

EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

"A fiddler on the roof. Sounds crazy, no? But in our little village of Anatevka, you might say every one of us is a fiddler on the roof, trying to scratch out a pleasant, simple tune without breaking his neck. It isn't easy. You may ask, why do we stay up there if it's so dangerous? We stay because Anatevka is our home. ... And how do we keep our balance? That I can tell you in a word ... Tradition."

– TEVYE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Show	4
Principal Characters	5
Synopsis	6
The Director's Approach: A Conversation with Director Bartlett Sher	8
<i>Fiddler</i> at Fifty: A Conversation with Lyricist Sheldon Harnick	10
Biographer Alisa Solomon on the original Broadway production	12
Choreographing <i>Fiddler</i> : A Conversation with Hofesh Shechter	14
Life in the Shtetls.	15
Sholem Aleichem	16
Discussion Questions.	17
References	19

Compiled and Designed by
Jeffrey Richards Associates
For more information about this study guide, please contact
Matt@bondtheatrical.com



ABOUT THE SHOW

DID YOU KNOW?

The title *Fiddler on the Roof* is derived from Marc Chagall's 1913 painting "The Fiddler." Chagall's work also influenced Boris Aronson's scenery for the original production. Chagall's artwork tended to romanticize the bleak Shtetl life.



"The word 'fiddler' connected the show with music."

— Sheldon Harnick, *Lyricist*

"I think the perspective of being on the roof is a perspective of seeing better, and making music up on a roof is one of trying to get a good look at things. It's a powerful, unique symbol of surviving joyfully, and that's why I think people respond to it. It's a beautiful sound but it's in a precarious place, so you're kind of feeling the balancing act that goes into something like fiddling on a roof, but you're making a beautiful sound, you're making a sound of who you are, you're keeping an eye out, but you're in a precarious place."

— Bartlett Sher, *Director*

In 1961, writers **Joseph Stein** (*book*), **Jerry Bock** (*music*), and **Sheldon Harnick** (*lyrics*) set out to adapt three stories from Sholem Aleichem's "Tevye's Daughters" into a Broadway musical. Bock and Harnick were fresh off their Pulitzer Prize win for the musical *Fiorello!*, which was produced by **Harold Prince**, who also collaborated with them on the "Tevye's Daughters" adaptation.

The result was **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF**, which opened on September 22, 1964, directed and choreographed by **Jerome Robbins** and starring **Zero Mostel** as Tevye. It won nine 1965 Tony Awards, including Best Musical, Best Book, and Best Score. It also received a special 1972 Tony for becoming the longest-running Broadway musical of the time (3,242 performances).

The show has enjoyed five other Broadway revivals, several U.S. Tours, and countless productions around the world. The show has been praised for its universality. A successful film was made in 1971, directed by Norman Jewison and starring Topol as Tevye. Many of the show's songs have gone on to become standards, including "To Life (L'Chaim!)," "If I Were A Rich Man," "Sunrise Sunset," "Matchmaker, Matchmaker," and "Tradition."

Tony Award-winning director **Bartlett Sher** reunited his Tony Award-winning creative team from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific* and *The King and I*—**Ted Sperling** (*music director*), **Michael Yeargan** (*scenic designer*), **Catherine Zuber** (*costume designer*), **Donald Holder** (*lighting designer*), and **Scott Lehrer** (*sound designer*)—to bring a fresh and authentic vision to this beloved theatrical masterpiece. The new revival also features stunning choreography from acclaimed Israeli choreographer **Hofesh Shechter**, based on the original Jerome Robbins staging. A wonderful cast and a lavish orchestra tell this heartwarming story of fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, and the timeless traditions that define faith, family, and community. This Broadway Revival was nominated for three 2016 Tony Awards including Best Choreography and Best Revival of a Musical.

This production will introduce a new generation to this uplifting Broadway classic.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

TEVYE The poor, jovial, pious, and hard-working dairyman who always tries to be optimistic about life. He is a proud father of five daughters, and he is firmly grounded in his family's traditions.

GOLDE Tevye's sharp-tongued but affectionate wife of twenty-five years. Golde's wish is that her daughters find good husbands and have better lives than she and Tevye have had.

TEVYE AND GOLDE'S FIVE DAUGHTERS:

TZEITEL Tevye's eldest daughter, who is in love with Motel the Tailor. She is loyal to her family, but she questions the village's traditions. She can be quite stubborn.

HODEL Tevye's second-eldest daughter, intelligent and opinionated, who falls in love with Perchik and later marries him. After Perchik is arrested, she leaves Anatevka to join him in Siberia.

CHAVA Tevye's sweet middle daughter, whom he loves dearly. She falls in love with Fyedka, a Russian soldier, and runs away with him, even though she knows her family will disown her for marrying a Christian.

SHPRINTZE Tevye's second-youngest daughter.

BIELKE Tevye's youngest daughter.

THE DAUGHTERS' SUITORS:

MOTEL The poor but hard-working tailor who is in love with Tzeitel. He is sensitive and nervous, but sincere and friendly.

PERCHIK The outspoken student who visits Anatevka and falls in love with Hodel. He continually challenges the traditions of the village. He is arrested and sent to Siberia.

FYEDKA A strong, young Christian soldier from Russia who falls in love with Chava. He is outraged by the Russians' treatment of the Jews, and he runs away with Chava.

YENTE The meddling matchmaker and the village gossip.

LAZAR WOLF The wealthy, older butcher who wishes to marry Tzeitel.

SPOTLIGHT ON JOSEPH STEIN BOOK

Joseph Stein won the Tony Award and Drama Critics Circle Award for *Fiddler on the Roof*. His other musicals include *Zorba* (Tony nom.); *Rags* (Tony nom.); *The Baker's Wife* (Laurence Olivier Award, London); *Juno*; *Take Me Along*; *Irene* (starring Debbie Reynolds); *The King of Hearts*; *So Long*, *174th Street*. He also co-authored, with Alan Jay Lerner, the musical *Carmelina* and, with Will Glickman, *Mr. Wonderful* (starring Sammy Davis Jr.) and *Plain and Fancy*. His plays are *Enter Laughing*, *Before the Dawn*, *Mrs. Gibbons' Boys*. He began his career in TV and radio, writing for "Sid Caesar Show," "Your Show of Shows," "Henry Morgan Show" and many others, and for personalities including Tallulah Bankhead, Phil Silvers, Jackie Gleason and Zero Mostel. He wrote the screenplays of *Enter Laughing* and *Fiddler on the Roof*, for which he won the Screen Writers Guild Award.



SYNOPSIS

SPOTLIGHT ON JERRY BOCK MUSIC

Jerry Bock was born in New Haven on November 23, 1928. Thirty years later he and Sheldon Harnick gave birth to *The Body Beautiful* in Philadelphia. In between was *Catch a Star* and *Mr. Wonderful* (starring Sammy Davis Jr.). Bock and Harnick's celebrated collaboration yielded five scores in seven years: *The Body Beautiful*, *Fiorello* (winner of the Broadway triple crown: Tony Award, NY Critics Circle Award, Pulitzer Prize for Drama), *Tenderloin*, *She Loves Me*, *Fiddler on the Roof* (nine Tonys, including Best Musical), *The Apple Tree* (and to have had Eddie Sauter as the original orchestrator of *The Apple Tree* was a gift to this composer beyond measure) and *The Rothschilds*. Bock and Harnick have been inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame.



PROLOGUE

During “**Tradition**,” Tevye the dairyman introduces us to the tight-knit inner community of the village of Anatevka, and he describes their devotion to God. Traditions are of the utmost importance to the people of Anatevka.

ACT ONE

Three of Tevye’s daughters—Tzeitel, Hodel, and Chava—wonder if Yente, the village matchmaker, will ever find them the men of their dreams (“**Matchmaker**”). Yente tells the girls’ mother, Golde, that she has selected the older butcher Lazar Wolf to marry Tzeitel, the eldest daughter.

Meanwhile, Tevye reflects on how he wishes he had a small fortune (“**If I Were a Rich Man**”). A group of villagers and a young scholar, Perchik, approach him with news of a violent attack (a pogrom) in a nearby village. Tevye invites Perchik to join the family for Sabbath dinner at their home, and he arranges for Perchik to teach his daughters.

Motel, the meek tailor, attempts to ask Tevye for Tzeitel’s hand, but he becomes flustered. The family and their guests celebrate the Sabbath (“**Sabbath Prayer**”).

*“May the Lord protect and defend you.
May the Lord preserve you from pain
Favor them, oh Lord, with happiness and peace
Oh, hear our sabbath prayer. Amen.”*

Tevye goes to a local tavern to see Lazar Wolf, and he permits Lazar to marry Tzeitel, causing a boisterous celebration (“**L’Chaim**”).

As Tevye stumbles home from the tavern, he meets the Constable, who warns him that a demonstration is going to be planned against the Jews of Anatevka; Tevye brushes it off.

When Tevye arrives home, he tells Tzeitel that he has arranged for her to wed Lazar Wolf. Golde is thrilled, but later Motel tells Tevye that he and Tzeitel have pledged to marry each other. Torn between tradition and his daughter’s wishes, Tevye agrees to let them marry. But how will he break this news to Golde? After he leaves, Motel and Tzeitel celebrate (“**Miracle of Miracles**”).

Tevye decides to concoct a wild nightmare (“**The Dream**”) to convince Golde that the butcher’s late first wife, Fruma-Sarah, will kill Tzeitel if she marries Lazar Wolf. Golde is horrified when Tevye explains this, and she insists that Tzeitel and Motel marry.

The controversial change in Tzeitel’s wedding plans causes much gossip amongst the villagers. As Chava enters Motel’s tailor shop, she is taunted by a group of Russians. Fyedka, a young Russian man, insists that they stop. After they leave, Fyedka tries to speak with Chava.

With the end of Act One comes Tzeitel and Motel's wedding. The company sings "**Sunrise, Sunset**" as the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony occurs.

Perchik asks Hodel to dance with him, and she accepts, even though it is forbidden for a man and woman to dance together. The other villagers follow suit, causing much commotion. Suddenly, the Constable and his men enter, destroying everything in sight.

ACT TWO

Perchik tells Hodel that he is leaving to work for justice in Kiev. He asks for her hand in marriage, and she accepts ("**Now I Have Everything**"). He promises to send for her as soon as he can. Tevye approves of the engagement. Later, Tevye asks Golde about their own arranged marriage of twenty-five years ("**Do You Love Me?**").

On a village street, Yente begins gossiping with Tzeitel, and soon all of the villagers are gossiping about Tevye's daughters and their suitors ("**The Rumor**").

Perchik has been arrested and is living in Siberia, so Hodel leaves Anatevka to join him ("**Far From the Home I Love**").

Fyedka and Chava speak outside of Motel's tailor shop. She promises to tell her father about their love for each other. However, when Chava tries to speak with Tevye about Fyedka, Tevye grows angry.

When Tevye returns home, he learns that Chava and Fydeka have been married by the priest. Tevye says that Chava is dead to them. He deeply loves Chava ("**Chava Sequence**"), but when she appears to ask his forgiveness, he cannot allow himself to speak to her; he is too grounded in his traditions.

The Constable brings news that everybody in the town must leave Anatevka in three days or risk death. The villagers ponder their future while reminiscing about their past ("**Anatevka**").

The family is packing the wagon to move to America. Tzeitel and Motel are staying in Warsaw until they can afford the journey to America, and Hodel and Perchik are still in Siberia. Chava appears with Fyedka, but Tevye refuses to acknowledge her. Chava explains that they are also leaving to go to Cracow, because they cannot stay among people who can do such things to others. Tzeitel says goodbye to them and Tevye prompts Tzeitel to add, "God be with you!" Final goodbyes are said and Tevye begins pulling the wagon, as they begin their new journey. ■

TEVYE: *Then you love me?*

GOLDE: *I suppose I do.*

TEVYE: *And I suppose I love you too.*

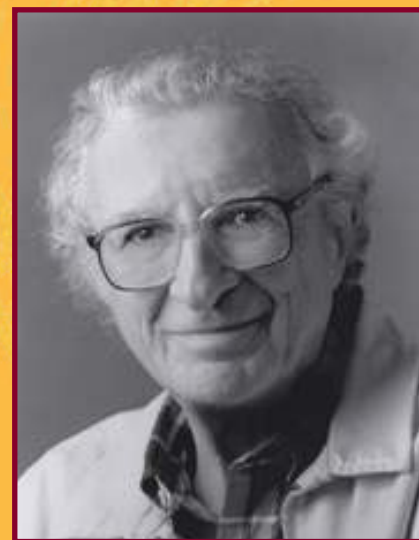
BOTH: *It doesn't change a thing but even so
After twenty-five years, it's nice to know.*

*"Soon I'll be a stranger in a strange new place
Searching for an old familiar face
From Anatevka.*

*I belong in Anatevka
Tumble down, workaday Anatevka
Dear little village, little town of mine."*

SPOTLIGHT ON SHELDON HARNICK LYRICS

Mr. Harnick's career began in the 1950s with songs in revues both on and off Broadway (e.g. "The Boston Beguine," "The Merry Little Minuet"). With Jerry Bock he created a number of memorable musicals including *Fiorello* (Tony Award, Pulitzer Prize), *She Loves Me* (Grammy) and *Fiddler on the Roof* (Tony). Other collaborations: *Rex* (Richard Rodgers), *A Christmas Carol* (Michel Legrand), *A Wonderful Life* (Joe Raposo), *The Phantom Tollbooth* (Arnold Black / Norton Juster) and *The Audition* (Marvin Hamlisch). He has written two musicals himself: *Dragons* and *A Doctor in Spite of Himself*. Mr. Harnick is a member of the Dramatists Guild and the Songwriters Guild.



THE DIRECTOR'S APPROACH

BARTLETT SHER ON DIRECTING THE BROADWAY REVIVAL OF 'FIDDLER' IN 2015

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WORKING ON THIS SHOW AND SOME OF YOUR OTHER PAST PROJECTS?

Bartlett Sher: Talking about *Fiddler on the Roof* is actually a pretty great challenge when it comes to being a director, because the show is deeply beloved and it has a very strong and rich history. It has been revived several times, and it lives within a tradition of literature that is much-beloved with very strong opinions about it. It's a challenge in the sense that you want to summon the experience it evokes, and particularly now in history it's a particularly interesting story to be coming back to. *Fiddler* takes on a series of these Tevye tales, and it follows the family through it. Our concentration is evoking the spirit of two things: One, of the pogroms and the intense world of where they grew up, and at the same time, the color and light and beauty and humor that's in the actual spirit of the telling. So, it's trying to marry those two things into making something fresh.

WHAT KIND OF RESEARCH HAVE YOU DONE TO PREPARE FOR THE PRODUCTION?

I do a lot of research when I prepare for a show. I've read the Sholem Aleichem stories. I'm very familiar with the history that surrounds the Jewish diaspora throughout the twentieth century. I look at a lot contemporary politics and ideas and the experience of the Jewish community in the United States and around the world at this time. I look at the many ways *Fiddler* has been performed before and how other people have approached it. I think there are a lot of interesting things the system of matchmaking and how it sets up the plot, and how that wards against the ideas of love. I explore all of these elements that are part of building blocks of *Fiddler*, and then build my own block up from that.

The more specific this production gets to the Jewish community, the more I hope that people see it as a universal story. Whether it's a family with a Pakistani cab driver who have immigrated to New York, or whether they are refugees flooding out of war-torn and complicated circumstances all over the world right now, these people should understand something similar in the story of *Fiddler on the Roof*, and the struggles of a family to look after their children when they're being oppressed. I hope that story can resonate so people understand that, for example, a Jewish community in New York shares a lot with an Islamic community in Tunisia, or a community in Africa. I would like grandparents and great-grandparents and grandkids and families who are Jewish to love this story, but I want it to be experienced even more universally than that.

FIDDLER IS A UNIQUE PROJECT FOR YOU BECAUSE YOUR FAMILY HAS A CLOSE CONNECTION TO THE PEOPLE DEPICTED IN THE MUSICAL.

My father was born in a shtetl in Lithuania, and when he was three years old my grandmother put him on a train and came up through Canada and all the way across to Southern California. My grandfather came through Ellis Island. So, I've always had a sort of connection to the tale, but it's only an imaginary one. I don't actually know what that was like. My grandparents spoke Yiddish, but I don't have much of a memory of what that meant to me. In a way, I think that's similar to a lot of people who read these tales. They think they should understand them better than they sometimes do. The stories are very powerful, but you can't really explain why. It's more in the spirit of them—the spirit of going forward, the spirit of enduring, the spirit of holding on, the spirit of living by your faith, the spirit of living by your family. This piece allows audiences to—in the same way as it did in *South Pacific*—discover their own past all over again, in the same way as I'm using the show to discover my past. There is a lot of joy in the journey, even though the journey is marked by suffering.

SO MANY PEOPLE KNOW AND LOVE THIS SHOW. HOW DO YOU HONOR THE TRADITION OF THE SHOW WHILE ALSO MAKING IT APPEAL TO 21ST CENTURY AUDIENCES?

When you go to a revival of a show, you want two things at once: You want to experience what it was like when it was originally made and why people loved it so much, and you want to feel like you understand why it's happening now. I have to deeply honor it, rediscover it, and push it forward.



Danny Burstein and the cast of Lincoln Center Theater's *SOUTH PACIFIC* (2008), directed by Sher.
Photograph by Joan Marcus.



The legacy of the show itself is built on the collaboration of Jerome Robbins, Sheldon Harnick, Jerry Bock, and Joseph Stein, but we're living in 2015, so our audiences are slightly different. I have a different choreographer than Jerome Robbins: I am using Hofesh Shechter, who is Israeli born, Israeli trained, and he was in the Batsheva Dance Company in Tel Aviv. He knows this culture very intimately. He is going to re-explore Robbins' work and re-shape it in his own way. He brings a very special point of view to it as a boy growing up in Israel and growing up in the tradition of these dances that go into the wedding, go into the Bottle Dance, go into "L'Chaim." It's in his body, and it's in his contemporary world.

At the same time, [scenic designer] Michael Yeargan and I are trying to look at the original designs by Boris Aronson, which were very devoted to Marc Chagall. I'm looking at a lot of that art, but I'm trying to find a new way of interpreting that in the design, which may or may not honor the Chagall in the same way, but which may create that spirit of craziness that you experience in a Chagall painting.

I feel like all of us as interpreters have to re-examine, re-think, re-connect with the material. Musicals are not museum pieces. They can't just be re-set and repeated the same way they were 50 years ago. We have to reinvestigate them and find how the words ring true for us now, what the movement means to us now, what new artists can do to bring these things to life. These fresh reimaginings are what propel the musical theatre forward. That's where we live and breathe. Audiences will get both experiences: You get "oh my God, that's incredible" and "oh my God, that's how I never imagined it." That's what happens in the opera, and it's what happens in the theatre world with Shakespeare or Moliere or Chekhov. We go back, and we re-think these things for our time, and that's the big task we have ahead of us in *Fiddler on the Roof*: What does it mean now? Why are we doing it now? What are we going to discover about ourselves as living, breathing people seeing the show in New York? What are we going to discover that this story tells us about where we came from and how life moves in this way?

WHAT DO YOU HOPE MODERN AUDIENCES WILL GET OUT OF THIS PRODUCTION?

Audiences will come to *Fiddler* and experience a full orchestra and the world and the village of Anatevka coming to life. In that exploration, they get to enjoy the thing that musical theatre does best, which is creating vivid, bold life within the community and lives of the family. I want to honor as deeply and magnify the work of Bock, Harnick, Stein, and Robbins. I think they're great-grandfathers of my work, and I would like to create a production that lets people see how good their work is. ■

SPOTLIGHT ON BARTLETT SHER DIRECTOR

Bartlett is the Resident Director of Lincoln Center Theater, where he has directed *Golden Boy* by Clifford Odets (Tony nomination), *Blood and Gifts* by J.T. Rogers, the new musical *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* by Jeffrey Lane and David Yazbek, August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* (Tony nomination), Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific* (2008 Tony Awards for Best Director and Best Revival), *Awake and Sing!* by Clifford Odets (Tony nomination) and *The Light in the Piazza* by Craig Lucas and Adam Guettel (Tony nomination). He has directed operas for the Metropolitan Opera (*L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Le Comte Ory*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), *Roméo et Juliette* for Salzburg Festival in 2008) and Seattle Opera/ New York City Opera (*Mourning Becomes Electra*, 2003-2004). From 2000-2010, Mr. Sher was Artistic Director of Seattle's Intiman Theatre, where his credits include the world premieres of *Prayer for My Enemy* and *Singing Forest* by Craig Lucas, and *Nickel and Dime*, Joan Holden's adaptation of the nonfiction bestseller by Barbara Ehrenreich, and plays by Chekhov, Shakespeare, Goldoni and Tony Kushner, among other credits. His New York credits include the Theatre for a New Audience productions of *Cymbeline*, which premiered in England and was the first American Shakespeare production at the Royal Shakespeare Company, and for which he received the 2001 Callaway Award, and the American premiere of Harley Granville-Barker's *Waste*, winner of the 2000 Best Play Obie. He is a graduate of Holy Cross College and received his graduate training in a class of international theatre artists at the University of Leeds in England.

FIDDLER AT FIFTY

LYRICIST SHELDON HARNICK ON THE MUSICAL'S ORIGINS AND LASTING POPULARITY

WHAT IS AT THE HEART OF *FIDDLER OF THE ROOF*?

Sheldon Harnick: At the heart of *Fiddler on the Roof*, I think, are two different stories. One has to do with our leading man, Tevye. Three of his five daughters are at marriageable age, and they are breaking away from the traditions that Tevye himself believes in. It is very hard for him to accept that they are breaking away from his values, and eventually he does accept it, but it's a struggle. That is something that I think audiences identify with, because any parent who has children hopes that they will grow up observing his values and when they don't, it could be very difficult. That's one aspect of *Fiddler*.

The other is the aspect of a minority culture, trying to cope with the majority culture in which it lives. Joe Stein, Jerry Bock, and I felt that what we were writing was not just about a Jewish family, but that it was universal. The Jewish group in the village of Anatevka are subject to abuse, they are subject to persecution, and this is something that I think reminds people of what is happening to other minorities around the world: Black, Hispanic, where persecution persists. I think those are the two aspects of culture which are paramount.

After the show opened, we had our first Actors' Fund benefit, where the audience is filled with actors. At intermission, my friend Florence Henderson came running up the aisle and said, "Sheldon, this show is about my Irish grandmother!" And I thought, "we have succeeded!"

HOW DID YOUR UPBRINGING INFLUENCE YOUR WRITING?

The starting point for *Fiddler on the Roof* was, of course, the stories themselves: several stories from Sholem Aleichem's major work, *Tevye's Daughters*. That was the basis for the show. Once we started to work on that, it reminded me of the way I grew up in Chicago. Although it was a non-Jewish neighborhood, we did have the other men, somehow, raise the money to rent a hall to use as a synagogue; they later raised money and bought an abandoned church, and that became our synagogue. I remember the fervor of which those men prayed in synagogues and many of them, if not most of them, had come from the old country. Many of them looked like the photographs I had seen of the survivors of the holocaust: they were kind of thin and they looked like they had had very difficult lives, so all of those images were in my mind.

Also when growing up—as I said, it was a non Jewish neighborhood—there was a little Italian kid who lived down the

block from me, and anytime he saw me and there was no one around, he would throw me to the ground and start punching me. They were not heavy punches, and they didn't really hurt that much, but it was humiliating. So I got to know what it was like to be Jewish in a community where there were very few other Jews, and that was something I could identify with the community that we were writing about in *Fiddler*.

I like to think that those experiences that I had growing up being Jewish in various situations meant a great deal to me, and the memories of those experiences are still vivid. I like to think that I was able, through those experiences, to convey something in the lyrics of what it meant to feel those things so that others could identify with it.

DISCUSS THE COLLABORATION WITH BOCK AND STEIN WHILE WRITING THE SHOW.

When Jerry Bock and I worked with the bookwriter, Joe Stein, Joe always started writing book scenes first. I had familiarized myself with the Sholem Aleichem stories, and there were certain aspects of those stories that I felt that, no matter what Joe does, there will be things that he will have to preserve. So I thought those were things where I could start looking for lyrics.

Jerry Bock and I had a very specific way of working; I've never worked this way with any other composer. Jerry would go into his studio and start to write numbers and when he had anywhere from about seven to eight of those numbers, he would record them and he would then send me the tape. When I listened to the tape, they would always start with "Shel, I think this number is for the butcher" or "Shel, I think this may be for the wedding." I would listen to all the songs, and although there may have been ten or more songs, I was always happy if there were two that coincided with the ideas that I had. It was wonderful to have that music to work with because some of his tunes were just so catchy and so ingratiating that I just couldn't wait to put lyrics to them. So that's the way we always started.

At some point in the collaboration, I would have an idea for a number and there was no music that Jerry had sent me, so I had to write the lyric first. Eventually, we would get together with Joe Stein and we would compare what we had written with the book scene that he had written, and then we'd do a little carpentry to make sure that the song was introduced correctly and let out of correctly, and that the whole thing was integrated.



Sheldon Harnick, Joseph Stein, Jerry Bock (seated), and Jerome Robbins.



Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, and Joseph Stein (2004).

DESCRIBE YOUR PROCESS AS A THEATRICAL LYRICIST.

A theatre lyricist has to be also something of a playwright, because you have to investigate the character who is singing, thinking, “what is the situation he is a part of,” and, “emotionally, what would he be thinking? What would he want to express? Is it something that is emotional enough or funny enough to demand music?” and then finding the words for that. Then of course, the style of diction has to mesh with the diction that the book writer is writing: the words, the sentences have to sound like they are coming out of the same people. The vocabulary and the style that I write would have to exactly mesh with the style and the character that Joe Stein would write, or else it would sound very peculiar.

Jerry and I have written songs and played them, and then the writer or the director has said, “you know something, that might be better spoken. That is not really such a terrific idea for a song. Let’s convert that into dialogue.” I’m kind of delighted

when I see any of my shows and I hear a line and I thought that was originally a lyric, and now it’s dialogue and nobody knows that but me.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE MEMORY OF WRITING THE SHOW?

Jerry Bock wrote the music to a Russian waltz, and I heard it and I thought, “isn’t that beautiful,” and I had an idea for it. It turned out to be “Sunrise, Sunset.” Jerry, at that time, was living in New Rochelle, and I went to his studio in his basement, with my lyric, and we sang the song a couple of times and I changed a lyric or two once I heard how it sang, and when we had it the way we wanted it, we called Jerry’s wife, Patty, from upstairs, because we wanted to get a reaction. So Patty came downstairs and we sang the song. When I audition a song for somebody I look at the wall above them or to the side, I don’t look in their eyes. At the end of the song, I looked at Patty and, to my astonishment, she was crying.

A couple of weeks later, I was in Bethesda where my sister lived, and although I’m not a pianist, the piano accompaniment to “Sunrise, Sunset” is simple enough so I could master it, and I played the song for my sister. When I finished the song, I turned away from the piano and looked at her, and she was crying, and I thought “My goodness, this song must be something very special.” And it has turned out to be!

Jerry and I were just delighted when people began to use it at their weddings. I was asked to tweak the lyric a bit so it could be used at same-sex weddings, which I was happy to do. ■

ON JEWISHNESS, AS THE FIDDLE PLAYED

ALISA SOLOMON ON 'FIDDLER ON THE ROOF' AND ITS PRODUCTION HERITAGE

BY ALISA SOLOMON

Adapted from the book *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof* by Alisa Solomon, this excerpt first appeared in *The New York Times* on October 17, 2013. Copyright © 2013 by Alisa Solomon. Reprinted by arrangement with the publishers, Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

"Fiddler on the Roof" — created by Jerry Bock (music), Sheldon Harnick (lyrics), Joseph Stein (book) and Jerome Robbins (direction and choreography) and based on the stories of Sholom Aleichem — was a blockbuster success when it opened in 1964, smashing all box office records in its day. The initial production played 3,242 performances, the longest-running show on Broadway for years. There have been four Broadway revivals and countless national tours; some 200 schools across the country put it on each year.

As the first work of American popular culture to recall life in a shtetl — the Eastern European market towns with large Jewish populations — "Fiddler" felt tender, elegiac, even holy. It arrived just ahead of (and helped to instigate) the American roots movement. It was added to multicultural curriculums and studied by students across the country in Jewish history units, as if "Fiddler" were an artifact unearthed from a destroyed world rather than a big-story musical assembled by showbiz professionals.

Beyond its continuing vibrant life in the theater, "Fiddler," like no other musical before or since, has seeped into the culture more widely, functioning in sometimes contradictory ways, which makes sense, since the show's essential gesture is dialectical: it looks backward and forward, favors both community and individual needs, honors the particular and the universal, struggles between stasis and change, bewails and celebrates. Tevye, the milkman hero, seems to be constantly caught in these opposing forces and, before our eyes, weighs the arguments of every dilemma — on the one hand, on the other hand ...

"Fiddler" also regularly serves as a Jewish signifier: "Now I know I haven't been the best Jew," Homer tells a rabbi from whom he is trying to borrow money in an episode of "The Simpsons," "but I have rented 'Fiddler on the Roof,' and I intend to watch it."

How could a commercial entertainment do all this? How does a work of popular culture glow with a radiant afterlife, illuminating for different audiences the pressing issues of their times? The answer lies in large part in where "Fiddler" came from and how it was made.

"It never entered our minds that it was Jewish," Harnick recalled. "We all felt the same way about the stories, that they were just very beautiful and we couldn't wait to work on them."

Or as Stein liked to put it, "These were stories about characters who just happened to be Jewish." Robbins kept searching for what he called a special "ordinary" quality for his cast — he didn't want actors who looked too polished or flashy to be convincing as poor Jews. Yet he and his collaborators also didn't want actors who, in their view, overplayed some put-on idea of Jewishness. They rejected stereotypical portrayals that showed vestiges of the American vaudeville "stage Jew" with Old Country accents, flailing hands or singsong intonations; they quickly eliminated anyone who seemed to have arrived at the audition hall directly from Second Avenue, which was largely the erstwhile home of the Yiddish theater district, or from the borscht belt. (They did, however, arrange with the Hebrew Actors' Union — the 65-year-old association of Yiddish performers — to audition some of its members.) Robbins's notes on the show repeatedly sound his contempt for representations of Jews as "lovable schnooks," and his collaborators shared his concerns.

Whoever played Tevye first would have to combine the general realness Robbins insisted on with the magnetism and virtuosity — the ineffable "it" — that make a Broadway star. The actor would have to live in two places simultaneously onstage: inside the world of the play as a convincing Pale of Settlement patriarch and on the outside of the dramatic action as a crowd-pleasing performer of magnificent feats. And he would have to be equally and constantly lovable in both realms: intimate with audience members and beyond their ken, winning their empathy and their awe.

Zero Mostel and Robbins had briefly worked together, and the once-blacklisted actor and the director who had named names before the House Un-American Activities Committee did not like each other. So Robbins's eagerness to cast Mostel, and Mostel's zeal for the part, spoke to both men's prevailing

sense of artistry — they recognized and respected each other's talents. Even more, the draw of the Sholom Aleichem material trumped their mutual distrust and distaste.

Two more opposite temperaments are tough to imagine. Mostel was confident and free as an actor could be, Robbins a sack of insecurity as a director. Their very bodies exemplified the contrast: an uncontrollable, jiggling mass on the one hand, an utterly flab-free, erect carriage on the other.

For both of these Jewish artists, albeit in vastly different ways, this project was personal. Mostel would have seemed the perfect choice to Robbins for a deeper reason, too: He represented an image of Jewishness that Robbins had done all he could do to distance himself from but that exerted a pull on him all the same. He described it in one of his journals as a "crude, vulgar, but healthy and satisfied" way of being, a way of saying, "I don't care what they think."

Like Robbins, Mostel fought an inner war over Jewish identity, but the enemy fire came from a different place. Mostel never sought to evade his Jewishness — on the contrary — but he rebelled against, and came deeply to resent, the Orthodox practice his parents maintained and expected their eight children to carry forward. The family lived in the concentrated community of some 230,000 Jews in Brownsville, Brooklyn, in 1915, when Mostel was born (his given name was Samuel), and later moved to the Lower East Side. Yiddish was spoken at home and in the neighborhood. Mostel would have made an excellent rabbi, his father thought. Mostel understood that choosing to pursue painting and performance meant leaving his family's world behind.

The part offered a kind of vindication, a reconciling of Mostel's past with his present, a means of honoring the background he had to reject in a form that, in itself, expressed, even celebrated, that rejection: playing Tevye on Broadway, he could have his kreplach and eat it too.

Robbins, in contrast, had run from a specter of weakness that rose from his ignorance and fear and from his desire for acceptance. Mostel knew what he had given up and could represent it with affection as a trace of the past; Robbins was joyously discovering a cultural wealth that he'd been denied and that the show could display as a gleaming treasure — but crucially, one from long ago and far away.

In different fashions, both men were internally making the show's primary contradictory gesture: embracing Jewish practice at arm's length. Through "Fiddler," Mostel and Robbins — and millions of spectators in the decades to come — could cherish, honor and admire a legacy in the safely secular, make-believe space of a theater.

When Mostel blasted into rehearsals after the second week, he started ridiculing Robbins right away. "A couple of weddings in Williamsburg and that putz thinks he understands Orthodox Jews!" he'd snort with a roll of the eyes that seemed to trace the full circumference of the globe. Day after day he found a way to entertain his fellow cast members at Robbins's expense. And most of the company — especially the younger actors — cheered him on with their laughter.

When they argued at all, it was over substance, and often over Jewish substance. "What are you doing?" Robbins demanded at one rehearsal as Mostel touched the doorjamb of Tevye's house and then brushed his fingers over his lips.

Mostel offered the obvious answer: "I'm kissing the mezuzah." Robbins responded bluntly, "Don't do it again." But Mostel insisted that Tevye, like the Orthodox Jews with whom the actor had grown up, would never neglect to make the customary gesture of devotion that acknowledges the case of sacred parchment affixed to doorways of Jewish homes.

Robbins bristled. Mostel held firm and kissed the mezuzah again. Without raising his voice — in fact, the more emphatic he became, the more firmly and calmly he spoke — Robbins demanded that Mostel stop. The actor relented. And then, when he walked through Tevye's doorway once more, he crossed himself. He'd made — and won — his point. The mezuzah kissing stayed in.

No one was surprised that "Fiddler" swept the Tony Awards, winning as best musical as well as for book, score, direction, choreography, costumes, production and performances by Mostel and Maria Karnilova (as his wife, Golde).

Mostel famously accepted his statue noting that, since no one else from the show who had been on the podium that night had bothered to thank him, he would thank himself. Then he carried on a bit in Yiddish. ■

CHOREOGRAPHING FIDDLER

CHOREOGRAPHER HOFESH SHECHTER ON REIMAGINING THIS CLASSIC MUSICAL

SPOTLIGHT ON HOFESH SHECHTER CHOREOGRAPHER

Israeli-born, UK-based choreographer Hofesh Shechter began his professional dance career with Tel Aviv's Batsheva Dance Company. While working with Batsheva, he began studying percussion and went on to become a drummer in a rock band. He made his choreographic debut in the UK in 2003 with the duet *Fragments*, followed by *Cult*, *Uprising*, and *In your rooms*. In 2008 he formed Hofesh Shechter Company, an international cast of outstanding dancers and musicians, to create an extended version of *Uprising/In your rooms: The Choreographer's Cut*. In 2010 Shechter presented *Political Mother* at the Brighton Festival, which brought the company international attention. It has since toured Australia, Asia, Europe, and the US, including at BAM. Shechter has worked as a choreographer at the UK's Royal Court Theatre and the National Theatre and for BBC 4's popular drama "Skins." He is the recipient of many prizes, including the 3rd Serge Diaghilev choreography award for *Fragments*, an Audience Choice Award at the Place Prize 2004 for *Cult*, Movimentos Most Promising Newcomer in Dance Award in 2009, and the British Theatre Institute's Award for Excellence in International Dance in 2011. He is an associate artist of Sadler's Wells. Hofesh Shechter Company is the resident company at Brighton Dome.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH THIS NEW PRODUCTION OF *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF*?

Hofesh Shechter: I first worked with Bart Sher when he invited me to collaborate with him on *Two Boys*, a new opera by Nico Muhly that premiered at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York in 2013. During this time, Bart mentioned that he would like us to work together again on a production of *Fiddler on the Roof* that he was planning for 2015.

WHAT HAS IT BEEN LIKE TO COLLABORATE WITH DIRECTOR BARTLETT SHER AGAIN?

It's really great to be working with Bart again. There is a positive energy to our partnership that makes it really easy for us to reconnect in the studio. The two lab weeks [in which we worked in a studio with dancers to get a feel for the movement of the show] were inspiring, exciting and I am looking forward to the next stage of the production process in New York.

HOW DOES YOUR WORK ON *FIDDLER* COMPARE TO YOUR WORK IN THE CONTEMPORARY DANCE WORLD?

For me, this is a really exciting project as my background is in folk dance. I was born in Israel where the tradition of folk dance is rooted in the culture and my first experience of dance was in a youth folk group. Folk dance in Israel is a mix of cultures and traditions, a lot about rhythm, groove, community and group, power and joining power—all these elements are present in the work I create with my own company of dancers and this is what I will bring to *Fiddler*.

Hofesh Shechter was nominated for a 2016 Tony Award for his choreography in this production. ■



LIFE IN THE SHTETLS

The presence of Jews in Russia can be traced as early as the 7th century.

In 1791, due to growing anti-Semitism and increased business competition in Moscow, Czar Catherine II (Catherine the Great) restricted all of the Jews in Russia to a district along the western border of the country, known as the **Pale of Settlement**. The Pale of Settlement included much of what is now Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, Moldova, and Ukraine, in addition to parts of western Russia.

Life within the Pale was not easy. Most people lived in small, poor villages (**shtetls**), constantly in fear of an attack from the government. In an attempt to drive the Jews out of Russia, the government organized violent riots called **pogroms**, in which an army of Russian citizens would loot and destroy Jewish homes and businesses within the shtetls, resulting in injuries and deaths.

In 1882, the **May Laws** were established by Czar Alexander III, which forbade Jews from living outside of towns and shtetls. It also prohibited them from conducting business on Sundays and Christian holidays. Trade and farming opportunities were now limited for the Jews, resulting in lives of poverty. To escape these harsh conditions, Jews could emigrate from Russia or convert to Christianity to avoid starving to death. Two million Jews immigrated to the United States between 1881 and 1914, with many others settling in Israel, Germany, Canada, Australia, and other countries.

Living in the shtetls caused Jews to form tight-knit communities, filled with traditions, charity, and strong family values. Shtetls were deeply rooted in Jewish faith, as depicted in *Fiddler on the Roof*.

The Pale of Settlement was abolished in 1917, after the overthrow of the Czars, and most of the shtetls were destroyed with the Nazi occupation during the Holocaust. ■

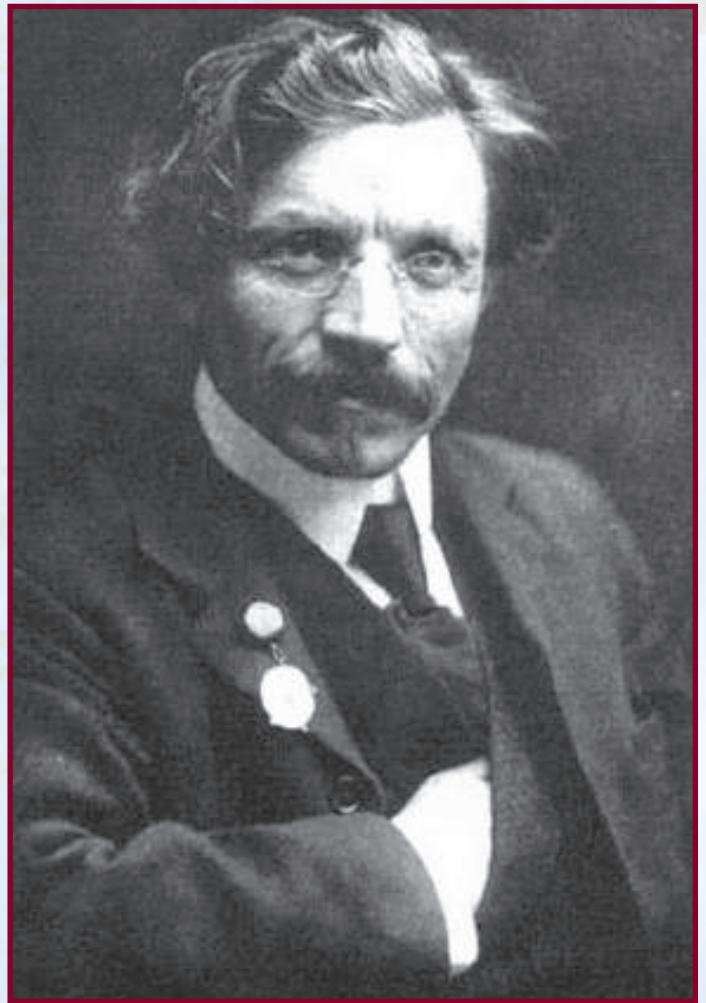


SHOLEM ALEICHEM'S WORLD

Solomon Rabinovitz (Sholem Aleichem) was born in Kiev, Russia, in 1859. "Sholem Aleichem" literally means "Peace be unto you," or "How do you do?" He lived most of his life in Kiev, where he was the owner and editor of a Ukrainian newspaper. He moved to New York City in 1906, after witnessing the pogroms in Southern Russia. He died in New York in 1916.

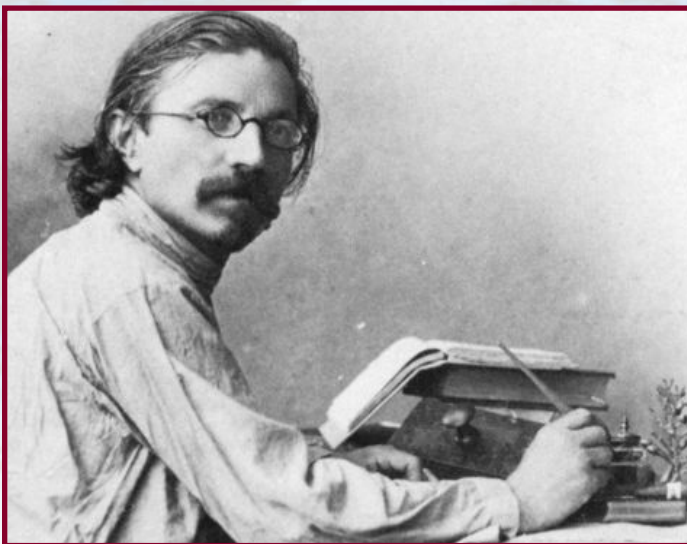
Sholem Aleichem remains one of the greatest and most beloved of all writers in Yiddish. His works include *The Adventures of Menahem-Mendl*, *Adventures of Mottel*, *The Cantor's Son*, *Tevye the Dairyman*, *Hanukah Money*, *Inside Kasrilevka* and *The Nightingale*.

His legacy lives on even today. Monuments of him have been erected in Kiev and Moscow, and postage stamps featuring him were issued by Israel (1959), the Soviet Union (1959), Romania (1959), and Ukraine (2009). There is also an impact crater on the planet Mercury named after Aleichem, and the National Bank of Ukraine issued an anniversary coin celebrating him on March 2, 2009 (150 years after his birth). *The World of Sholom Aleichem*, a celebration of his work, played Broadway in 1982, starring Jack Gilford. ■



"Sholem Aleichem was Russian and Jewish—his wife was Russian but he grew up in a Jewish community—and he wrote out of a tradition of Yiddish, which is almost lost now. He then traveled to America where he struggled to get a footing because there were so many divisions in the Jewish community, some of whom embraced it and some of whom didn't. In his own life, he experienced the same sort of struggle as someone like Tevye. So he's a folk writer, and that's very different than you have of a national story in *South Pacific* or this strange tale of exotic, faraway Siam in *The King and I*. I'm getting very interested in his approach and the kind of things he went through to tell this story, and I find that fascinating."

— Bartlett Sher



FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION TOPICS

MUSICAL THEATRE AND DANCE

On YouTube, view some other choreography by **Jerome Robbins** from his musical retrospective, *Jerome Robbins' Broadway*. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AE8Kd74KbqE>).

Then, look up some of **Hofesh Shechter's** past work in the world of classical and modern dance. (<https://vimeo.com/user9326973>)

How do Jerome Robbins and Hofesh Shechter's work compare to each other, and how do they differ? How does each relate to the choreography that you saw on stage in this production of *Fiddler on the Roof*?

TRADITIONAL RUSSIAN CULTURE

Find some videos online of traditional Russian Jewish Dancing. Pay attention to both the movement and the music.

How does the dancing in *Fiddler on the Roof* compare to the dancing in those videos?

How does the music in *Fiddler on the Roof* compare to the music featured in those video clips?

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Examine a modern culture in which a minority group is living as a subset of a larger group of people. How does that compare to the Jews of Anatevka living in Russia during *Fiddler on the Roof*? How are these minority groups oppressed? How do they try to overcome this oppression?

Discuss anti-semitism and its history, from ancient times through modern day. What other events in history resemble the pogroms in Russia during the time of *Fiddler on the Roof*?

Research two other historical cultures with arranged marriages, and compare and contrast them with the traditions of Russian Jews. What are the similarities and differences? If these rules were ultimately abolished: how and why were they abolished? How do those cultures behave today?

Find two other literary, film, or stage works that deal with the idea of an arranged marriage. How are they portrayed, and how is that portrayal different from *Fiddler on the Roof*? Do you think that a less-than-perfect marriage would be better than no marriage at all?

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION TOPICS

THE STORY CONTINUES

Imagine it is five years after the final scene in the musical. Where are all of the major characters from *Fiddler*? What is life like for them wherever they are living now? Did some of them remain as a tight-knit community, or have they all gone their separate ways? What remains of Anatevka? What was it like for them to become part of a new culture of people?

SHOLEM ALEICHEM

Read some of the “Tevye” stories by Sholem Aleichem. What are the similarities and differences to the plot of *Fiddler on the Roof*? How different are the characters in those stories from the characters in the musical?

Compare those stories to another satirical work, fable, or story, and discuss the differences and similarities. What similarities can be found between Sholem Aleichem and other writers from other cultures and time periods?

THE CHARACTER OF TEVYE

Tevye begins the show speaking directly to the audience as a narrator in the Prologue. He also has frequent “asides,” in which he speaks to God in prayer. Why do you think the authors chose to have him do this?

Choose two other theatrical works in which a character speaks directly to the audience. Analyze its use. How does this theatrical device enhance or burden the show?

Tevye is one of the most richly complex characters in the musical theatre canon. Analyze Tevye as a character, and then defend or criticize him. Do you feel he is right to stand by his traditions? Why does he feel so strongly about his traditions?

How does the character of the Fiddler serve as a metaphor in Tevye’s life and to the people of Anatevka?

PHOTOGRAPH CREDITS

PAGE 3

Zero Mostel in *Fiddler on the Roof*: <http://jewishcurrents.org/september-22-zero-as-tevye-2768>

Topol in *Fiddler on the Roof*: <https://blogofthetwelve.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/fiddler.jpg>

Theodore Bikel in *Fiddler on the Roof*:
http://en.enikos.gr/images/resized/590_55b42c8f5e47f537de24adf68e660add.jpg

PAGE 5

Joseph Stein: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/b/be/Joseph_Stein.jpg

PAGE 6

Jerry Bock: <http://www.beachamjournal.com/.a/6a01053653b3c7970b013488b4208c970c800wi>

PAGE 7

Sheldon Harnick: <http://cdn.theatermania.com/article/33910/1.jpg>

PAGE 8

Danny Burstein in *South Pacific*: <http://images.playbill.com/photo/s/p/spclose460.jpg>

PAGE 9

Bartlett Sher: <http://images.playbill.com/photo/b/a/bartlettsher200.jpg>

PAGE 11

Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, and Joseph Stein: <https://jasonhurwitz.files.wordpress.com/2014/04/04harvey-span-blogspan-v21.jpg>

Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, Joseph Stein, and Jerome Robbins: http://www-tc.pbs.org/wnet/broadway/files/2012/09/bock_j_pic2-300x232.jpg

PAGE 16

Shtetl: http://shtetle.co.il/Shtetls/liozno/Images/liozno_old.jpg

Shtetl (Chagall): <http://www.irarosenberg.com/mknchnng/mcgraphics/chagall-vue-de-vitebsk.jpg>

Shtetl: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/friedlander11/files/2011/03/11.jpg>

PAGE 17

Sholem Aleichem: <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f2/SholemAleichem.jpg>

Sholem Aleichem: <https://media2.wnyc.org/i/620/372/c/80/1/2.sholem.aleichemEDIT.jpg>

***TO
LIFE!***

**Fiddler
on the
Roof**