



March 26-April 5, 2008

A Theatre at UBC Companion Guide

Tony Kushner's

A Dybbuk

by S. Ansky

THE POOR

- YOSHIE BANCROFT
- SARAH AFFUL
- KRISTINE JESUSDASON
- KEVIN STARK
- MICHAEL NEALE
- WIL CARLOS
- JEFF KAISER



Costume Design Rendering
for A Dybbuk,
by Ariel Rivera

AR ARIEL RIVERA '08



A Theatre at UBC Companion Guide

Tony Kushner's
A Dybbuk
by S. Ansky

Adapted by
Tony Kushner

Based on a translation by
Joachim Neugroshel

March 27 to April 5, 2008
Frederic Wood Theatre

Directed by
David Savoy

Set Designer
Yulia Shtern

Costume Designer
Ariel Rivera

Lighting Designer
Ian Giles

Original Adaptations
and Songs
Patrick Pennefather

Sound Designer
Jason Ho

Original Music
The Creaking Planks

Rowan Lipkovits, *Accordion*

Pawel Piechocki, *Santur*

Travis Bernhardt, *Steel Guitar, Ukulele*

Katie Mackin, *Clarinet*

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A Message from Stephen Heatley

Theatre Program Chair UBC Department of Theatre and Film

Welcome to “Theatre at UBC” and the Frederic Wood Theatre! For those of you who are here on Opening Night, March 27th, Happy World Theatre Day.

After a season that has taken us from Elizabethan England to 17th and 19th century France, 20th century Northern Ontario, and 21st century Italy, we complete the 07/08 season with this Jewish folktale originally dramatised in Russian and Yiddish in the early 20th century, then translated into English and eventually adapted into the version you are witnessing tonight by one of the foremost playwright practitioners of the contemporary American Theatre, Tony Kushner (*Angels in America*). *A Dybbuk* completes the raucous stylistic and cultural ride that this theatre season has taken you on, and we are grateful that you have come along on the voyage with us.

When we are choosing a season for “Theatre at UBC”, there are many considerations that demand addressing. What will be challenging projects for our theatre practice students in acting, design and production? What work will be provocative for our Theatre Studies and Drama classes? What plays might serve other programs and departments in the university community? What works reflect important contemporary issues and major societal movements? What works can connect our students and our university with the professional theatre community of the lower mainland and beyond? What plays help to fulfill faculty research agendas? What plays deserve to be seen that cannot be produced by other theatre organizations? What plays will work well in one of our three theatre spaces? And what plays might sell some tickets?! The fact that we ever come up with a season often seems like a minor miracle.

One other key aspect we take into consideration in forging our season is the passions and aspirations of our MFA directing students. These directors are the leaders-in-waiting of the “theatre of the future”

and it is our program’s intention to encourage them not only hone their craft but to strengthen and test their vision of what theatre can and should be. *A Dybbuk* was the choice of MFA director David Savoy, who came to our program with lots of directing experience but a desire to immerse himself in the study of the director’s art and craft. He also wanted to direct plays of a type that were not currently available to him in his professional life—particularly plays of scale in terms of size of cast and stage, but also scale of idea, language and image. *A Dybbuk* has allowed for this kind of artistic exploration and it is exciting to share the outcomes tonight.

Although this is the last performance of our main season, “Theatre at UBC” never sleeps. Watch for the annual Brave New Play Rites Festival in the Somerset Studio in April 2 to 6, a co-production with UBC’s Creative Writing Program. “Theatre at UBC”’s production of Gogol’s *Diary of a Madman*, under the direction of David Savoy, has been chosen as the first North American theatre offering for presentation at the international festival of student theatre in Brno, Czech Republic in mid-April. The Canadian National Voice Intensive, our country’s premiere laboratory for the study of the actor’s process, is once again hosted by our program and Professor Gayle Murphy in May and June. Early June brings the Canadian Association of Theatre Research Conference and its 100 theatre scholars and practitioners to our studios, led by our intrepid Acting Head, Jerry Wasserman. In conjunction with CATR and the Magnetic North National Theatre Festival, playing Vancouver from June 4 to 10, Professor Tom Scholte leads a special summer session course to take advantage of the convergence of these special events. So, there will be lots of excitement to take us into the summer months.

I look forward to seeing you at the theatre again soon.

Director's Notes

David Savoy

MFA Directing Candidate

UBC Department of Theatre and Film



When asked “Why would I choose to direct *A Dybbuk*?” I answer the question as any good Jew would—with another question. Why not?

I first encountered *The Dybbuk* (the original title—actually the original title was “*tsvishn tsvey veltn*”—*Between Two Worlds*—as a young camper at Camp Masada in the Okanagan. In between learning to paddle a canoe (not well) and playing field games that usually involved some variation of sneaking past the British to emigrate to Palestine/Israel (though I doubt anyone actually made it across the Mediterranean on a paddle boat) we watched the 1937 movie—and yes, it was a movie, not a video and not a DVD (I am THAT old)—in Yiddish—with no subtitles. It was all rather baffling—speaking only a smattering of Yiddish (I can deliver an “Oy!” with the best of them). But like many of a certain age during a certain age, magic and mysticism were a bit of a passion—being a devoted fan of the supernatural soap opera *Dark Shadows* and given a tendency to sleep coffin-like with my arms folded devoutly across my chest. So what I lacked in Talmudic and Kabbalistic knowledge was more than made up for by spirit possessions, loads of smoke and fog and a mysterious Messenger character who seemed to appear and disappear as if by... magic.

The journey of the play is reflected in our production. From an early pre-censored version

that featured a pre-amble of a father reunited with a daughter who has fled an arranged marriage to follow her heart—only to return when the romance failed, through the introduction of The Messenger on the suggestion of Stanislavsky; to Tony Kushner’s adaptation—which is faithful to the original but contains many hints of the Holocaust that was to come—their “shtetl life will soon be swept away”. Watching the film now is a disturbing experience—within 5-6 years of the film’s release—a majority of the cast was dead. Much like our production—it has become a ghost story told by ghosts.

The character of The Scribe is a Kushner addition—and it started me thinking about why? What does a scribe do? He records the events of his community. His record book is like a diary—but if left unread—it is as if those events had never occurred. If Anne Frank’s diary had never been found—she would have remained one of the millions of the dead who have become largely anonymous.

Saying Kaddish—the prayer of Remembrance—for someone who has died is a key element of mourning and remembrance. But who can say Kaddish for someone for whom there is no record that they even existed?

If there is record of what has taken place, it can’t be denied.

This one is for my mom.

Shalom.

D.

Cast

Sarah Afful	<i>Ensemble</i>
Shaun Aquiline	<i>Rabbi Azriel</i>
Spencer Atkinson	<i>Henech & Ensemble</i>
Yoshie Bancroft	<i>Bessye & Ensemble</i>
Wil Carlos	<i>Batlon 3, Nachman, Michl & Ensemble</i>
Hilary Fillier	<i>Chana Esther, Mrs. Nachman & Ensemble</i>
Nick Fontaine	<i>Rabbi Shimshin & Ensemble</i>
Max Gilbert	<i>Batlon 1, Rabbi Mendl & Ensemble</i>
Maura Halloran	<i>Leah</i>
Kim Harvey	<i>Gitl & Ensemble</i>
Aslam Husain	<i>The Messenger</i>
Kristine Jesudason	<i>Ensemble</i>
Jeff Kaiser	<i>The Scribe & Ensemble</i>
Courtney Lancaster	<i>Mayer & Ensemble</i>
Gord Myren	<i>Sender</i>
Michael Neale	<i>Batlon 2, Menashe & Ensemble</i>
Becky Shrimpton	<i>Fradde</i>
Kevin Stark	<i>Chonen & Ensemble</i>

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Arts Club Theatre, Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company, Rabbi Lipa Dubrawsky of Lubavitch Vancouver, Rabbi Yechiel Baitelman of Chabad Richmond, Rabbi Kaiser-Blueth of Congregation Beth Tikveh, Richmond, Breanne Jackson, Hillel UBC, The Sigal Clan (Marilee, Ruth, Cecil, Avihu Nachmani), Mordecai Wosk – Shofar Instructor Extraordinaire

As a way of giving back to the community, Theatre at UBC has provided tickets to the Jewish Family Service Agency to be used for their Tickets to Inclusion program.

The performance of A Dybbuk is 2.5 hours long with a 15-minute intermission.

A fog effect is used in the production.

Please turn off all pagers and cellular telephones.

The use of cameras or any other recording device is prohibited in the theatre auditorium.

Thank you.

Production

Stage Manager	Cassandra Tattrie
Assistant Stage Managers	Steph Meine, Laura McLean, Jay Baker-French, Megan Gilron
Production Manager	Jay Henrickson
Technical Director	Don Griffiths
Crew	Steven Tsang, Ashley Serl
Properties Supervisors	Janet Bickford , Lynn Burton
Properties Builder	Chap Chan
Properties Crew Chief	Rob Higgin
Assistant Set Designers	Irena Hoti, Elena Dubova
Set Design Shadow	Sally I Lang
Set Construction	Don Griffiths, Jim Fergusson, Jay Gower Taylor, Rob Higgin, Wladimiro Woyno, Patrick Caracas, Lisa Rosenberg, Patrick Walden
Scenic Artist	Lorraine West
Scenic Painters	Jay Gower Taylor, Jeff Hitchcock, Sally I Lang, Amanda Larder, Minah Lee, Lisa Rosenberg, Stacy Sherlock
Assistant Lighting Designers	Ian Schimpf, Jay Gower Taylor
Lighting Operator	Patcharin Saligupta
Projection Operator	Ryan Warden
Lighting Operator Shadow	Esther Chen
Assistant Costume Designers	Chantal Balfour, Basha Ladovsky
Costumes Supervisor	Jean Driscoll-Bell
Costume Cutter	Charlotte Burke
Costumes Builders	Erin Samuda, Erin York
Dressers	Amanda Larder, Erin Samuda, Lisa Rosenberg
Hair & Make-up Consultant	Jill Wyness
Hair & Make-up Assistant	Ashley Serl
Sound Operator	Mya Brown
Voice Coach	Brad Gibson
Cultural Advisor	Breanne Jackson
Faculty Advisor, Directing	Stephen Malloy
Faculty Advisor, Stage Management	Bob Eberle
Faculty Advisor, Set Design	Ron Fedoruk

Biography

S. Ansky (1863-1920)

Shloyme Zanol Rappoport or S. Ansky was an author and ethnographer committed to the preservation of Jewish folklore. While he eventually devoted his life to the maintenance of Jewish culture, his beginnings did not indicate a movement to this ideal. Born in Vitebsk, Belarus in 1863, Ansky became interested in militant works of the Hebrew Haskalah/Enlightenment and was greatly influenced by Russian nihilism. Eventually Ansky lost his Jewish faith and became almost totally secular. By age 17 he ran a commune on the outskirts of town, attempting to convert poor boys that had left the Yeshiva away from their religious beliefs. Ansky's teachings and beliefs soon turned toward Russian radicalism; however, he could not fully abandon his Jewish roots.

In 1905, Ansky moved to St. Petersburg and was introduced to Zionist youth groups. There he reconsidered the works of secular Jewish writers, including I. L. Peretz, who wrote about Jewish nationalism with a modern European sensibility. He quickly became part of a group of Jewish intellectuals who aimed to preserve the facts and culture of the Jewish folk in the shtetlach. To these ends, he joined the Jewish History-Ethnographic Society and the Jewish Literary Society.

Ansky soon began making a living as a writer. He composed folk legends, Hasidic tales, and short stories about social issues, and gave lectures that spread the word about Jewish folklore, Yiddish literature, the war — as well as the virtues of revolution. He also became the literary editor of the Russian-Jewish monthly *Evrieski Mir*, and was close to the Jewish Folk Music Society based in St. Petersburg.

Between 1911 and 1914 Ansky organized and led a trip to gather folklore by recording the songs and stories of the region with the Jewish History-Ethnographic Society. He spent his time traveling through the distant towns and villages, living

amongst rural Jews. This resulted in the collection of several thousands of photographs, legends, songs, plays, manuscripts, documents and sacred objects. The expedition greatly affected his own work and gave him a deep appreciation of Jewish folklore. It also initiated the writing of his most famous work, *The Dybbuk*, which he wrote in both Russian and Yiddish.

The Dybbuk, was first staged by the Vilna Troupe in Warsaw, 1920. The Polish Jewish theatre company that produced the play was very close to Ansky and their performance was a tribute to the author, who had died two months earlier. Several productions followed in both Europe and America, and the play continues to serve as a monument to Ansky's faith in depicting the folklore of the Jewish people. In 1998 it was adapted by award-winning playwright Tony Kushner.

In March of 2001, Stanford University hosted an international conference on Ansky and, in doing so, further propelled his writing into the new millennium. The book *The Worlds of S. An-sky*, which was published as a result of this conference, includes articles by historians, scholars and ethnographers. Perhaps more importantly, *The Worlds of S. An-sky* includes a range of multimedia, including a translation of an early Russian draft of *The Dybbuk*, photographs, and a CD of recordings of Jewish songs both collected and written by Ansky.

Today Ansky is remembered and revered as a man who was actively dedicated to the preservation of Jewish culture. His legacy lives on in works such as *The Dybbuk*, and he is regarded as a musician, scholar, poet, playwright, ethnographer, activist and interpreter the spirit of the Jewish people.

Sources:

Hirsch, John. *Dybbuk*. Winnipeg: Peguis Publishers, 1975.
www.jhom.com/personalities/ansky/index.htm
www.jhom.com/personalities/ansky/dybbuk.htm

Biography

Tony Kushner

I've learned how absolutely essential to life freedom is.

– Tony Kushner

Tony Kushner was born New York in 1956, and lived in Louisiana with his family until he moved back to New York to attend Columbia University for his undergraduate degree. Kushner then attended New York University for a graduate degree in Directing. Kushner also received an honorary doctorate from Brandeis University in 2006. He is a Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, screenwriter, poet and prolific writer on issues such as politics, gay rights and American culture. Some of his works include: *Stella* (1987), *A Bright Room Called Day*, (1987), *The Illusion* (1988), and *Widows* (1991) with Ariel Dorfman. He is best known for his two-part play *Angels in America* (1992) for which he received two Tony awards. The success of *Angels in America* on stage was followed by a film version which received a multitude of nominations and received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing in 2004.

In the last two decades Kushner has become an influential playwright, so much so that he has been compared to Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, and Eugene O'Neill (Kolin 105). In a *New York Times* article "Seeing Answers in Yiddish Classics," Alisa Solomon calls Kushner one of a "generation of American Jews with Eastern European roots who [is] seeking meaningful models in the cultural and political passions of [his] Yiddish forebears" (Solomon 7).

Kushner's plays and essays often explore marginalization, particularly concerning Judaism and homosexuals. In a 1994 issue of *Newsweek*, he wrote, "I am homosexual, and this ought to make me consider how my experience of the world, as someone who is not always welcome, resembles that of others, however unlike me, who have had similar experiences" (Kushner 7). His own marginalization has led him to create plays with

these themes and also to adapt the work of those artists he deeply respects. Kushner has adapted Goethe's *Stella*, Brecht's *The Good Person of Setzuan* (1997), as well as Ansky's *The Dybbuk* (1997). He notes that he respects Bertolt Brecht because he was a "man deeply committed to collectivity as an ideal and an achievable political goal" (Kushner 35). In a 1994 issue of the *New York Times* he wrote, "The fiction that artistic labour happens in isolation, and that artistic accomplishment is exclusively the provenance of individual talents, is politically charged, and in my case at least, repudiated by the facts" (Kushner 33). Kushner notes, for example, that his closest friend, Kimberly T. Flynn, has been a teacher and collaborator since the beginning of his career (Kushner 36).

While Kushner believes freedom is essential to life and is keenly attentive to the many ways it can be lost or compromised, he nonetheless finds hope in his country's political landscape:

There are, in this country, political traditions congenial to the idea that democracy is multi-color and multicultural and also multigendered, that democracy is about returning to individuals the fullest range of their freedoms, but also the sharing of power, about the rediscovery of collective responsibility. (Kushner 9)

Sources Cited:

Kushner, Tony. *Thinking about the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995.

Solomon, Alisa. "Seeking Answers in Yiddish Classics" *New York Times*. 16 November 1997. pg. 7.

Kolin, Philip. "(Review) Tony Kushner: New Essays on the Art and Politics of the Plays." *Project Muse*. 105-109.

Understanding Kabbalah Thought

Rabbi Joseph Saltoun

This article appeared in the Jewish Independent on Oct. 28, 2005. It is reproduced with the permission of the author.

The wisdom of kabbalah can be seen as one of the most ancient philosophies on earth. But unlike any other philosophy, kabbalah was not invented by man. It was "received" through divine inspiration—hence the name kabbalah, which means "to receive" in Hebrew.

There is a tendency to separate kabbalah from mainstream Judaism. This may be due to some misunderstanding that occurred during the Middle Ages, as false messiahs appeared in the Jewish communities of Europe and misled them into false beliefs of deliverance using calculations

which, as they proclaimed, were taken from the kabbalah. Specific dates were indicated for the final redemption and the revelation of the Messiah. In any case, the kabbalah did not start with these events, although it did shake the then-known foundations of Judaism.

It was Abraham who, for the first time in human history, accepted the existence of an eternal living G-d. The G-d of Abraham lives on forever. The idea of transcendental consciousness, known to us now as kabbalah, was born.

Kabbalah is known as the Wisdom of Truth, in Hebrew, *Hochmat Ha'emet*. By this, we refer to the Ultimate Truth, which is supernatural and divine.



The Dybbuk, Act ii, depicting Leah and the Beggars. Production of The Dybbuk, by S. Ansky, was performed by The Temple Players at The Temple Playhouse, Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco beginning October 29, 1928. Photograph by Roger Sturtevant; Vintage silver print, 1928

This truth does not undergo the changes of time and the pettiness of selfish human interests. After discovering it, Abraham realized that he had to pass on this information for all humankind, so that one day, when the time is right, we would be able to use it as a beacon of light to illuminate our path. Therefore, he wrote a book known as *Sefer Yetzirah* (Book of Formation) and in it he revealed all the secrets of the divine and transcendental consciousness, known to us as G-d. In this book, Abraham opened a new understanding of how G-d created the universe and humankind, the true purpose of life, reincarnation and the mission of the soul, astronomy and astrology and methods of healing the body and the soul. He combined religion and science as one. This is why all the kabbalists of all times were religious and pious men as well as the leading scientists of their generation.

Following in the steps of his forefathers, we read in the chapters of the Ethics of the Fathers (*Pirkei Avot*) that Moses "received" (*kibel*) the Torah from Mount Sinai. The verb "kibel" comes from the same root as kabbalah.

It was only after the revelation of the *Zohar* (Book of Splendor) by Rabbi Shimon Bar-Iochai in the first and second centuries, that the entire code of the kabbalah was deciphered, offering open access to this wisdom.

But the time then was not ripe and there was a lot of resistance to accepting the Divine Truth, as it demanded that people abandon their ways of falsehood and deceit, which were dominated by their greed for power and manipulating others

Nevertheless, Bar-Iochai prophesized that ultimately people would come to their senses and that, in the future, there would appear a generation that would be totally disillusioned from the falsehood set for them by the traps of the material world and seek the spiritual understanding of their

existence – bringing them closer to themselves and to G-d through transcendental consciousness

According to the *Zohar*, that generation is ours and the time is now. If we follow the *Zohar*, we find that transcendental consciousness simply refers to the ability to overcome the physical limitations of the way we perceive things and that, instead of searching for outward solutions, we should search for them inwardly.

For example, the Messiah is not perceived as a charismatic leader who shall come and perform miracles and lead us to the final redemption, because what we can conclude from the teachings of the kabbalists is that everything depends on our individual growth and personal actions and deeds. From this, we can understand that the term Messiah, like all other terms in our Holy Scriptures, is a code. The inner meaning of this word can be explained as "self-enlightenment," or a level of consciousness where every person individually will achieve spiritual enlightenment through the study of kabbalah, which provides us with the necessary and adequate tools to accomplish this mission.

Throughout history, we have had many models of people with messianic consciousness, who were sent by G-d for us to follow in their footsteps. But they only show us the way. The rest depends on us.

Therefore, the "Messiah" is a level of consciousness that we all have to reach in order to perceive the G-d-like image in ourselves and in our fellow people. Once we achieve this stage, we can be granted the peace and tranquillity we are all seeking.

Kabbalah connects to conventional Judaism

Using the allegory of the kabbalists, the Torah, known as the Five Books of Moses, explains the technical aspect of the mitzvot – in other words, the "how"—while the *Zohar* explains the "why," or the

purpose. In this manner, the Torah is perceived as being the "body" and the Zohar as the "soul."

The Torah is also known as the Written Law, while the kabbalah is related to the Oral Law, which was passed down from one generation to the other, explaining the inner meaning of the Torah. The Torah can be seen as the messenger and the kabbalah as the message. Encountering the messenger without paying attention to his message is definitely futile.

The message here may have various methods of interpretation and, as 16th-century Rabbi Isaac Luria explained, there are actually four ways or levels, known to us by the Hebrew letters PARDES.

The four levels are *pshat*, which refers to the immediate and simplistic understanding of the written word; *remez*, which refers to the apparent contradictions and seemingly meaningless repetitions that appear in the text and are there for the purpose of drawing our attention to search for a deeper meaning; *drash*, the fables, allegories and moral messages of the stories in the Bible; and *sod*, which refers to the kabbalah and is the highest and most complete level of understanding of the holy words of G-d passed down to us by Moses.

There is a story that is used at times to deter us from studying kabbalah, in which four rabbis enter Pardes. One entered the *pshat* and lost his mind. The second entered the *remez*, denied G-d and ultimately became a heretic. The third entered the *drash* and committed suicide. Only the great Rabbi Akiva, who entered *sod*, came out safe and sound

This is why we are warned at times not to "meddle" with the kabbalah. But the *Ari Hakadosh* disagrees with this approach and explains the story like this: Rabbi Akiva was the person who was forsaken from the unfortunate fate of the other rabbis caused by the total misunderstanding of Pardes, exactly

because of him entering the entire Pardes, including the kabbalistic level of interpretation known as *sod*, and that is why he came out with a complete and full understanding, while the other rabbis did not continue in their studies and stopped midway.

The messenger has completed his mission, so what remains is to understand his message in full.

– Rabbi Joseph Saltoun is a kabbalistic scholar, ordained by Yeshivah Kol-Yehuda, Jerusalem. He has been lecturing on kabbalah since 1982. For information on courses on kabbalah given in Vancouver, and for personal inquiries, contact him by e-mail at jsaltoun@telus.net



Scene from the film version of
The Dybbuk, 1937

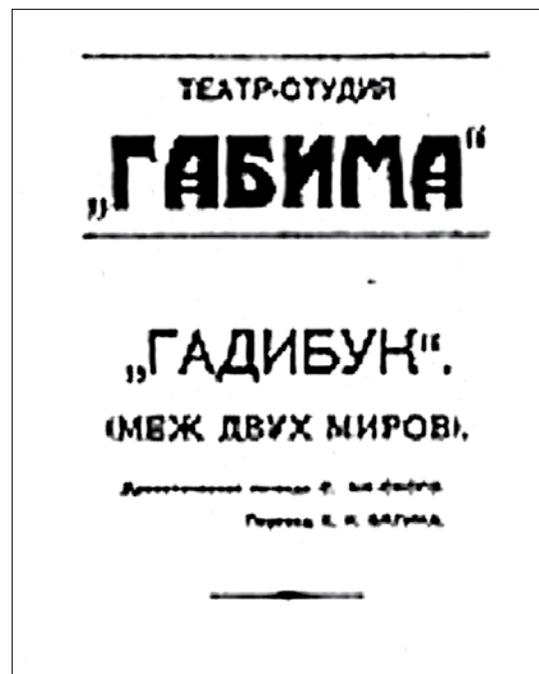


The actress Paula Varter in a scene from The Dybbuk, by S. Ansky, performed by The Vilna Jewish Theatre Group, 1920

I attend as many rehearsals as I can. The band is already listening to the music and rehearsing with me away from the theatre. A week prior to opening they come in for a sitzprobe. We have one rehearsal with them and the ensemble, then we're in tech. This is typical of live musicians joining in on the process, primarily due to budgetary constraints. I also provide additional support to the musicians in the form of charts, recorded music and an efficient rehearsal process.

On Theatre Trends – I think there is a growing trend toward having live music integrated into plays and that this is changing the genre of theatre. If it were up to most directors and productions I work with, all music would be live. The concerns are mainly financial, although sometimes a work has an aesthetic that doesn't require live music.

Incorporating music into plays adds to the actors' process—it's always challenging and there's no simple solution. This is because each actor brings specific musical skills to the table. Most have been trained differently and so even their approach to singing and sound making is divergent. The ability to read music is an asset and can help actors learn and memorize the work more efficiently, however, it is not crucial as long as they work hard and find some way to notate the music in their own language.



Cover for the The Dybbuk program at the Habima Theatre Studio, Moscow, 1920



Set Designer's Notes

Yulia Shtern



A Dybbuk is a love story. It is a ghost story that is alive with magic; it is a story of loss and death, but in a lot of ways it is also a story of survival and hope. One of my aspirations for designing its scenery was to create a visual atmosphere that would

reflect the dual nature of this play.

In our interpretation of *A Dybbuk* the action takes place in a partially destroyed 17th century Polish synagogue that has miraculously survived the war. The time line of David Savoy's concept for this production is quite complex, and our goal was to choose an environment for it that would accommodate every aspect of this time line equally. It was a lengthy and multi-staged process, and we rejected a number of preliminary ideas before committing to a final design decision.

The palette that I chose for *A Dybbuk* is an Earth-tone one, partially for practical reasons, but largely

because of one of the lines in the text that resonated with me: "They say it wasn't built, just found buried underground, the whole building". While this set is not an entirely realistic one, a lot of its elements are in a direct reference to a very particular sub-culture within European Jewry.

Being Jewish, designing for *A Dybbuk* has been a very enlightening and rewarding experience. Until now I have never had a chance to embrace my heritage through the means of creating a stage production. The process of research for this play has been somewhat of a personal journey that gave me a chance to discover some new aspects of the culture I belong to and also to re-examine some pre-conceived notions of it that I had in the past. Based on this experience, I believe that one of our bigger challenges for this production is to reach both the part of the audience that is closely familiar with Jewish values and culture and those ones that will be discovering them for the first time; and I hope that the visual framework of the show will help contribute to the success of this task.

OPPOSITE: *Set Design Renderings for A Dybbuk*, by Yulia Shtern

A Dybbuk: Costume Design Process

Ariel Rivera



Costume Design Rendering for
A Dybbuk, by Ariel Rivera

When I was approached to design *A Dybbuk* by the University, they assured me that this was a show that was right up my alley. I trusted their judgement as I had spent two years as a design student, and they were much aware of my abilities and preferences

as a designer. I accepted the project without having even read the script.

In the seven months since my initial discussion with the director, I have found myself immersed in the world of *A Dybbuk* more than I thought I might be. Because of the private and specific nature of Hasidic Jewish society, especially in the context of the Second World War, I wanted to treat the costuming with a large degree of respect. Not having had any prior experience with Judaism, I took it upon myself to grill David Savoy for any and all information that he could provide about the world that we were creating. When I had a fairly decent grasp of the general overview, I took it upon myself to go out and seek images that would further inspire my designs. I found what I was looking for at the Jewish Community Centre. Their extensive library and Holocaust memorial archives provided me with the primary images that inevitably formed the basis for my design. The wedding dress in the play is directly inspired by one from 1938 that the Centre has in its museum.

When considering the palette of this performance, I had no further to look than David Savoy's vision of *A Dybbuk* being "a tale told by candlelight". As a rule, Hasidic costume is based predominantly in black and white. As this is an unavoidable given, I started with black as the shadows and white as the light. All of the other colours are those found



in soft candlelight, old photos, or dim memory. I chose to use warm and neutral colours that echoed the fading paint on the walls of the shul. The only character that bares any bold colour is that of the Messenger, who is different: an outsider, and a little unworldly. His is the colour of the sky, or the centre of the candle flame.

The challenges that I experienced in the process of designing this play are the same as the rewards. It was imperative in my mind to make this production as authentic looking as possible without resorting to stereotypes. I wanted the actors to look as though they had stepped out of one of the photos in the Holocaust archives, and I held to that goal fairly rigidly. This will be the largest and most complex show that I have designed to date and I am thrilled with the result, thanks to the director and the wonderful support team who helped to make this vision a reality.

Glossary of Terms

All terms are quoted from the Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion unless otherwise noted.

Ba'al Shem Tov – Baal Shem Tov - Rabbi Yisroel (Israel) ben Eliezer (רבי ישראל אבן לארשי יבר) August 27, 1698 – May 22, 1760) is considered to be the founder of Hasidic Judaism. Name means 'Master of the Good Name' He was born in Okopy, small village that over the centuries has been part of Poland, Russia, Galicia and is now part of Ukraine. He died in Medzhybizh, which had once been part of Lithuania, then Turkey, Poland and Russia, and is now in Ukraine. Known by the acronym BESHT (24)

Dybbuk – The disembodied spirit of a dead person that finds no rest on account of sins committed during life. A dybbuk seeks a haven in the body of a living person, talking through the mouth of the host and acting as an evil influence. (211)

Kabbalah – Its terminology, symbolism, and conceptual structure are better described as a form of esotericism rather than mysticism, though elements of the latter are not absent and sometimes even prominent. The salient features of this system are the notion of an utterly hidden and therefore completely inaccessible Godhead and its manifestation in a complex and dynamic structure of ten emanations. A particularly important feature of this system is the female character of the tenth sefirah, the Shekhinah, and the view that the unity of the Godhead is consummated by the union of the male and female elements within it. Central to kabbalistic piety is its relation to the commandments, which are given not an ethical but an esoteric and mystical interpretation with a theurgical character. (387)

Kaddish – In the Middle Ages in Germany *Kaddish Yatom* ('Mourner's Kaddish') was introduced. A son (in some communities a daughter as well) recites this special Kaddish for eleven months after the death of a parent and on the anniversary of the death. (Jacobs 298)

Mikveh – 'Gathering' of water, the ritual bath. (Jacobs 347)

Minyan – The requisite number of adult Jewish males (i.e. aged 13 or older) for a quorum for various liturgical purposes. (468)

Moshiach – the messiah - anointed one - a descendant of the house of David - raised up by God to break the yoke of the heathen; will herald a time of peace, restore Israel. (17)

Shabbes – (Sabbath) The weekly day of rest observed from sunset on Friday until nightfall on Saturday. Essentially, the Sabbath is a day of physical rest and spiritual joy, centred around the twin poles of home and synagogue. (595)

Sitra Achra – A kabbalistic term used in the Zohar and subsequent literature to designate the realms of the powers of evil. (647)

Talmud – The name applied to each of two great compilations, distinguished respectively as the Talmud Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud) and the Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), in which are collected the teachings of the major Jewish scholars (amora'im) who flourished between 200 and 500 CE, the classic period of rabbinic Judaism. (668)

Torah – A term applied both to the entire corpus of sacred literature and to the first section of the Hebrew Bible.

Yeshiva – The oldest institution for higher learning in Judaism, primarily devoted to study the Talmud. (741)

Zohar – Recognized by kabbalists since the fourteenth century as the most important work of mystical teaching; in some circles the book has achieved a sanctity only less than that of the Bible. The Zohar is composed of several literary units, not all by the same author. The Zohar has been described as a mixture of theosophic theology, mystical psychology and anthropology, myth and poetry. (763)

Sources Cited:

Werblowsky, R.J. Zwi and Geoffrey Wigoder Ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Jacobs, Louis. *The Jewish Religion: A Companion*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Production Biographies



Sarah Afful

May we all carry a part of the pain the Holocaust brought forth, so that it may never happen again. Thank you David for ending my UBC career with something meaningful and close to my heart. Mazel Tov.



Shaun Aquiline

A Dybbuk is Shaun's final show at UBC. Shaun has been seen in *Mother Courage and Her Children, Featuring Loretta, A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Learned Ladies*. Shaun is currently in negotiations with

Homebound Films for his screenplay *A Blue Collar Love* and it's thematic sequel *Working Class Heroes*. He would like to thank David Savoy for his patience and wisdom with Shaun's crash course in Judaism. And of course he would like to thank his hero. The person who stood behind him through it all and

said never blink and works incredibly hard everyday so Shaun could be in the fabulous world of acting; his father.

Spencer Atkinson

Spencer Atkinson made his professional acting debut last spring



with Blackbird Theatre in *Peer Gynt*. Since then, Spencer has appeared at UBC in *The Skin of Our Teeth, Big Love, Mother Courage and Her Children, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Featuring Loretta* and recently in the 2008 PuSh festival production of *Old Goriot*. You can catch Spencer next in Pi theatre's environmental tragedy *The Eighth Land*. As this is his last show here at UBC Spencer would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to all his professors for making these last three years of his life incredibly special.



Yoshie Bancroft

I am thrilled to be ending my final year at UBC with *A Dybbuk*. Being part of this show has been a great learning experience and hugely rewarding. My UBC credits include Zhaboonigan in *The Rez Sisters*, Martine

in *The Learned Ladies*, Quince in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mrs. Juno in *Overruled* and Lydia in *Big Love*. I am delighted to be part of the first production of *A Dybbuk* in Vancouver and would like to thank everyone involved in the production of this show!



Wil Carlos

Working on *A Dybbuk* this semester has been a great experience for Wil Carlos. Learning about the rich Jewish culture as relates to the show and the time period, at the same time as rehearsing with a great cast and team, has been

a lot of fun. Highlights of Wil's theatre life include playing Victor in *Lovestruck* last summer, the co-production *Old Goriot* and playing Achilles in last semesters *Shadows of Troy*. Wil has had a great time working with everyone involved in *A Dybbuk* and hopes you leave the theatre believing in the power of the spirit.

Hilary Fillier

Hilary is delighted to be a part of the Vancouver premiere of *A Dybbuk*. She is in her final year of the BFA Acting Program where she has enjoyed playing characters such as Philomena in *The Rez Sisters* and Titania/Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Nick Fontaine

Nick is thrilled (and more than a little sad) to be in his fifth and final mainstage show at UBC. Selected previous credits include *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Learned Ladies*, *Into The Woods*, *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown*, *The Skin Of Our Teeth*, and *The Actor's Nightmare*. Thanks to Theatre at UBC for three unbelievable years! Look next for Nick this summer in Pi Theatre's *The Eighth Land*.



Max Gilbert

Max is humbled and excited to have been invited to join David Savoy and the talented BFA acting class in the production of *A Dybbuk*. Previously, Max could be seen last March in Camyar



Chai's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Theatre at UBC) as well James Tait's production of *Old Goriot* (Theatre at UBC in cooperation with Western Gold Theatre) last January. Many thanks to Stephen Heatley and David Savoy for thinking of me to fill a hole left by some pretty incredible shoes. And of course, to Amanda, for all the support even if I didn't necessarily deserve it.

Ian Giles

Ian is a UBC Theatre alumni (BFA '07). Last summer he was chosen from hundreds of international teams as a finalist in the Walt Disney Imagineering Imagi-Nations design competition in Los Angeles. With his design partner Ian Schimpf, he presented an original ride design concept to a room of creative executives from both Imagineering and the Walt Disney Company. They won the competition, receiving a creative innovation award. Ian continues his love of theme park design and is currently pursuing a creative position at Walt Disney Imagineering.



This spring, he will travel to the Czech Republic as the lighting designer of *Diary of a Madman* which was chosen as a top entry for the Setkani theatre festival in Brno.

Ian is thrilled to be part of this amazing creative team and is very thankful for the opportunity.



Maura Halloran

Maura Halloran (BFA final year) has worked in theatre, film and radio in Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver and Banff. Maura appeared this year at UBC as Helena in *Midsummer*, hammer-happy Pelajia in *The Rez Sisters* and Philaminte,

the towering pink matriarch of *The Learned Ladies*. Other favourite gigs include *Steel Magnolias* (Morpheus), *Peer Gynt* (Blackbird) and *Diary of a Madman* (UBC), the latter of which she'll perform again for the SETKÁNÍ/ENCOUNTER 2008 theatre festival in Brno, CZ. As playwright, Maura's had work at NextFest and Brave New PlayRites and will assistant direct for John Wright on Pi theatre's upcoming *The Eighth Land*.



Jason Ho

Jason Ho is currently in his 3rd year of studies in the BFA Theatre Design program. Originally from Taiwan, Jason came to Vancouver to pursue his dream as a computer graphic artist. After completing the 3D Animation and Visual

Effects Program at Vancouver Film School, Jason has continued his studies here at UBC to combine his 3D knowledge skills with theatre set, lighting, costume, and sound design. *A Dybbuk* is Jason's first major production design at UBC, and he would like to thank the entire crew for such a wonderful experience. Furthermore, he would like to thank Patrick Pennefather for his support and work as

another sound designer/ music director/mentor of the show.

Previous show experiences include:

Assistant Lighting Designer – *The Learned Ladies*

Sound Effects Designer – *Shadows of Troy*

Assistant Set/Lighting Designer – *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Aslam Husain

This is Aslam's last performance at UBC before he graduates. Recent credits include *The Madman* in *Diary of a Madman*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Clitandre in *The Learned Ladies* and Rats in Enlightenment Theatre's production of *Lovestruck*. In April, Aslam and the cast of *Diary of a Madman* will be travelling to the Czech Republic to perform in the 18th annual SETKANI/ENCOUNTER Theatre Festival as the first North American competitors in its history. It has been incredible to be part of telling such a great story and working with some of his favourite people in the world!



Kristine Jesudason

Kristine is in her intermediate year of the BFA program and is delighted to be part of this production. She was last seen in *Shadows of Troy* as Clytemnestra here at UBC and has been in other productions such as *Frankenstein*

(Douglas College), *Taming of the Shrew* (Douglas College), *Hot L Baltimore* (UBC). She will next be seen in next season's production of *Gormenghast* by Mervyn Peake, directed by Stephen Malloy.



Jeff Kaiser

Jeff's previous performances at UBC include: *La Dispute* directed by Patrick Gauthier, *Hot L Baltimore* directed by Stephen Malloy, *Bringing it All Back Home* directed by Camyar Chai, *La*

Dispute directed by Joanna Garfinkle. Prior to attending UBC Jeff studied the Lecoq Pedagogy under the teachings of Annie Averre. His physical theatre training continued to attending 2 summer intensive workshops at Dell'Arte International School of Movement Theatre in Blue Lake California: Extreme Physical Theatre Stephen Bueschur, Clown Ronlin Foreman. Jeff's physical theatre career includes: working for Imago Theatre Company in Portland Oregon; where he performed and created masks for *Big Little Things* directed by Carol Triffle and Jerry Mouwad.

Courtney Lancaster

Courtney is from Nova Scotia, and is in her final year of the BFA Acting program at UBC. She has had a wonderful learning experience in *A Dybbuk* and is happy that her final production here at UBC has been so enriching. Some of Courtney's favorite credits include *The Learned Ladies*, *Medea Redux*, *Mother Courage and her Children* and *Big Love* at UBC, *Welcome to the Moon* and *Munschpalooza* at Festival Antigish Summer Theatre, and *Antigone*



with Seven Tyrants Theatre Collective.

Courtney would like to thank her family and friends for their ever-present love and support.



Gord Myren

This is Gord's final production at Theatre at UBC for his BFA in Acting. This year at UBC he has had the privilege of working on *The Learned Ladies* by Molière, directed by Patrick Gauthier, and *A Midsummer*

Night's Dream, directed by Stephen Heatley. Gord is a graduate of Douglas College Theatre Program where he played Hart in *Unity 1918* by Kevin Kerr, directed by Cheryl Matheson, as well as Father Don White in *Sympathetic Magic* by Lanford Wilson, directed by Sarah Rodgers. In his second year at UBC he played the Commander in Chief in *Mother Courage and her Children* by Bertolt Brecht, directed by Camyar Chai, as well as Oed in *Big Love* by Charles Mee, directed by Joanna Garfinkel. Gord would like to thank everyone at UBC for the opportunities they gave him and looks forward to the future, whatever that may be.

Michael Neale

Michael is thrilled to be a part of this production of *A Dybbuk*, which he hopes you will enjoy as you sit in your comfortable bourgeois chairs and quietly await the revolution as you munch on your processed foods



and take part in your bacchanalian orgies of consumption, never noticing the trod upon, the suffering, the hungry. Why? Why?? Why?????!!!!

Patrick Pennefather

Patrick Pennefather is a multi-award winning composer and songwriter. He has created music for over two hundred productions in music, theatre, dance, web, video, film advertising, corporate events, in Canada, the U.S., Australia, Japan and Europe. Clients have included the Vancouver International Comedy Festival, PuSh Festival, Electric Company Theatre, HIVE, CBC Radio, Bravo Television, Cossette Communications and Palmer Jarvis/DDB. Patrick also teaches sound design in the Theatre Program at UBC and is a faculty member at the MDM Program.

Ariel Rivera

Ariel Rivera graduated from the UBC Theatre Program in 2007. When she received a call from one of her mentors asking if she would like to return to design for *A Dybbuk*, there was no hesitation.

Ariel has been designing since a very early age and is now pursuing a career in the field. Due to the extensive experience she has received through UBC she feels empowered to do so.

This project has been a joy to work on. The faculty knew of Ariel's penchant for a certain kind of production and offered it up. The research opened new doors and enriched her understanding, and the large and efficient costume team ensured that all of the details were taken care of.

This experience has reminded Ariel of her love for theatrical design and bolstered her confidence and resolve to find her place in the theatre community further afield.

David Savoy

David Savoy is the Artistic Director of the Showboat Festival Theatre in Port Colborne, ON. Previously he was the AD of the St. Lawrence Stage Company in Brockville and the Associate AD of the Sunshine Festival in Orillia. He spent 3 seasons at The Shaw Festival. He has directed over 80 productions and has taught at The University of Windsor, UofT/ Sheridan and Theatre Ontario. Last season at UBC he directed *Overruled* by G.B. Shaw, and directed and adapted *Diary of a Madman* by Gogol, which has been invited to be a part of Setkani/Encounter 2008 – The International Festival of Theatre Schools in Brno, CZ. He last appeared onstage at the FWT in *The Boys From Syracuse*—and his role as Citizen #3 is the stuff of local theatrical legend.



Becky Shrimpton

Becky would like to thank you for attending *A Dybbuk*. She's dreadfully proud of her entire cast and crew, and with the great love of a Jewish baba she would like to ask you that you Enjoy! Enjoy!

Previous roles have

included Victorine Taillfer in *Old Goriot* and Yenta the Matchmaker in *Fiddler on the Roof*. One more role in the vein of Judaic theater and she intends to convert.

Yulia Shtern

Yulia Shtern is a visual artist and a scenic designer. She completed her BFA in Drawing and Painting at the Ontario College of Art and Design and is currently working toward a Masters degree in Scenic Design at UBC. Some of her past design credits include *Agatha* (Theatre at UBC), *Three*

Days of Rain (GG Productions), *Stone Face* (Damfino Theatre), *Lady Windermere's Fan* (United Players of Vancouver), and *Moonlight and Valentino, Homeward Bound* and *Problem Child/Criminal Genius* (Alumnae Theatre, Toronto). Recent visual arts exhibitions include *Stoneworks* at Wagner Rosenbaum Gallery and *OPEN CASE/SHUT SPACE* at Gallerie Bertossini in Toronto.



Kevin Stark

Kevin is thrilled to be making his debut on the Frederic Wood Stage in *A Dybbuk*. As always, Kevin likes to find something new that each production has given him. This production's lesson: How To Be Deceased.

Of course, this is one experience everyone is guaranteed to have; however, doing a considerable amount of acting afterwards is unlikely. Kevin would like to thank David for the incredible opportunity and the cast and crew for a truly singular experience. Let's get possessed!

Cassandra Tattrie

What should I write? What do you want to write?—Answering a question with another question—almost became second nature during *A Dybbuk's* rehearsal process, a process that Cassandra is happy to have been a



part of—despite the production being her last show with Theatre at UBC. Her previous Theatre at UBC, Stage Management credits include, *The Rez Sisters*,

Mother Courage and her Children, Beautiful Thing, & House of Atreus. Cassandra Looks forward to seeing what her post UBC theatre career will hold. Cheers!



The Creaking Planks

For the first time since the '05 Vancouver Fringe Festival's *Jew! A Musical*, East Van's jug band of the damned put their skullcaps back on and resume their explorations into the worlds of theatre and the

klezmorim. Delegates from their island of misfit instruments include Rowan Lipkovits on accordion, Travis Bernhardt on steel guitar and ukulele, Pawel Piechocki on santur and percussion, and introducing Katherine Mackin on the clarinet. Following the conclusion of this production The Creaking Planks anticipate another typical summer of inducing dancing in pirates and zombies... but never yet both at the same time.



Don Griffiths

A Message from
Gerald Vanderwoude, Administrator
UBC Department of Theatre and Film

I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank one of the “original players,” Mr. Don Griffiths, for his exceptional career at UBC, particularly at the Frederic Wood Theatre. After 33 years of excellent service, sage wisdom, 700,000 lighting cues and somewhere in the neighbourhood of 4 million # 8 wood screws, Don is retiring from his post as a Stage and Lighting Specialist.

Don’s retirement marks a milestone at the Frederic Wood Theatre. He is the last of the original crew that shaped and instituted what is still being taught and passed on today within the Theatre Program. While we are sad that he is retiring, we are honoured to build upon the high standards in the art of stage-craft and design that he has provided to many, many students (now working professionals) over the years.

For whatever reason, these last few weeks, I have crossed the stage to the lobby and I have noticed Don out of the corner of my eye. He has been engaging lighting students, directing traffic and building sets, seemingly at the same time. Just last week I walked onto a darkened stage and there was Don: 20 feet in the air, on the end of an A- frame

ladder, miner’s lamp on his head, tweaking a light just so. All the while giving a student input about which lamp works best where, on this stage.

I think that this is Don’s great talent. He understands how the technical translates into art. For him sets and lights have never been just lines on a page to be positioned because a measurement on paper said so. Rather, these lines were maps for exploration into the art of theatre and the potential for student education.

On behalf of the program, many thanks Don for all of your years of service, creativity and guidance. We all wish you the best in retirement and look forward to hearing of your latest pursuits.

PS: If its okay with you, I will keep our tradition of yelling out the curler’s cry of “Sweep!” when crossing the stage.

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Actors: Jocelyn Gauthier, Cecile Rusin, and Spencer Robinson in *Hamlet* at Balzac's Old Grand, 2007. Photo: Tim Matheson

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