

Dr. Miriam Isaacs



Songs from a Lost World: Singing as Resistance and Renewal in New York, 1948

In 1948, only three years after the war, Ben Stonehill recorded over a thousand songs from Holocaust survivors temporarily housed in a hotel in upper Manhattan. In this presentation sociolinguist and Yiddish scholar Dr. Miriam Isaacs will explore the meaning of that archive and discuss what these songs tell us about the inner world of refugees and survivors. Many of these songs are rare, some written in the camps or by partisans. Among the most important of the singers was Shmerke Kaczerginski, a partisan and poet and the collector and an actress, Diana Blumenfeld.

Miriam Isaacs received her MA and Ph.D. at Cornell in linguistics. She has specialized in Yiddish language and literature. She was born in a German DP camp and grew up in Yiddish speaking enclaves of Montreal and Brooklyn, New York. She has been working on creating a new website which makes available the lyrics to many of these songs. She will play cuts of the original songs, sung by men, women and children, mainly in Yiddish, but also Russian and Hebrew. Collectively, this body of song constitutes a haunting testimony to survivors' resilience, courage and humor.

Thursday
Nov. 12, 2015

6 P.M. Reception
6:30 P.M. Lecture

The Magnes Collection of
Jewish Art and Life

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