



KLEZKANADA

קלעז-קאַנאַדע

Yiddish Culture Jam — Artist Bios

Liz Alpern is a passionate cook, author and community organizer. She is co-founder of The Gefilteria and co-author of *The Gefilte Manifesto: New Recipes for Old World Jewish Foods*. She is also the creator of Queer Soup Night, a global event series highlighting the talent of queer chefs and raising tens of thousands of dollars for locally-based social justice organizations. Liz has traveled the world teaching Yiddish cooking and has been featured on the Forbes 30 Under 30 and the Cherry Bombe 100.

Originally from the Mauricie region, **Isaac Beaudet Lefebvre** was fascinated by Quebec's traditional music from a young age. He initially received classical training in elementary and high school, while learning folklore by ear. He then became familiar with Irish music during several trips to Ireland. Upon returning to Quebec, he explored jazz, completing a degree in jazz composition and arrangement at Cégep de St-Laurent. During his studies, he immersed himself in the world of klezmer music with the group Ichka. An eclectic and passionate fiddler, he can be seen performing with groups such as Kavaz, La Délégation, and the Isabelle Charlot Ensemble, as well as composing and arranging music for storytelling and puppet shows.

Raffi Boden is a NY based cellist, composer, and educator known for his groovy bass lines and his versatility. He has performed internationally and taught at klezmer festivals around the world. Raffi plays with the Magid Ensemble, Levyosn, The Golden Thread Ensemble, contemporary classical quintet the Riwaya Ensemble, and chamber-jazz ensemble Simone Baron & Arco Belo, all of whom have albums coming out in 2025 and 2026. In classical contexts, he has performed internationally in Europe and South America, and locally in Carnegie Hall. Raffi holds degrees from Juilliard and Oberlin. These days, Raffi is freelancing in NY, teaching, and working on singing in Yiddish!



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Maia Dagher is a Montreal-based violinist and singer. She studied with Alexander Read at the Montreal Conservatory of Music and with Éric Favreau at Cégep de Lanaudière in Joliette. Active on the music scene since the age of 17, she is already known for her enthusiasm, dedication, and ensemble playing. Among the musical styles she explores are Quebec folk, Celtic music, old-time music, bluegrass, and early music.

Maia is regularly booked for concerts and events in these various musical genres, and she has been entertaining audiences at the Auberge du Dragon Rouge as a musician and host for the past three years. She is also skilled in playing the Irish bouzouki and footwork, in addition to singing and playing the violin.

Josh “Socalled” Dolgin is a pianist, accordionist, composer, magician and producer based in Montreal, Quebec. He has lectured and led master classes in music festivals around the world, from Moscow to Paris, from London to LA, and from Krakow to San Francisco, and has performed on every continent. With 8-ish solo albums (and one with Vulfpeck’s Jack Stratton and Michael Winograd as Yiddishe Pirat) and 6 produced musical comedies to his name, he has performed solo or with his band all over the world for more than 25 years. His list of collaborators knows no generational, social, cultural or religious boundaries: Chilly Gonzales, Itzhak Perlman, Lhasa de Sela, Fred Wesley, Andy Statman, Adam Cohen, Boban Markovic, the Mighty Sparrow, Roxanne Shante, Irving Fields, Killah Priest, Matisyahu, Theodore Bikel, Fanfare Ciocarlia, Enrico Macias and Derrick Carter, to name-drop a few. Dolgin was the subject of The Socalled Movie, a 2010 feature documentary produced by the National Film Board of Canada. Always active doing special projects, he toured with Yiddish programs with Austria’s Lungau Big Band and Germany’s Kaiser Quartett, creates theme songs, directed and released an indie erotica film and created a special program using first world war archives at the Weimar festival of Yiddish culture. He is working on the next Socalled record and is a course lecturer in the Jewish Studies department at McGill University, teaching about the history of Eastern European Yiddish music and “living the archives”.

Eden Glasman is a violinist from London, UK, based in Quebec since 2013. She is a member of klezmer string ensemble Yene Velt, and is currently studying Ottoman music. As well as playing violin in various local music, theatre, and film projects, she enjoys writing and teaching literature at a college in Montreal.



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Adah Hetko is a Yiddish singer/songwriter, dance-leader, and educator based in Boston, MA. Several of her compositions are featured on the album Levyosn's Lullaby, recorded with her ensemble Levyosn (Ashkenazi Hebrew for "Leviathan"), and released by Borscht Beat in June 2023, and on the ensemble's forthcoming second album. Adah has developed her knowledge and skills in many ways, including completing an ethnographic study of contemporary Yiddish women singers (and completing an MA in Jewish Studies at Indiana University in the process), performing with Yiddish song trio Soloveychicks, studying Yiddish song and dance-leading with veteran artist Judy Bressler, and teaching Yiddish songs to students ages 5-95. Adah served as Multidisciplinary Programs Coordinator at KlezKanada for the exciting years 2020-2021, and she is a regular faculty member at Yiddish New York.

Lysander Jaffe is a Boston-based violinist, violist, and vocalist, equally at home in chamber music, traditional music, and cross-genre collaborations. Known for his command of East European and Mediterranean folk styles, he balances a busy international touring schedule with a commitment to community music in New England. He is a Co-Artistic Director of Grammy-nominated string orchestra Palaver Strings and a founding member of the Yiddish ensemble Levyosn and the vocal quintet Culomba. He has studied with masters of traditional music in Bulgaria, Kosovo, Greece, Corsica, and Georgia, and is a two-time recipient of the Massachusetts Cultural Council Apprenticeship in Traditional Arts. Lysander holds a Masters in Contemporary Improvisation from New England Conservatory. For more information, visit lysanderjaffe.com

Traditional music and dance have been a cherished part of life in the Jutras family of Bas Saint-François, Québec. It was the family stories that inspired **Ghislain "Gigi" Jutras** to take up calling dances, just like his grandfather Lulu did back in the 1950s. His real spark came during the festive holiday gatherings of his teenage years with the Langlois family in the Eastern Townships. Step by step, he began calling dances in the early 2000s, joining his fellow musicians from the agronomy faculty at university. After 25 years of dancing and calling across the four corners of Québec and beyond, Gigi has honed an energetic, authentic, and unifying style that adapts easily to crowds of all kinds. Whether the setting is a folk festival or an electrotrad party, he delights in sharing that deeply human spirit characteristic of the square dance tradition. Novice or pro, young or young-at-heart — you'll be swinging and laughing in that irresistible kitchen-party atmosphere!

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Daniel Kunda Thagard is a multi-instrumentalist living in Montreal. As a musician, Daniel is deeply involved in the revival of the tsimbl, or Yiddish hammered dulcimer, and contributing to the preservation and revitalization of traditional Jewish music and its co-territorial styles. He performs regularly in the klezmer band Yene Velt, the Greek Smyrnaiko band Toubeki, and with singer Gabrielle Cloutier. In addition to performing, Daniel is a software developer and a founding member of the Klezmer Archive Project, an initiative dedicated to making klezmer source materials available online for performers, learners, and researchers, and safeguarding the rich heritage of klezmer music.

Zafer Mamilli picked up the violin at a classical conservatory. In recent years he has gravitated towards folklore and is presently a member of Yene Velt Yiddish String Ensemble. Zafer is a jammer at heart and is likely to be feeling right at home in a kitchen party!

An internationally-acclaimed teacher of Yiddish dance, **Avia Moore** leads Yiddish dance workshops for festivals and events around the world, coaches emerging dance leaders, and works as a consultant for choreographers, directors, and teachers seeking to engage with Yiddish movement. Avia is the Artistic Director of KlezKanada and has worked extensively as a creative producer with festivals and cultural organizations across North America as well as on individual artistic projects in North America and Europe. She holds a PhD in Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies from York University, where she focused on critical approaches to postvernacular Yiddish culture.

Rona Nadler enjoys a multi-faceted career on the Montreal music scene as a music director, composer, harpsichordist and vocalist. She has performed across the United States and Canada as a member of the quartet Infusion Baroque and is the Artistic Director of the Blue Dawn Quartet and the chamber choir One Equall Musick. Since 2014, Rona has served as Music Director and Cantorial Soloist at Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom in Westmount. She is also on faculty at the Schulich School of Music as a vocal coach and the director of the Cappella Antica. Her vocal compositions, setting Yiddish poetry by Kadya Molodowsky, have been performed by numerous ensembles and were recorded by Ensemble ArtChoral for the label ATMA Classique.



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Sebastian Schulman (he/him) is a multilingual writer and literary translator working in and between English, French, Yiddish, Esperanto, Russian, and other languages. His work has appeared in anthologies and literary journals, including Words Without Borders, Two Lines, and Electric Literature. Schulman's translation of Spomenka Stimec's Esperanto-language novel Croatian War Nocturnal was published by Phoneme Media in 2017. He has leadership positions at several cultural institutions, currently serving as the director of special projects and partnerships at the Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, MA. He divides his time between western Massachusetts and Montréal, Québec.

Lexi Ugelow is a vocalist, songwriter, expressive arts workshop and music education facilitator based in Cambridge, MA. She is a life long learner and lover of intergenerational community singing. A professional vocalist and self produced songwriter, Lexi has toured with groups such as Northern Harmony, Culomba, Honey & Soul, and Road Dogs, performing and teaching workshops to adults and children. Though her interests and experience with music spans from funk, to world folk music, you can be always be sure to expect some buttery harmonies. A firm believer that our bodies are our instruments, she encourages the practice of non-judgement during exploration of musical play. Moving into her fifth year as co-music director for Sing Positive, Lexi continues to use music as a way to help others build community, confidence, and self expression.

Jeffrey Yoskowitz is a chef-pickler, entrepreneur, and thought leader. He co-founded The Gefilteria, a culinary venture that reimagines Ashkenazi-Jewish cooking and co-authored the award-winning cookbook, The Gefilte Manifesto. He teaches, cooks, and lectures on shtetl cooking and Jewish food history to communities across the globe. His writings on food and culture have appeared in The New York Times, The Atlantic, among other publications. He was featured on Hulu's Taste the Nation for the Hanukkah episode and was recently tapped to represent Jewish culture at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. He got his start in the food world as a pickle apprentice on an organic farm in the Berkshires.