

# Lex-Ham Community Theater

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## LEX-HAM COMMUNITY THEATER PRESENTS THE LAST CYCLIST

ST. PAUL, MN (May 2, 2009) - The Lex-Ham Community Theater will present the U.S. premiere of *The Last Cyclist*, a cabaret by Karel Švenk, as adapted by Naomi Patz, June 5 to 20, 2009. The play is directed by Adam Arnold.

This production of *The Last Cyclist* is a collaboration of the Lex-Ham Community Theater, the St. Paul Jewish Community Center, the Czech and Slovak Cultural Center, Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, the Good Samaritan United Methodist Church of Edina, and Blank Slate Theater.

These groups have come together to present the U.S. premiere of a powerful work written at Terezin, known in German as Theresienstadt, a concentration camp near Prague during WW II. Although not a death camp as such, Terezin was a ghetto that for thousands of Jews was a prison stop before their deportation to death camps like Auschwitz.

*The Last Cyclist* was an absurdist allegory that expanded a gallows-humor joke being told by Jews in Europe in the years between the two World Wars: "The cyclists and the Jews are responsible for all of our misfortunes." "Why the cyclists?" To which the rejoinder is, "Why the Jews?" Although the original play was seen by many of the camp inmates during the production's open rehearsals, it was shut down after the dress rehearsal by the Council of Jewish Elders (a puppet "self-government" set up by the Nazis to run the internal affairs of the camp) who feared Nazi reprisal because of the daring explicitness of the satire.

This play, an example of the remarkable cultural creativity that flourished under horrendous circumstances, is a testament to the vitality and resilience of the human spirit. *The Last Cyclist* illuminates a little known aspect of Jewish spiritual resistance during the Holocaust.

Performances, in partnership with the Czech and Slovak Cultural Center and Czech and Slovak Sokol Minnesota, will be at the CSPS Sokol Hall, 383 Michigan Street, Saint Paul at **7:30 p.m., June 5 and 6 and at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, June 7.**

Performances, in partnership with the Saint Paul JCC, will be at the JCC, 1375 St. Paul Avenue, at **7:30 p.m., Thursday, June 11 and at 2:00 p.m., Sunday, June 14.**

Performances, in partnership with Good Samaritan United Methodist Church, 5730 Grove Street, Edina, will be at that location at **7:30 p.m., Friday, June 12 and Saturday, June 13.**

Performances at the Blank Slate Theatre, located in the basement of First Baptist Church, 499 Wacouta Street, Saint Paul, will be at that location at **7:30 p.m., Friday, June 19 and Saturday, June 20.**

Besides the performances, there will be a number of other scheduled events related to the production. Lisa Peschel, a scholar of Terezin, and the play's adapter, Naomi Patz, will give a lecture, "The Cultural Life of the Theresienstadt Ghetto" at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, June 4 at the Saint Paul JCC.

**Naomi Patz** is author of seven books, including *Explaining Reform Judaism*, with Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, and *The Jewish Holiday Treasure Trail* (Behrman House), and editor of many books and articles. She has written numerous scripts and parodies translated from Hebrew (with her husband), *The Third Cry*, a fantasy play by Yaakov Cahan, and wrote the book for *A Word to the Wise*, a setting to music of three Jewish folktales. She has also written many creative services for the Sabbath and Rosh Hashanah as well as a prayer book and women's Haggadah. She has also written monographs on the Jewish communities of Dvur Kralove nad Labem and Jihlava in the Czech Republic. She is a graduate of Barnard College and holds masters degrees in English Literature (Old Dominion University) and Jewish Education (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion). Hebrew Union College has awarded her an honorary doctorate.

**Lisa Peschel** is a doctoral candidate in Theater Historiography at the University of Minnesota, writing her dissertation about survivor testimony on the cultural life of the Theresienstadt ghetto. In the fall of 2008 she published a collection of scripts written in the ghetto.

Tickets for the performances at the CSPS Hall, Saint Paul JCC, and at Blank Slate Theatre are \$18 and \$12 for children, students, and seniors aged 65 and older. Special pricing is available for performances at the Good Samaritan UMC and for members of the St. Paul Jewish Community Center, The Czech and Slovak Cultural Center, and Czech and Slovak Sokol of Minnesota.

Print-quality photos from the production are available for downloading at [www.lexhamarts.org/theater/MediaResources.htm#Show200906](http://www.lexhamarts.org/theater/MediaResources.htm#Show200906).

Lex-Ham Community Theater has been producing quality theatrical experiences for and by the residents of the Lexington-Hamline and surrounding neighborhoods in St. Paul since 1996.

Check the theater's website: [www.TheLastCyclist.com](http://www.TheLastCyclist.com) or call **651-222-7333** for more information or to make reservations.