

God of Vengeance Bios:

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Laura Sheppard (Producer) is Co-Artistic Director of Yiddish Theatre Ensemble, an event producer, and professionally trained actor. For over 35 years she has produced large-scale festivals including Earth Day New York Celebration in Times Square and Bryant Park and the Jewish Music Festival and Jewish Food Festival at JCC of the East Bay. Since 2000, she has worked as the Director of Events at the Mechanics' Institute, San Francisco where she presents authors programs, literary festivals and films. There she also produced Bloomsday Noon, a video/film production with director Bruce Bierman. Her performing credits include her signature solo show, *Still Life With Stein*, based on the writings of Gertrude Stein, which toured to international festivals and was awarded two NEA Grants for Solo Performance. More recently, her performance piece, *Paris Portraits* about San Francisco writer, Harriet Lane Levy, was presented by the Contemporary Jewish Museum and for Humanities West at Marines Memorial Theater. Laura co-produced and performed in *Di Megileh of Itzik Manger* at the JCC of the East Bay. She has served on the Board of Directors of KlezCalifornia since 2003 and is pleased to be contributing to the Yiddish culture Renaissance happening today.

Bruce Bierman (Director) is Co-Artistic Director of the Yiddish Theatre Ensemble with long time creative collaborator, Laura Sheppard. He directed, choreographed, and co-produced their first production together: the critically acclaimed *Di Megileh of Itzik Manger* for the Jewish Music Festival at JCC of the East Bay. Other directorial projects include: Heather Klein's *Shanghai Angel* at the Contemporary Jewish Museum, *Wade in the Water* at the Odyssey Theatre Ensemble in L.A. (*Foundation for Jewish Culture Award), *The Passion of Carmen* at the Celebration Theater in L.A. (*Backstage West Award for Best Choreography), *The Blue Dress* at the New Conservatory Theater in S.F. (*Dean Goodman Award), *Waters of Babylon* at the Phoenix Theater and choreography for the original Scrumby Koldwyn musical *Sylvia* with Joan Mankin at the Ashby Stage. Most recently Bruce served as Yiddish Dance Dramaturg for Erika Chong Shuch's choreography of *Indecent* for the Arena Stage and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. Since 2006 he has been on the teaching faculty of Stagebridge in Oakland, the nation's premiere performing arts institute for seniors. He also developed the company's first satellite program at the Los Angeles LGBT Center. Bruce is also a celebrated Jewish dance teacher and has been a leading presenter of Yiddish dance for several prominent klezmer festivals including KlezCalifornia and KlezmerQuerque. He was a 2020 LABA Artist Fellow at the JCC of the East Bay, a laboratory for new Jewish Culture.

Caraid O'Brien's translation of Sholem Asch's *God of Vengeance* directed by Aaron Beall "set Show World aflame" according to Chloe Veltman in the *Village Voice* and was also produced by Theater J and the Rorschach Theater in DC. For ten years, she studied Yiddish theater and performance with legendary actors Luba Kadison and Seymour Rechtzeit. She received three new play commissions from the Foundation for Jewish Culture and was a 2019 translation fellow at the Yiddish Book Center. She has directed numerous Bloomsday broadcasts for Pacifica Radio and her performance of the 3 hour Molly monologue is available at completeulysses.com. Her translation of Asch's play *The Dead Man* will be performed as a radio drama next month presented by the Yiddish

Book Center as part of Carnegie Hall's *Voices of Hope*. Register in advance at yiddishbookcenter.org/events You can read her work on [amazon](https://www.amazon.com), or watch a short film based on Asch's *On the Road to Zion* on [youtube](https://www.youtube.com). She is delighted to see her translation of *GOV* in this new zoom premiere by the Yiddish Theatre Ensemble. For more info visit caraidobrien.com.

Aaron Beall is an actor, dramaturg, director, producer and impresario based in NYC. A native of Berkeley, his Bay Area theater credits include playing Mr. Bones in Julie Taymor's *Juan Darién* at the Marine's Memorial and Valentine in *Puss-n-Boots* directed by Liz Huddle at ACT. In NYC he performed in six Broadway shows and on one international Broadway tour. He founded *Todo con Nada*, a tiny storefront theater on Ludlow Street presenting over 2500 shows from 1988-2000. He also co-founded the New York International Fringe Festival in 1997. Aaron renovated the notorious porn Emporium Show World into a complex of legit theaters opening with Caraid O'Brien's *God of Vengeance* on a go-go stage. In 2017 he directed *God of Vengeance* in Yiddish at St. Clement's. He recently played Yossef in Caraid O'Brien's first ever English translation of Asch's *The Dead Man* for Carnegie Hall's *Voices of Hope* Festival. Favorite roles: Hamlet, Faust, & Cinderella. He is spending the summer of '21 in the Bay Area working on a book and a new theater. To chat: todoconnada@gmail.com

Jeremy Knight (Production Designer, Editor, Technical Director) has created innovative projections for over forty opera productions by West Edge Opera, Livermore Valley Opera, Oakland Opera Theater, and others, and has filmed numerous opera productions and recitals. Two operas he provided projections for Allen Shearer's *Middlemarch in Spring* and Alban Berg's *Lulu* were among the San Francisco Chronicle's "top ten operatic events" of 2015.

Karen Sellinger (Assistant Director) is a retired psychotherapist, actor and classical guitarist. She has acted with Stagebridge of Oakland, and Generation Theatre of San Francisco. She also is a musician for the San Francisco Playback Theater Company. This is her first time as assistant director and feels honored to be working with such a wonderful cast and production team.

David Rosenfeld (Composer) is a multi-instrumentalist playing viola, violin/fiddle, mandolin, guitar, percussion and keyboards. His approach to scoring music for film and video is informed by his decades performing as a Klezmer musician, by his studies of contemporary and avant-garde music at Mills College, and by his lifelong passion for being creative in the recording studio. He has collaborated with, and produced, musical scores for, NBC, Warner Brothers, Cliff Bar, 12th Night Shakespeare Company, UC Berkeley's Repertory Dance Theater, Waking Star Videos and Stories, Octopretzel, The Daniel Barash Shadow Puppet Company, and numerous others. Having mentored and performed for three years, with free-jazz giant, John Tchicai, David is always interested in the improvisational aspect, as well as the emotional content, of each theatrical moment.

Suzanne Stassevich (Wardrobe Consultant) worked with the San Francisco Opera for 22 years as head of wardrobe and was costume supervisor for many productions abroad. Suzanne collaborated with Laura Sheppard in 2007 as a directing consultant and as set and costume designer for the remounted production of *Still Life with Stein*. In 2008 she directed a staged reading of stories by William Saroyan for *A Salute to Saroyan* at the Mechanics' Institute. She then

directed Laura Sheppard in *Paris Portraits* created for the Contemporary Jewish Museum's exhibit, Seeing Gertrude Stein. Suzanne continues to pursue a lifelong passion for costumes and textiles with her own work. She is a member of the board of the Textile Arts Council at San Francisco Fine Arts Museum.

LEAD ACTORS:

Roni Alperin (Yankl), RDT/BCT, is an actor, director, improviser and a drama therapist. He is the Founder and Director of San Francisco Playback Theater, a theatre company that builds communities based on empathy to bring real life stories to life using improvisation, movement, spoken word, ritual and music. As a graduate from Tel Aviv University theater department Roni performed in the Akko Festival, Beit Lessin Theater and Camari Theater. He is also founder and director of Impulse Theater and Jewish Circle Theater. He played the lead role in Alexander Charnie's film *Inflated heart*.

Jill Eickmann (Soreh) is thrilled to be performing the role of Soreh in YTE's pioneering online production of *God of Vengeance*. Her favorite past acting roles include Truvy in *Steel Magnolias* and Constanze in *Amadeus*. She is Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Leela, an improvisational theatre company and training center. She received her BFA in Acting from University of Florida and MA from CIIS in Counseling Psychology/Drama Therapy. Jill trained in both Chicago and NYC with IO, Annoyance, and Upright Citizens Brigade and has performed with notable artists in improvisational theatre across the nation.

Elena Faverio (Rivkeleh) is an actor, creator, and maker of artistic shenanigans. Regional Theatre: Miep Gies in *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Patchogue Theatre), Antonio Salieri in *Amadeus* (Eastline Theatre), Mary-Kate Olsen in *Mary-Kate Olsen is in Love* (The Lab at Williamstown). International Credits: PX in *Born on a Monday* (Edinburgh Fringe Festival); Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Barbican CoLab). Elena's creative work can be found on her eponymously named YouTube channel.

Zissel (Chloë) Piazza (Mankeh) (they/them) is a New Yorker currently in graduate student at UC Berkeley. They research and teach Yiddish literature and culture, Talmud, and queer studies. Their English translation of Maria Lerner's "Di Agune," the first Yiddish play by a woman playwright is forthcoming from Syracuse University Press. Zissel has a B.A. in Theatre Activism and Performance and they have written and produced two short plays. Zissel has performed at a range of small venues including La MaMa and Cherry Lane.

Esther Mulligan (Hindl) has been an actor in the Bay Area for several years. She has worked with Berkeley Rep, Aurora Theatre, Magic Theatre, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, among others. Some of her favorite roles include, Fraulein Schneider in *Cabaret*, Ruth in *Blithe Spirit*, the title role in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, and Molly Bloom in *Mechanics' Institute's Bloomsday Noon* video/film production. She was born in Wexford, Ireland, and now resides in Kensington, California with her husband, John, and their two cats.

Simon Winheld (Shlomo) grew up in Berkeley, California, and received his MFA in Acting from The New School for Drama in New York City. Some favorite credits include Nero in the off-Broadway production of *Pete Rex* at 59E59 Theaters; Walter in *BAD PRESS* at the historic Cherry Lane Theatre; and his one-man show *Mozart: Das Musical!* at Emerging Artists Theatre. He is also a visual

artist, and is the author/illustrator of *Are You Dissing Me? What Animals Really Think* (Chronicle Books).

Naomi Newman (Reb Eli) was a co-founder of A Traveling Jewish Theatre, where she worked as playwright, director and actress for 34 years, winning awards in each field. Before that she sang on the concert-stage, acted in television and had a psychotherapy practice. She is currently performing, *World On Fire*, a poetry/music/theater piece about climate disruption. For her contributions to the cultural life in the Bay Area Ms. Newman has received a Tikkun Award, Mill Valley Creative Achievement Award, and Theatre Bay Area's Community Leadership Award.

Frances Teves Sedayao (Rayzel) is a multi-disciplinary dance artist who has performed and toured with many wonderful Bay Area notables over the past 20 years. She has done collaborative and independent dance works both locally and internationally, is an alumna of Alvin Ailey Dance School and CSU East Bay where she now teaches. Frances was a Serpent Source grant recipient, Featured Dance Artist for SF Apature, and Dance Resident of Art OMI International in NY. She currently works with Bandelion Dancetheater, Alleluia Panis' Kularts, Kendra Kimbrough Dance Ensemble and Sarah Bush Dance Project. Her work, 'I Am But a Mighty Bird' was revamped in 2018 for the SF National Queer Arts Festival and for Shawl-Anderson's first Queerfest in 2019. Frances is deeply honored to work for the first time with the Yiddish Theatre Ensemble, as 'Rayzel.'

Rebekah Kouy-Ghadosh (Basha) is a San Francisco based performer. She has appeared in several film, television, and theater productions. You may have seen her recently in "AJ's Wild Party" at Dragon Theater or Walnut Productions' "Holidays That Almost Didn't Happen." A graduate of UC Berkeley and ACT, she is also an accomplished mezzo-soprano performing in New York, London, and Paris.

Josiah Prosser (A Scribe) is happy to be working with the Yiddish Theater Ensemble again after playing the infamous Haman in their two productions of "Di Megileh." He would like to thank Bruce and Laura for this opportunity. He has used his time during the pandemic to paint. He recently wrote and illustrated a parody of the *Little Prince*, featuring a recently dethroned fascist. Wishing for world peace in 2021.