

“The Magic Mirror”
A Case Study: Publicity and Marketing Strategies
By Debi Caplan

THE PROJECT *The Magic Mirror* was a multi-part project aimed at promoting awareness in Western Massachusetts of the historical and cultural legacy of Yiddish theatre. Over several months, I translated, directed, and promoted a full-scale production of a 1938 Yiddish play written by modernist poet and playwright Itzik Manger. Originally staged in the great Yiddish theatres of Warsaw, *The Magic Mirror* is a modern fairytale about Hotzmakh, an impoverished Jewish peddler, and his quest to rescue the virtuous orphan Mirele from the evil clutches of a sorceress. At its core, the play addresses issues of poverty, justice, the possibility of redemption, and negotiating Jewish identity in the modern world. Auditions in early September netted a cast of 13 actors who rehearsed between September and early November. Performances were scheduled for November 16 & 18 at the National Yiddish Book Center. Advance sales were so high a 3rd performance was added. Reviews were published in the *Western Massachusetts Jewish Ledger*, the *Jewish Advocate* (Boston), and *Pakn Treger*, the monthly magazine of the National Yiddish Book Center (forthcoming).

THE AUDIENCE *The Magic Mirror* attracted a highly diverse audience on all three evenings: 78 for the first performance, 90 for the second, and 45 for the third. The two largest demographic audience groups were students and seniors, with seniors generally outnumbering students. A few students invited their parents or grandparents to come with them to see the performance, creating a unique inter-generational mix. Local Jewish professionals, group leaders, and synagogue members made up another demographic group (15 members of the Amherst Yiddish club attended one night; Congregation Sons of Zion brought 7 to the final performance). A significant number of college professors and staff were present. Families and teenagers comprised only a small percentage.

SPECIFIC MARKETING STRATEGIES

College Students: College students, as we all know, are very busy people. You can't just put the information out there and hope they see it; you have to market directly to them and make it so they can't help but notice it. I used many traditional means to attract a college audience: flyers throughout the campuses, at coffeehouses, and around dorm buildings; listings in campus newspapers; advertising in libraries, campus centers, mail rooms, etc. However, the most successful avenues were web & email based: listings posted on Hampshire College's **Daily Jolts**, **Livejournal** announcements to all of campuses; a **Facebook** posting out to over 400 people through the friends networks of myself and my cast members; and posted on Craig's List. These listings were incredibly successful (particularly **Facebook** and **Livejournal** postings) because they build from social networks. A person who received the **Facebook** posting knew that it had been passed along from a friend or a friend of a friend – thus providing the event with automatic social endorsement.

Synagogue Groups & Jewish leaders: Using the HGF media database, I sent out press releases and flyers to every synagogue and Jewish organization in the Pioneer Valley and beyond as well as all local newspapers listed in the database. My event was listed in almost every synagogue bulletin in the valley, as well as several newspapers, both Jewish and general. I also networked within synagogues, using my contacts to get the event listed in weekly synagogue email blasts and announced at synagogue events.

Academic Community: After compiling a list of professors and departments who I imagined might be interested in the event, I mailed out a packet filled with postcards, posters, and press releases to each using the (free) Five College mail service. This strategy seemed to be very successful, as my postcards and posters started showing up in academic offices and buildings everywhere.

Documents: Press Release, Marketing Timeline & Tasks, Sample Poster, Flyer, & Postcard

The Magic Mirror – Marketing Timeline

Recommended Date for Completion	Description of Task	Date to be Completed	Notes on Progress
12 weeks prior	Determine marketing plan for event— what ways will you get out the word?	9/5	COMPLETE
10 weeks prior	Work with designer on flyers/brochures, posters and program, advertisements, banners, etc.	9/19	COMPLETE
8 weeks prior	Draft press release	9/21	COMPLETE
7 weeks prior	Final press release	9/28	COMPLETE
6 weeks prior	Finalize press list and mailing list for flyers/postcards	10/5	COMPLETE
6weeks prior	Distribute flyer at SWEET HARVEST Community Festival & other community events	10/7 +	COMPLETE
6 weeks prior	Assemble press kits	10/5	COMPLETE
6 weeks prior	Press kits mailed out or delivered	10/5	COMPLETE
6 weeks prior	Press releases mailed out	10/5	COMPLETE
5 weeks prior	Drop off advertisements to papers	10/12	COMPLETE
5 weeks prior	List information on websites (CULTURE CONNECT, WFCR, 5-College calendar)	10/12	COMPLETE
5 weeks prior	Send out email blast	10/12	COMPLETE
4 weeks prior	Follow up calls to media contacts who received press kits	10/19	COMPLETE
3 weeks prior	Send final flyers and postcards to printer	10/26	COMPLETE
2 weeks prior	Mail out flyers and postcards	11/2	COMPLETE
1 week prior	Bring program book to printer	11/9	COMPLETE
1-4 weeks prior	Make announcements at related events; call rabbis to make announcements	10/19-11/9	COMPLETE
1 week prior	Email blast	11/9	COMPLETE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 27, 2006

Contact: Debra Leah Caplan
Director/Translator, *The Magic Mirror*
615 Main Street, Apt. 8
Amherst, MA 01002
Phone: (215) 680-9365
dobeleye@gmail.com

WHAT WAS ONCE THOUGHT OF AS OLD-FASHIONED AND IRRELEVANT IS NOW CENTRAL FOR A NEW GENERATION OF YIDDISH AFICIONADOS

NEW TRANSLATION OF YIDDISH PLAY BY LOCAL COLLEGE STUDENT TO PREMIERE THIS NOVEMBER

(Amherst, MA – September 27, 2006) – A graduating senior at Hampshire College will present a new English translation of a previously untranslated Yiddish musical at the National Yiddish Book Center on November 16 and 18th, 8 PM. Written by the modernist poet and playwright Itzik Manger, *The Magic Mirror* tells the tale of Hotzmakh, an impoverished Jewish peddler, and his quest to rescue the virtuous orphan Mirele from the evil clutches of a sorceress. Originally staged in 1938 in the great Yiddish theatres of Warsaw, *The Magic Mirror* is a modernist fairytale exploring questions of poverty, justice, and redemption.

This translation and production are emblematic of the burgeoning interest in Yiddish among young people at colleges, high schools, synagogues, music festivals, and Jewish community centers worldwide. Yiddish, a language once considered to be dying or even dead, has experienced a revival of youth interest in the past decade and a half. Yiddish cultural programs and organizations such as the National Yiddish Book Center, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, KlezKamp and the Ashkenaz festival have expanded by leaps and bounds; new Yiddish programs have been created in Vilnius (Vilna), Tel Aviv, Los Angeles, Paris, and more; and colleges and universities around the world are creating new positions every year for Yiddish educators in response to the high demand.

Debra Caplan, translator and director of *The Magic Mirror*, has experienced this worldwide phenomenon in its many forms. A student of Yiddish literature, Debra has studied at the National Yiddish Book Center, Tel Aviv Yiddish Program, KlezKamp, California Institute for Yiddish Culture and Language, and the Vilnius Yiddish Institute in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The Magic Mirror, or, Hotzmakh's Shpiel by Itzik Manger

Directed, Translated and Produced by Debra Caplan

November 16 and 18, 2006, 8:00 PM

Applebaum-Driker Theatre at the National Yiddish Book Center

1021 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002

Wheelchair accessible \$2 General Admission

Reservations: (413) 241-6501 Note: Not for young children, older teens are welcome

Sponsored by the Harold Grinspoon Jewish Arts & Culture Initiative, Hampshire College Jewish Studies, and Hampshire College Theatre Board.

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FACEBOOK

<http://hampshire.facebook.com/event.php?eid=2219995900>

Event Info

Name: The Magic Mirror, or, Hotzmakh's Shpiel
Tagline: The 1938 hit of the Warsaw stage!
Host: National Yiddish Book Center
Type: [Music/Arts - Performance](#)

Time and Place

Start: Thursday, November 16, 2006 8:00pm
End: Monday, November 20, 2006 10:30pm
Location: National Yiddish Book Center
Street: 1021 West Street ([map](#))
City: Amherst, MA

Contact Info

Phone: 413.241.6501
Email: dobeleye@gmail.com

Description Featuring an all-star cast of 13, a live Klezmer band, and authentic Jewish cuisine, this is one Div III performance you won't want to miss! Translated and directed by Debra Caplan and performed in English for the very first time, The Magic Mirror is a modern fairytale of poverty, justice, and redemption. Written by the famous Yiddish poet and playwright Itzik Manger, The Magic Mirror tells the tale of Hotzmakh, an impoverished Jewish peddler, and his quest to rescue the virtuous orphan Mirele from the evil clutches of a sorceress. It will fill you to the brim - better than the Brothers' Grimm! Three nights only - reserve your tickets now before they're all gone! November 16 & 18 at 8 PM and a special encore performance November 20 at 6 PM.

For reservations, call 413-241-6501 or email dobeleye@gmail.com!

UPDATE: Thursday night (November 16) and Saturday night (November 18) are officially SOLD OUT!!! Tickets for Monday are still goin' hot! (There will be a waitlist for Thurs. and Sat. - email dobeleye@gmail.com for more info and to reserve a spot on the list) This event has [71 confirmed guests](#).

LIVEJOURNAL

<http://community.livejournal.com/hampsters/634406.html>

[The 1938 hit of the Warsaw stage!](#)

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