

THE IMPORTANCE of being Jewish



Who would have thought keeping the faith could be so hard!

A new feel-good comedy by
multi award winning playwright Rob Selzer

Directed by Rob Selzer & Steven Curtis
Creative Advisors Gary Abrahams & Pip Mushin
Produced by Niki Saltzman

www.saltpillar.org.au

וואַלט איר געוואלט פֿאַרשטיין
דאָס אָן די איבערזעצונגען?*

*Wish you could understand this without the translations?

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CHAIRPERSONS WELCOME



If you are reading this in the Phoenix Theatre about to enjoy *The Importance of being Jewish*, all we can say is “WOW!!!”. What a journey we have all been on to get here. Two years in the making. We won’t bore everyone going on about the elephant in the room, but we can reflect on the energy, enthusiasm and resilience of all those involved to bring you today’s performance. Whilst we were tempted with ‘wait and see’ and ‘what if...what if... what if’, we chose to heed Queen Elizabeth I, who said “life is for living and working at”. Amongst all the uncertainty, zoom rehearsals and looming cancellations, we decided to move ahead anyway, and who knows, it might just all fall into place.

We are thrilled to produce another one of Rob Selzer’s wonderful plays which presents real and relatable characters with lots of great comedy. Having Gary Abrahams on board as director in 2021 was not just a great pleasure but a huge opportunity for us. Gary was unavailable in 2022 so Steven Curtis & Rob Selzer stepped up to direct. Their relative inexperience in this role was augmented by the wonderful Pip Mushin, who turned some rehearsals into veritable masterclasses. Pip is a true professional with a longtime association with Saltpillar. We are again blessed with a fine production team superbly managed by our producer extraordinaire, Niki Saltzman. Thank you to Chloe Goldsmith, our stage manager and Camryn Elbaum, our assistant stage manager, who have tirelessly attended every rehearsal and stepped up to fill the huge void left by Adam Samuel, a dedicated member of the Saltpillar crew, who was also unavailable for this 2022 show. We also thank our exceptional treasurer, Amanda Braun, who has managed to keep Saltpillar running through good times and bad – Amanda might be gentle and petite, but somehow we are all scared of her!!

Thanks to our fabulous cast who have created this show under the most difficult and unprecedented circumstances – we hope you derive as much pleasure out of the show as we expect our audience to.

And lastly, to you, our audience, we are so grateful that you have chosen to continue supporting Saltpillar. Thank you, thank you, thank you. There is no community theatre without a community. Our greatest reward to you is a night full of laughs – enjoy the show!

Steven Curtis & Raoul Salter

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SYNOPSIS



Ray Cohen couldn't be happier. His only daughter is two weeks away from being married, his wife has finally forgiven him for botching the house renovation, and the local rabbi loves his plans for the new synagogue, which means a huge contract for Ray.

Then in walk his future in-laws, and the mother, it turns out, is his girlfriend from thirty years ago - before she converted to Judaism. Ray's been acting like a good Jewish mensch to his wife and daughter forever, so he needs to pull out all stops to keep the secret from coming out. But he has even bigger problems when he discovers the rabbi's had a stroke, leaving the synagogue plans that were supposed to pay for the over-the-top wedding in the hands of his rollerblading youngest son, Rabbi BB.

To cap it all off, Ray thinks he may have lost his ketubah, which means his daughter can't prove she's Jewish, which means she can't get married, which means his wife will kill him. His day had started so well...

GLOSSARY

Shule - Synagogue.

Machatonim - A special familial relationship for which there is no English word. Your machatonim are your son's/daughter's parents-in-law (and visa-versa).

Chuppah - The canopy under which a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony is performed.

Mischpocha - The entire family. Not only immediate relatives but everyone including those related by marriage.

Ketubah - The Jewish wedding contract.

Mensch - A decent bloke.



Rob Selzer - PLAYWRIGHT & CO DIRECTOR

Distracted by medical school then a career in psychiatry, Rob finally found time to try out his creative writing skills a few years ago. Then after winning his first writing competition, he summarily quit his day job. But maybe he shouldn't have been so hasty - he now earns just enough from freelancing to keep the family pooch in dog food but not much else.

You'd think that winning a British Theatre Challenge, a couple of National One Act Playwriting Awards (second place in 2019, third place in 2020, first place in 2022) as well as other prizes might boost his earning potential, but sadly he's relying on the hope of his (absolutely hilarious) new novel, *Breaking Josh Glass*, being picked up by a publisher and becoming a best-seller. People call him naïve, but he kind of likes it that way.



Steven Curtis - CO DIRECTOR

Steven was the founding chairperson of Saltpillar back in 1988 and remains as co-chairperson today. The company was borne out of the creative and experimental AUJS Comedy Revues in 1986 & 1987. In that period Steven has acted in a number of plays, including *Biloxi Blues*, *Witness for the Prosecution*, *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, *Other Peoples Money* and *The Chosen*.

He has produced multiple productions. After all that, this is his directorial debut - He thought, "how hard can it be?". He is so grateful that he had Rob's shoulder to cry on and Pip's shoulder to lean on. In all it has been a truly satisfying experience.



Niki Saltzman - PRODUCER

One of Niki's favourite pastimes is her involvement in the performing arts, and she is thrilled to be working with the Saltpillar team once again on *"The Importance of being Jewish"*. Her interest in Theatre began with her involvement in the Art Direction, Set-Design/ Construction, Make-Up & Production for the AUJS Revues, *Stop Making Soup*, *Meshugar Babies*, and *For Liver or For Wurst*.

Hungry for more, Niki joined the Saltpillar family in 1988 with their first production, *On Edge*. In 1991, Niki completed certificates in Stage-Managing, Lighting Design and Theatrical Make-up at the Prahran College of Tafe.

Her passion for theatre then continued, attaining a position on Saltpillar Theatre's Executive Committee as well as Set-Designing/ Constructing and Stage Managing, *Biloxi Blues*, *God*, *Witness for The Prosecution*, *Night Train*, *The Mighty* and *The Condemned*, and more recently Producing *Relatively Speaking*, *In Bed With The Bishops*, *Solomon's Secrets* and the *Biloxi Blues* staged play reading. She looks forward to her continued involvement with Saltpillar Theatre, which always holds many special memories and proud moments.

CO DIRECTORS MESSAGE



Gary Abrahams' incredible work with the cast last year was a convincing factor in us taking on the job for 2022. We were also blessed to have Pip Mushin give freely of his time, talent and ideas.

We resolved early in the process to shape the play through the eyes of the audience, as if we're sitting in the middle row as the lights go down. What would we enjoy? What would distract us? What would irritate us? We hope that we've managed to get our filters right and that you see what we saw.



A huge thank you to Niki Saltzman, our producer extraordinaire and to Chloe Goldsmith, our stage manager and Camryn Elbaum, our assistant stage manager, who have been wonderfully supportive throughout this journey. We are so indebted to the entire crew who have worked with us with one common goal – the best we can present to you.

What a joy to have our directorial debuts with such a talented cast. They made our job infinitely easier by trusting us and being patient enough to try out our ideas.

Indeed, some of the best moments of the show were suggested by the actors, or just emerged out of the usual rehearsal horseplay. We loved the process, we are proud of the finished product and we hope you enjoy the show.

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Leon Rothman from JJ service centre
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PRODUCTION TEAM



Playwright	Rob Selzer
Co-Chairmen	Steven Curtis & Raoul Salter
Producer	Niki Saltzman
Directors	Steven Curtis & Rob Selzer
Creative Advisors	Gary Abrahams & Pip Mushin
Treasurer	Amanda Braun
Stage Manager	Chloe Goldsmith & Adam Samuel (2020)
Assistant Stage Manager	Camryn Elbaum
Understudy	Elisa Gray
Set Designer	David Lampard
Set Constructor	Jon Medlin
Set Painters	Royal Prestige Painting
Set Construction Volunteers	Niki & Tara Saltzman, Michelle & Leon Rothman, Jordana Curtis, Georgia Curtis, Jack Agius, Mark Sperling
Lighting Designer	Rohan Thornton
Lighting & Sound Operator	Michelle Nachsatz & Georgia Curtis
Music & Sound Composition	David Rothberg
Costume & Prop Designer	Dani Harrison
Hair & Make-Up	Olivia Harrison
Graphic Designer	Tara Saltzman
Social Media	Niki Saltzman
Photography	Peter Haskin & Tuvsday Photography
Video Production	Deon
Group Bookings Manager	Melody Curtis
Front of House Manager	Mark Speling
FOH Volunteers	Deb Sims, Rhonda Cashmore, Linda Nirens, Nicole Mizan, Vonny Klaesi, Elana Rubenstein, Joseph Follwell, Dean Borthwick, Jess Gordon, Yvonne Bresley, Suzy Rabinov & Cynthia A.

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SUITABLY WORRIED



Ray JOE TIGEL

Joe was practically born on the stage with his father Shia a stalwart of the Yiddish theatre spanning from the vibrancy of pre-war Poland to the Kadimah stage here in Melbourne. With a performers DNA, early school years at Sholem Aleichem Sunday School and SKIF youth movement were a blur of musical performances, recitals and short plays – mostly in Yiddish. Being mesmerised by Hayes Gordon performing Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof in 1968 became an inspiration for this aspiring actor.

In High School, apart from majoring in distractions, Joe had lead roles in musical theatre productions including the Pyjama Game and Damn Yankees and some challenging roles such as Azdak in Brecht's Caucasian Chalk Circle. As a teenager, the Kadimah stage was a second home and small roles in Yiddish productions including the 'Kishefmakherin' and The Megille (Purim Shpil).

As a young adult, roles in Yiddish theatre included Peter in The Diary of Anne Frank, the nephew Ben in Neil Simon's Sunshine Boys, King Ahaverosh in the Megille and the coveted role of Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof in 1997.

This is Joe's fourth production with Saltpillar, with previous roles in Big Al, Falsetto's and Asher Lev. Off the stage, Joe is the current President of the Kadimah Cultural Centre and Co-Chair of the Jewish Arts Quarter. He is married with two beautiful daughters and loads of chutzpah and attitude to contend with at home.

Over fifty years on and behind the stage includes many variety nights, musical and comedy acts and MC at many a community event.

He remains available for your weddings Bar/Bat Mitzvah's and Brit.





EASILY EXASPERATED



Rosh NATALIE SHOSTAK

Natalie's theatre credits include 'Low Level Panic' (Claire)- which toured VIC and NSW, 'As you Like It' (Celia), 'The Changeling' (Beatrice-Joanna), and 'The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie' (Sandy), to name a few.

Natalie worked for the Oxford Children's Theatre before moving overseas to study and graduate Dux of her year at Drama Studio London.

In television she has been seen in Henderson Kids, Prime Time and Neighbours as well as numerous commercials.

Natalie has appeared in three previous Saltpillar productions - 'Witness for the Prosecution', 'Other People's Money' and most recently, 'Solomon's Secrets'.

CHARMING BON-VIVANT



Ilan RAOUL SALTER

Raoul has acted in a number of Saltpillar productions including *The Suicide*, the hit comedies, *Biloxi Blues*, *Beau Jest*, *Play it again Sam* and *Solomon's Secrets*.

In addition to this, he has played and compered Theatresports and other Saltpillar activities. A long serving Chairperson and current Co-Chair of Saltpillar Theatre, Raoul has been involved in radio, TV and has performed numerous stand-up comedy routines.

He has also acted as host and MC for many community groups and functions. Not to mention he does trivia nights and charity auctions . . . available for bar mitzvahs, weddings and funerals.





FIREBRAND DAUGHTER



Tara ROMI FREEDMAN

When Saltpillar announced their plans for putting on a Jewish comedy based on the meeting of two machatonims right before a wedding, Romi knew this was an opportunity that couldn't be missed.

This is Romi's second show with Saltpillar, having been cast in their 2018's production of Woody Allen's Honeymoon Hotel and she is thrilled to be back working amongst such fine creative talent.

Romi hopes you find the show as amusing as she does referencing herself in the third person.

DIGNIFIED & FRAGILE



Kitty AMELIA FRID

Amelia has always enjoyed being creative. From the days of Bialik's drama productions, Amelia learned to find her voice on stage. This evolved into screen roles: Celia (Stephanie Burke) in 1989, Neighbours (Cody Willis) 1989 – 91, and the mini-series Adventures on Kythera (Molly) 1991, followed by a return to the stage to play Princess Balroubador in a pantomime production of Aladdin (Oxford, UK, 1992).

A long sojourn from acting followed, in which time Amelia focused on her studies, career and growing her family. A focus on craft of a different

kind ensued: painting, construction, make believe, and lounge room dance-off sessions (often all at once, before afternoon tea and nap time). To misquote Tim Burton, the pursuit of creativity is the opportunity to reconnect with the way you saw things as a child.

After acting in Saltpillars' 2019 production of 'Solomon's Secrets', Amelia is once again thrilled to have the opportunity to return to this craft, and be amongst like minded, gorgeously supportive souls to bring the vision of The Importance of Being Jewish to life.





BIG KID



BB DANIEL TEITELBAUM

Daniel first appeared on the stage in a minor role as a marsupial in Mount Scopus Memorial College's grade three production of Magic Possum, in 1996. Daniel had been method acting the role in years previously and gave a standout performance.

After studying media and theatre in high school and university, and developing a deep appreciation of the stage, the screen, and the art of evoking pathos, laughter and ennui from audiences, Daniel co-starred in a viral YouTube video that was based on a previous viral YouTube video.

After riding someone else's viral coat tails, Daniel went on to ride further coat tails in 2019, co-writing, producing, and performing in the critically acclaimed comedy cabaret The Illegitimate Love Children of Bob Downe and Magda Szubanski.

Currently Daniel appears on radio on Southern FM, 3RRR, and ABC radio fortnightly and shares the reins of the production company Velcro Couch. Daniel is excited to play BB; a roller-blading irreverent and happy-go-lucky son of a Rabbi makes up a big part of Daniel's astrological profile.

MILD ISRAELI PROFESSOR



Leo MIKKI PALTÍ

Mikki Palti returns to Saltpillar Theatre for *The Importance of being Jewish*. His last production with the company was as Eugene Jerome in 2005's production of *Brighton Beach Memoirs*.

Some of Mikki's other credits include *Richard III*, *The Prince of Egypt*, *Into the Woods*, *Cosi*, *The Hunting of the Snark*, and as *Cyrano De Bergerac* at *Top Class* and *Top Acts* for excellence in theatre performance.

Mikki is also the author of the dystopian adventure story *Time, Light, and Other Myths*, and a two-time guest speaker at *Comic-Con*. Mikki would like to thank his family and friends for their incredible support!



The Team at

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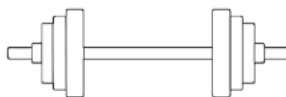
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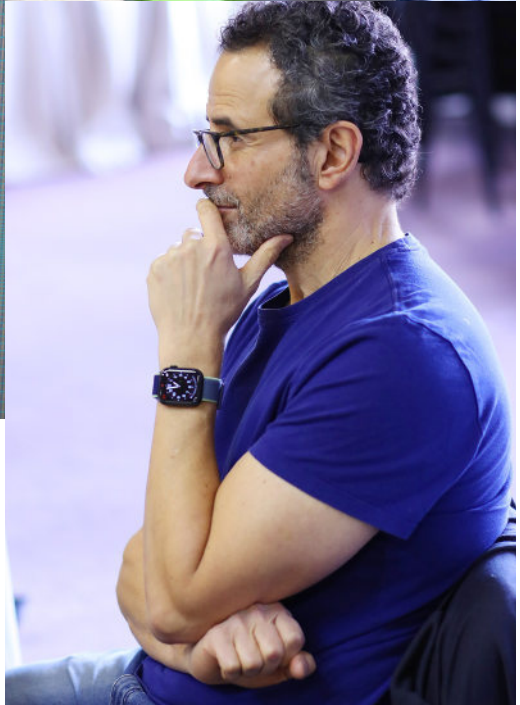
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