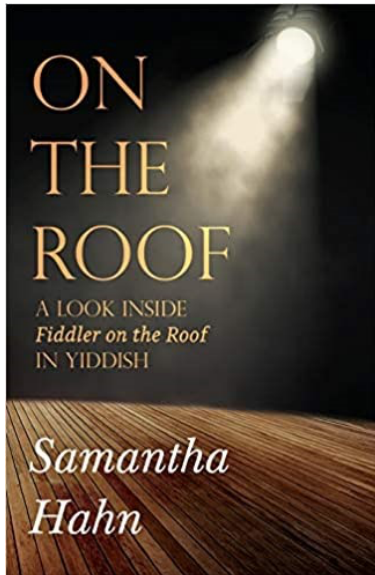


On the Roof: A Look Inside *Fiddler on the Roof* in Yiddish by Samantha Hahn



In *On the Roof: A look inside Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish* by Samantha Hahn (2020), Hahn interviews the cast and crew of the production of *Fiddler on the Roof* in Yiddish, an off Broadway play which originally opened in 2019. Capturing countless fun anecdotes, inside secrets, feelings and thoughts, Hahn traces the story of *fiddler* from her own perspective as one of the seven daughters of Tevye (played by Steven Skybell) and Golde, (played by Jackie Hoffman). Reading this book is like sifting for gold, in a very rich river. There are countless opportunities for learning embedded throughout Hahn's anecdotal, conversational writing style.

While the entire cast is impressively quoted, it is in Samantha (Sammy's) perspective that the writing really comes to life. We ground ourselves in her perspective over and over. At times, it feels intimate, like reading a private journal entry. Sammy, a young adult heading into her third year of university, is suddenly and unexpectedly cast in *Fiddler*. We follow her tumultuous journey as she navigates the growing success of the production with her desire to continue her education. She learns what it is like to participate in a production as one of the youngest cast members- this perspective is incredibly valuable to young readers!

The book deals equally with the perspective of the successful actors, alongside the "less successful" ones, offering in depth anecdotes from the cast members in the swing and

understudy roles. Their reflections on processing and overcoming rejection to be confident and comfortable in their value as members of the cast could be equally valuable, if not more, than Sammy's perspective of success for young readers. Reflections from the production manager offer invaluable advice on navigating professional relationships throughout personal hardship. It also offers some examples of the ways that theatre-makers can serve their broader community! The play employs the use of supertitles, something that makes theatre much more accessible as a viewer no matter the language, and the cast and crew took any opportunity to use the show to fundraise throughout its run.

This book may be of particular appeal to theatre lovers who are a part of the Jewish community, as it puts heavy importance on the revival and maintenance of the Yiddish language and of orthodox Jewish culture, from the perspective of many of the Jewish cast members. It frames Yiddish as not just a language to be used for its own sake, but as an asset, a new way of looking at a popular show.

Despite not intending to, this book serves as a wonderful, positive, and seemingly honest example of what theatre can be like. For this reason, this book could serve as an excellent read for theatre geeks, teens, and adults alike. However, if the reader is a complete beginner to theatre and the theatre world, this might be a confusing place to start. It is a bit jargony at points and assumes a certain amount of theatre knowledge, so reader beware!

As a taste for the gems to be found within the pages of this book, in one of the sections of this book, Hahn writes:

"It was moving to be surrounded by our *Fiddler* family on our opening night, while being initiated into the Actor's Equity Association with these beautiful words:

'I will take my rightful place on the stage

and I will be myself.

I am not a cosmic orphan.

I have no reason to be timid.

I will respond as I feel;

awkwardly, vulgarly, but respond.

I will have my throat open,

I will have my heart open,

I will be vulnerable.

I may have anything or everything
the world has to offer, but the thing I need most,
and want most, is to be myself.

I will admit rejection, admit pain, admit frustration,
admit even pettiness, admit shame, admit outrage,
admit anything and everything that happens to me.

The best and most human parts of me are those
that I have inhabited and hidden from the world.

I will work on it.

I will raise my voice.

I will be heard.”

(Hahn, 2020)

References

Hahn, S. (2020). On the Roof- A Look Inside Fiddler on the Roof in Yiddish (Vanguard E-Book). Vanguard Press, Imprint of Pegasus Elliot McKenzie Publishers Ltd.
https://read.amazon.ca/?asin=B08KS3W7D4&ref_=kwl_kr_iv_rec_1