



*The Sparks Fly*  
**UPWARD**

A Holocaust opera of fear, faith, and hope

**CLEVELAND PREMIERE**

*Presented with support from*  
**Milton and Tamar Maltz**

**June 9-12, 2022**

**Maltz Performing Arts Center**  
**CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY**

*Music and Libretto by* Cathy Lesser Mansfield  
*Directed by* Jeffrey Lesser • *Conducted by* Daniel Singer

**TheSparksFlyUpward.org**

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## COMPOSER'S NOTE

Welcome to the Cleveland premiere of *The Sparks Fly Upward*, an opera and project dedicated to the victims and heroes of the Holocaust and intended to educate and activate about genocide and tolerance. We hope that you will leave this production knowing more than you did before about the history of the Holocaust, and with a deeper understanding of how simple acts of kindness can defy hate and genocide.

If I thanked every person who has given something of themselves to this project this note would wrap around the world, but there are certain individuals and organizations I must thank individually. First, I want to thank Milton and Tamar Maltz for their substantial financial support, as well as Sandy Zieve and the other donors listed in this program. I want to thank Drake University and Drake University Law School for recognizing this project as one that deserved academic support, even though it was outside my designated area of higher education. They gave me time paid off to finish the project and have continued to support the project, even though I have left Drake and moved home to Cleveland. I also want to thank Jerry L. Anderson, whose beautiful melody serves as the basis for the song “So Many Things,” and who contributed significantly to the piece that became “The Pretext.” Jerry also spent many hours translating German survivor memoirs and contacting German photo archives on our behalf.

I also want to thank our presenting partners, Alex Shvartshteyn of London Cleaners for cleaning the costumes for free for us, and Cleveland Opera Theater for allowing us to borrow their orchestra curtains and rugs. We want to thank The Temple-Tifereth Israel for providing rehearsal space and access to this beautiful Silver’s Hall. And I want to thank my dear friend Kathy Wolfe Sebo, who shepherded the Cleveland production from start to finish.

Over the course of researching *The Sparks Fly Upward* many archivists and historians and survivors gave freely of their time and knowledge, and to them I am also deeply grateful. I want to thank my baby brother, Jeff Lesser, whose directing has made my vision come to life, and my children, parents, and brother-in-law for their unconditional love and support, even when I disappeared into “opera land.” Finally, I want to thank the cast for their soulful participation in this project and, especially, R. Stephen Gracey,

playing the role of Julius, who has spent hundreds of hours designing our website, spearheading our outreach, and providing comfort and calm in any storm.

Although the characters in Sparks are not real people, their lives and experiences are based on the records and memoirs of countless survivors and victims of the Holocaust. I hope that in seeking historical accuracy, I have given one more bit of meaning to their legacy and provided rich evidence of both the existence of the Holocaust, and the importance of never forgetting not just the way they died, but the way they lived. I hope their stories inspire you to recognize that although we live across centuries and miles, people have much in common, and always have the power to change each other's lives. There are times when our humanity is tried, and in those times and always we must choose goodness, kindness, and love.

— Cathy Lesser Mansfield

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

*The Sparks Fly Upward / The Job Story* has been part of my life almost from the beginning. My sister Cathy composed *The Job Story* in high school, and I played the role of GOD at The Jewish Community Center here in Cleveland. As Cathy was doing her thorough research to build it into an opera about the Holocaust, I worked with her and was struck by how normal these people's lives were before they were torn apart.

In 2008, when we did the first performance in Des Moines, Iowa, I served as assistant director to our director, Timothy X. Troy. When it came time to mount today's production, we decided that as I knew the opera almost as intimately as Cathy, I would take the reins as its director.

Telling the story of the Holocaust is never easy or comfortable, but it is essential. In the world we share at this moment, we are once again witnessing atrocities committed against groups of people. I can't think of a more crucial time to share this story, not only of the evil we can do to each other, but more importantly, of the courage and love we can show to one another. It is these powerful, loving relationships that drive this piece, alongside its stunningly beautiful music.

It has been my privilege to work with this amazing, talented group of performers and designers, as I have watched them bring what had been in my head and heart into reality for you to see today. We must all remember that such goodness and kindness will bring us out of these darkest days into the light.

— Jeffrey Lesser

# ACT I

## **Prologue**

*September 14, 1930 – October 28, 1938*

The Rise of Nazi Germany

## **Scene 1: Rosenbaum Apartment Building**

*Friday, October 28, 1938,*

Deutschland Erwache

*5:00 a.m.*

## **Scene 2: Rosenbaum Apartment and Stores of Julius and Hans**

*Friday, October 28, 1938, just after*

Generations

*5:00 a.m. and into the morning*

## **Scene 3: A Berlin Train Station**

*Friday, October 28, 1938*

Train Station

Let Me Find Them

## **Scene 4: The Neue Synagogue, Berlin**

Candle Blessing

*Friday, October 28, 1938, 6:00 p.m.*

Service/Oseh Shalom

## **Scene 5: Germany, Poland and Paris**

*Thursday, November 3 –*

The Pretext

*Monday, November 7, 1938*

## **Scene 6: Rosenbaum Apartment and Attic**

*Wednesday November 9,*

The Mundfunk

*10:00 p.m.*

Kristallnacht

*Morning of November 10, 1938*

A Man Named Job

Jacob You Play God

Lord God, How Blind You Seem To Be

So Satan's Work Was Begun

Bless the Lord

## **Scene 7: Rosenbaum Apartment**

*Friday, March 31, 1939*

Trying to Get Out

## **Scene 8: Neue Synagogue**

*Sunday, April 2, 1939*

The Reopening

**Intermission** (15 minutes)

## ACT II

### **Prologue**

*April 2, 1939 – October 1, 1941*

### **Scene 1: Rosenbaum Apartment**

*Wednesday, October 1, 1941  
(Yom Kippur)*

Letter from America

### **Scene 2: Rosenbaum Apartment**

*Thursday, October 16, 1941*

Mama, You Look Tired

Destruction

Master the Oxen Plowing

The Plan

### **Scene 3: Rosenbaum Apartment**

*Friday, February 26, 1943*

Decision to Hide

### **Scene 4: Lotte's Factory**

*Saturday, February 27, 1943*

Warning

### **Scene 5: All Over Berlin**

*Saturday, February 27, 1943*

The Factory Action

### **Scene 6: Apartment of Hans and Ruth and Deportation Hold**

*Saturday, February 27, 1943*

Returning Home

The Lord Giveth

So Many Things

Into Hiding

All That We Once Had is Gone

### **Scene 7: Children's Hiding Places and Auschwitz**

*Friday, March 5, 1943*

Turning Away

### **Scene 8: In Hiding**

*April 1945*

The Meaning of Job

God if I Have Wronged

### **Scene 9: Apartment of Hans and Ruth**

*Thursday, May 3, 1945*

The Reunion

## EPILOGUE

### **Scene 1: Cleveland, Ohio**

*1995*

The Invitation

### **Scene 2: Neue Synagogue Berlin**

*Sunday, May 7, 1995, 5:00 p.m.*

Peace

# THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD: STORY SYNOPSIS

## Act I

The opening scene of *The Sparks Fly Upward* takes place on Friday, October 28, 1938, at 5:00 a.m. in an apartment building at Sophienstrasse 25 in Berlin. The Rosenbaum family (German Jews), the Stein family (Polish Jews living in Germany), and the Weber family (German Christians), are all awakened by the police arresting the father (Wilhelm, or “Willie”) and oldest son (Frederick) of the Stein family. Wilhelm and Frederick are arrested and deported to the Polish/German border along with 18,000 other Polish Jews living in Germany. [Music: “Deutschland Erwache,” or “Germany Awakens”].

After the arrests, the three families decide that the men will go to work, so as not to cause further problems, while the women look for Wilhelm and Frederick. [Music: “Generations”]. The women spend the day trying to get information about Wilhelm and Frederick, but they and other women in the community whose family members have been arrested are unsuccessful. [Music: “Train Station,” “Let Me Find Them”]. That night, a Friday night, Rosa and her two remaining daughters, and the Rosenbaum family attend Shabbat services at their Synagogue, the Neue Synagogue on Oranienburger Strasse in Berlin. As the service proceeds, the various characters reflect on the terrifying events of the day. [Music: “Candle Blessing, Service,” “Oseh Shalom”].

On November 3, 1938, a Polish Jew living in Paris, Herschel Grynszpan, receives a letter from his sister, who, like Rosa’s husband and son, has been deported to the Polish border. That same day Rosa receives and reads a letter from Wilhelm. The letters describe the deportation and the deplorable conditions at the border. Meanwhile, Lina and Julius Rosenbaum and other community members are trying to get permission to emigrate from Germany. At the end of the scene, Herschel Grynszpan goes to the German embassy in Paris and shoots Ernst vom Rath, whose death provides the pretext for “Kristallnacht.” [Music: “The Pretext”].



On November 9, 1938, the horror of Kristallnacht begins. The Jews and some Christians of Berlin attempt to warn other Jews to stay out of the streets to avoid arrest and harm. [*Music*: “The Mundfunk” (translated as “mouthcast” or “rumor mill”)]. Julius Rosenbaum is not home when the pogrom begins. Lina Rosenbaum decides to venture into the street to find her husband, while her neighbors, Hans and Ruth Weber, hide the Rosenbaum children, and Rosa Stein and her children in the apartment attic. [*Music*: “Kristallnacht”]. The oldest Rosenbaum daughter, Lotte, begins reading the children the story from the Book of Job in order to keep them distracted. [*Music*: “A Man Named Job”]. As she and her siblings continue to play out the story of Job, the events in the streets of Berlin seem to mirror the events in the story of Job. [*Music*: “Lord God, How Blind You Seem to Be,” “So Satan’s Work Was Begun”].

When Kristallnacht is over, the Steins and Rosenbaums rejoice that they are all right, but vow to try to emigrate before it is too late. [*Music*: “Bless the Lord”].

In early 1939, the Steins and Rosenbaums continue their attempts to emigrate. Lina writes on behalf of both families to a relative in Cleveland, Ohio, for help. In her letter, she explains the events and decrees since the November 9 pogrom. [*Music*: “Trying to Get Out”].

At the end of the first act the Jewish Community of Berlin is hopeful that things will improve as the Neue Synagogue reopens for the first time since the November 9 pogrom for a Passover service. [*Music*: “The Reopening”].

## Act II

It is two and a half years later, October, 1941. The Rosenbaums and Steins are still hopeful that they will be able to leave Germany, but Lina receives a discouraging letter from her relatives in Cleveland, Ohio, saying that they are unlikely to be able to help them leave Germany. [*Music*: “Letter from

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<sup>1</sup> Words in brackets denote the title of the musical piece in the opera.

<sup>2</sup> On Kristallnacht, or the “Night of Broken Glass,” Nazi forces and German civilians ransacked Jewish Synagogues, and homes, and killed or injured many Jews across Germany and Austria.

America”]. At the same time, the head of the Jewish Department of the Berlin Police instructs the Berlin Jewish community that deportations will begin.

On October 16, 1941, the two families are sitting in the Rosenbaum’s apartment. The children are bored [*Music*: “Mama, You Look Tired”] and decide to finish the story of Job. As the children tell the part of the Job story where Satan is given power to destroy Job and his family, the first round-up and deportation of Jews begins throughout Berlin. [*Music*: “Destruction,” “Master the Oxen”]. The three families decide that it has become very dangerous, and Ruth and Hans Weber explain their plan for hiding the Rosenbaums and the Steins for the balance of the war. [*Music*: “The Plan”].

A year and a half later, on February 26, 1943, Hans and Ruth Weber, Lina and Julius Rosenbaum, and Rosa Stein decide things have become so dangerous that it is time to go into hiding. They make a plan for the following Monday, March 1, 1943 [*Music*: “Decision to Hide”], but their plan is foiled the following day, February 27, 1943, by a massive Gestapo raid of forced labor locations, called the *Fabrikaktion*, or “Factory Action.” Lotte Rosenbaum escapes arrest when she is warned away from work by her non-Jewish boss. [*Music*: “The Warning”]. Lina, Julius, and Rosa are arrested. [*Music*: “The Factory Action”].

Back in their apartment, Hans and Ruth Weber wait with the younger children, as the older children make their way home. [*Music*: “Returning Home”] When Lina, Julius and Rosa do not return, Karl Rosenbaum reads from the *Book of Job* “The Lord Giveth, and the Lord Taketh Away.” As he reads, Hans and Ruth go into the streets of Berlin to find Julius, Lina, and Rosa. [*Music*: “The Lord Giveth”].

Eventually, Hans and Ruth return with the terrible news that Lina, Julius, and Rosa have all been arrested and are being held at the Clou Concert Hall at Zimmerstrasse 90-91. The devastated children, joined by Hans and Ruth, sing of losing their parents, while the parents sing of losing their children. [*Music*: “So Many Things”] Immediately thereafter, the children say goodbye to each other, and Hans and Ruth deliver the children to their hiding places. [*Music*: “Into Hiding”]. In the meantime, Lina writes her final letter to her children. Hans and Ruth meet to pray in a church, while they face their own loss. [*Music*: “All That We Once Had Is Gone”].

By Saturday, March 6, 1943, the children are in their hiding places. Lotte and her brother Karl, from their respective hiding places, are each reading the *Book of Job*, and taking on the roles of Job and his wife. Job can retain his faith in God, while his wife cannot. As Lotte and Karl sing this part of the story, Julius, Lina and Rosa are being deported to Auschwitz. Lina leaves behind her last letter to her children. When they arrive at Auschwitz, Rosa and Lina are sent directly to the gas chambers along with other members of the Jewish Community, while Julius is placed in forced labor. [*Music*: “Turning Away”].

By 1945 the Stein children are worn out and discussing with Lotte the meaning of Job’s and their suffering. [*Music*: “The Meaning of Job”]. At the same time, Karl is contemplating the suffering of Job. He is joined by the rest of his family and individual members of Jewish community, now dispersed across Europe. [*Music*: “God, If I Have Wronged”].

In May 1945, the Battle for Berlin finally ends the war in Europe. The children are rescued from their hiding places and as planned, reunite at the apartment with Hans and Ruth Weber. They are overjoyed to find that Julius has also survived and devastated to learn of the fate of their mothers, Lina and Rosa.

After the war, the Rosenbaum and Stein families eventually emigrate to the United States, where like many survivors, they rebuild their lives. In February 1995, Lotte receives a letter from the City of Berlin inviting her family back to Berlin for the re-dedication of the Neue Synagogue as the “Centrum Judaicum.” The family decides that they should attend the re-dedication. [*Music*: “The Invitation”].

On May 7, 1995, the Neue Synagogue in Berlin is rededicated. The Rosenbaums and Steins are reunited with the Webers. They join the revitalized Berlin Jewish community in singing “Oseh Shalom...May the one who causes peace to reign in the high heavens cause peace to reign among us, all Israel, and all the world.” As they remember those who were lost in the Holocaust they vow, “Mama, I will remember you. Papa, I will remember you. Now and forever more, I will hold you here in my heart.” [*Music*: “Peace”].

# CAST, ORCHESTRA, AND PRODUCTION

## Cast

Julius Rosenbaum ..... R. Stephen Gracey  
Lina Rosenbaum..... Kathryn Wolfe Sebo  
Jacob Rosenbaum ..... Lifan Deng  
Lotte Rosenbaum..... Lia Bendix  
Max Rosenbaum..... Seth Hobi  
Karl Rosenbaum ..... Owen Connor Stout  
Rita Rosenbaum..... Lizzie Walsh

Rosa Stein ..... Tana Field  
Peter Stein..... Henry Miller  
Berta Stein ..... Abby Pokrywka

Ruth Weber ..... Leslie Tinnaro  
Hans Weber ..... Ross A. Williams

Herschel Grynspan..... Benjamin Hayes  
Berta Grynspan..... Julia Cooke

Rabbi ..... Elisabeth Roter  
Cantor ..... Benjamin Hayes  
Candle Blessor..... Cheryl Eitman  
Ignatz Bubis..... Terry Smith

Lotte's Boss ..... Harvey Bernstein

Chorus of Jews: ..... Harvey Bernstein, Julia Cooke, Alfred Cowger,  
Merrie Drees, Cheryl Eitman, Lisa Falkenberg,  
Charles Garrard, Benjamin Hayes, Craig Housum,  
Jacob Liptow, David Miller, Richie Pokrywka, Kara Ross,  
Elisabeth Roter, Laura Schapiro, Susan Schapiro,  
Louis Schwartz, Sharon Shaffer, Dallas Stark

Nazi/Policeman..... Bob Ruiz, Terry Smith, Matthew Allarie

## Production

Composer/Music Director .....	Cathy Lesser Mansfield
Conductor .....	Daniel Singer
Director.....	Jeffrey Lesser
Stage Manager.....	Adam Leventhal
Assistant Stage Managers .....	Caven Swift, Garrett Michael Scharf
Set and Projection Design .....	T. Paul Lowry
Lighting Design .....	Marcus Dana
Sound Design.....	Richard B. Ingraham
Costume Design .....	Inda Blatch-Geib
Wigs and Wardrobe Supervision.....	Brielle McGrew
Costume Assistants .....	Sydney DeMatteis-Geib, Dred Geib Ennin Geib, Em Leatherman
Video Director .....	Rommie Sebo
Rehearsal Accompanist.....	David Robison
Photographer .....	The Rev. David M. Bargetzi
Web Designer.....	R. Stephen Gracey
Production Assistant.....	Garrett Michael Scharf

## Orchestra

Concertmaster .....	Andrew Sords
Violin.....	Susan Britton, Eunho Kim, Owen Lockwood, Masha Andreini,* Priscilla Eva, Tal Yankevich, Jacob Andreini
Viola .....	Dudley Raine IV,* Claire Peyrebrune, Colin Henley, Matt Ross
Cello .....	Daniel Pereira,* David Ellis, Isabel Dimoff, Samuel Sykes
Double Bass.....	Michael Zogaib,* Steven Brija
Flute.....	Vincenzo Volpe*
Flute/Piccolo .....	Audrey Park
Oboe.....	Paul Converse*
Oboe/English Horn.....	Cyn Warren
Clarinet .....	Stanislav Golovin,* Bethany Stone
Bassoon.....	Mark DeMio
Horn.....	Emily Shelley,* Connor Monday, Laura Makara, Tom Park
Trumpet .....	Jack Brndiar,* Matt Wirfel, Stephen Stavnicky
Trombone .....	J.c. Sherman
Percussion.....	Marie Conti
Timpani/Percussion.....	Dylan Moffitt
Harp .....	Katelyn Croft

\* Principal

# BIOGRAPHIES

## Leads

**R. Stephen Gracey** (Julius Rosenbaum) is a content strategist by day — he does “web stuff” — and joined the Sparks crew not only as singer, but as graphic designer and website builder. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where he studied with Richard Miller and Gerald Crawford. He has also studied with Eleanor Pudil Anop at the Cleveland Institute of Music and with Daniel Teadt at Carnegie Mellon University. He played Edward Rutledge in three productions of *1776* and the Priest in *Man of La Mancha*. He’s also sung in the operas *La Traviata*, *Die Fledermaus*, and the Opera Cleveland’s productions of *Les pêcheurs de perles* and *Pagliacci*.

**Kathryn Wolfe Sebo** (Lina Rosenbaum) is honored to perform with this talented and versatile cast. She has been a cantor in Cleveland for 36 years and has served The Temple-Tifereth Israel since 1999. A graduate of the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, her performing credits include The Four Cantors at Severance Hall, *Rags* (Rebecca), and four seasons with Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera. She is a past president of the Women Cantors’ Network. Love and thanks to Cathy, Jeff, and the “ganse mishpocheh,” especially to Rommie. Her performance is dedicated in memory of her father-in-law, David Sebo, and to the Christian family who “hid” him in Nazi occupied Hungary.

**Lifan Deng** (Jacob Rosenbaum) is delighted to portray the role of Jacob in this powerful story. A recent graduate of Case Western Reserve University, Lifan holds a Bachelor of Arts in music and a Bachelor of Science in Engineering (BSE) in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering. He will pursue a Master of Music in Voice and Opera at Northwestern University this fall. His recent stage appearances include *Into the Woods* with the Happy Ending Lyrics Players, Northeast Ohio Master of Fine Arts (NEOMFA) Playwrights Festival with the Convergence-Continuum Theater, and the Festival of Short Works with Playwright Local. He will also appear in *La Bohème* and *Gianni Schicchi* with La Musica Lirica Young Artist Program in Italy this summer, and *Godspell* with Access Theater Project. He would like to dedicate this production with thanks to his parents, family, friends, and everyone who support his dream and passion.

**Lia Bendix** (Lotte Rosenbaum) is thrilled to be returning to the stage after a long hiatus. By day she manages scholarships for a college access non-profit, by night she teaches French and Italian lessons, and by weekend she sings in the Plymouth Church Choir. In her spare time, she enjoys doing crosswords, going to plays, and exploring Cleveland.

**Seth Hobi** (Max Rosenbaum), bass-baritone, comes originally from the Cleveland area, and is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance at Cleveland State University. He currently studies voice with Amanda Powell and has also studied voice with Tyler Evatt-Young and Bob Godfrey. He has performed in many choral ensembles, as both chorister and soloist, including The Cleveland Orchestra Chorus, Blossom Festival Chorus, Case Western Reserve University Early Music Singers, Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus, CSU University Chorus, and CSU Chorale. In addition to his choral experience, Seth also has served as singer and cantor at St. Anselm Anglican Church, St. Rocco Catholic Church, and the Old Stone Church.

**Owen Connor Stout** (Karl Rosenbaum) is thrilled to be playing Karl Rosenbaum in the Cleveland premier of *The Sparks Fly Upward*. Connor received his master's degree in Opera Performance from the University of Illinois in 2021, under the tutelage of Dawn Harris and Nathan Gunn. He has been seen in the University's productions of *Pirates of Penzance*, *HMS Pinafore*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, and *Crazy For You*. Recently, he moved to the Cleveland area to further pursue music and acting. Enjoy the show!

**Lizzie Walsh** (Rita Rosenbaum) is a sophomore at Solon High School and a member of the drama club. She loves to perform with Solon's show choir and in the Solon Marching Band as a Starlette. Lizzie has a passion for singing and performing on stage. Some recent roles include *Freaky Friday* (Gretchen), *We Will Rock You* (Puff), *Seussical the Musical* (Gertrude) and *Frozen* (Anna). This is Lizzie's first time performing in a professional opera and is so excited to share this story with the audience!

**Tana Field** (Rosa Stein), mezzo-soprano, is an active recitalist and performer and has sung throughout the United States and Europe. She had the privilege to premiere the role of Rosa Stein in the Des Moines production of *The Sparks Fly Upward* and is honored to be performing this meaningful work once again. Among Ms. Field's recent honors are prizes in the voice divisions of the Los Angeles International Liszt Competition and selection for participation in the prestigious National Association of Teachers of Singing Intern Program. A graduate of Luther College and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Dr. Field serves as Professor of Music at Murray State University where she was named Outstanding Music Faculty Member in 2018.

**Henry Miller** (Peter Stein) is a rising 7th grader at Orange Middle School. He was recently seen as Gabe in his school's production of *The Lightning Thief* and as Tigger in Heights Youth Theatre's *Winnie the Pooh*. He has performed in a variety of shows at Stagecrafters and Heights Youth Theatre. Many thanks to the Sparks team for this opportunity!

**Abigail Pokrywka** (Berta Stein) is an energetic nine-year-old who loves to sing and perform. Abby's first on-stage show was at age four months in the play *Anne of Green Gables* at Magnificat High School. She is a member of the Littlest Angels, a part of the Cleveland Singing Angels for younger singers. Later this summer Abby will play Winthrop in a local production of *The Music Man*. She is the youngest of three and has enjoyed watching and learning from her older brothers, who are also performers.

**Ross A. Williams** (Hans Weber) (he/him) recently relocated to Cleveland after an 18-year stint in New York City. He is the founding artistic director of New York Shakespeare Exchange (NYSX), an off-off-Broadway company devoted to connecting communities through Shakespeare. In a previous actor life, Ross appeared onstage throughout North America. Most notably, he originated the role of Gimli the battle-axe-wielding dwarf in the world premiere of *The Lord of the Rings*, the musical in Toronto. Local audiences may recognize him from his recent frolic as Prince Charming in *Shoeless: A Cinderella Story* with The North Coast Men's Chorus. He holds a Master of Fine Arts in acting from The Cleveland Playhouse and Case Western Reserve University, and Bachelor of Fine Arts in directing from Southern Methodist University.

**Leslie Tinnaro** (Ruth Weber) is honored to be part of this incredible opera. Musical theatre has given her the opportunity to play many roles. The role closest to her heart—and one she's played in several productions — is Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*. Leslie's love for the intimacy of cabaret led her to develop several cabarets, including a very special one with director Jeffrey Lesser, *I'm Nothing Without You*.

**Julia Cooke** (Berta Grynszpan / Chorus) is honored to work on such an impactful story with a group of wonderful people. She is a rising senior Theatre: Acting and Directing major with Music and Dance minors at Baldwin Wallace University. Her favorite previous credits include *Angels in America*, *Men on Boats*, and *Chicago*, as well as performing with the ACDA National Honor Choir. She would like to thank the incredible cast, creative and production team, and as always, her supportive and loving friends and family.

**Elisabeth Roter** (Rabbi / Chorus) is proud to be part of this meaningful production. This is Elisabeth's first opera, although she is active in community theater. Favorite roles include Rose in *Working: A Musical*, Atina in *The Little Mermaid*, Dr. Pierce in *Miracle on 34th Street*, and Sandy Margolin in *Heaven Help Us*. Two favorite roles were in Holocaust remembrance plays: Miep Geis in *Diary of Anne Frank* and Regina Kogan in *The Wall*. Elisabeth thanks everyone involved. "Never forget."



**Benjamin Hayes** (Cantor / Herschel Grynszpan / Chorus), tenor, is from Akron, Ohio. He received his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Mount Union, and Master of Music in Vocal Performance from Kent State University. He performed with the Kent State Opera Theatre, including *The Tender Land* (Martin) and *Dido and Aeneas* (Aeneas). He has sung with Opera Western Reserve, the Cleveland Chamber Choir, the Summit Choral Society, and throughout the Akron-Canton area. Ben has taught private voice lessons with the Aurora School of Music and Great Lakes School of Music and currently teaches applied voice with the University of Malone.

### **Chorus**

**Harvey Bernstein** (Lotte's Boss / Chorus) is excited and moved to join the Sparks family with this awesome and extremely talented cast. Harvey's last performance was "Working A Musical" at Geauga Center For The Arts (GCA). His other credits include Chagrin Valley Little Theater (CVLT), Happy Ending Lyric Players (HELP) and Gates Mills Players. Harvey's love for music extends past theatre. He plays guitar, bass and keyboards with friends and co-workers. Harvey would like to thank Cathy Jeff and the rest of the production staff for their patience and guidance. He also thanks his family for their support.

**Alfred Cowger** (Willie Stein / Franz Prüfer / Chorus) spends almost as much time singing as lawyering these days, even though he's an attorney. He performs with Good Company, the North Coast Men's Chorus, and the St. Andrew's Episcopal Church choir (Kirtland Hills). He studies voice with Emily Stauch at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

**Cheryl Eitman** (Candle Blesser / Chorus) is a professional substitute cantorial soloist at many synagogues in the area, but primarily at The Temple-Tifereth Israel. She has performed locally at Cain Park (*Fiddler on the Roof* and *South Pacific*), JCC (*Ragtime*), Cassidy Theater, Fine Arts Association, Lakeland Community Collegestep, and Beachwood Community Theater. Favorite roles include Eliza in *My Fair Lady*; Mrs. Banks and Mary Poppins in *Mary Poppins*; Gertrude McFuzz in *Seussical*, and Mrs. Potts in *Beauty and the Beast*. She is thrilled and honored to be a part of this beautiful and moving production and thanks Cathy and Jeff for the opportunity.

**Merrie Drees** (Chorus) is excited to be in her first opera! Most recently she was seen as Jovie in the the Beck Center's production of *Elf*. She is a Kent state musical theatre graduate and since then was on Nickelodeon's national tour of "Paw Patrol Live" as Skye. Credits include *Children of Eden* (Eve), *Little Women* (Amy), *Drowsy Chaperone* (Kitty), *It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's...Superman* (Lois Lane), *Allegro* (Jenny), and many others. Many thanks to her friends, family, and Zac for their love and support.

For Lois. Stay Gold.

**Lisa Falkenberg** (Chorus) is very honored to be performing in this powerful and beautiful work. After singing with the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus for 30 years she is excited to be on stage again. Outside of music Lisa serves as manager of rehabilitation services for University Hospitals Lake Health.

**Charles ("Chuck") Garrard** (Chorus) has been acting and singing since the age of twelve, performing with his father and in many musicals. Favorite roles include Billy Bigalow in *Carousel*, and the Prince in *Cinderella*. He was also a vocalist with The Akron Symphony Chorus. Chuck then served in the United States Marine Corp, serving in Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield. While serving in the Marines Chuck continued to perform in several ensembles and directed the church youth chorus. After returning to civilian life Chuck performed as a vocalist in several resorts and toured the Fair & Festival circuit for many years. Most recently Chuck appeared in several Broadway reviews, and as Tony Soprano in a *Sopranos* spoof at Spotlight Dinner Theater in Canton, Ohio.

**Craig Housum** (Chorus) has been singing in choirs since the age of nine with the Ohio Boy Choir which included singing for President Reagan at the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, an appearance in the movie *A Christmas Story* and a European tour. Since that time, he has been a tenor section leader and soloist for several Cleveland area churches and synagogues. He most recently has been singing with the Park Synagogue choir since 1998 and St. Paul's Lutheran for the past year. In addition, Craig also sang professionally with the Cleveland Opera from 1993 to 2003. Before singing in this production, he most recently played the part of Joey in the musical *Sister Act* at Olde Town Hall Theater in North Ridgeville. By day Craig has been a music teacher and an administrator, as well, in his 22 years in education. He currently teaches in the Cleveland Metropolitan School District.

**Jacob Liptow** is recent graduate from Kent State University's College of Architecture and Environmental Design. Along with his architectural training, he has studied classical violin and piano since the age of four, and he began vocal training this year with instructor Phyllis Spears. He is honored to be performing in his first opera and hopes to advance his musical career throughout his time in Cleveland.

**David Miller** (Chorus) is thrilled to share this experience with his son Henry. Many thanks to Cathy and Jeff for their vision and to the incredibly talented cast for the opportunity to ensure that our history is not forgotten.

**Richie Pokrywka** (Chorus) is a student at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, where he is studying to receive his Bachelor of Arts in Musical Theatre and his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Marketing. His body of work includes productions with Xavier University, St. Edward High School, Fairview Park Fine Arts and Theatre Association, and more. When he is not performing, he loves to spend time with his family, sing, create unique graphic designs for apparel, and keep up with his favorite Cleveland sports teams. Richie is thrilled to work with such an amazing group of people on such a powerful production.

**Kara Ross** (Chorus) is a classically trained Mezzo Soprano from the Cuyahoga Falls area. She has been involved with many opera productions around Cleveland since 2016. She has worked with The Cleveland Opera on many shows and has performed iTheater at Playhouse Square. Kara was even at the Maltz Performing Arts Center back in 2018 singing *Madame Butterfly*. She is grateful to be back on the stage after the pandemic put performing on pause!

**Laura Schapiro** (Chorus) is delighted to be performing in her first theater production since college. She was previously in *The Magic Flute*, *Into the Woods*, and *The Music Man*. She loves choral singing and most recently sang alto with the May Festival Chorus in Cincinnati. She is currently a physician in Cleveland.

**Susan Schapiro** (Chorus) has returned to the stage after a 41-year hiatus, *Mary Poppins*, *Jekyll and Hyde*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, and *Titanic*. Now she is delighted to tackle her first opera. A retired neonatologist, Susan also enjoys choral singing. She trusts that everyone will learn from and be moved by Sparks.

**Sharon Shaffer** (Chorus) has been a professional singer, actor, and voice teacher for over 35 years. She has had a prolific performance career and has appeared in leading operatic, musical theatre roles, and in recital, throughout the United States, Europe, and Scandinavia. Some of her favorite recent roles are: The Ghost of Entrances Missed in *Haunted* with Hudson Players, Karen in *Obnoxiously Unconstitutional* with Twin Masks Theater, Deloris Dante in *Working: A Musical* with Geauga Center for the Arts, and Miss Marietta Shingle in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder* at Chagrin Valley Little Theater. Ms. Shaffer is the choral director of The Park Synagogue Choir in Pepper Pike and maintains a busy private teaching studio in Shaker Heights, Ohio. Sharon would like to dedicate her performance in *The Sparks Fly Upward* to her mother (of blessed memory) who was a hidden child and survivor of the Holocaust, and who taught her daughter to never forget.

**Louis Schwartz** (Frederick Stein / Chorus) is honored to be a part of such a beautiful production. He is a laboratory technician in the automated chemistry lab at The Cleveland Clinic. He is a recent graduate of The College of Wooster (chemistry major/theatre minor) and has grown up doing theatre in Cleveland (Playmakers Youth Theatre). He is a member of Park Synagogue. His most recent stage credit is Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella* (Ensemble/Coachman) at Near West Theatre. His theatre credits include *Fiddler on the Roof* (Tevye), *Fools* (Dr. Zubritzky), *The Normal Heart* (Hiram Keebler), *Matt's First (Real) Thanksgiving* (Matt Quinn). He thanks Jeff and Cathy for this amazing opportunity, the entire cast for creating a new family, and finally, he would like to thank his friends and family for all their love and support always. Happy Anniversary, Mom and Dad! Enjoy the show!

**Dallas Stark** (Chorus) is grateful to be performing in this production of *The Sparks Fly Upward* alongside such a talented cast. Some of her recent roles have been in *Sister Act* (Sister Mary Hope, Michelle) and *The Comedy of Errors* (Luciana). In her free time, Dallas enjoys dancing, being outdoors, and trying new restaurants.

### Nazis and Police

**Matthew Allarie** (Nazi / Policeman / Gun Seller) is a senior electrical student at Kennebec Valley Community College in central Maine. Previously, he has performed in high school, at Lakewood theater, and studied acting at City College of New York. His favorite credits include *Addams Family*, *Chicago*, *Big Fish*, and *Godspell*. He would like to thank Julia Cooke (Berta Grynszpan / Chorus) for introducing him to the production, to Jeff, Cathy, and Adam, and for giving him the opportunity to do theater again.

**Bob Ruiz** (Nazi / Policeman) is a lover of music and theatre. He has spent his life appreciating performances from the audience. To be a part of such a moving production has opened his eyes to the other side of the stage. He cannot express how grateful he is for the opportunity to be a part of such a powerful artistic depiction of events. He is forever changed.

**Terry Smith** (Nazi / Policeman) is thrilled to be part of this awesome production! As an actor, his favorite roles include Lord Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet*; Frank in *Tainted Justice* at Clague Playhouse; and Robert in *Proof* at Strongsville Community Theatre. Terry enjoys performing occasional piano gigs and reciting the military creeds and historical speeches by Henry, Douglass, Lincoln, Gehrig, Churchill, RFK, JFK and others on radio, at parades, and at other events. A database programmer by trade, he and his wife, Erin, have four adult sons and live in North Olmsted. His website is [actingbuff.com](http://actingbuff.com).

### **Production**

**Cathy Lesser Mansfield** (Composer / Librettist) is the composer and librettist of *The Sparks Fly Upward*, and she is founder and Executive Director of The Sparks Fly Upward Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to educating people about the Holocaust, genocide, and tolerance through presentations of Sparks, and ancillary activities.

She teaches courses in consumer protection and commercial law, as well as a course called “Holocaust and the Law,” at Case Western Reserve University School of Law.

Professor Mansfield speaks nationally about Holocaust and the law, and about consumer protection issues. She was a Silberman Fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and is a Distinguished Fellow at The Consortium for the Research and Study of Holocaust and the Law at Chicago-Kent College of Law’s Center for National Security and Human Rights Law.

company that brings to light deserving works on the repertory’s periphery in the hope that these works remain in the canon.

**Hayley Baran** (Stage Manager)

**Daniel Singer** (Conductor) - Forging parallel careers as both performer and educator, Daniel Singer has had considerable success as a chorus conductor, a recitalist, and as an inspiring teacher. Daniel earned degrees from Northwestern University and Michigan State University in Music Education and Conducting. He joined the choral conducting staff of The Cleveland Orchestra in 2012 and has served as Assistant Director of Choruses and Director of The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus since 2017. From 2011 to 2022, Daniel served as Director of Music at University School, and in Fall 2022, he will join the music faculty of The College of Wooster.

Daniel has sung as bass soloist in performances of Handel's Messiah, the requiem masses of Mozart, Fauré, and Duruflé, masses of Mozart, Schubert, and Haydn, and past recitals include works of Copland, Vaughan Williams, and Spohr. Recent seasons have included concert performances with the Wooster Symphony Orchestra, recital performances in Toronto and Wisconsin as well as performances of the National Anthem in Louisville and Akron.

Daniel is active as a guest conductor, clinician, composer, and arranger, having worked with and written for choral and instrumental groups throughout the United States. Uniting with violinist Andrew Sords, Daniel is co-owner of Green Point Editions, a music publication

**Jeffrey Lesser** (Director) resides in Palm Springs, California, after relocating there from Philadelphia. In Philadelphia he was the founding director of the non-profit theatre company Center City Theatre Works, where he directed Michael Cristofer's *The Shadow Box*. He directed and/or musical directed *They're Playing Our Song*, *A Little Night Music*, *Company*, *9 to 5*, and *Head Over Heels*.

He was assistant director and on the staff of the world premiere of *The Sparks Fly Upward* in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2008.

Jeff is the founder and director of The Coachella Valley Cabaret Performance Class, which he taught for 11 years in Philadelphia. He has directed numerous cabarets in both Philadelphia and Palm Springs.

As a performer, he played the role of Nathan in the national touring company of *Old Jews Telling Jokes* on the East coast and then again in Los Angeles and Palm Desert. He has appeared in musicals including *Company and Souvenir*, as well as his own cabaret shows in New York City and Philadelphia. He performed his solo cabaret show *Life Upon a Wicked Stage* at the Arthur Newman Theater in Palm Desert.

Jeff has worked closely with Leslie Tinnaro (Ruth Weber) in many shows, including their hit cabaret show *I'm Nothing Without You*.

**Caven Swift** (Assistant Stage Manager) has been a stage manager and actor for stardust dinner theater for 4 years now and is excited to bring his talents to the production.

**Garrett Michael Scharf** (Assistant Stage Manager/Production Assistant) recently graduated with a Master of Arts from Case Western Reserve University. He has been involved in the Cleveland theatre community for about twenty years and performed in over 50 productions. He graduated from Notre Dame College and Orange High School, where he appeared in theatre productions, sang in choirs, and played percussion in the marching and concert bands. Garrett is excited to be a part of this production because its message is important in these turbulent times.

**T. Paul Lowry** (Set and Projection Design) has served in artistic, production, and design capacities with such companies as Cleveland Play House, Long Wharf Theatre, Playwrights Horizons, New Haven Theater Company, Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, Cleveland Public Theatre, Dobama Theatre, and Talespinner Children's Theatre. Mr. Lowry is an award-winning designer for such works as: *Aida*, *Black Nativity* (Karamu House), *Egress* (Cleveland Play House), *Sherlock Holmes; The Baker Street Irregulars*, *Ella Enchanted*, *The Nether* (Dobama Theatre), *American Dreams*, *Fire on the Water* (Cleveland Public Theatre), *Uz* (Teatro Público de Cleveland), *The Turing Machine* (Theatre Ninjas), *The 39 Steps* (Via Brooklyn), *To the Orchard*, *Things as They Are* (Playwrights Local 4181), *Angels in America* (Oberlin College), *Jane Eyre* (Cleveland Musical Theatre). You can learn more about his work at [www.tpaullowry.com](http://www.tpaullowry.com).

**Marcus Dana** (Lighting Design)

**Richard B. Ingraham** (Sound Design) ) is a freelance Sound Designer, teacher, and AV Systems Designer. Richard has designed sound for numerous theatres, schools and attractions throughout the US including: Ashland University, Beck Center for the Arts, Baldwin-Wallace University, Cain Park, Carnegie-Mellon University, Chagrin Falls Performing Arts Academy, The Cleveland Play House, Cleveland Public Theatre, Cleveland State University, Dobama Theatre, The University of Evansville, Great Lakes Theater, Hope Summer Repertory Theatre, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, The Jewish Community Center of Cleveland, Oberlin College, Playhouse Square and Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines. Richard is also a consultant on the construction and renovations of theatres and to award winning software companies that create products for live event production including Stage Research and Richmond Sound Design.

**Inda Blatch-Geib** (Costume Design) as a costume and production designer for over 1,000 theatrical, commercial, and film releases across 35 years and 4 continents.

Production and Costume Design has included commercials for Footlocker, The West Virginia Lottery's national award-winning campaigns, The Ohio Lottery, Microsoft, Under Armor, McDonalds, TroyBuilt, and The Original Mattress Factory, as well as the Cleveland Cavaliers' 1970s and 1980s themed videos, national spots for the team, and design for on-court half-time shows including their mascot shield design and pyrotechnic sword. Live performance and festival design include Machine Gun Kelly's US and European Tours as well as ESTFEST and Wolstein Arena productions. Specialty projects include microphone stand designs for MGK and Bear. Print designs have included set styling for Harper's Bazaar UK Scarlett Johansson cover and spread as well as catalogue set styling for Foundations and Kilgore Trout.

Additionally, Ms. Blatch-Geib's designs have been showcased in exhibits at The Smithsonian Institute with film projects including Ohio Art Direction of *The Signal* starring Laurence Fishburne and Production and Costume Design of the soon to be released *The Con*.

Theatrical Design includes Production & Costume Design for the special off-Broadway Production of *Kris Kringle, The Musical*, Costume Design for the Cleveland Play House production of *Native Gardens*, as well as multiple productions for the Colombian National Opera.

Music Video Production and Costume Design includes Machine Gun Kelly's "Alpha Omega" and "Let You Go" releases. Locally, Inda is the 2021/2022 Resident Designer for Karamu House, Cleveland Public Theatre, Magical Theatre Company, and Cleveland Institute of Music.

**Rommie Sebo** (Video Director) is delighted to be a part of the Sparks Fly Upwards team. A full-time videographer, Rommie has been producing and directing corporate events and shows for over 30 years. His resume includes TNT, Turner Sports, The NFL Fan Fest, The National Health Association, The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, The Cleveland International Food Show as well as numerous local organizations. Rommie also formed the Northern Ohio Videographers Association and is currently serving as President of the organization.

Rommie is married to his best friend, Kathryn Wolfe Sebo (playing the role of Lina). They are proud parents of Zac & Kayla Sebo, Josh & Beth Sebo, Becky Sebo (boyfriend Michael Hirsch) and David Sebo. Their greatest joy now comes from two adorable grandsons, Archer (1 ½) and Warren (6 months).



**David Robison** (Rehearsal Accompanist) is happy to have had the opportunity to participate in the rehearsal process of this very meaningful and moving opera. David's professional credits include associate conductor and keyboardist for national tours of the *Phantom of the Opera* and *Evita*. He was keyboardist for national tours of *Love Never Dies* and *Cats*. He has also participated in productions of the *Phantom of the Opera* in Stockholm, Sweden, and in Oberhausen, Germany, and was an active substitute keyboardist for the Broadway production of the *Phantom of the Opera*. David was also musical director for two European tours of *Evita*.

He has been active locally at Cain Park theater (musical director, *Avenue Q*, and now assistant music director, *School of Rock*) and Cleveland State University (musical director, *Cabaret*). He was also a musical director for *Sweeney Todd* at Theatre Zone in Naples, Florida.

He is active as an accompanist/coach in both Cleveland New York City and performs as ensemble pianist and keyboardist with the Cleveland Pop Orchestra and the Firelands Symphony Orchestra. He received his training from SUNY/Potsdam (undergraduate) and the Cleveland Institute of Music (graduate) in solo piano.

**The Rev. David Bargetzi** (Photographer) is a retired Episcopal priest with a lifelong connection to the opera. His parents were both professional singers and his mother founded and directed the Huntsville Opera Theater. Photography is a new enthusiasm he took up a couple of years ago, and he has joined this production as husband to Stephen Gracey (Julius Rosenbaum). You can see his work in the photo galleries on the Sparks website: [thesparksflyupward.org](http://thesparksflyupward.org).

## A NOTE ABOUT OUR RABBI

In this present production of *The Sparks Fly Upward*, the role of the Rabbi will be played by a woman. Although all the rabbis at the Neue Synagogue were men, the first woman ever ordained as a rabbi was ordained in Berlin in 1935. Her name was Regina Jonas, and she was never given a congregation because of her gender. She was deported to Theresienstadt on November 6, 1942, where she used her training as a rabbi to provide comfort and learning to her fellow prisoners. She was murdered in Auschwitz. Tonight, we are honoring her by having the role of the rabbi played by a woman. To learn more about Regina Jonas, visit <https://www.yadvashem.org/articles/general/rabbiner-regina-jonas.html>

## SOURCES FOR QUOTATIONS USED IN THE SPARKS FLY UPWARD

“The Pretext,” Letter from Berta Grynszpan: Rita Thalmann and Emmanuel Feinermann, *Crystal Night*, 9-10 November 1938 (Thames and Hudson London 1974) at 33 (citing Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, File 991 F 54-55, DZQ, Potsdam).

“Into Hiding,” Lina’s letter to her children: Letter written by Erich Frey to his daughters, April 7, 1942, Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, RG-10.041 \*03 at 3; Diary kept by Frieda and Max Reinach for their children, who had been sent to London on the Kindertransport, Ilana Schwartz, Frieda and Max Reinach diary, 1939-1942, Archives of the USHMM Acc1999.A.0215.

“Peace,” Speech of Ignatz Bubis: Hermann Simon, *The New Synagogue, Berlin, Past-Present-Future*, at 24.

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The Sparks Fly Upward is an original musical drama researched, written, and composed by Cathy Lesser Mansfield. It is produced by The Sparks Fly Upward Foundation, a non-profit corporation organized and dedicated to educating people about the Holocaust, genocide, and tolerance.

**<https://www.thesparksflyupward.org/>**





**Baldwin Wallace  
Voice Performance**



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More info: [clevelandoperatheater.org/bernarda](http://clevelandoperatheater.org/bernarda)

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