

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**LABA: A Laboratory for Jewish Culture 2019-2020 Season: HUMOR**

New York, NY - September 16, 2019 - LABA: A Laboratory for Jewish Culture, a ground-breaking artistic fellowship program of the 14th Street Y in the East Village that uses classic Jewish texts to inspire the creation of art, dialogue and study, is back for its 11th season. Each year, LABA: A Laboratory for Jewish Culture brings together ten fellows to study classic Jewish texts in a non-religious, open-minded setting centered on a chosen theme. HUMOR will be explored this year and will act as the focal point for the fellows' multi-disciplinary artistic projects. Additionally, this year's fellows will take part in study sessions where a portion of the time will be devoted to interviewing Jewish comedic professionals to discuss the role Judaism has played in their creative lives. These interviews will be led by former LABA fellow Amy Handelsman.

The 2019-2020 fellows are [Charlie Buckholtz](#), [Charles Gershman](#), [Jared Hoffman](#), [Mark Katz](#), [Anna Lublina](#), [Rokhl Kafri](#), [Liba Vaynberg](#), [Ari Wolff](#), [Willie Zabar](#), with staff fellow [Anya Hoerburger](#), and visiting fellows [Iris Bahr](#) and [Ophir Tal](#).

The resident Scholar will be author and teacher Ruby Namdar, who is the recipient of Israel's most prestigious literary award the Sapir Prize for *The Ruined House*. Shira Hecht-Koller, Esq of 929 English will join as a guest lecturer, as will Rabbi Scott Perlo of the 92nd Street Y. Laura Beatrix Newmark will be taking on the role of Director of LABA and LABA Fellow Charles Gershman will be editor of the LABA Journal.

"After the seasons of OTHER, WAR & PEACE, and LIFE & DEATH, we decided it was time for a change. With the success of our #NastyWomen – A Night of Female Resistance Comedy show series, and an interest in exploring a topic not always associated with ancient Hebrew text, we excitedly went with HUMOR! We recognize there are many shades of humor, not all particularly funny, but we welcome the journey of exploring this topic and look forward to the projects that the Fellows develop with the inspiration of the text." —Laura Beatrix Newmark, Director of LABA

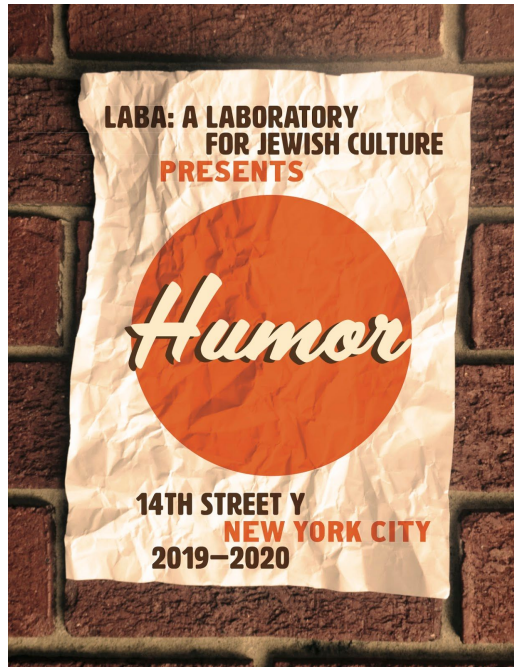
Highlight of the year includes:

December 5 – 8, 2019: State of the Jews – a new opera by former LABA fellow Alex Weiser in the Theater at the 14th Street Y. Tickets available here: 14StreetY.org/StateoftheJews

January 10 – 26, 2020: Scenes from Childhood – an original play by former LABA fellow Ari Brand in the Theater at the 14th Street Y. Tickets available here: 14StreetY.org/ScenesfromChildhood

May 28, 2020: LABA fellows will create a LABA House of Performance showcasing their works in progress for the annual Tikkun, a night celebrating Shavuot as our finale to our Season of Jewish Culture.

Additional information can be found at www.labajournal.com



ABOUT THE FELLOWS:

Charlie Buckholtz is ordained as an Orthodox rabbi, worked as a grass-roots community-builder-slash-rabbi of an East Village shul, coauthored a punk rock murder mystery, became Senior Editor of Jerusalem's Hartman Institute and coauthored two books on Jewish thought. He is currently the founding director of a small nonprofit that takes Hillels through an intensive organizational redesign process. For three years he has been writing and performing standup regularly at open mics.

Charles Gershman is a Midwest-raised playwright/screenwriter, a 2018-2019 Dramatists Guild Foundation Playwriting Fellow, and a 2019 Chesley/Bumbalo Playwriting Award winner. His plays have been seen / developed Off- and Off-Off Broadway, regionally, and in the United Kingdom and are published by Oberon Books. He is a recovering science writer.

Jared Hoffman is a Brooklyn-based visual artist practicing across many disciplines including printmaking, painting, installation and new media. Coming from a tech background, Hoffman applies computational processes to artmaking, attempting to explore ways that algorithms constrain and/or free us from existing social orders. Hoffman has shown in group exhibitions at Mana Contemporary in Jersey City, NJ and at the Detroit Public Library.

Mark Katz is a would-be journalist, ex-political operative, recovering copywriter, failed sitcom writer, occasional essayist, itinerant storyteller, C-list pundit and a *New York Times* worst-selling author. But over time, he has come to understand himself as, first and foremost, a

communicator. His is a career that no high school guidance counselor could have told him about. As his wife likes to say, Mark is a “role model for nobody.”

Anna Lublina is an interdisciplinary performance maker and educator working with objects. Anna is thrilled to continue developing their practice as a Jewish artist with the LABA lab this year and present their newest work, “Б а б у ш к а | BAb(oo)shka,” at the 14th St Y September 26 – October 5!

Rokhl Kafri is a journalist and playwright in New York City. Her work on new Yiddish culture, feminism, and contemporary Jewish life has appeared in publications all over the world, including Haaretz, Jewish Week, The Forward, Hey Alma and Lilith. She conducts the twice monthly Rokhl’s Golden City column for Tablet, focusing on Yiddish and Ashkenazi life in all its incarnations.

Liba Vaynberg is a first-generation American actor and writer. Her work has been developed and presented at Rattlestick, 59E59, Tank, Theater Row, Dixon Place, Wild Project, Xavier University, Fault Line Theater and the Working Theater. She has performed at Yale, Williamstown Theater Festival, HERE Arts, CSC, CATF, La Jolla Playhouse and will be seen in *The Soap Myth* opp. Ed Asner on PBS All Arts. She is bilingual, so that’s not why her parents still don’t get what she does.

Ari Wolff is a Berkshire County-based poet, visual artist and educator. She has worked as a teaching artist across age ranges, designed curricula for after-school programs and summer camps and managed community arts projects. Her poetry has appeared in The Offing, Vinyl Poetry, Lime Hawk, Hinchas de Poesia, Tinderbox and Whiskey Island, among other places. Her artwork has been included in shows at Collar Works and Para//el Performance Lab.

Willie Zabar is a stand-up and character comedian from New York City. He has performed at the Brooklyn Comedy Festival, NYC Sketchfest, the 5th Borough Comedy Festival and the Nantucket Comedy Festival. He also performs solo musical improv comedy as Hymie Wilhelm.

STAFF FELLOW

Anya Hoerburger is Senior Vice President for External Engagement at Educational Alliance. She brings a personal approach to fundraising in over 15 years in development. She is a fifth-generation New Yorker, art(s) enthusiast, and culture curator. Anya is Chair of the Board of Planned Parenthood NYC Votes and a Director of the Board of Planned Parenthood NYC.

VISITING FELLOWS

Iris Bahr is a writer, comic, actor and public speaking coach. She grew up in the Bronx and Tel Aviv and has been shuttling between NYC, Israel and LA for the past bazillion years. They all feel like home and yet she keeps shuttling.

Ophir Tal, a proud Jerusalemite, is a trained facilitator of Jewish-Palestinian dialogue groups, a youth Instructor and a writer in soul. He was a music journalist in Maariv Lanor, a military correspondent in the IDF Magazine “Bamhane,” a journalist in Xnet, and is now the new Shaliach of the Jewish Agency and UJA Federation to the 14th Street Y. In the Shlichut, he aspires to tell stories by the art of the word, exploring conflicting narratives and perspectives.

DIRECTOR OF LABA

Laura Beatrix Newmark was born in Cincinnati and has called New York City her home for two and a half decades. She completed a LABA Fellowship in the 2016-17 season OTHER with her project *Hannah and Her Sisters* about the feelings of otherness becoming a mother. Laura’s work in the intersection of the arts, media, activism, community building and Jewish programming spans two decades. She quoted a young stand-up named Jay Leno at her bat mitzvah, watched every episode of *The Jon Stewart Show* and then snuck into a comedy club to tell him she was Jewish, and eventually managed a roster of stand-ups and improv artists. Laura holds a BA from Barnard College and lives in Brooklyn with her two sons and husband, a lapsed professional juggler.

RESIDENT SCHOLAR

Ruby Namdar is an Israeli-American author born and raised in Jerusalem to a family of Iranian-Jewish heritage. His latest novel *The Ruined House* (2013) won the Sapir Prize, Israel’s most prestigious literary award. The English edition of *The Ruined House* (translated by Hillel Halkin) was published in the US by Harper Collins in November 2017. The French edition of the novel (translated by Sarah Tardy) was published in September 2018 by Belfond, and was nominated for the Prix du premier roman étranger 2018. He currently lives in NYC with his wife and two daughters, and teaches Jewish literature, focusing on Biblical and Talmudic narrative.

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