

# The Braid and HUC-JIR Present

## Stories from the Fringe



**Wednesday, April 6, 2022**

**4:30 pm PT / 7:30 pm ET**

**Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion  
One West Fourth Street, NYC**

**Simultaneous Livestream**



# Stories from the Fringe: Women Rabbis, Revealed!

## WRITTEN BY

Rabbi Lynne Appel & Ronda Spinak

## DIRECTED BY

Susan Morgenstern

## CAST

Lisa Cirincione, Geoffrey Cantor, Rosie Moss, and Kate Zentall

## ABOUT THIS SHOW

The play is set today and yesterday, in real time and in memory.

All words have been culled from transcripts of extensive interviews with 18 Los Angeles women rabbis and are spoken nearly verbatim by professional actors.

The rabbis portrayed tonight have been divided into three groups:

Near Retirement, Mid-Career, and Recently Ordained.

Each actress will play the part of several rabbis within each grouping.

This play will run approximately 70 minutes and be performed without intermission. There will be a Q & A immediately following.

**With gratitude to the women who allowed their stories to be told.**

Thank you to the eighteen Los Angeles rabbis

who shared their lives with us and invited us into their hearts:

Rabbi Toba August, Rabbi Anne Brener, Rabbi Sharon Brous, Rabbi Rebecca Dubowe,

Rabbi Denise Eger, Rabbi Karen Fox, Rabbi Laura Geller, Rabbi Miriyam Glazer,

Rabbi Rochelle Kamins, Rabbi Lynne Appel, Rabbi Zoe Klein, Rabbi Susan Laemmle,

Rabbi Naomi Levy, Rabbi Sheryl Lewart, Rabbi Debra Ornstein,

Rabbi Cheryl Peretz, and Rabbi Elianna Yolkut. We are blessed.

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*Stories from the Fringe: Women Rabbis, Revealed!* is a commission of The Braid (formerly Jewish Women's Theatre) and was first produced in May 2010 as part of its Salon Theatre Series. Ronda Spinak, Artistic Director, produced the Salon, and Eve Brandstein directed the original show. Additional thanks to Ms. Brandstein for helping to develop this play.

This show is dedicated in memory of Abby Freeman (12/8/76 – 6/1/14), a beautiful actress and person, who originated the role of Recently Ordained Rabbi.

# MEET THE ARTISTS

## ACTORS

**LISA CIRINCIONE** (Recently Ordained Rabbi) is an Abby Freeman Artist-in-Residence at The Braid, both acting and directing with the company. Lisa has performed in numerous productions with The Braid, including *Saffron and Rosewater* and *Uncuffed*. You can most recently see her on the small screen in the FOX TV show *9-1-1*, Spectrum's *L.A.'s Finest*, and on Direct TV in the short film *Porcupine*, which she both stars in and produced. Lisa received LA WEEKLY and LA Drama Critics Circle nominations for playing the role of Catherine in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* and received her BFA in acting from the University of Southern California. She is extremely passionate about working with immigrant communities on their storytelling skills in order to foster empathy and deeper connection. Most important role to date, being mama to her three-year-old daughter and five-month-old baby boy!

**GEOFFREY CANTOR** (All Male Roles) is best known as Ellison in Marvel's *Daredevil* and *the Punisher*, and has more than 100 TV and film credits that include Apple's *Foundation*, *Maniac*, *The Deuce*, *BULL*, *Madam Secretary*, *House of Cards*, *The Blacklist*, *The Americans*, *Damages*, *Sopranos*, all *Law & Orders*, *Call Jane*, *Hail, Ceasar!*, *American Pickle*, *Man on a Ledge*, *Fair Game*, and *Public Enemies*. He has been seen on stages from New York to London, off-off to Broadway, and been featured in various web series and in more than 200 television and radio commercials. With eight audio books to his credit, including *Motherless Brooklyn* (Latham) and the award-winning *The Family* (Laskin), he has also voiced a number of video games, including Beverly in *GTA5*. Geoffrey graduated *magna cum laude* from Amherst College and trained at National Theater Institute in Connecticut and London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama.

**ROSIE MOSS** (Mid-Career Rabbi) is an Abby Freeman Artist-in-Residence at The Braid. She starred in Epic Level Entertainment's feature film *Blood Born* and Lifetime Network's digital series *The Rookie*. Her TV credits include appearances on ABC's *The Conners* and Freeform's *Famous in Love*. She originated the role of Sarah Kaufman in the West Coast Jewish Theatre's production of *FUGU*. Other theatre credits include *Macbethx5* (The Odyssey), *The Physicists* (Sacred Fools), and *The Ascent* (The Blank Theatre). Film: *To Be King*, *Strangers*, *One Halloween* and *American Girl*. Rosie has also written, produced, and acted in two short films: *The Pass* and *Enchanted, LLC*. A Jewish educator and *b'nei mitzvah* mentor and officiant, she is currently in a master's program at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, having earned her FBA at Boston University. Keep up with Rosie at [RosieMoss.com](http://RosieMoss.com)

**KATE ZENTALL** (Near-Retirement Rabbi) is proud to be an Abby Freeman Artist-in-Residence at The Braid, where she has appeared in over a dozen shows. She has performed in many NYC venues, including the Public Theater, Guggenheim Museum, and Carnegie Hall. In LA, she has performed in Shakespeare, Irish plays, English comedies, and modern dramas, at the Taper and other companies around town, as well as movies and commercials. She has also had many network television roles, from series regular on *Studio 5B*, to a recurring role on *Hunter*, to guest spots on *Cheers*, *Lou Grant*, *It's a Living*, *Becker*, *LA Law*, and more. In recent years she has been a writer, communications manager, and editor—for magazines, books, blogs, websites, and The Braid. As a recent grandmother to toddler Gracie, she reflects on how her career accomplishments take their place behind this awesome blessing.

# DIRECTOR

**SUSAN MORGENSTERN** began directing in college by staging musical theatre concert readings while co-teaching American musical comedy with Tom Lehrer at UC Santa Cruz. In Los Angeles, Susan has directed numerous shows, and has also worked as a consultant show director at Disneyland Parks and Resorts, working with Mickey, Minnie, and friends. She has directed many The Braid Salon shows, as well as *Annie Korzen: Famous Actress*, and *Ovation Recommended*, *Sacred Resistance*. Her position at The Braid has become the most meaningful, working with amazing actors, writers, and The Braid leadership, while also informing and illuminating her Jewish life.

# WRITERS

**RABBI LYNNE APPEL** is an award-winning journalist who has written for the *Kansas City Star*, *The Washington Post*, the *LA Times*, and *The New York Times*. Ordained from the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in 2001, she has served as a congregational rabbi for five and a half years, as well as founding Timbrels Through Torah: A Women's Institute of Jewish Learning. She is a co-writer of *Stories from the Fringe* and is the co-founder and co-director of the Story Archive of Women Rabbis, the first video-based archive to capture and share the stories of hundreds of women rabbis worldwide. Rabbi Appel is also a member of CLAL's fourth cohort of Rabbis Without Borders.

**RONDA SPINAK** (Founder and Artistic Director) created The Braid's Salon Theatre and has curated and produced 75 original Jewish-themed shows as well as adapted many of the pieces performed. Spinak developed and produced *Not That Jewish*, which ran for 16 months, garnered an LA Drama Critics Circle nomination, and then moved to a successful run off-Broadway. She also re-developed and produced Rain Pryor's hit show *Fried Chicken & Latkes*. In January 2021, Spinak developed and produced *Stories from the Violins of Hope*, which the United Nations Programme on the Holocaust shared in 30 countries and which was also translated into Spanish and Portuguese for streaming to Latin America. Spinak co-wrote *Stories from the Fringe*, putting the stories of women rabbis on stage for the first time. Since then, she and her team have interviewed on videotape 185 national and international women rabbis, and in partnership with Jewish Women's Archive have made many of the interviews available online at [jwa.org](http://jwa.org). In 2022-23, the travelling art exhibition "Holy Sparks" features 24 Jewish women artists, each paired with one pioneering woman rabbi to create a work of art based on that rabbi's words and life. Spinak is on the board of the Alliance for Jewish Theatres and is a member of the Dramatists Guild. She feels blessed to be working with so many creative people at The Braid.

## **STORIES FROM THE FRINGE** is presented in conjunction with the exhibition **HOLY SPARKS: CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF WOMEN IN THE RABBINATE.**

Rabbi Sally Priesand's ordination from HUC-JR as the first woman rabbi in North America opened the way across all denominations and around the globe, setting in motion the first steps toward inclusion, diversity, equity, and empowerment of new cohorts redefining Jewish leadership over the past 50 years. **HOLY SPARKS** features the works of 24 leading contemporary Jewish women artists evoking the identities and consecrated paths of 24 women rabbis who were "firsts" in their time. This art exhibition is a collaboration between HUC-JIR's Dr. Bernard Heller and Skirball Museums and The Braid, and a culmination of The Braid's documentation of 200 pioneering women rabbis' stories, shared online in partnership with the Jewish Women's Archive.



# HEBREW AT A QUICK GLANCE

**Aliyah:** meaning “to ascend,” referring to Jews who move to Israel to live

**Amidah:** 18 blessings that comprise the central prayers for any worship service

**Ashkenazi:** Jews from the Rhine, Alsace in the south, Rhineland in the north

**Beit Din:** a rabbinical court comprised of three rabbis who serve as judges

**Bimah:** the pulpit or elevated area or platform in a synagogue

**Chametz:** one of five types of grains forbidden to be consumed on Passover

**Chevra:** friends

**Daven:** from the Yiddish, meaning “to pray”

**Drash:** short for midrash: a way of interpreting biblical stories

**Erev Pesach:** the night before the day of Passover

**Fringes of the tallit:** knotted twine signifying the 613 commandments

**Gabbai:** a person who assists in the running of synagogue services

**Gates of Mea Sha'arim:** gate to the most religious neighborhood in Jerusalem

**Kiddush:** meaning “sanctification,” a blessing over wine to sanctify the Sabbath

**Kippah:** yarmulke or skullcap, worn as a sign of respect to God

**Kol Nidre:** meaning “all my vows,” a prayer recited on Yom Kippur

**Lulav and etrog:** a frond from a date palm tree and a lemon-like fruit

**Minyan:** a quorum of ten Jewish adults

**Mitzvah:** an act of human kindness or a good deed

**Modah Ani:** meaning “I give thanks,” the first words of prayer recited upon waking

**Rebbitzin:** the wife of a male rabbi

**Seder:** meaning “order, arrangement,” a feast/service marking the start of Passover

**Selichot:** penitential poems and prayers said on the High Holy Days

**Sephardic:** Jews from the Iberian Peninsula before expulsion in the 15th century

**Shehechyanu:** a blessing that conveys gratitude for new experiences

**Shel Rosh box:** the head-tefillin, placed on the forehead with words from Torah

**Shma:** the centerpiece prayer, which addresses the monotheistic essence of Judaism: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one”

**Shul:** a synagogue or house of Jewish prayer

**Sukkah:** meaning “booth,” a temporary hut for use during the festival of Sukkot

**Tallit:** Jewish prayer shawl

**Talmud:** rabbinical discussions about ethics, philosophy, customs, and history

**Tefillin:** a set of small cubic leather boxes, with scrolls of verses from Torah

**Torah:** the Five Books of Moses, the entirety of Judaism’s foundational legal and ethical religious texts

**Traife:** non-Kosher foods that do not comply with Jewish dietary laws

**THE BRAID** educates and builds community by inspiring Jewish stories that connect us all. As the Jewish story company that pioneered the new theatrical art form of Salon Theatre, The Braid gives voice to diverse contemporary stories grounded in Jewish culture and experience. Since 2008, their growing collection of 75 original Salon Theatre shows have illuminated themes as varied as forgiveness, food, family, and freedom, touching hearts and igniting real change, including combatting antisemitism. Seminal shows newly spotlighting the true stories of women rabbis, Persians, Latinx, Russian Jews, and Jews of Color. Their recently launched StoryNosh is releasing digitally “bite-sized” Jewish stories for all to enjoy, now on YouTube.

In 2021, The Braid’s commissioned work *Stories from the Violins of Hope* was shared in 30 countries in partnership with the United Nations Outreach Programme on the Holocaust. It has been translated into Spanish and Portuguese and featured in the Greenwich International Film Festival. The Braid’s commissioned Ovation-recommended *Not That Jewish*, by Emmy Award-winning writer Monica Piper, ran more than 16 months in LA before its successful off-Broadway run. Other hit shows include TikTok star Annie Korzen in *Annie Korzen Famous Actress*, Rain Pryor’s *Fried Chicken & Latkes*, and master storyteller Vicki Juditz’s *Sacred Resistance*.

The Braid’s Next Emerging Artists program ensures next generations have an artistic platform and inclusive community to celebrate the diversity in Jewish culture. The Braid performs live across the country and is accessible globally via Zoom performances, the StoryNosh short films, the AudioNosh podcast, and streaming on ChaiFlicks and other online platforms. [the-braid.org](http://the-braid.org)

**HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION** is North America’s leading institution of higher Jewish education and the academic, spiritual, and professional leadership development center of Reform Judaism. HUC-JIR educates leaders to serve North American and world Jewry as rabbis, cantors, educators, and nonprofit management professionals, and offers graduate programs to scholars and clergy of all faiths. With centers of learning in Cincinnati, Jerusalem, Los Angeles, and New York, HUC-JIR’s scholarly resources comprise the renowned Klau Library, The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, museums, research institutes and centers, and academic publications. In partnership with the Union for Reform Judaism and the Central Conference of American Rabbis, HUC-JIR sustains the Reform Movement’s congregations and professional and lay leaders. HUC-JIR’s campuses invite the community to cultural and educational programs illuminating Jewish heritage and fostering interfaith and multiethnic understanding. [huc.edu](http://huc.edu)

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