



BARBRA STREISAND TO PERFORM IN TEL AVIV

Show-business legend **Barbra Streisand** will perform for the first time ever in Israel this summer. She's booked to give two concerts in Tel Aviv's Bloomfield Stadium, June 20 and 22.

Streisand is also expected to appear for a private performance at the annual Presidential Conference in Jerusalem in honour of **President Shimon Peres'** 90th birthday two days prior to her concert.

The American singer-actor has sold a cumulative total of 140 million records worldwide and won eight Grammy Awards, five Emmy Awards and two Academy Awards.

Lenka Lichtenberg Concert: Musician **Lenka Lichtenberg** celebrates the release of her new CD *Embrace* with a CD launch concert featuring Lichtenberg with her group **Fray** and additional musicians. Glenn Gould Studio, 250 Front St. W. April 28, 8 p.m. \$25, \$15 for seniors and students. 416-872-4255, www.cbc.ca/glenngould

Writing Workshops: Author **Benjamin Hackman** leads two writing workshops at the Miles Nadal Jewish Community Centre. The Art and Craft of Poetry runs Thursdays from April 18 to June 27, 7 to 9 p.m. The Art and Craft of Short Fiction runs Sundays, April 21, to June 23, 6:45 to 8:45 p.m. Each course is \$235. 416-924-6211, ext. 154, sharonis@mnjcc.org

Names in the News: Montreal writer **Dana Szeffan Bell** has recently published *Danusia: The Story of a Child Survivor*. Beginning from the age of two, Bell survived a wartime ordeal of being deported in a cattle car to a remote slave labour camp in northern Russia. Enhancing her memory with knowledge gained from copious research, she describes the abuse and hunger she suffered along with hundreds of thousands of others who were subjected to similar treatment.

Yad Vashem recently asked Bell to participate in a ceremony that will honour Holocaust survivors in Ottawa on April 23. A book launch takes place in Montreal on April 29.

Names in the News II: Acting Up Stage Company presents *Falsettos*, a play about the birth of a non-traditional family in 1979. The cast includes 11-year-old actor **Michael Levinson**, who has already had much experience over the past few years in both theatre and television. Acting Up's executive producer is **Mitchell Marcus**.

Concert for Heart and Stroke Foundation: Hit That Jive Jack is a concert-cabaret being staged to raise funds for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. The event features **Kelly Holliff** hosting, singing, telling stories and inviting well-known theatrical performers to sing with her. Last year's concert sold more than 300 tickets and raised \$12,000. Capital Theatre, 2492 Yonge St. Sunday, April 28, 8 to 11 p.m. www.hitthatjivejack.com

Arts in Brief

- There are still several days of programming left in this year's Toronto Jewish Film Festival, which finished on April 21. www.tjff.com

- The Israeli movie *Ha'lehaka (The Troupe)* is being screened in celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut in an Israeli

Movie Night and Sing-along. Miles Nadal JCC, Saturday, April 20, 7:30 p.m. \$5 at the door.

- Film critic **Adam Nayman** continues his series on the **Coen brothers** with a session titled "Political Science: *Barton Fink* and *Burn After Reading*." Miles Nadal JCC, Monday, April 22, 7 to 9 p.m. \$12, students \$6. 416-924-6211, ext. 606, film@mnjcc.org

- Active Seniors & Boomers presents **Osnat Lipa** talking about influential Jewish artists. Miles Nadal JCC, April 23 and 30, 1:30 p.m. Cost \$15.

- **Arthur Schnitzler's** "sex-drenched shocker," adapted for modern audiences by **Jason Sherman**, is currently on stage at Soulpepper. Visit the website www.soulpepper.ca for showtimes and tickets.

- Newly released tickets for \$100 are now available for Koffler Rocks!, a fundraising concert featuring **Randy Bachman** and special guests, hosted by writer-racounteur **Michael Wex**. Funds to benefit the Koffler Centre of the Arts. Artscape Wychwood Barns, 601 Christie St. Thursday, May 2, reception 6:30 p.m., performance 8:30 p.m. www.kofflerarts.org

- The Isrock Festival presents a taste of Israel in Toronto with a concert by the hip-hop ensemble **Hadag Nahash**, as well as performances by **Mashina** and **Yael Deckelbaum**. Sound Academy, 11 Polson St. Sunday, April 28, doors open 7 p.m. for 8 p.m. concert. VIP \$180, general \$65, student \$55. Presented by the Motek Cultural Initiative, motektoronto.com

- Eye On Arts has received late word that first-time Israeli author **Ayelet Tsabari**, whose new book is *The Best Place on Earth*, was a featured artist at the recently concluded Spur Festival of Politics, Art and Ideas, which ran in mid-month in Toronto, and which is scheduled for Winnipeg in late April and in Vancouver in mid-June. The Toronto Spur Festival also featured New Yorker senior writer **Hendrik Hertzberg** and playwright **Hannah Moscovitch**.

Falsettos is a 'straight through musical, well sung'

Kathryn Kates
Special to The CJN

Michael Levinson, 11, plays Jason, the son of rather dysfunctional parents, in the award-winning, groundbreaking musical *Falsettos*.

Falsettos, directed by Robert McQueen, runs at the Daniels Spectrum cultural centre in Toronto from April 25 to May 12. The show is presented by Acting Up Stage Company, in association with Harold Green Jewish Theatre Company.

"The play is a little bit like the TV show *Modern Family*," Michael says. "My father, Marvin, divorced my mother, Trina. Trina is falling for another man, and another man is falling for Marvin. I'm in the middle of it and I feel very confused. No one is able to talk to me. Jason is complex, smart, and he is neglected."

Michael – who was a Dora Award nominee for the musical *Caroline, or Change*, about an African-American maid to a Southern Jewish family – says the biggest challenge of playing Jason is that the character is nothing like him.

Michael lives in Toronto with his South African-born parents, Andrea and Ari, and three siblings – a brother, Asher, 13, and sisters, Hanna, 6, and Izzy, 15 months. He is a Grade 6 student at Crestwood Lower School.

Michael says these days people are more accepting of those who are gay. "Many people who are gay are coming out like a lot of movie stars, and people are starting to accept the fact, but there is still some work to be done."

"I think Acting Up Stage is taking a big risk doing... shows that not everyone wants to hear about, instead of



Michael Levinson

the big commercial shows. The director, Rob McQueen, is a really good director. I aspire to be a director like him one day."

Falsettos takes place in New York City in 1979 during the sexual revolution and the rise of AIDS. For this production only, composer and lyricist William Finn granted the use of the text and score of his original one-act plays, *Falsettos*, *March of the Falsettos* and *Falsettoland*, which mirror significant social changes, mainly within the gay community between the writing of Act 1 in 1981 and Act 2 in 1990.

"It is a straight through musical, well sung. The music is jazzy and some rock 'n' roll... it's great music," Michael says.

When he was seven, Michael told his mom that he wanted an agent, and she agreed but suggested he needed acting training first.

"I have a music teacher, Deva Neely at Crestwood Lower School, so we had a couple weeks of lessons with her," he says. "She directed this show called *Oliver* and asked if I would like to audition in Etobicoke. It was quite a schlep! I was just in the ensemble, but I loved it. So we decided to get an agent."

Michael was a series regular playing Simon on the recently cancelled CW Television and MuchMusic series, *The LA Complex*. His theatre credits include *The Full Monty* and *A Christmas Carol*, and he plays the lead role of Iggy in the soon-to-be-released feature film drama, *Algonquin*, about a canoe trip taken by half-brothers.

When he's not acting, Michael likes to watch movies and give commentaries on them, make his own short films involving friends and do lots of "kid stuff" like bicycling and skateboarding.

Joining the young actor in *Falsettos* are theatrical veterans Darrin Baker, Sara-Jeanne Hosie, Sarah Gibbons, Erin Morin, Stephen Patterson and Glynis Ranney.

Falsettos is written by James Lapine and Finn, the music director is Reza Jacobs and the choreography is by Tim French.

For tickets, call: 1-800-838-3006 or visit online at: www.actingupstage.com. Daniels Spectrum is at 585 Dundas St. E., east of Parliament Street.