

JEWISHLINK

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HERE: Happenings for Jewish Women To Hold Open Mic Event, Feb. 25

By Deborah Melman

Following the sold-out success of their pre-Chanukah event, HERE: Happenings for Jewish Women will host another "Your Time" Open Mic Melave Malka at Forte Piano in Paramus on February 25. The event will feature some of the most talented female Jewish performers of today, including Shandel Antelis, Esti Berger Pitterman, Zippora Amster Rothberg, Lyndsay Blashka and Miryam Lakritz, and will also support more than 10 other open mic performers. In addition to vocal stylists, musical composers and comedians, attendees will enjoy delicious refreshments and wine.



Miryam Lakritz

not chesed or a learning opportunity, just an opportunity to have fun and support one another." That isn't to say that these evenings are mere frivolity—funds raised have been donated to organizations such as Hatzalah, Partners In Torah and Kids Of Courage. "We also have funds in our coffers for 'one on one' assistance as needs arise," added Ruder.

For performers, opportunities to get on stage are rare. For observant, Jewish, female performers who follow kol isha, access to live performances is even rarer. Ruder notes that the "sheer excitement, the thrill, the stage and the lights create the magical environment that transcends the neshama and is made even more beautiful when women share it together."

The first events in the series were held during covid on Zoom. The positive note was that there were no attendance capacity limitations and over 2,200 people from Israel, California, Florida and beyond joined together with those in the New York metropolitan area. The in-person events are limited in size and scope, but more than make up for it with the enthusiasm generated by like-minded women. The venue of approximately 125 people amplifies the energy in the room and helps the audience connect to the performers.

With several featured, professional performers alongside open mic participants all providing upbeat entertainment, a good time is guaranteed. The joy emanating from even the least experienced performer is contagious and spreads through the audience. The event is not a competition, but rather an evening to enjoy and cheer each other on—with an opportunity for those who want to work on their skill sets and pick up a few pointers to do so.

Antelis started performing her own original compositions at age 18, and has loved performing since she was a young girl. "Many of my songs are very personal, as if they are from a diary. I'm hoping that by sharing some of my life experiences [and the] struggles I've gone through, people can feel less alone. When I was first asked to do the show, I wasn't sure if I would be able to because I am putting on a show a few days later with a girls choir that I've been working with. Once I thought about it, I realized I couldn't



Shandel Antelis

say no because Leslie puts on events like no other! She supports women to share and express themselves fully which is such a beautiful thing."

Rivka Bella Rabaev of Highland Park is excited to bring her love of Broadway show tunes to the big stage for her open mic debut performance. "I love singing Broadway music and I've selected what I think is a super relatable, beautiful piece that everyone in the audience can enjoy. I've always loved performing in front of an audience. I feel like it's really nice to share my passion for music with others, so I take the opportunity whenever I can."

A veteran of two prior open mic events, Rivki Steiner of Passaic has performed by herself and with others. "I grew up in a very musical family, with my father and grandfather both being musicians. I play both piano and guitar and give private music lessons. I will be accompanying myself on piano at the open mic event. I want to be able to share that joy and happiness [of music] with other people. I have always had quite a bit of stage fright and I think that



Esti Berger Pitterman, Shandel Antelis and Zippora Amster Rothberg in the afterglow of a 2022 event. (CREDIT: ELLIE WOLF)

a bit of my desire to perform is to push myself and prove to myself that I can do it. I do dream about being able to record some music and get it out to a wider audience or maybe do some small kumzitz-type performances for women. I've been a music teacher for about 10 years now and I love doing that, but it is nice to be able to spend some more time working on my own music."



The feedback from prior events has been incredibly positive, according to Ruder, even when they ran longer than expected to allow all participants sufficient time to perform. People have loved the format combining different types of entertainers, professionals and amateurs alike.

At press time, there were only 10 tickets remaining for the Feb. 25 performance. However, the next open mic night has already been scheduled for Thursday night, June 1, also at Forte Piano. Tickets will be sold beginning at the Feb. 25 show and sales will continue on the website. To purchase tickets or for information about this or future events visit <https://www.herehappenings.org/>



Leslie Gold Ruder

HERE: Happenings Founder-Director Leslie Gold Ruder noted that the program is selling out quickly. Demand for these events, with women supporting women, fills the void for frum women to be able to creatively express themselves. "Men are less social creatures, but they have the connection to their peers by seeing them at prayer services three times a day. Women, by default, are more isolated with family, home and work responsibilities. The open mic events create an outlet that is



Jewish women from New York, New Jersey and even Ohio enjoy the Pre-Chanukah 2022 Singer-Songwriter Concert & Conversation/Jam Session at Forte Piano, Paramus. (CREDIT: ELLIE WOLF)