

# Some-thing from No-thing

an opera for children based on the Jewish folk tale  
Epes Fun Gornisht



Original dialogue by  
Amy Fellner Dominy

Music arranged by  
Jody Rockmaker

presented by the

**University of Hartford's  
Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies**



College of Arts and Sciences  
UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD



Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies



greater hartford  
arts council

During 2010-2011, the University of Hartford's Greenberg Center will begin celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary serving in the Greater Hartford Community. In honor of the Center's long term commitment to bringing works of Jewish civilization to the public, the Center commissioned a children's opera from well-known composer Dr. Jody Rockmaker of Arizona State University. The performances around the State of Connecticut are intended to give children the ability to connect with the music and to perhaps create a cadre of singers to perform this in years to come.

The Gala Performance of the opera will take place at Wilde Auditorium on Monday March 15, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. The evening's performance will be dedicated to the memory of the former chair of the Greenberg Center's Board of Visitors, Paula Steinberg, who passed away last year. Paula, who was a patron of the arts throughout Connecticut made a significant contribution to the development of the Greenberg Center's programs during her tenure on the board.

**This performance is free and open to the public, but tickets are required.  
Call the University of Hartford Box Office at 860.768.4228.**

All Connecticut performances of *Some-thing from No-thing* are sponsored in part by the Greater Hartford Arts Council, the Greater Hartford Jewish Federation, the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies, the Waltman Family Fund and the Jerry and Sally Wagner Fund at the University of Hartford.

*Some-thing from No-thing (Epes Fun Gornisht)*  
Opera Performance Schedule

**SUNDAY, MARCH 14**

**10 a.m.** Temple Israel, Westport, Conn.

**3 p.m.** Hartford Jewish Film Festival – Mandell Jewish Community Center of West Hartford  
(Admission to this performance is by advance ticket sales)

**MONDAY, MARCH 15**

**9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.** Solomon Schechter Day School, West Hartford, Conn

**7 p.m.** Wilde Auditorium, Harry Jack Gray Center, University of Hartford (This performance is free and open to the public, **but tickets are required.** Call the University of Hartford Box Office at 860.768.4228.)

**TUESDAY, MARCH 16**

**11 a.m.**

**2 p.m.** University of Hartford Magnet School, West Hartford, Conn

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17**

**11 a.m.** Hoffman Summerwood Community, West Hartford, Conn

**4 p.m.** Temple Beth Israel, Main Auditorium, West Hartford, Conn

## The Composer, the Librettist, the Performers

*Some-thing from No-thing* is his new children's opera (for ages 7-107) based upon the beloved Jewish folk tale *Epes fun Gornisht*. Dr. Freund at the Greenberg Center heard Dr. Rockmaker's work when it was performed at a New York City choral presentation of Yiddish songs. He had "re-orchestrated" some of the most beloved melodies so that any choral group could sing them and capture the history of Yiddish tunes behind the songs. The idea was born from that moment onward. Freund's idea was to create a combination between the famed children's opera, "Peter and the Wolf" and the popular Jewish play, "Fiddler on the Roof." Jody Rockmaker together with his librettist has done just that. The reworking of the lyrics into English will give a whole generation of young people the ability to appreciate this lost Jewish culture.



**Jody Rockmaker**

In the story a child receives a blanket at birth that is transformed throughout his life into a coat, a vest, a scarf, a hat and finally a button. It is recycled until it finally exists only in his memory. It is a moral eco-drama for our times, about learning to live with less. The opera provides audiences with forty minutes of spirited music and dialogue and has an uplifting message for children and adults. The children's book, *Something from Nothing*, and an animated short by the same name have been a favorite of many public and private libraries and schools with many different editions worldwide. The composer, Dr. Jody Rockmaker, is a composer who has previously worked on compositions with Jewish themes at the Arizona State University School of Music. In *Some-thing from No-thing*, he has re-orchestrated some of the most well-known Yiddish melodies of all time (*Hob Ich Mir a Mantl*, *Zackele*, *Bulbe*, *Volt Ikh*, *Shlof meyn kind*, among others) and integrated them in this new children's opera.



**Amy F. Dominy**

The Tempe, Arizona-based playwright, **Amy Fellner Dominy**, created a humorous dialogue that will engage and entertain children and adults. This unique collaboration will bring together the Yiddish folk songs with an English version of the lyrics that will allow audiences to appreciate and enjoy this original, vital music. Amy Dominy (with the help of Pam Sterling, ASU Professor in the Theater Department) directed the opera and Kathy Stephenson of the ASU Theater Department designed costumes.



**Karen McCann**

The opera players will be accompanied by Arizona State University pianist, **Karen McCann**, who has performed as a soloist and accompanist throughout Canada, the United States, and Europe. She has served as a vocal coach and pianist for AIMS in Graz (Austria), the CoOPERative program, and for summer programs at Westminster Choir College of Rider University (Princeton, NJ). In summer 2010, she will join the faculty of the Taos Opera Institute (Taos, NM) as a coach/pianist. Raised in Vancouver, Canada, Karen received a master's degree in Piano Accompanying and Coaching from Westminster Choir College, a master's degree in historical musicology from the University of British Columbia (Vancouver, BC), and a bachelor's degree in Piano and English Literature from the University of British Columbia. She is currently a doctoral candidate (ABD) in Collaborative Piano at Arizona State University.

The Lyric Opera Players are some of the best university performers in the nation and the members of the cast for this opera will be future stars in the world of opera and music in the years to come. The four parts that have been chosen for the roles are:

**Corinne Denny** will be playing *Daniel* and is a mezzo-soprano (MM voice)

**Sara Smith** will be playing the *Mother* in the opera and is a soprano (DMA voice)

**Justin Carpenter** will be playing the *Father* and is a tenor (senior voice)

**Matthew Montana** will be playing the *Grandfather* and is a baritone (senior voice)



Corinne Denny

**Corinne Denny** is a first year Master's student at ASU studying Opera and Musical Theatre Performance. She holds a B.M. in Vocal Performance from Middle Tennessee State University. Her performance credits include: *The Magic Flute* (Second Lady), *Anything Goes!* (Erma), *Pippin* (Fastrada), *Nunsense!* (Sister Hubert), and the original children's musical *Mayor Moon* and the Storytelling Festival (Carrot), part of MTSU's 2006 Honduras Project, an arts-based humanitarian project including teaching and performances in Tennessee and Honduras, and the remodeling of a school in Cane, La Paz, Honduras. Corinne was also part of the College Light Opera Company in 2007, and studied voice with David Jones in New York, NY for a year. She recently was the winner of the graduate division the Valley of the Sun National Association of Teachers of Singing Musical Theatre Competition.



Sarah Smith

**Sarah Smith** received her bachelor of music in voice performance from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She is currently studying for her master of music degree in opera performance with Dr. Jerry Doan at Arizona State University where she also works as teaching assistant in voice. After graduating in May she plans to continue her studies as a Doctoral candidate in Voice Performance at ASU. Most recently Sarah has performed the role of "Joanna" in Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* as well as "Genovieffa" in Puccini's *Suor Angelica*.



D. Justin Carpenter

**D. Justin Carpenter** is a senior at Arizona State University, double majoring in Musical Theater and Vocal Performance, studying with David Britton. He has appeared in Arizona State University's Lyric Opera Theater productions such as *Don Pasquale*, *Giulio Cesare*, *She Loves Me*, *Godspell* (Apostle), *West Side Story* (Arab), *Gianni Schicchi* (Gherardo), and *The Turn of The Screw* (Prologue). His most recent role was in LOT's production of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* (Tobias Ragg). Other roles include Archibald in *The Secret Garden*, Laurie in *Little Women*, Frederick Fleet in *Titanic*, and the God of Death in *Once on this Island*. He also is a regular soloist with the Phoenix's Salt River Brass.



Matthew Montana

**Matthew Montana** is a Senior Vocal Performance major at ASU. He has been a part of Arizona Broadway Theatre's *A Christmas Carol* (Fred Anderson/Ensemble) and *Bye Bye Birdie* (Reporter #3/Ensemble), and Phoenix Theatre's production of *Curtains*. He has also been with ASU Lyric Opera Theatre in *West Side Story* (Riff), *Don Pasquale* (Old Servant) for which he received an ariZoni in 2009, *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (Curio), *Gianni Schicchi*, *Candide*, and *Godspell*. He won the Arizona Young Artists' Competition in 2008 as well as the Arizona chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing competition in 2007 and in 2008.



Andrew Studenski

**Andrew Studenski** will be the clarinet performer for the presentation of *Some-thing from No-thing* at Temple Israel in Westport and the Mandell JCC in West Hartford on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Andrew of Brockton, Massachusetts, is a sophomore saxophone performance and music education major at The Hartt School. He has been involved in such notable performances as the Hartt Wind Ensemble's world premieres of Robert Carl's "La Ville Engloutie" and Jess Turner's symphonic fairy tale, "Rumplestilzchen". In addition to playing in the Hartt Wind Ensemble, Big Band and preparing solo works, he is also active with Hartt's Arioso saxophone quartet. His true passion being pit music, Andrew involves himself in main-stage and black box musicals both here and at the Handel Performing Arts Center, where he is an active and requested woodwind doubler. He is a member of the Hartt chapter of the MENC and in his spare time enjoys golf and reading. After his undergraduate study, he plans to pursue an MM in Multiple Woodwind performance. Andrew is a student of Carrie Koffman.



Adam Berkowitz

**Adam Berkowitz** will be the clarinet performer for presentations at the University of Hartford's Wilde Auditorium, the University of Hartford Magnet School, Solomon Schechter and Beth Israel Synagogue in West Hartford. Currently based in Hartford, CT, Adam is well known as an energetic teacher and performer. He takes his work as an educator seriously. As a teacher at the Hartt School of Music's Community Division, he maintains a studio of private students. In addition he has taught a wide range of courses and lectures including: music theory, music history, Jewish music, and various lectures and workshops on clarinet technique. As a performer, Adam has distinguished himself as a clarinetist and bass clarinetist whose primary focus is on contemporary music and techniques. In doing so he has been privileged to work with such groups as Ensemble 212, The New York Composers Circle, the Tonal Center Trio with Stephen Solook and Tiffany DuMouchelle, and the Simsbury Light Opera Company. Additionally he has worked with composers including: Davide Zannoni, Seth Rozanoff, Michael Cohen, and Raphael Fusco. He is also the author of "Four Extended Techniques for Clarinet: A Practical Guide" a method book for advanced clarinetists which will be completed in mid-2010. In 2008, Adam's interests in contemporary music were fused with his passion for klezmer when he was given the opportunity to study with David Krakauer, Alicia Svigals, Michael Alpert and Josh Dolgin (aka DJ Socalled) at Carnegie Hall through the Weill Institute's Young Artist Program. In addition to the learning from these leading figures in the Klezmer community he and the other participants were given the opportunity to perform at Zankel Hall.

### Composer's Statement

A chance discovery in the ASU Music Library spurred the creation of the music for *Some-thing from No-Thing*. There, sitting on the recent acquisitions shelf, the title boldly emblazoned in Hebrew on the spine was an anthology of Yiddish folksongs published in Glasnost-era Russia. I recognized many of the tunes, songs I had heard from family or friends or simply in passing. I wanted to set my favorites for chorus, and the collection was entitled Yiddish Choruses.

Each song was dedicated to a family member. My mother remembers singing *Bulbe* in her childhood. *Shlof Meyn Kind* is a lullaby for my daughter. My brother-in-law, Dr. Richard Freund, loves to sing *Ma noymar uma nedaber* during Passover. I had used the melody of *Zackele* as the theme to a set of piano variations my freshman-year of college. This setting is dedicated to the memory of my Bubby. *Volt Ikh* is a gift to my wife.

Dr. Freund heard a performance of Yiddish Choruses at Arizona State University and suggested combining the songs with the famous folktale, *Some-Thing from No-Thing* to create a musical drama for children. Amy Dominy skillfully threaded the storyline with Dr. Freund's ideas and my music to create this stage production. The performers, costume designer, collaborated to craft this enjoyable production.

Jody Rockmaker

**The Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies  
University of Hartford**

**Where the Community Comes to Learn**

**The Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies was founded in 1985 through a generous endowment and is the community division of the Department of Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford. The department provides students with a strong academic foundation that enriches and prepares them for graduate study and meaningful professional lives after graduation. In addition to the Judaic Studies course work that is available to community members, the center offers lectures, concerts, workshops, and study abroad opportunities. We look forward to having you join us.**

**Monday, March 22, 7 p.m.** – Wilde Auditorium

Hartford Jewish Film Festival: Tribute: “Observations on Survival and Spirit-Lessons from the Holocaust”

Admission to event is by advance ticket sales. For ticket purchase, contact the Gilman Theater Box Office, at [tickets@mandelljcc.org](mailto:tickets@mandelljcc.org) or 860.231.6316.

**Thursday, April 1, 7-8:30 p.m.** – Wilde Auditorium - First-of-the-Month Contemporary Issues Forum

Book Launch and Signing Irene Levin Berman *We are Going to Pick Potatoes: Norway and the Holocaust*

**8:30-9:30 p.m.** – William Singer Gallery, Sherman Museum

Exhibit Opening: *Freedom: The Jews and Norway*

**Thursday, April 15, 7-8:30 p.m.** – Wilde Auditorium

46th Annual Edward Lewis Wallant Award - Recipient: Sara Houghteling: *Pictures at an Exhibition*

**Monday, May 3, 7:30 – 9 p.m.** – Wilde Auditorium

Holocaust Educators Award Ceremony

Keynote Speaker: Irene Levin Berman

**Monday, May 17, 7-9 p.m.** – Wilde Auditorium

The Lillian Margulies Singer Jewish Humor Lecture - “Women and Jewish Humor in the film *Making Trouble*

Gail Reimer, Jewish Women’s Archives, Boston, Mass. This performance is free and open to the public, but tickets are required. Call the University of Hartford Box Office after **March 22** at 860.768.4228.

Summerterm in Israel will take place from June 13 – July 13, 2010, and includes two weeks of excavation and two weeks of Hebrew and Arabic instruction. For additional information, please call 860.768.4964 or [mgcjs@hartford.edu](mailto:mgcjs@hartford.edu).

**GEORGE J. SHERMAN AND LOTTIE K. SHERMAN MUSEUM OF JEWISH CIVILIZATION**

**The George J. Sherman and Lottie K. Sherman Museum of Jewish Civilization was founded in 2003 thanks to a generous gift by Dr. William Sherman of West Hartford and other donors. It was directed by Dr. Richard A. Freund (2003-2007) and is presently directed by Dr. Avinoam Patt of the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford. The Sherman Museum is a teaching museum and its primary goal is to tell the story of Jewish civilization for the general and academic communities of Connecticut through exhibitions coordinated with lectures and coursework in the extensive Judaica offerings of the Greenberg Center.**

**The William Singer Gallery has featured exhibits highlighting the history of Jewish interactions with Muslims and Christians; the lives of the Jews in Germany, the United States, Latin America, and ancient Israel, as well as books on and about the Jewish people worldwide and the Holocaust. The Jewish Music section features the Cantorate, highlighting the way Jews used the Arts to express their spirit, while the section on archaeology chronicles the daily and religious life of Ancient Israel.**

**The Sherman Museum is located in Mortensen Library, Harry Jack Gray Center, University of Hartford, 200 Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford, CT. For docent led tours and Museum hours, please call 860.768.5729 or email [mgcjs@hartford.edu](mailto:mgcjs@hartford.edu).**