

**The Leo V. Berger Immigrant's Trunk:
Saul Bernstein Living History Performance
Pre-Visit Materials**

Introduction:

As a part of your participation in the Jewish Museum of Maryland's *Immigrant's Trunk* program, an actor playing the role of Saul Bernstein, a Lithuanian immigrant to Baltimore in 1889, will deliver a dramatic performance for your students. During this performance, students will have the opportunity to interact with "Mr. Bernstein," to learn about his life as a Jewish immigrant, as a peddler, and as an artist.

Performance Set Up:

Your classroom will be transformed into an artist's studio for the performance. The year is 1903, and Saul Bernstein is visiting an art class filled with interested students (your students) who are curious about the life of a painter. The actor portraying the role of Saul Bernstein will bring a trunk with him filled with objects, reproduced paintings, immigration documents, and photographs that will help him tell the story of his life. He will need three chairs set up at the front of the classroom for placing the trunk and props upon.

Please note that the performance is intended for a classroom setting, not an auditorium. If you have intended to use a different space for the program, please contact Lauren Silberman (410-732-6400 ext. 29), so that the actor can be prepared for your venue.

It is important that students are prepared in advance of his visit, that they understand that they are going back in time to the year 1903 and that they will pretend to be art students.

Here are just a few things going on in the world in 1903:

- Theodore Roosevelt is the President of the United States
- Orville and Wilber Wright successfully fly their first airplane in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina
- Henry Ford begins selling the "Model A" auto for \$850 in an attempt to manufacture reliable cars at an affordable price. The first driver's license is issued in 1900.
- Immigrants are pouring into the United States from many countries, including Jewish refugees from countries in Eastern Europe due to extreme anti-Semitic violence. One of the worst attacks on Jews takes place in 1903 in the Russian town of Kishniev.
- The Panama Canal is constructed after Panama becomes independent from Columbia
- The United States consists of 45 states and does not yet include Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, Hawaii, and Alaska

What else is going on in the world in 1903? Encourage students to conduct their own research to find out. Also, please remind students that the program is intended to be interactive. Ask them to brainstorm possible questions that they would like to ask a Jewish immigrant to America in the early 20th century. They will have the opportunity to ask some of their questions at the end of the performance.

Attached you will find additional background information that might be useful in preparing your students in advance of this program. Materials include a brief history of Eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a bibliography for preparing additional lesson plans, and a biography of Saul Bernstein. Please do not share Saul's biography with the students before the program takes place.

The Leo V. Berger Immigrant's Trunk Project Team

Project Directors:

Deborah Cardin, Director of Education, Jewish Museum of Maryland
Leah Wolfson, Education and Programming Coordinator, Jewish Museum of Maryland
Lauren Silberman, Education and Program Coordinator, Jewish Museum of Maryland

Research:

Dean Krimmel, Research Consultant
Willa Banks, Intern, Jewish Museum of Maryland
Lucy Hirsch, Intern, Jewish Museum of Maryland
Deb Weiner, Research Historian, Jewish Museum of Maryland

Archives Research and Photograph Reproductions:

Robin Waldman, Archivist, Jewish Museum of Maryland
Erin Titter, Collections Associate, Jewish Museum of Maryland

Living History Project:

"Saul Bernstein" script by Sharie Valerio with additional research and writing assistance from Tim King and Harriet Lynn
Performed by Tim King
Produced and directed by Harriet Lynn, Heritage Theater Artists' Consortium
Costumes, Kostumes by Kathryn

"Ida Rehr" script by Sharie Valerio with additional research and writing assistance from Tamara Johnson and Harriet Lynn
Performed by Katherine Lyons
Produced and directed by Harriet Lynn, Heritage Theater Artists' Consortium
Costumes, Kostumes by Kathryn

Many people and organizations were instrumental in assisting with this project. JMM is especially grateful to the Maryland Historical Society for sharing its traveling trunk program with us.

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The Jewish Museum of Maryland is an agency of THE ASSOCIATED: Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore.

To reach the Education Department of the Jewish Museum of Maryland, please call (410) 732-6400 ext. 36 or 29.

Saul Bernstein Living History Performance Creative Team

Tim King is an actor, writer, and musician who lives in Annapolis, MD. Along with the portrayal of Saul Bernstein for the Jewish Museum of Maryland, Tim also performs a one-man show in which he portrays the artist, James Whistler. *Son of Whistler's Mother* is available for performance through the Maryland Humanities Council. Tim is a company member of The Children's Theatre Association of Baltimore (CTA). He tours as an actor in several shows and is currently writing two of CTA's upcoming productions.

Harriet Lynn, the performance director, has enjoyed a long professional and diverse career in theatre, dance, film, television and radio. Her numerous credits include National Broadway Companies in *Hello, Dolly* with both Ginger Rodgers and Betty Grable companies, *On a Clear Day...* with Howard Keel, regional theatres, and performing throughout the US, Canada, and Caribbean in major hotels and clubs. She is active in the Greater Baltimore Area arts community and a founding board member of the Baltimore Theatre Alliance. As playwright and performing artist she has delighted audiences with her original one-woman show, *Ella Shields: The Woman Behind the Man* in London, New York and various local and regional venues. Ms. Lynn has enjoyed working with the Jewish Museum of Maryland as a performing artist (the *Ella Joeline Gutman Hutzler* living history tour 2001-02) and as director of the new living history school programs, *Saul Bernstein* and *Ida Rehr*. Ms. Lynn's *Russian Literary Masters: Pushkin, Blok and Akhmatova* production is premiering in 2003 during the Vivat St. Petersburg Festival in collaboration with the Enoch Pratt Library. In 1994 Ms. Lynn founded Heritage Theatre Artists' Consortium, and she has been actively producing, directing and writing museum theatre and arts education programs earning local, national and international attention ever since.

Ms. Lynn would also like to thank Marvin Rombro, M.D. for his research assistance with this production.

Program Partner **Heritage Theatre Artists' Consortium's** Mission Statement:

Heritage Theatre Artists' Consortium is a professional arts/entertainment/educational organization founded in 1994 to provide a total consulting, programming, theatre arts and creative workshop resource for museums, historical societies, educational and arts institutions, attractions and special events programs.

Heritage Theatre Artists' Consortium
116 W. University Parkway, Penthouse 3
Baltimore, MD 21210

Ph/fax: 410-235-4457

hlynn@h-t-a-c.com

www.h-t-a-c.com

Contact Person: Harriet Lynn, B.F.A., M.S.

Heritage Theatre Artists' Consortium is a subsidiary of Communications -Health Network, Inc.

Historical Background:

The Lives Left Behind

Beginning in 1880 and lasting until 1924, approximately four million immigrants, many of them Jewish, left their homes in Eastern Europe and journeyed to the United States. The reason for this large-scale migration was the anti-Semitic policies towards Jews in this region, and a perception of the United States as a glorious land of limitless opportunity. During the reign of Alexander II in Russia, many liberal reforms were implemented, including the abolishment of the serf system and the introduction of capitalism. After his assassination in 1889, anti-Semitic riots erupted and Russia's new rulers introduced discriminatory legislation. The resulting *Temporary Laws* placed severe economic restrictions on Jews, and, in turn, led to increased violence against them. The Russian leaders supported this violence as a means of diverting attention from a growing revolutionary anti-Czar movement. The *Black Hundred*, an anti-Semitic movement supported by the Czar, instigated pogroms against Jews in Russia and neighboring countries. Thus, the Jews in Russia and other countries in Eastern Europe, who had once experienced a degree of economic and intellectual freedom, were confronted by increasingly oppressive and discriminatory conditions. Many opted to leave and to immigrate to the United States, where they envisioned a golden land free from religious oppression.

The Immigrant's Journey

The immigrant's journey from Eastern Europe to the United States was not an easy one. After acquiring the necessary papers for departure and boarding the ships, immigrants were often confined to the steerage section of ships which could hold up to two thousand people. In the steerage section, immigrants were housed in metal berths three bunks high, where they remained during their two-week journey, amidst unsanitary conditions that included spoiled food and unwashed bodies which often caused sea-sickness. Meals were served in dining rooms with long tables. On older ships, however, passengers often ate from tin mess kits in their steerage quarters.

Upon arrival at Ellis Island, immigrants did not immediately disembark but were often forced to wait in steerage for days at a time before boarding a ferry to the immigration station. The harbor was usually crowded with steam ships, and as many as 20,000 immigrants waited for processing. The conditions on the ferries themselves were stifling. Many people died from contagious diseases waiting to make the trip across the harbor.

Once the immigrants finally landed in Ellis Island they were each given a numbered tag that corresponded to the page and line number in the ship manifest where their names appeared. They then formed a line, extending all the way from the dock baggage room up to the second floor where the immigrants were met by a team of doctors and inspectors. The inspection process was very thorough, and doctors searched immigrants for signs of disease, and mental deficiencies. They were especially on the lookout for trachoma, a highly contagious eye disease, as well as cholera, favus (a nail and skull fungus), and insanity.

After the medical inspection, immigrants were required to illustrate that they were competent through a variety of tests proving they were capable of providing for themselves in the US. Often single women and children were required to show proof that they knew someone in the US who would support them before they were allowed to leave Ellis Island. Those without such documents and those who failed to pass the medical inspection were forbidden to leave Ellis Island until they either received the necessary documents, or recovered from illness. Two percent of all immigrants were deported back to their countries of origin because they suffered from an incurable disease, or failed to meet inspection requirements.

Becoming A Citizen

In order to become an American citizen, immigrants were first required to file a declaration of intent. This document recorded the applicant's pledge to become a United States citizen, to uphold permanent residence within the country, and to renounce allegiance to other nations. After filing the declaration of intent, the applicant then had to wait for a period of two to seven years. When this waiting period was over, the applicant then petitioned the court for citizenship and was required to produce affidavits signed by two witnesses attesting to the applicant's moral character and to the fact that the applicant had resided within the United States for a minimum of five years. The petition was then subject to an investigation and a hearing before a judge. This hearing was the last step in the procedure, and if the judge ascertained that all criteria for citizenship had been met, the applicant would take an oath of allegiance to the US constitution, renouncing all foreign allegiances. The immigrant was then granted a certificate of citizenship.

Naturalization, the process of becoming a full-fledged American citizen, has changed throughout the course of American history. By the early 1920s, as the flow of immigrants to the United States increased, immigration and naturalization laws became more and more restrictive. The restrictive nature of these laws resulted from a growing anti-immigrant or nativist sentiment. This was due to the fear that the large numbers of immigrants living in the US would result in a weakening of American society and in a reduction in the numbers of available low wage jobs. This fear resulted in a change in immigration policy. What had formerly been an open door policy ended. Immigration quotas were established in 1924 which, effectively, closed America's doors to immigrants.

Biographical Sketch: Saul Bernstein



Saul Bernstein was born on May 10, 1872, in Poniewicz, Lithuania to Wolf Bernstein and Ida Bernstein. Saul grew up under the government district of Kovno, Russia. Saul's father was a scholar by choice and a bookbinder by trade; he preferred the life of study to his work. As a result, Saul's family was always very poor; his mother was a dressmaker to help support the family. When Saul was thirteen, his father sent him to study *Talmud*, or the commentary on the Five Books of Moses, in the neighboring town of Poniewicz. Even at this young age, Saul displayed a talent for art; his teachers frequently caught him sketching rather than studying. It soon became clear to Saul that he could not practice what he loved in this environment; he sought greater opportunity to develop himself as an artist. After receiving a letter from an uncle, Abram Shalowitz, in Baltimore in 1889, Saul saw his opportunity to leave Lithuania. In the autumn of 1889, Saul boarded a ship for America using the money his mother raised over the years as a dressmaker. He arrived in New York Harbor alone and took the train to Baltimore to meet his uncle. Saul was seventeen years old.

Saul remained in his uncle's house only one week before embarking on his own as a tin peddler on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The young man spoke little English, and carried his wares on his back, day after day. Saul's pack carried something else as well--his pencils, sketchpad, box of watercolors, and a folding easel. Saul became successful enough as a peddler to bring his parents and younger brother to the United States in 1894. When Saul settled in Coopers, West Virginia as a partner in a local country store, he covered the walls with his work--a sight that did not go unnoticed by Louis Lutzky, a shoe drummer travelling through the area. Lutzky was attracted to the small store by the gaily decorated signboard of the Silver and Bernstein Clothing Store. As he approached, two large charcoal canvases adorned the doorway: one the likeness of Czar Alexander II of Russia, the other of George Washington. Once inside, Lutzky found every inch of the walls covered in pencil drawings, most depicting Jewish life in Russia. The man suggested Saul enter the Maryland Institute School of Art and Design (now the Maryland Institute College of Art).

Over the next several years, Saul attended the Maryland Institute, the Metropolitan School of Fine Arts in New York, and later in 1897, and the Academy Julian in Paris where he resided for several years. Saul traveled throughout Europe observing and painting in both small towns and large cities. By late autumn of 1901, approximately fifty of Bernstein's sketches had reached the Baltimore home of Henrietta Szold (see Who is Henrietta Szold?). Bernstein became acquainted with Szold through his membership in the Zionist organization *Hovevei Zion--Lovers of Zion* (see What is Zionism?). Szold would later become one of the most prominent Zionists of her day. Bernstein also met the brother of his future wife--Senior Abel at a Zionist meeting. In 1898, Saul even attended the Second Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. In November of 1901, Szold held a sale of Bernstein's work. Several pieces found their way into the homes of the most prominent Baltimoreans, among them Etta and Claribel Cone, whose collection would form the centerpiece of the Baltimore Museum of Art, the American writer

Gertrude Stein, and several others. Bernstein continued to show his work throughout the United States in Europe over the next four years. In 1903, Bernstein married Jennie Abel in New York, and the couple settled in Baltimore. In May of 1905, Bernstein died suddenly at the age of thirty-three. His wife was pregnant with their first and only child, Paul, at the time.

Immigration History Resources

Books for Teachers:

- Joyce Antler, The Journey Home: Jewish Women and the American Century, New York, 1997.
- James Ciment (editor), Encyclopedia of American Immigration, Armonk, NY, 2001.
- Isaac M. Fein, The Making of an American Jewish Community: The History of Baltimore Jewry from 1773 to 1920, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1985.
- Samuel Joseph, Jewish Immigration to the US from 1881 – 1910, New York, 1914.
- Arthur Kurzweil, From Generation to Generation: How to Trace Your Jewish Genealogy and Personal History, New York, 1994.
- Avrum K. Rifman, Centennial of Eastern European Jewish Immigration, 1882-1982: Exploring the Immigrant Experience of Baltimore as a Gateway City, Baltimore, 1982.
- Robert A. Rockaway, Words of the Uprooted: Jewish Immigrants in Early 20th Century America.
- Yaakov Ro'i (editor), Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union, Portland, OR, 1995.
- Loretto Dennis Szucs, Ellis Island: Tracing Your Family History Through America's Gateway, Provo, Utah, 2000.

Books for Students:

- Cynthia Klinkel and Robert B. Noyed, Ellis Island, Chanhassen, MN, 2001.
- Kathryn Lasky, Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, New York, 1998.
- Milton Meltzer, The Jewish Americans: A History in Their Own Words 1650 – 1950, New York, 1982.
- Ronald Takaki. A Larger Memory: A History of Our Diversity with Voices. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998.

Web Sites:

- www.ellisland.org – Ellis Island's web site, virtual tours of exhibitions, on-line passenger search
- www.dreamsoffreedom.org – virtual tours of immigration museum in Boston, sample lesson plans
- <http://library.thinkquest.org/~26786/en/introduction> – “From One Life to Another” – articles about different ethnic group immigration stories
- www.jewishgen.org – connects researchers of Jewish genealogy worldwide

**The Leo V. Berger Immigrant's Trunk
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Evaluation

Your name: _____

School : _____

Grade (s): _____ # of Students: _____

How did you learn about this program? _____

Please rate the following aspects of the program:

Quality of program as a teaching tool	excellent	good	fair	poor
Content of script	excellent	good	fair	poor
Ability of actor to interact with students	excellent	good	fair	poor
Relevance of program to curriculum	excellent	good	fair	poor
Age-appropriateness for your group	excellent	good	fair	poor
Student response	excellent	good	fair	poor

Were your expectations met? _____

Did this program enrich your curriculum? _____

How can we improve upon this program for future performances? _____

Please use the back of this sheet for additional comments. We are especially interested in hearing about specific student comments.

Thank you!