional Cultures, The Righteous Persons Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts, The David and Barbara R. Hirschhorn Foundation, The Forward Association, Rita Poretsky Memorial Fund, The Lauder Foundation/Evelyn and Leonard Lauder Fund, Jacob and Mollie Fishman Foundation, Nan Bases, Nina and David (z”l) Rogow, Christopher King, Ken Maltz, Jonathan Sunshine, Barry Rodin, Lydia Kleiner, Marsha Dubrow, Jill Gellerman, Michael Isard, Will Kahane, Edward Konig, Joan D. Levin, Donna and Sidney Lipton, Elliott Mills, Dan Sinclair, Corey Weinstein.

“A Living Tradition” CD Series Records Two More Klezmer Greats

Elaine Hoffman Watts

Pioneering klezmer drummer Elaine Hoffman Watts plays to beat the band in the third CD of our series, “A Living Tradition”, currently in postproduction and due for release by December 2008. Documenting some of our musical community’s treasured elders, these recordings are made during each year’s KlezKamp and feature stellar ensembles of our KK staff musicians.

Our first “A Living Tradition” CD, recorded at KlezKamp 21, preserved the incomparable playing and repertoire of klezmer clarinetist German Goldenshteyn, who died unexpectedly shortly after his CD’s 2006 release.

Fortunately, our next two CD honorees — Ray Musiker and Elaine Hoffman Watts — were on hand for a memorable KlezKamp 23 concert and to receive some well-deserved *koved* from the crowd. (See article at right for more on Ray Musiker’s just-released “A Living Traditions” CD.)



Photo courtesy Elaine Hoffman Watts

Elaine’s family came from a town near Odessa in the Ukraine; her father, Jacob Hoffman, was a prominent member of a klezmer band that recorded in the 1920s. Growing up in Philadelphia, she received training from her father and uncles in their repertoire of polkas, *freylekhs*, mazurkas, *shers*, and other traditional klezmer dances. Always an original, Elaine became the first female graduate in percussion from the Curtis Institute of Music, but chose to maintain the three-generation family tradition of playing klezmer music at weddings, bar mitzvahs, and other social events.

Elaine’s band for our third “A Living Traditions” CD features her daughter and trumpeter Susan Watts, saxophonist Mike Cohen, clarinetist Ken Maltz, trombonist Dan Blacksberg, pianist Adrian Banner, tenor banjoist Henry “Hank” Sapoznik, and tuba player Mark Rubin. As a *forspshpayz* of our forthcoming CD (produced by Aaron Alexander), they performed at their KlezKamp 23 concert some amazing tunes drawn from the Hoffman family archives, including a *freylekhs* that Elaine’s father had written for her. The concert closed with a beautiful waltz that made me cry, as it did the first time I heard it back at the 2001 Cherry Hill KlezKamp when Hankus Netsky interviewed Elaine and fellow Philadelphia musician Joe Borock.

When Elaine’s CD is released this year, we will have three “A Living Tradition” recordings representing three completely different klezmer styles and repertoires — each equally authentic, beautiful, and engaging. As Henry told the concert crowd that evening, Living Traditions may not have the money we need to support all the projects we want to accomplish, but we are beyond wealthy in human resources.

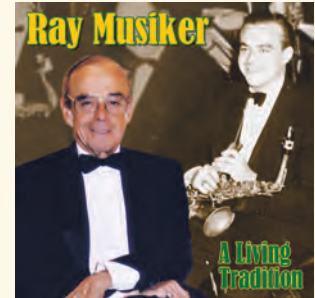
To help us cover the \$5,000 production/distribution costs of our Elaine Hoffman Watts recording — the next in our priceless series — would you make a gift to Living Traditions in the enclosed self-addressed response envelope? As special thanks for your donation over \$50, you’ll receive your own copy of this soon-to-be-classic CD, “Elaine Hoffman Watts: A Living Tradition”, in early 2009.

— Sherry Mayrent, LT Board President

Ray Musiker

In our ongoing quest to capture performances of klezmer legends, we were delighted to record our longtime friend and clarinetist Ray Musiker at KlezKamp 22 for the second in our CD anthology series, now on sale at our online Epes Center.

“As a member of one of klezmer music’s royal families, Ray has been there and done it all,” writes CD co-producer Pete Sokolow about this fourth-generation klezmer musician. “He appears in featured roles on [Dave Tarras’] immortal ‘Tanz!’ album, with his brother Sam on early 1950’s Victor sessions, leading his Jewish All-Stars on the Audio Fidelity label, with jazz great Terry Gibbs, and with his son, pianist Lee Musiker, famous in his own right.”



For this long-awaited CD, Ray and Pete chose a wide variety of beautiful material from the reed player’s deep musical catalog. “Ray’s ideas for the repertoire included some of his own classic compositions, some wonderful Abe Ellstein works, and recreations of pieces from the ‘Tanz!’ and Sam/Ray Victor dates,” Pete continues.



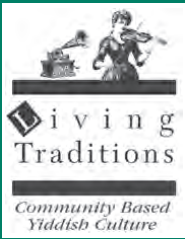
Photo courtesy Dan Peck

All these selections are performed on Ray’s new CD, in pianist Sokolow’s typically elegant arrangements, by KlezKamp artists (pictured above — clockwise from the top left) Henry Sapoznik (guitar), Jeff Baker (King Django) (producer/engineer), Alex Kontorovich (alto sax), Aaron Alexander (drums), Ken Maltz (tenor sax), Ray Musiker (clarinet), Jim Guttmann (bass), and Sokolow (piano). Pete dubbed them “an ideal panoply of musicians who were able to perform my arrangements to perfection on the spot.”

“The listener will be instantly aware of the extraordinary skill and artistry of this veteran performer, who reached his eightieth birthday in 2006,” says Sokolow of our latest “Living Tradition”. “He easily holds his own with the younger musicians on this recording; the empathy and unity achieved here are nothing short of miraculous!”

Give a listen to the remarkable Ray Musiker on our Podcast site (www.klezkamp.mypodcast.com) and then buy yourself a piece of klezmer history — “Ray Musiker: A Living Tradition” — at our online Epes Center. *Gey shoyrn!*

You can buy our “A Living Traditions” CD series and other klezmer and Yiddish goodies at our online store — www.livingtraditions.org/docs/store.htm — or by contacting our office at (212) 532-8202 or info@livingtraditions.org. *Nu, koyft epes* from our “Epes Center”!



WE'VE MOVED!

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Our Mission

Founded in 1994, Living Traditions is a non-profit organization committed to the celebration and continuity of community-based, traditional Yiddish culture.

We don't view *yidishkayt* as a symbol of a lost world, nor as customs that are our "duty" to perpetuate. Instead, Living Traditions strives to bring the lush bounty of this cultural heritage to new generations in ways both inspiring and relevant to contemporary Jewish life. We make Yiddish a meaningful part of one's active personal identity in a multi-cultural world.

Through our annual KlezKamp and other year-round programming, Living Traditions encourages development of a worldwide Jewish community knowledgeably steeped in Yiddish language, culture, and traditions too often forgotten in modern Jewish life.

אונדזער ציל

שוין פֿערצן יאר וואָס עס גיט זיך Living Traditions אָפּ מיטן עבר און צוקונפֿט פֿון די גרונט-טראַדיציעס פֿון דער היינטיקער ייִדישער קולטור.

ביי אונדז זײַנען די ייִדישע שפּראַך און קולטור נישט נאָר סימבאָלן; אונדז זײַנען זיי מער ווי קולטורעלע לאַסטן וואָס מע שלעפט מיט זיך נאָר פֿון יוצא וועגן. Living Traditions וויל אַרײַנציען דעם היינטיקן ייִדישן כלל אין דער לעבעדיקער, שעפֿערישער ייִדישער פֿאַלקס-קולטור וואָס בליט שוין העכער טויזנט יאָר. מיר ווילן מאַכן ייִדיש פֿאַר אַן אינטערגראַלן טייל דעם היינטיקן פינטעלע ייד.

סײַ קלעזקעמפּ: די ייִדישע פֿאַלקסקונט-פּראָגראַם, סײַ אונדזערע פּראָגראַמען פֿון אַ גאַנץ יאָר העלפֿן פֿירן דערצו אַז די ייִדישע שפּראַך און קולטור, דער אמת-ייִדישער שטייגער-לעבן, זאָלן זײַן ווײַטער אַנטוויקלן אַנשטאַט פֿאַרגעסן צו ווערן.

SAVE THE DATES:
KlezKamp 24
December 21-26, 2008
KlezKamp Roadshow
Block & Hexter
Vacation Center
Poyntelle, PA
July 30 - August 6, 2008

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Living Traditions



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