

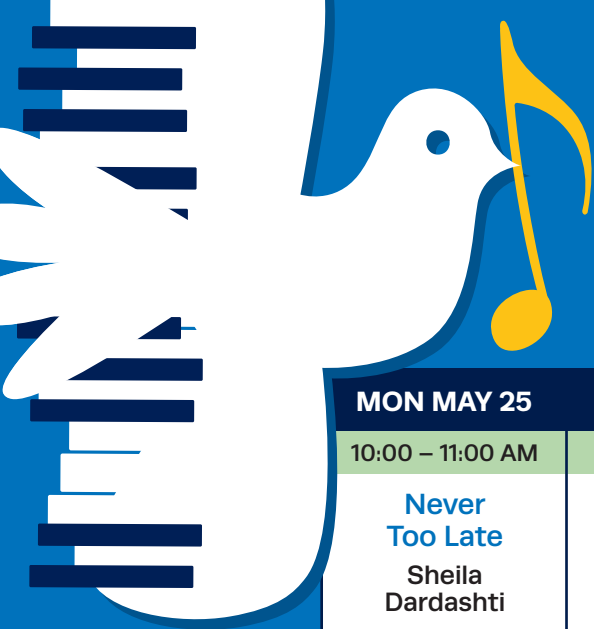
Program Guide



**Jewish
Music
Week**



May 24–31 2026



The Week at a Glance

Tickets available at jewishmusicweek.com or call 416-638-4492

SCHEDULE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE CHECK WEBSITE FOR UPDATES.



Jewish Music Week

SUN MAY 24

7:30 PM CONCERT

Schmaltz and Pepper Live!

▶ LEAH POSLUNS THEATRE

7:30 PM CONCERT

THE 1ST PERFORMANCE OF
Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish
JMW Discount

▶ ELGIN THEATRE

7:30 PM CONCERT

Nani Vazana Sings Ladino

▶ BETH TIKVAH

8:00 PM CONCERT

Music of Survival
Former Hostage Alon Ohel

▶ TO BE ANNOUNCED

7:30 PM CONCERT

Riki Rose in Concert

▶ BETH EMETH

Shabbat Shalom!

AFTER SHABBAT
APPROX. 10:00 PM

Melaveh Malka

▶ TEMPLE EMANU-EL

7:30 PM CONCERT

More Gefilte Fish & Chips
Daniel Cainer

▶ COLUMBUS CENTRE

MON MAY 25	TUES MAY 26	WED MAY 27	THUR MAY 28	FRI MAY 29	SAT MAY 30	SUN MAY 31
10:00 – 11:00 AM	10:00 – 11:00 AM	10:00 – 11:00 AM	10:00 – 11:00 AM	10:00 – 11:00 AM		10:30 – 11:30 AM
Never Too Late Sheila Dardashti	Jewish Rock Musicians Under the Radar	Jewish Jazz Musicians Under the Radar	The Jewish Soul of Leonard Cohen Michael Posner	The Life Cycle through Yiddish Song Janie Respitz		Cool Kids Concert
▶ COLUMBUS CENTRE	▶ GRACE CHURCH ON-THE-HILL	▶ BETEL CENTRE	▶ MONARCH TAVERN	▶ HELICONIAN HALL		▶ BETH RADOM
12:00 – 1:00 PM	12:00 – 1:00 PM	12:00 – 1:00 PM	12:00 – 1:00 PM	12:00 – 1:00 PM	Shabbat Shalom!	
Hava N'ranena	The Light of East Ensemble	Remembering Matti Caspi	Middle Eastern Rhythm Body Workshop	From Salon to Synagogue Arieh Sacke		
▶ COLUMBUS CENTRE	▶ GRACE CHURCH ON-THE-HILL	▶ BETEL CENTRE	▶ MONARCH TAVERN	▶ HELICONIAN HALL		
2:00 – 3:00 PM	2:00 – 3:00 PM	2:00 – 3:15 PM	2:00 – 3:00 PM	2:00 – 3:00 PM		2:00 – 3:00 PM
Blue Moon: The Songs of Lorenz Hart Shannon Butcher	The ShinShinim	The Lost Music of Auschwitz <i>Film</i>	Mitsve Tants Queen Kong	Journey to Healing JoDavi		Middle Eastern Rhythm Body Workshop
▶ COLUMBUS CENTRE	▶ GRACE CHURCH ON-THE-HILL	▶ BETEL CENTRE	▶ THE REX	▶ HELICONIAN HALL		▶ DARCHEI NOAM



Morning Music Lectures



Live at Lunchtime



Afternoon Tunes



Evening Concert/Special Events

Jewish Music Week 2026 is dedicated to the memory of **Cantor Benjamin Maissner ז"ל**

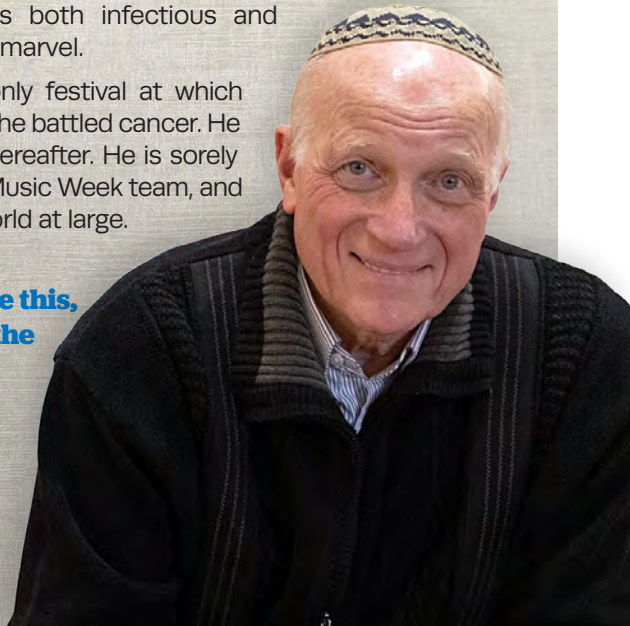
"Beny" Maissner was indirectly instrumental in the birth of Jewish Music Week and remained a beloved part of the festival until his passing last year.

As co-chair of the Cantors Assembly international convention in Toronto, Beny and the other co-chairs worked with Aliza Spiro who had the idea of bringing the Cantors' music to the city and sharing the incredible local musical talent with the visiting Cantors. Jewish Music Week was born.

In following years, Beny organized JMW concerts at Holy Blossom Temple, where he served as Senior Cantor for over 40 years. He often hosted the Melaveh Malka, led the musical Havdalah, shared delightful banter with other Cantors on the JMW stages, and presented numerous Morning Music lectures on a wide variety of topics. Beny had an astounding wealth of knowledge about all areas of Jewish music, and his enthusiasm for Jewish music was both infectious and something at which to marvel.

JMW 2025 was the only festival at which Beny did not appear as he battled cancer. He passed away shortly thereafter. He is sorely missed by the Jewish Music Week team, and by the Jewish music world at large.

It is with enormous love that we dedicate this, our 14th festival, to the memory of Beny.



Special Notes



Let's Stay Safe and Healthy

Masks are optional unless required by the venue. Please be considerate of others who may need to be more cautious among groups of people.

"Jewish Time"? Not with us!

JMW events begin and end on time and some venues restrict entry once the program begins. Please allow extra travel time to accommodate possible delays for construction, detours and parking.

Scent-sitivity.

Out of consideration to those with allergies, please refrain from using fragrances when you attend a JMW event.

Oy, are we full!

Our venues are subject to capacity limitations and building fire codes. We do our best to seat everyone but are not able to exceed the numbers allowed inside the venue.

It's 10 minutes to show-time!

For free ticketed events, ticket-holders must be in the seating area 15 minutes before event start. We begin giving empty seats to Walk-Ins at 10 minutes before the show. Ticket-holders arriving later than 10 minutes to the hour will not be guaranteed a seat.

Keep us humming!

Thanks for being part of our festival! Please consider a donation to help maintain the top-notch quality of our events and to keep the festival humming! We appreciate your generosity. To donate, please go to: www.jmweek.ca/donate.



Greetings from the Jewish Music Week Board

"If music be the food of love, play on" is the famous opening line from William Shakespeare's play, Twelfth Night (Act 1, Scene 1), spoken by Duke Orsino. They are also the very first words by Shakespeare that I had ever read. That's why I grew up loving Shakespeare! Music indeed brings joy, and many other emotions as well, and Jewish Music Week is one of Toronto's musical highlights every year. Looking at the 2026 program, we know that this year will be no exception.

JMW 2026 features a wide array of live Jewish music from all over the world. JMW will also stimulate you with lectures and film. The daytime events are even free! Too good to be true? Here is the rub. Based on the thirteen previous festivals, JMW will no doubt fill the seats for most, if not all, of the events. Don't be disappointed. Register early so you don't miss out.

We are only able to provide this incredible programming with your financial support. While we have some very generous sponsors and donors for JMW, we need everybody to pitch in to ensure that this wonderful week of music continues in the years to come. No donation is too small, or too big for that matter.

Also making JMW possible is our amazing, hardworking, passionate, dedicated, and creative Artistic Director, Aliza Spiro. She has a very hard-working, dedicated and passionate crew of volunteers. We owe Aliza and all of the volunteers so much gratitude for their involvement.

On behalf of the Board of JMW, I invite you to attend and be part of this exciting event this year. I guarantee that you will be moved, inspired and uplifted by the music throughout the week.

Allan Cheskes, on behalf of the JMW Board

Bill Sklar
Steve Stein
Mathias Memmel
Allan Cheskes



Greetings from the Artistic Director

If someone were to ask about the theme of the 2026 festival, I'd have to say "Laughter." After two intense years of praying for hostages, and with the ongoing antisemitism in our city and the terror around the world, our people need an escape from the stress – we need to laugh.

It wasn't planned that way, but looking over our fantastic program, I am suddenly struck by how many light, uplifting, and downright funny events are on our calendar this year. We cover all bases with the lighthearted Schmaltz and Pepper, not to mention their world-class musicianship; the comical adventures of Tevye the milkman; charming Ladino superstar entertainment from Nani Vazana; hysterical entertainment from Yiddish blues/rock/jazz singer Riki Rose; and Daniel Cainer's off-the-wall, amazing one-man show, *More Gefilte Fish & Chips*. There will be laughter at all of these events.

But wait. As with everything, our laughter is always balanced and offset with tears. This festival will have you shedding tears of joy and heartbreak, nostalgia and gratitude. Each 2026 program has moments to tug at your heart strings.

Most notably, we are incredibly proud to bring to you the most powerful event of the year. Pianist and former hostage Alon Ohel, direct from Israel, will be on the JMW stage, playing, singing, telling his triumphant story of music as survival, music as healing, music as victory. Accompanied by his own brother on guitar, Alon will also be interviewed by AGPI's Avi Benlolo. This is the evening that will change you for the better.

Enjoy planning your week. It's taken a brilliant team, fantastic volunteers, generous sponsors and donors, and overwhelming musical talent to bring you our 14th festival. We can't wait for you to experience it with us!

See you at the festival!

Aliza Spiro
Artistic Director

Our Jewish Music Week Team



Aliza Spiro, *Artistic Director*

Aliza coordinates a dazzling festival so that our audiences will have a well-rounded choice of stellar music programming.

The Jewish Music Week Board is made up of a genial quartet of clear-thinkers and deeply focused leaders – exactly what any organization needs to run smoothly and successfully. And JMW has them!



Bill Sklar
JMW Board, President



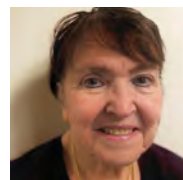
Steve Stein
Board Member



Mathias Memmel
Board Member



Allan Cheskes
Board Member



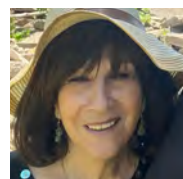
Roza Berkowitz, *Volunteer Coordinator*

Roza puts together our extraordinary team of volunteers, making sure each one knows what to do and when to do it so that our audiences have all their needs addressed at each event.



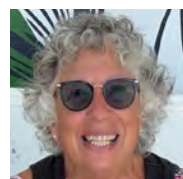
Judy Jacobs, *Consultant, Former JMW Managing Director*

Judy has made herself available to offer her expertise in many aspects of the festival to which only she held the secrets...



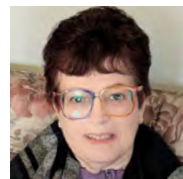
Pamela Kenley, *Publicist*

Pamela sends out JMW publicity material in every direction to reach as many music-lovers as possible. They are so grateful, and so are we!



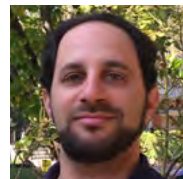
Barbara Lazar, *The Telephone Lady*

Barbara's is the lovely voice you hear when you phone the Jewish Music Week office. She's super friendly and you'll have a delightful chat when you call for information.



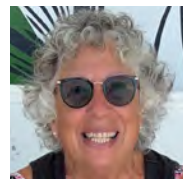
Sharyn Berger, *Hospitality Director*

Sharyn arranges flights and accommodation for our out-of-town performers. With everything being looked after, they only need to concentrate on entertaining YOU!



Benjamin Shindman, *Technical Liaison*

Benjamin coordinates artists and venues to make sure all tech needs are met. Without him, you wouldn't hear the music! He is bright and efficient, and he Gets. It. Done.

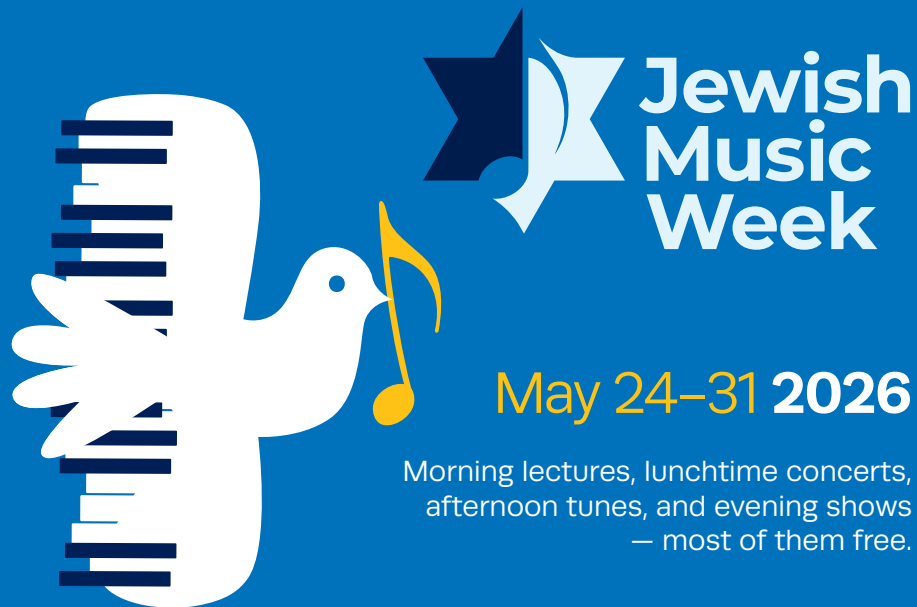


Barbara Lazar, *Editor/Proofreader*

Barbara reviews the Program Guide with her eagle eyes to ensure that the information you read is accurate and as clear as possible.

Your mother wanted you to go out more. She meant this.

A full week of world-class
Jewish music across Toronto.
Laughter, tears, and
everything in between.



Morning lectures, lunchtime concerts,
afternoon tunes, and evening shows
– most of them free.

Important Information

Your safety is our top priority.

While there have always been security guards at Jewish Music Week events, this year, we have taken extra precautions to ensure the safety of all our audience members, performers, and volunteers.

When attending a JMW event, please be prepared to:

- show ID
- have your bag checked
- wait patiently in line as venue entry may be slower than usual
- arrive earlier than usual to ensure you don't miss a minute of your event
- thank the security guards and TPS officers you see throughout the week
- enjoy the music!

Thank you for being part of Jewish Music Week.



If you would like to help cover our increased security costs, visit jewishmusicweek.ca/donate or simply scan the bar code.

Enjoy The Festival!

☆ Evening Concerts



14

Schmaltz & Pepper Live!

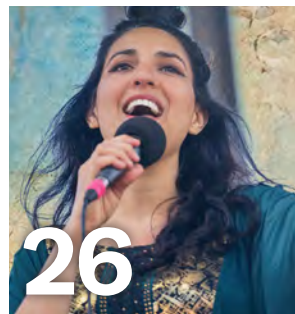
Sunday, May 24
7:30 PM



20

Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish

First Performance (JMW Discount)
Monday, May 25
7:30 PM



26

Nani Vazana Sings Ladino

Tuesday, May 26
7:30 PM



32

Music of Survival: Former hostage Alon Ohel

Wednesday, May 27
8:00 PM



38

Riki Rose in Concert

Thursday, May 28
7:30 PM



48

More Gefilte Fish and Chips Starring Daniel Cainer

Sunday, May 31
7:30 PM

👤 Morning Music Lectures 10:00 – 11:00 AM

- [Page 16](#) **Never Too Late – Sheila Dardashti** Monday, May 25
- [Page 22](#) **Jewish Rock Musicians Under the Radar** . . . Tuesday, May 26
- [Page 29](#) **Jewish Jazz Musicians Under the Radar** . Wednesday, May 27
- [Page 34](#) **The Jewish Soul of Leonard Cohen** Thursday, May 28
- [Page 40](#) **The Jewish Lifecycle through Yiddish Song** . . . Friday, May 29

🍎 Live at Lunchtime 12:00 – 1:00 PM

- [Page 17](#) **Hava N’ranena** Monday, May 25
- [Page 23](#) **The Light of East Ensemble** Tuesday, May 26
- [Page 30](#) **Remembering Matti Caspi** Wednesday, May 27
- [Page 35](#) **Middle Eastern Rhythm Body Workshop** . . Thursday, May 28
- [Page 41](#) **From Salon to Synagogue** Friday, May 29

☀️ Afternoon Tunes 2:00 – 3:00 PM

- [Page 19](#) **Blue Moon: Songs of Lorenz Hart** Monday, May 25
- [Page 25](#) **The ShinShinim** Tuesday, May 26
- [Page 31](#) **The Lost Music of Auschwitz (75 MIN FILM)** . Wednesday, May 27
- [Page 36](#) **Mitsve Tants with Queen Kong** Thursday, May 28
- [Page 42](#) **Journey to Healing** Friday, May 29
- [Page 47](#) **Middle Eastern Rhythm Body Workshop** Sunday, May 31

☆ Special Events

- [Page 44](#) **Melaveh Malka** Saturday night, May 30
- [Page 46](#) **The Cool Kids Concert** Sunday, May 31

Sunday, May 24 *Opening Night*

★ 7:30 PM



Photo by Lucky Tang

This event made possible by Sephi Band and Jeff Mitz

TICKETS	LOCATION	PURCHASE AT
\$25 / \$40 / \$75	Leah Posluns Theatre 4588 Bathurst Street	JMWEED.CA/schmaltz

Two years ago, JMW introduced the world to Schmaltz and Pepper as they exploded onto the music scene. (The event sold out, so not everyone was able to get a ticket.)

One year later, JMW was there to launch the first Schmaltz and Pepper album. (That event also sold out, so not everyone was able to get a ticket.)

They've been blazing a trail, setting records, and changing the sound of klezmer and Yiddish swing as we know it. Now, fresh from their first US tour (and Drew's Grammy win!), they're back!

This is what happens when phenomenal, world-class musicians come together!

With their combined talents and experience in countless musical genres, these stellar musicians are redefining the traditional boundaries of Jewish music, blending classical mastery with innovative, soulful arrangements. An unforgettable musical experience from a major force in the global music scene!

www.schmaltzandpepper.com

Featuring the extraordinary talents of:

Eric Abramovitz, principal clarinetist of the Toronto Symphony;

Grammy-winner, multi-instrumentalist and arranger, **Drew Jurecka**;


Virtuosic violinist, vocalist and composer, **Rebekah Wolkstein**, founder and leader of the acclaimed Payadora Tango Ensemble;

JUNO Award-nominated bassist, **Michael Herring**;

And JUNO Award-winning pianist, **Jeremy Ledbetter**.



Monday, May 25

 **Morning Music**
10:00 - 11:00 AM



Never Too Late

Sheila Dardashti

What a story! A folksinger from Queens, New York goes to Israel, meets and marries a Persian TV singing star. Back in the USA, they perform together as *Farid and Sheila*. Later, *The Dardashti Family* includes their three daughters, singing in 12 languages across North America. After forming *The In-Laws and Outlaws*, a musical group with her son-in-law and grandchildren, she finally releases her first album of original songs at the age of 78! Sheila is excited to now share her adventures as a singer, an unconventional wife of a famous Cantor, the matriarch of a musical Sephardic family, and more! She shows us all that it's never too late to pursue your passion!

Sheila Dardashti began playing guitar and mandolin at age 11 and attended New York's famous High School of Performing Arts. She balances and blends a life of music and family, with both Ashkenazi and Sephardic customs. Sheila has taught early childhood, special education and literacy, incorporating music into the classroom, and exposing students to melodies and rhythms of the world. Her new album *Build Me A Home* is a reflection of her love of people, family and life!



TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Columbus Centre
Carrier Gallery
901 Lawrence Ave West

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/dardashti

 **Live at Lunchtime**
12:00 - 1:00 PM



Hava N'ranena

Get ready to sing! Hava N'ranena is a lively 5-piece ensemble specializing in soulful singalongs based on ancient Jewish chanting. They lead niggunim, original compositions and beloved traditional classics in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino and English. This interactive program is overflowing with heart as Hava N'ranena gets everyone singing and clapping along, creating harmonies in sound and feeling!

Making their JMW debut, **Hava N'ranena** features Tikka Smiley on lead vocals, Tamar Geraci on guitar, Rachel Sheinin on violin, Susan Litchen on flute, Karen Gold on percussion, and special guest, Rachel Melas on bass. All are seasoned performers and Jewish educators in the GTA, sharing the healing power of their music with the world.

www.nigguntoronto.com



TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Columbus Centre
Carrier Gallery
901 Lawrence Ave West

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/havanranena



Stay informed on what's happening in Canada and around the world, with 3 months of National Post digital access, on us.



SIGN UP NOW
nationalpost.com/jmw

Monday, May 25



Afternoon Tunes
 2:00 - 3:00 PM



Blue Moon: The Songs of Lorenz Hart

Shannon Butcher
 Accompanied by
 Mark Eisenman

It's Lorenz Hart's birth month and The Great White Way meets the world of swing! In this super fun hour, come celebrate the man whose classic Broadway songs became jazz standards. Renowned jazz singer Shannon Butcher takes us through the Lorenz Hart Songbook, with hit after hit after hit written with Richard Rodgers. You'll love her version of such classics as *The Lady is a Tramp*, *My Funny Valentine*, *Manhattan* and, of course, *Blue Moon*. Join us for a swingin' afternoon!

Shannon Butcher is an acclaimed Canadian singer, songwriter, arranger and record producer. Her first album, *Words We Both Could Say*, earned her an iTunes' *Best New Jazz Artist of the Year* award. In addition to releasing four more albums, Shannon has recorded with numerous jazz artists and can be heard on the soundtrack to the hit video game *Cuphead*. She has performed across the USA and England, and her music-streaming fan base reaches from Europe to Japan. A graduate of U of T, Shannon has taught jazz at Humber, Mohawk College and TMU, and she is a sought-after teacher, currently running her own voice studio.

www.shannonbutcher.com



*This event made possible
 by Charles and Lynne Simon*

TICKETS

FREE
 Registration
 Required

LOCATION

Columbus Centre
 Carrier Gallery
 901 Lawrence Avenue West

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/bluemoon

Monday, May 25

★ 7:30 PM



FIRST PERFORMANCE OF

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF

IN YIDDISH WITH ENGLISH SUPERTITLES

WINNER!
OUTSTANDING
REVIVAL
OF A MUSICAL
DRAMA DESK AWARDS

WINNER!
OUTSTANDING
LEAD ACTOR
STEVEN SKYBELL
LUCILLE LORTEL AWARDS

WINNER!
NEW YORK DRAMA
CRITICS' CIRCLE AWARD
SPECIAL CITATION
FIDDLER
ON THE ROOF

HAROLD GREEN
JEWISH THEATRE COMPANY

This is the 2018 production that took Broadway by storm! New York audiences fell in love with this truly authentic version of Fiddler. Its director, the great Joel Grey, is now here in Toronto, reunited with Broadway star Steve Skybell as Tevye, and working with an all-Canadian cast, for the Yiddish version of one of the greatest musicals of all time.

Set in the small village of Anatevka, *Fiddler on the Roof* follows Tevye, a devoted father struggling to hold onto his traditions, navigating family, faith, and a rapidly changing world as his daughters choose their own paths. Filled with humor, heart, songs you love and a phenomenal cast, this beloved musical is a celebration of nostalgia, faith, family and, overall, resilience.

Join us for an unforgettable theatrical experience that speaks to every generation.



TICKETS

\$36 - \$180

LOCATION

Elgin Theatre
189 Yonge Street

PURCHASE AT

JMWEED.CA/fiddler

JMW Discount:
Save 15% at these
performances

First
Performance
May 25

All June
Performances
June 1 - 7

At ticket site, click **UNLOCK**
and enter code **JMW15**

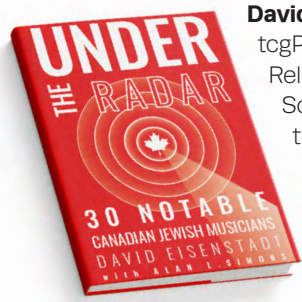
Tuesday, May 26

 **Morning Music**
10:00 - 11:00 AM

Jewish Rock Musicians Under the Radar

David Eisenstadt

Author David Eisenstadt has made it his mission to uncover and share the stories of Canadian musicians whose names might not be known as widely as they should. In this new, eye-opening session, David will present the stories and the music of the Jewish Canadian rock musicians he writes about in his newest book *Canadian Rock Musicians Under the Radar*. You'll be surprised by some, and you may be related to others! Join us for a fantastic morning hour!




David Eisenstadt is a recognized PR Consultant, co-founding tcgPR in Toronto in 1973. He is a Fellow of both the Public Relations Society of America and Canadian Public Relations Society; a (Ret.) Senator, Member of the Order and graduate of the University of Alberta at Calgary; with a graduate Journalism degree from Ottawa's Carleton University. All five of the Canadian Jewish Musician books that he's authored are available from Amazon and GTA bookstores, including his two most recent, *Jazz Musicians Under the Radar* and *Rock Musicians Under the Radar*.

www.undertheradarbook.com

David will be presenting his "Jewish Jazz Musicians Under the Radar" program on Wednesday morning.
[See page 29 ►](#)

GRACE
CHURCH ON-THE-HILL

TICKETS	LOCATION	REGISTER AT
FREE Registration Required	Grace Church on-the-hill 300 Lonsdale Road	JMWEEK.CA/jewishrock

 **Live at Lunchtime**
12:00 - 1:00 PM



The Light of East Ensemble

The first time they appeared on a JMW stage, the Light of East Ensemble created a sensation that we still feel! We've brought them back for you to enjoy another hour of exotic rhythms and melodies from the East. Colorful musical textures from Sephardic, Hebrew, and Yiddish traditions, as well as Arabic, Armenian, Greek and Turkish. You'll be spellbound on this exciting musical journey with charming narrative and pristine playing.

The Light of East Ensemble has graced the stages of countless festivals across Canada. They have collaborated with such esteemed orchestras as the International Symphony Orchestra and the London Symphonia and have been heard on CBC radio.

www.lightofeast.org

- Panayiotis Giannarapis – Oud, Bouzuki
- Jana Starling – Clarinet
- Jedd House – Bass/Contrabasso
- Menelaos Menelaou – Violin
- Tracey Atin – Vocals

GRACE
CHURCH ON-THE-HILL

TICKETS	LOCATION	REGISTER AT
FREE Registration Required	Grace Church on-the-hill 300 Lonsdale Road	JMWEEK.CA/ensemble



Proud sponsor
of Jewish Music Week

Stan Benaim

3251 Dufferin Street • 416 256 0279

info@dpidufferin.com

Tuesday, May 26



Afternoon Tunes
2:00 - 3:00 PM



This ShinShinim have put together a high energy, and most charming musical to entertain you and delight you. The show follows the story of two young people on their way to get married in Greece who somehow find themselves landing in Israel instead. What begins as an unexpected detour turns into a life-changing journey for the soon-to-be newlyweds. With wonderful singing and the ShinShinim's natural charisma, this special hour will give you a glimpse into the beauty of Eretz Yisrael!

The ShinShinim are highly accomplished post-high school Israelis who make the meaningful decision to dedicate a year of service to our community. They are assigned to more than 40 Jewish organizations — including day schools, JCCs, synagogues, youth movements, and more — and, through experiential education programs, they engage with over 20,000 community members each year. In doing so, they foster a deeper understanding of contemporary Israel and help build authentic, lasting relationships with it.



TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Grace Church on-the-hill
300 Lonsdale Road

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/shinshinim

Tuesday, May 26

Presented by Musica Beth Tikvah

★ 7:30 PM

Nani Vazana Sings Ladino

With a powerhouse voice and magnetic stage presence, internationally acclaimed singer-songwriter Nani Vazana breathes new life into the endangered Ladino language. She performs in Ladino, restoring traditions, and writes original songs in the beautiful and exotic language of Sephardi Jews. Her songwriting fuses Sephardic fairytales with contemporary storytelling, and the sounds of the marketplace with Flamenco drama.

Nani's new album *Ke Haber* ranked #11 on the International World Music Chart and #13 on World Music Chart Europe 2022. Singing her original *Una Segunda Piel* from that album, Nani won the 2024 Liet International, dubbed the "Eurovision for Minority Languages."

Her voice, musicality, charm, and charisma combine for a show like none other, and you are in for a spectacular treat!



**BETH
TIKVAH
SYNAGOGUE**



Ticket purchase and sponsorship opportunities at bethtikvahtoronto.org

TICKETS

Before May 22: \$36
After: \$45

LOCATION

Beth Tikvah
3080 Bayview Avenue

PURCHASE AT

JMWEED.CA/nani

Ticket sales in advance ONLY · No ticket sales at door · No admission without ticket.

Performing for Jewish Music Week since 2019.

Just not on stage!


manngroup

www.mann.group

Website Design
and Development

Brand Strategy
and Identity Design

Print and
Package Design

Wednesday, May 27

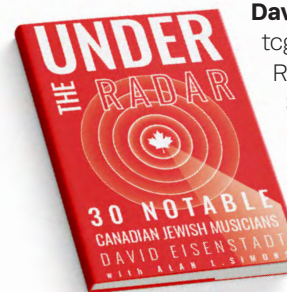


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David Eisenstadt

Author David Eisenstadt has made it his mission to uncover and share the stories of Canadian musicians whose names might not be known as widely as they should. In this new, eye-opening session, David will present the stories and the music of the Jewish Canadian jazz musicians he writes about in his newest book *Canadian Jazz Musicians Under the Radar*. You'll be surprised by some, and you may be related to others! Join us for a fantastic morning hour!



David Eisenstadt is a recognized PR Consultant, co-founding tcgPR in Toronto in 1973. He is a Fellow of both the Public Relations Society of America and Canadian Public Relations Society; a (Ret.) Senator, Member of the Order and graduate of the University of Alberta at Calgary; with a graduate Journalism degree from Ottawa's Carleton University. All five of the Canadian Jewish Musician books that he's authored are available from Amazon and GTA bookstores, including his two most recent, *Jazz Musicians Under the Radar* and *Rock Musicians Under the Radar*.

www.undertheradarbook.com



bernard betel centre

David will be presenting his "Jewish Rock Musicians Under the Radar" program on Wednesday morning.

[See page 22](#) ►

TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Bernard Betel Centre
1003 Steeles Avenue West

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/jewishjazz

Wednesday, May 27

 **Live at Lunchtime**
12:00 - 1:00 PM



Remembering Matti Caspi

Kobi Hass
with Avital Zemer



Singer, songwriter, arranger, and producer, Matti Caspi, has been hailed as one of Israel's most beloved and prolific musicians. He released dozens of records and close to 1,000 songs and collaborated with some of the most well-known Israeli artists. Sadly, this past February, he passed away from cancer, leaving a gaping hole in the Israeli music world. In this beautiful hour of song, we remember the great Matti Caspi, as **Kobi Hass**, along with **Avital Zemer**, perform the most beloved hits from the Caspi repertoire.

Kobi (Jaacov) Hass is a versatile Israeli musician, performing professionally on upright/electric bass, guitar, and vocals across genres from jazz and rock to Israeli folk. Kobi holds a Master's degree in Choir Conducting from Tel Aviv University and a Professional Music Diploma from Berklee College of Music. Based in Toronto, Kobi leads Israeli music sing-alongs, lectures, and actively contributes to the local Jewish and Israeli music scene.

www.kobihass.com



TICKETS


FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Bernard Betel Centre
1003 Steeles Avenue West

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/matticaspi

 **Afternoon Tunes**
2:00 - 3:15 PM



This fascinating documentary film tells the story of British composer Leo Geyer's eight-year mission to piece together a treasure-trove of forgotten fragments of music manuscripts found in the archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum. There were at least six orchestras in Auschwitz, comprised of prisoners from the camp.

Before Geyer's research, little was known about the music they might have played. Follow Leo on this musical journey as he discovers how the musicians rebelled with secret performances, weaving forbidden melodies into concerts. The documentary includes powerful interviews with some of the last remaining survivors and special performances from Leo's orchestra.

Presented in partnership with
kofflerarts

Koffler Arts is a multi-disciplinary arts platform that celebrates Jewish artistic voices within a diverse and exploratory framework of pan-cultural contemporary expression.

www.kofflerarts.org



TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Bernard Betel Centre
1003 Steeles Avenue West

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/auschwitz

Wednesday, May 27

☆ 8:00 PM

Music of Survival

Former hostage, songwriter/pianist Alon Ohel

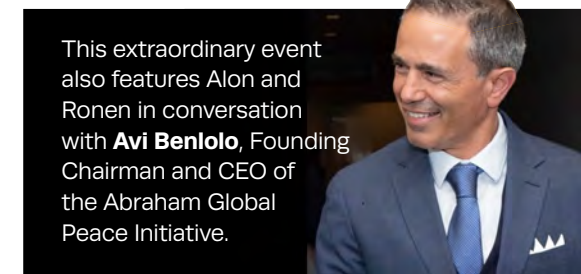


Direct from Israel: It's a powerful, unforgettable evening, featuring music from a musician who survived the unimaginable!

24-year old pianist **Alon Ohel** was abducted from the Nova Music Festival and was released only this past October. Surviving 738 days in Hamas captivity, he endured long periods of isolation underground, malnutrition, and injury. In the best-selling memoir, *Hostage*, author and former hostage Eli Sharabi devotes an entire chapter to this remarkable young pianist.

Now, in this triumphant evening, Alon will share not only his music, but his inspiring story of survival, discussing how music is more than just artistic expression. Joined by his brother **Ronen** on guitar, Alon will demonstrate the incredible power of music to heal.

Once silenced, he now plays with renewed purpose, offering a quiet yet powerful reminder of resilience, healing, and hope.



This extraordinary event also features Alon and Ronen in conversation with **Avi Benlolo**, Founding Chairman and CEO of the Abraham Global Peace Initiative.

This event is presented in partnership with the Canada-Israel Cultural Foundation and made possible in part by Kultura Collective and Mary Ellen Herman with community support from Allied Voices for Israel & International Christian Embassy Jerusalem-Canada



TICKETS

\$54 / \$72 / \$180

For special \$36 Student Tickets (ID required), contact daniel@alliedvoicesforisrael.org


LOCATION

For security reasons, the North York venue location will be shared with ticket-holders 24 hours before the event.

PURCHASE AT

JMWEED.CA/alonohel

Thursday, May 28

 Morning Music
10:00 - 11:00 AM



The Jewish Soul of Leonard Cohen

Michael Posner

Attention Leonard Cohen fans! Michael Posner is on the JMW stage! This award-winning playwright, journalist and author is the Leonard Cohen biographer, having written three books about him: *Leonard Cohen*, *Untold Stories*, based on hundreds of interviews with people who knew him. Michael is here to share untold stories reflecting the Jewish soul of this iconic, beloved Canadian Jewish singer-songwriter and poet.



Michael Posner is an award-winning writer, playwright, and journalist, and the author of nine books. These include the bestselling Mordecai Richler biography *The Last Honest Man*, and the Anne Murray biography *All of Me*, as well as three books in the Leonard Cohen, *Untold Stories* series. Michael was Washington Bureau Chief for *Maclean's* magazine, later serving as its national, foreign, and assistant managing editor. He was also managing editor of the *Financial Times of Canada* for three years and spent sixteen years as a senior writer with *The Globe and Mail*.



TICKETS


FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Monarch Tavern
12 Clinton Street

REGISTER AT

JMWEK.CA/leonard

 Live at Lunchtime
12:00 - 1:00 PM



Middle Eastern Rhythm Body Workshop

Shauli Hedaya

This exciting and unique workshop has toured Israel and Europe, and it's finally here in Toronto! Renowned Israeli percussionist, Shauli Hedaya leads participants in using their hands and bodies to create the exotic rhythms of Israel and the Middle East. Through games, (attempts at) coordination drills, and sound exploration, participants use basic music rudiments to discover the mechanism of Body Percussion. By the end of the hour, the group will create rhythmic harmony!

Shauli Hedaya is an accomplished 29-year-old percussionist from Nataf, a small village near Jerusalem. He is a former member of the renowned *Mayumana Rhythm Group*, having performed with them internationally from 2021-2025. Shauli currently plays Afro-Cuban percussion with the *Alsheikh Salsa Band*. To share his love of rhythm and people, Shauli created the *Middle Eastern Rhythm Body Workshop* for all ages, taking it to enthusiastic crowds across Israel, Europe, North America and the Far East.



Limited Space | *This workshop is also offered on Sunday, May 31, 2PM-3PM.*

[See page 47](#) ▶

TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required


LOCATION

Monarch Tavern
12 Clinton Street

REGISTER AT

JMWEK.CA/rhythmthursday

Thursday, May 28

 **Afternoon Tunes**
2:00 - 3:00 PM

Mitsve Tants

QUEEN KONG

Toronto-based ensemble **Queen Kong** presents Mitsve Tants, a new concert work rooted in Jewish ritual and contemporary expression.

Inspired by the Hasidic wedding tradition in which joy is created as a sacred obligation, Mitsve Tants asks what it means to choose joy deliberately in a fractured world. Led by drummer and composer Lorie Wolf, Queen Kong blends klezmer with jazz, funk, rock, and improvisation, transforming ceremonial melodies into expansive, groove-driven compositions. Mitsve Tants will be released as a studio recording in summer 2026, with this performance marking a cornerstone presentation.

www.queenkongtoronto.com



Lorie Wolf, drums, bandleader, composer

Max Forster, trumpet

Jossée MacInnes, clarinet

Nathan Dell-Vandenberg, trombone

Graham Campbell, guitar

Tom Richards, sousaphone



TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

The Rex Hotel
Jazz and Blues Bar
194 Queen Street West

REGISTER AT

JMWEK.CA/queenkong



Enjoying the Festival?

Support us
with a donation!

www.jmweek.ca/donate

 **SCAN & DONATE**



416-638-4492

info@jewishmusicweek.com

www.jewishmusicweek.com

Thursday, May 28

★ 7:30 PM



Riki Rose in Concert!

A powerhouse Yiddish singer, songwriter, comedian, and entertainer with a bold voice and a bigger personality!



Toronto Workmen's Circle Foundation
אַרבעטער־רינג פֿונדאַציע
אין טאָראָנטאָ



What? You don't speak Yiddish? That doesn't matter tonight. Riki Rose has a show that will entertain you, move you, mesmerize you, and keep you talking about her for months to come! *She's certainly not your Zayde's Yiddish singer!*

Raised in the ultra-Orthodox Satmar community of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, **Riki Rose** broke barriers to share her musical talent with the world. A true crossover artist, she burst onto the scene with her sultry, viral hit *Utem Arein Utem Arois* ("Breathe In, Breathe Out"). Her style is unique and all her own, singing blues, rock, jazz -- but in perfect, authentic Yiddish.

Riki's sound has gone viral, catapulting her into influencer territory. She now captivates audiences across continents and across cultures—blending music, comedy, and raw soul to entertain her growing global fanbase.

Featuring the All-Star Toronto Band:

Brigham Phillips, keyboard **John MacMurchy**, woodwinds
Russ Boswell, bass **Mark Kelso**, drums

*This event made possible by
Toronto Workmen's Circle Foundation
and by Andrew and Sharon Himel and Family
in memory of Ben and Edith Himel z"l*



TICKETS

\$25 / \$54 / \$72

LOCATION

Beth Emeth
Bais Yehuda
155 Wilmington Ave

PURCHASE AT

JMWEEK.CA/rikirose

Friday, May 29

 **Morning Music**
10:00 - 11:00 AM

The Life Cycle through Yiddish Song

Janie Respitz

Join Janie Respitz as she musically explores life in the cities and towns of Eastern European Jews. With beloved popular Yiddish songs as well as some lesser known gems, Janie takes us from the cradle to cheder; from courtship and love to marriage and aging. *Rozhinkes mit Mandlen*, *Oifn Pripitchik*, *Di Mezinke Oysgegn*, and *Kinder Yorn* are just a few of the nostalgic songs whose plaintive melodies and poetic Yiddish words reflect every aspect of Jewish life.

Janie Respitz is a Yiddish scholar and entertainer. For over thirty-five years she has performed in concerts throughout the world. She has taught courses relating to Yiddish language, folklore, literature and Eastern European Jewish history, at Queen's University, McGill University, Cummings Jewish Centre for Seniors and a variety of other learning environments. Janie has delighted audiences with her vast repertoire of Yiddish songs and lecture topics, and in 2019, Janie won the international Yiddish Idol song competition in Mexico City.

janie@ben-shach.com



This event made possible by UJA's Committee for Yiddish.



 THE HELICONIAN CLUB
since 1909

TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Heliconian Club
35 Hazelton Avenue

REGISTER AT

JMWEEK.CA/yiddish

 **Live at Lunchtime**
12:00 - 1:00 PM

From Salon to Synagogue

Arieh Sacke



In this glorious recital, we celebrate two hundred years of Jewish vocal music. From secular poetry set by Jewish composers initially performed in 19th century music salons, to Jewish poetry and the liturgy sung in great synagogues, tenor Arieh Sacke treats us to the music of Offenbach, Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Finzi, Toronto's own Sru! Glick, plus a few pleasant surprises. It's an exquisite hour of music performed by a superb vocalist!

Arieh Max Sacke has built a versatile career spanning opera, oratorio, and concert work across North America. He has performed leading roles with Cincinnati Opera, Calgary Opera, Manitoba Opera, and Opera Saratoga. Arieh is co-founder of the Fomitka Vocal Ensemble and The Java & Three, and he serves as Eastern Opera Region Councilor on the National Council of the Canadian Actors' Equity Association. He holds a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music and completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto. Accompanied by **Narmina Afandiyeva**, piano

 THE HELICONIAN CLUB
since 1909

TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required


LOCATION

Heliconian Club
35 Hazelton Avenue

REGISTER AT

JMWEEK.CA/ariehsacke

Friday, May 29

 **Afternoon Tunes**
2:00 - 3:00 PM

Journey to Healing

Joshua Washington aka JoDavi

Join us for an inspiring hour of music and storytelling with Joshua Washington, aka JoDavi. You'll feel all the feelings, as JoDavi leads everyone on an emotional journey in support of Israel, sharing his unique sound known as "symphonic soul." If James Taylor and Bill Withers had a baby boy, nursed it with soul and fed it R&B, this is what his voice would sound like. His music draws on gospel, R&B, reggae, and funk. His lyrics and ideas reach the innermost parts of our heart, caressing away hurt, and making everything good again.

Joshua Washington is the Executive Director of the Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel (IBSI), promoting justice and peace for Israel and her neighbours, as well as a strong Africa/Israel relationship. In the music world, he is composer, arranger, performer and recording artist JoDavi, who has had a celebrated career. JoDavi has opened for Grammy-winning artists India Arie and Anthony Hamilton, and he has composed for film and arranged for the Boston Pops and the Augusta Symphony Orchestra. JoDavi's recordings include the full-length album Zion and his recent EP the Vault.



www.jodavimusic.com

This performance is dedicated to the memory of Joshua's late wife, Olga, who passed away in January 2025.



 **THE HELICONIAN CLUB**
since 1909

TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Heliconian Club
35 Hazelton Avenue

REGISTER AT

JMWEEK.CA/journeytohealing



STAND WITH ISRAEL.

Bring Hope to Life.

ICEJ Canada unites Christians across Canada to support Israel and the Jewish people.

Our network provides vital humanitarian aid, promotes peace, and inspires hope, fostering a brighter future for Israel's communities.








PROVIDE VITAL HUMANITARIAN AID

Supporting vulnerable communities with essential resources, practical help, and care.



PROMOTE PEACE & UNDERSTANDING

Building bridges through education, advocacy, and unity.



INSPIRE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

Strengthening lives and communities across Israel for generations to come.



ICEJ Canada's aid projects bring God's love and transformative aid to the heart of Israel, providing vital support and inspiring lasting hope.

BE PART OF
Something Bigger.

-  STAND WITH ISRAEL
-  STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES
-  SHARE HOPE THAT ENDURES

JOIN US TODAY!

 **icej.ca**

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure." PSALM 122:6

Saturday, May 30 *After Shabbat*

Approximately
10:00/10:10 PM

Community Melaveh Malka



Join us after dark for the beloved Jewish Music Week tradition, as the music and spirit of Shabbat continue. We begin with Havdalah, led by Temple Emanu-El's own **Cantor Jeffrey Weber**. Then, get ready for an exciting double bill of great music! It's a great end to Shabbat, and a terrific start for a real Shavuah Tov!

Opening Act

Kesher Community Project

This fresh Toronto band of dazzling adolescent musical talent is making its debut on the JMW stage! With traditional Jewish songs and favourites of other genres, this precocious group will warm your heart, lift your spirits, and get you set up for a fabulous week!

Sebastian Solyom, vocals **Josh Katz**, guitar
Thomas Schmidt, violin **Johannes Solyom**, drums
Stefan Solyom, guest keyboard



The Main Event

Sunday Singers Women's Choir

Alona Astasheva, Musical Director

A JMW favourite, **Sunday Singers Women's Choir** is back for another most uplifting hour of a cappella music! You will be spellbound by the beautiful, blended voices of these talented ladies. Their different nationalities and backgrounds are reflected in their extensive repertoire. From timeless classics and folk melodies to jazz harmonies and contemporary masterpieces, under the masterful direction of founder Alona Astasheva, they sing in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ukrainian, Georgian, Spanish, and more.



TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required


LOCATION

Temple Emanu-El
120 Old Colony Road

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/saturdaynight

Sunday, May 31

 **Morning Music**
10:30 - 11:30 AM



Cool Kids Concert

Carl Berger

Hey, Kids! This is the Jewish Music Week show just for YOU! It's a family-friendly, fun, interactive musical adventure with one of Toronto's favourite children's entertainers, Carl Berger. Join us for this epic hour of singing, dancing, and laughter. Songs you know, and songs you'll learn! With Carl and his ukulele, this is just what you need to start your day with a smile on your face!

Carl Berger is a musician/educator who works extensively performing for and teaching music to young children. He holds degrees in ethnomusicology and jazz piano from York University and, as part of the Canadian music scene for over 30 years, he has performed and collaborated with Bobby McFerrin, Gordon Lightfoot and David Clayton-Thomas. Carl founded and toured internationally with the JUNO-nominated a cappella group Cadence and has recorded for film and TV.

www.carlberger.ca

**BETH
RADOM**
CONGREGATION

TICKETS


FREE
Registration
Required

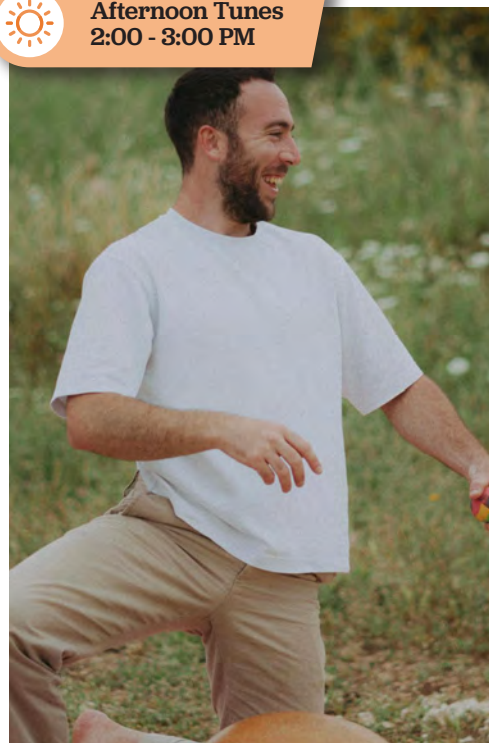
LOCATION

Beth Radom Synagogue
18 Reiner Road

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/coolkids

 **Afternoon Tunes**
2:00 - 3:00 PM



Middle Eastern Rhythm Body Workshop

Shauli Hedaya

This exciting and unique workshop has toured Israel and Europe, and it's finally here in Toronto! Renowned Israeli percussionist, Shauli Hedaya leads participants in using their hands and bodies to create the exotic rhythms of Israel and the Middle East. Through games, (attempts at) coordination drills, and sound exploration, participants use basic music rudiments to discover the mechanism of Body Percussion. By the end of the hour, the group will create rhythmic harmony!

Shauli Hedaya is an accomplished 29-year-old percussionist from Nataf, a small village near Jerusalem. He is a former member of the renowned *Mayumana Rhythm Group*, having performed with them internationally from 2021-2025. Shauli currently plays Afro-Cuban percussion with the Alsheikh Salsa Band. To share his love of rhythm and people, Shauli created the *Middle Eastern Rhythm Body Workshop* for all ages, taking it to enthusiastic crowds across Israel, Europe, North America and the Far East.


DARCHEI NOAM
קהילת דרכי נועם

Limited Space | *This workshop is also offered on Thursday, May 28, 12PM-1PM.*

[See page 35](#) ▶

TICKETS

FREE
Registration
Required

LOCATION

Darchei Noam
864 Sheppard Ave W

REGISTER AT

JMWEED.CA/rhythmsunday

Sunday, May 31



7:30 PM

More Gefilte Fish & Chips

Daniel Cainer
– Direct from England!



Direct from London, UK, Daniel brings us the full portion of his songs, laughter, and heartbreakingly beautiful story. Last year we got a little taste of Daniel, and this year JMW has brought him back for the full plate!

"You don't have to be Jewish or British to get a kick out of Cainer's shtick," says the LA Times, but you do have to like beautiful music, virtuoso piano-playing and brilliant lyrics. Smart, funny, timely and moving, Cainer's story-songs are about all our families and foibles. He is an extraordinary performer, his show is both devastatingly poignant and laugh-out-loud funny. You'll laugh, you'll cry – what's not to like? Fasten your seatbelts – it's a wild ride with Daniel!

Daniel Cainer is a British songwriter, storyteller, and broadcaster known for his warm, intelligent, funny explorations of Jewish life, family, and identity. He has performed at the Edinburgh Fringe for over 20 years and enjoyed seven off-Broadway runs in New York. His music has been featured in dramas and documentaries and his more contemplative songs are regularly sung by Cantors in synagogues across North America. He is a four-time Manhattan Association of Cabarets Award nominee and has performed countless topical songs on BBC Radio and TV.

www.danielcainer.com



TICKETS

\$25 / \$54 / \$72

LOCATION

Columbus Centre
901 Lawrence
Avenue West

PURCHASE AT

JMWEEK.CA/gefiltefish

Sponsors

We thank our donors and sponsors for their generous support which enables us to present a fantastic week-long musical celebration to the entire community!

ORCHESTRA

Toby Feldberg
Steeles Memorial Chapel

BIG BAND

Anonymous
Sephi Band and Jeff Mitz
Mary Ellen Herman
Kultura Collective
Carol Mitchell and Richard Venn
Steve and Rodeen Stein
Toronto Workmen's Circle Foundation

KLEZMER BAND

Anonymous
Gianna Glassman
*in memory of
Max Glassman z"l*
Andrew and Sharon Himel
and Family *in memory of
Ben and Edith Himel z"l*
Victor and Esther Peters

STRING QUARTET

Roger and Rose Goldstein
Judy Jacobs
Fern Matlin and Brendan Hanna
Anonymous
Charles and Lynne Simon

JAZZ TRIO

Stephen Abrams
and Rosette Rutman
Debra Anthony
and David Shindman
Mark and Ellen Cohen
Annice and Harvey Frisch
Eric Gertner
George and Kitty Grossman
Bunny and Bob Josse
Bonnie Lawrence
Barbara and Sam Lazar
Susan and Jeff Mouckley
UJA's Committee for Yiddish

Community Partners



Synagogue Partners



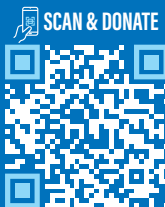
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SAVE THE DATE
FOR NEXT YEAR!

May 30 - June 6, 2027



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