

Arts

Andy Warhol and the Jews.

See Page 13



Cooking

Hooked on fish.

See Page 18



Travel

The best baguettes in Paris.

See Page 19



Recalling Richard Mintz

A fixture of Boston's legal scene for 60 years, the attorney exemplified Jewish values every day of his life, says Mintz Levin partner and friend Jeff Robbins.

See Page 2

Ranking the rabbis

Three Boston leaders make *Newsweek's* list of most influential, but does it really matter?

See Page 3

Shoah in words and music

Congregation Mishkan Tefila is commemorating the Holocaust by combining the words of survivors with song.

See Page 11

'Pictures' with a jazz twist

Having put his own spin on the Mussorgsky classic, Israeli-born, Boston-based pianist Eyrn Katsenelenbogen turns to Bach.

See Page 15

Bistro bullies

How your date treats the waiter may offer a clue to how he'll eventually treat you, singles columnist Tamar Caspi warns.

See Page 16

Have a news tip or story idea?

E-mail us at:

editorial@
TheJewishAdvocate.com

SHABBAT CANDLE LIGHTING TIMES



Parshat Kedoshim

BOSTON	7:23 PM
MANCHESTER, N.H.	7:26 PM
FALL RIVER	7:22 PM
PORTLAND, MAINE	7:22 PM
PROVIDENCE, R.I.	7:23 PM
SPRINGFIELD	7:28 PM
WORCESTER	7:25 PM

ERUV STATUS:

BOSTON	781-446-9797
MALDEN	781-322-5686
SHARON	781-695-0505



THE JEWISH ADVOCATE®

Established 1902

Vol. 202 No. 17 ■ 25 Nisan 5771 — APRIL 29, 2011 ■ www.TheJewishAdvocate.com ■ \$1.50

The untold story of Valery Spitkovsky

How a brilliant scientist – and renowned refusenik – wound up dying in virtual obscurity

By Joni Schockett
Special to the Advocate

We have just completed celebrating Pesach, the holiday when we retell the story of how, thousands of years ago, the Jews escaped from a tyrant and sought freedom in the Promised Land.

More than four decades ago, the Jews of the Soviet Union

also tried to escape tyranny,

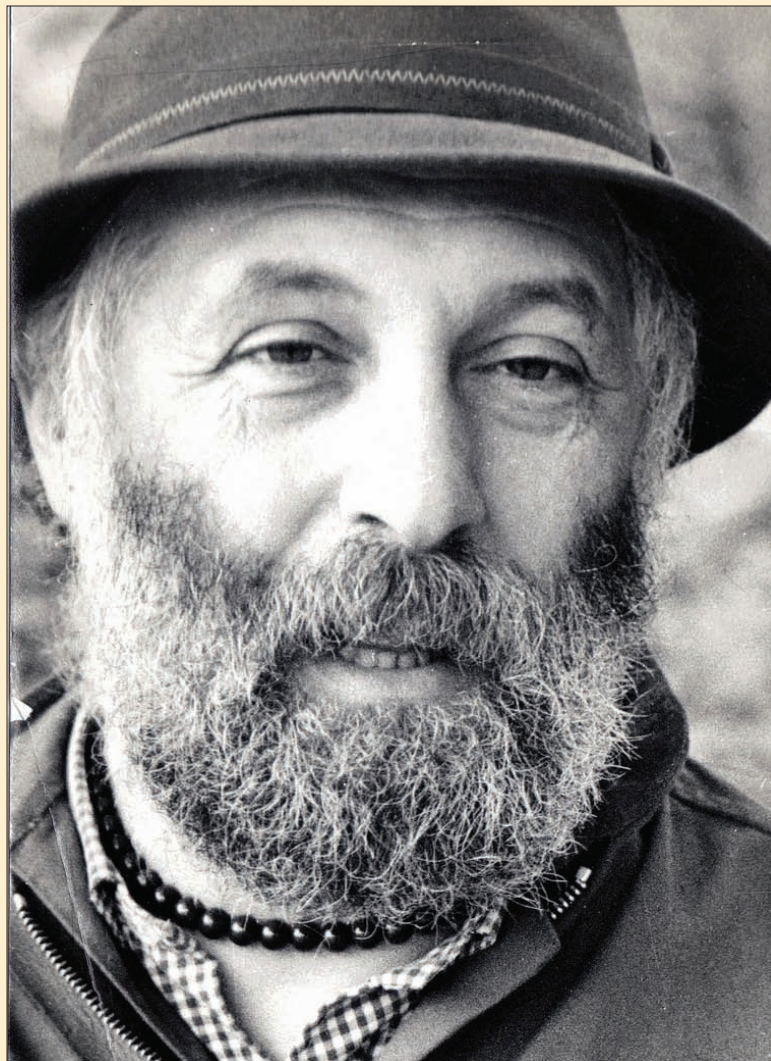
but the communist government refused to let them go. They became known as refuseniks. For seeking their freedom, many lost their jobs and were ostracized. They lived in limbo, hounded by the KGB.

This is the story of one of those refuseniks.

As a young scientist, Valery Spitkovsky achieved breakthroughs that led to advancements in satellite communications and space travel. He served on joint Soviet-US expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic, setting an endurance record that still stands.

But Spitkovsky's desire to stray from the life scripted for him destroyed his career and unhinged his world.

A queen, a prime minister and scores of scientists took up



As a refusenik, Spitkovsky was cut off from his scientific world.

his cause, bringing it to the attention of then Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. After more than a dozen lost years, Spitkovsky was allowed to leave the Soviet Union in 1990. But the next chapter in his life did not go as he had hoped.

A month ago, Valery

Spitkovsky died from complications of brain cancer at the Sherill House in Boston. He was buried at the Baker Street Cemeteries, with money provided by Medicaid. His death went unnoticed; Medicaid's coverage

Continued on Page 24

SJC to hear case of teacher vs. synagogue

Supreme Court ruling could affect Emanuel

By Elise Kigner
Advocate Staff

The outcome of a case before the US Supreme Court could influence the fate of an employment discrimination action brought against Temple Emanuel in Newton.

A woman who had taught Hebrew at the synagogue's religious school for 24 years alleges that she was not rehired in 2008 because of her age.

An investigation by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination was stymied nearly two years ago when a Suffolk Superior Court judge agreed with the temple's contention that the state lacked jurisdiction on religious grounds.

The state Supreme Judicial Court was to consider the case next month, but put off a hearing until at least September. The court wants to first see how the Supreme Court rules on a Michigan case in which a teacher who was fired accused a church of discrimination. Both cases pivot on the issue of ministerial exception – a doctrine that exempts religious institutions from anti-discrimination laws in personnel matters involving employees whose duties are primarily religious.

If the SJC rules in favor of Temple Emanuel, it would set a precedent protecting religious

Continued on Page 4

Wiesel protégé directing rare performance of play

By Elise Kigner
Advocate Staff

Sitting in a Kol Nidre service in Russia 45 years ago, Elie Wiesel's mind wandered.

Wiesel, who was visiting the country as a journalist, wished that the rabbi, Yehuda-Leib Levine, did not have to censor himself for fear of spies in the room. He wanted to hear the rabbi speak out about the oppression of Jews in the Soviet Union.

When the rabbi did not speak out, Wiesel decided he would be the rabbi's voice. In 1968, a decade after publishing his Holocaust memoir, "Night," he wrote a play about the Kol Nidre service he imagined.

"Zalmen, Or the Madness of G-d" will receive a rare performance May 1 at Harvard University.

The play is produced and directed by Guila Clara Kessous, who has

Continued on Page 7



Director Guila Clara Kessous and Elie Wiesel

In Wiesel's 'Zalmen,' a rabbi dares to defy Soviets

Continued from Page 1

also directed the first two of Wiesel's three plays, "The Trial of G-d" and "Once Upon a Time: a Black Canopy, a Black Sky." Kessous, 28, is billing the play as a tribute to Wiesel, who served as her mentor as she worked on her doctorate in ethics and aesthetics at Boston University and the University of France.

Kessous said she believed the last major US production of "Zalmen" was on Broadway in 1975.

Set in the late 1950s, somewhere in Russia, the play depicts a rabbi who dares to speak the truth about the suffering of Russian Jews in his sermon at a Kol Nidre service attended by his regular congregants and visiting Western actors.

"And I say and I proclaim to any who will listen that the Torah here is in peril and the spirit of a whole people is being crushed," the rabbi says. "If we allow this to continue, if you, our brothers, forsake us, we will be the last of the Jews in this land, the last witnesses, the last of the Jews who in silence bury the Jew within them."

Afterward, the commissar of Jewish affairs at the ministry of culture confronts the rabbi and his congregants, one after another. Upon interrogation, Zalmen, the synagogue's beadle (caretaker), admits to instigating the speech, as does the rabbi's son-in-law, Alexey.

The day before Kol Nidre, Zalmen coaches the rabbi on what he must say in his sermon:

"Become mad tonight – just tonight – and G-d on His throne will envy you your light. You're afraid – I know. Don't be – not tonight," the beadle says. "Madness is an answer to fear."

In Kessous's staging of the play, Zalmen's face is projected on a screen to suggest he is the rabbi's conscious, pressuring him to act.

Alexey, who rejects his Jewish identity, tells the commissar he thinks a family quarrel the day before led to the rabbi's outburst.

Right before Kol Nidre, Misha visits his grandfather, the rabbi. The rabbi asks Misha what is Yom Kippur. He responds that he thinks it is an important holiday, a Jewish holiday, a holiday for old people. "They pray ... I think. And they cry," he says.

Alexey does not want to raise Misha as Jewish, and only will have him circumcised at the rabbi's insistence. Alexey tells the rabbi he sees Judaism as a something that would separate his son from society, making him a "stranger in his own country."

When the commissar asks Alexey what he knows about the sermon, Alexey tells him: "His attack was directed not against the state, not against the regime, but against his son-in-law....He resents me because I refuse to follow in the footsteps of my so-called ancestors."

In Kessous's production, 12-year-old Misha is a puppet, "to show the manipulation," she ex-



Guila Clara Kessous

plained. While Misha is attracted to his grandfather's knowledge, he is also his parents' child, and he dreams of being a scientist.

Kessous, who is finishing a book about Wiesel's theater, said madness – the feeling Zalmen provokes in the rabbi – is a familiar theme in his work. The mad person "is the one who is closest to spirituality, and closest to the truth," she said of Wiesel's characters.

Wiesel, who survived the Holocaust in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 for his work spreading the messages of peace, atonement and human dignity. The author of more than 40 books, he is a professor at Boston University.

Wiesel gave Kessous permission to stage his three plays when she came to the US to study with him. Kessous said Wiesel never gives her

specific directions about how to stage the plays, but she does often email him with questions.

For example, after discovering one of Wiesel's unpublished plays from the '70s where the main character commits suicide, she asked Wiesel if the rabbi in "Zalmen" could be envisioned as committing suicide.

Kessous said he did not give her a direct answer, saying only that his work is intended to raise questions. When she questions Wiesel, she said, "The point is not to force him to give me some key, but just to try to interpret the message and interpret the best I can for the audience to do its job, to take the message and continue it."

While the play does not deal directly with the Holocaust, Kessous said she chose to stage it on Yom HaShoah because the experiences of Soviet Jewry offer similar lessons.

"When we are dealing with Elie Wiesel, we are, of course, thinking about the voice to 'always remember,' as a duty," she said.

The 18 cast members are a mix of students and theater professionals and non-professionals. "The big idea around the Holocaust is conscience is social responsibility and speaking out," said Efraim Shapiro, who plays the chairman of the synagogue council. "The play is all about the fear to say what you need to say to survive, or need to do to survive."

Shapiro's character mediates be-

tween the rabbi and the government investigator. "I am the party apparatchik; I have to answer to the regime. My back story is that I lost my family in the siege of Leningrad, so I have nobody except my people in the synagogue, and I am desperate to make sure they survive," said Shapiro, a general contractor from Sharon.

This production is based on the English and French versions of the play, including material that had not been previously translated. Kessous herself is from France, and will return to France in May to perform and teach.

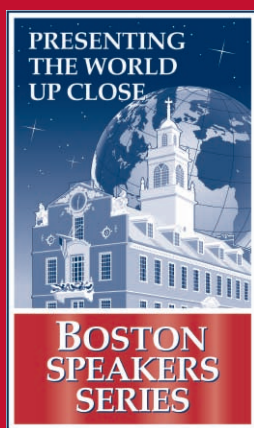
The play will feature the music of Edwin Geist, a victim of the Holocaust. His niece, Rosian Bagri-ansky Zerner, will give a talk introducing the play and her uncle's music.

"I think Elie Wiesel captures this intensity of tension. One needed to watch every move, every word, every step, and it was not just during the Nazi occupation, but even with the Soviets," said Zerner, who survived the Holocaust in the Kovno ghetto in Lithuania and in hiding.

The play is co-sponsored by the Laboratory at Harvard, the Harvard Center for Jewish Studies and Harvard Pforzheimer House.

To make reservations email zalmentheplay@gmail.com. For more information visit zalmentheplay.com.

BOSTON SPEAKERS SERIES



Come experience the ultimate in cultural entertainment—seven evenings of diverse opinions, profound insights and fascinating discussion on a broad scope of issues. Pulitzer Prize winners, innovative thinkers, statesmen and other celebrated personalities speaking on the cutting-edge issues of our time will enlighten, inspire and entertain YOU!

Subscriptions Available For as Low as \$245

Series Sold by Subscription Only

Order Now!

(617) 266-1200

www.BostonSpeakersSeries.org



DAVID MCCULLOUGH

Historian & Pulitzer Prize-Winning Author of *Truman, John Adams & 1776*

Wed., Oct. 5, 2011



MICHELLE RHEE

Former D.C. Schools Chancellor Featured in *Waiting for Superman*

Wed., Nov. 9, 2011



VALERIE PLAME WILSON & AMB. JOE WILSON

Former Covert CIA Operative & Former Diplomat to Iraq, Portrayed in the Film *Fair Game*

Wed., Nov. 30, 2011



MICHAEL POLLAN

Renowned Sustainable Food Activist Featured in the Documentary *Food, Inc.*

Wed., Jan. 25, 2012



AZAR NAFISI

New York Times Bestselling Author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

Wed., Feb. 22, 2012



FRANK ABAGNALE

The Spielberg Film *Catch Me If You Can* is His Amazing Life Story

Wed., Mar. 28, 2012



TOM BROKAW

Legendary Television Journalist and Author of *The Greatest Generation*

Wed., Apr. 25, 2012

2011-2012 SEASON AT BOSTON SYMPHONY HALL

SOLD OUT IN PHILADELPHIA!

The new Boston Speaker Series is modeled after the highly acclaimed Philadelphia Speakers Series, which, now in its seventh season, has been "sold out" since its beginning, with a waiting list since the very first season.

Here is what our subscribers have to say...

"This Series is incredible! It's like an elite continuing education course where the 'guest lecturers,' season after season, are some of the best and brightest minds of our time."

Laura Kulhanjian

"I need the Speaker Series. It continues to provide a wordly view in an unobstructed way without media influence. Each speaker broadens my perspective and challenges my thought process."

Charles B.

"A few years back I was a guest at the David McCullough lecture. It was one of the most fascinating evenings of my life. I enjoyed it so much, I've been a subscriber ever since."

Bob Jacobson

"I have attended the Speakers Series for several years and I am constantly impressed with the caliber of speakers. I enjoy having an unbiased, personal view into their lives and thoughts, and I always come away with new knowledge and insight into the topic discussed. I truly enjoy the whole experience."

Tom N.