

YIVO *and the* CONGRESS FOR JEWISH CULTURE
present



MIRYEM

By Tea Arciszewska

*Translated into English
by Sonia Gollance*

NEW YORK PREMIERE | APRIL 18, 2024 | 7:00PM



The Children:

Miryeml.....	<i>Ava DeVere</i>
Blimele.....	<i>Dylan Seders Hoffman</i>
Tsirele.....	<i>Alona Bach</i>
Dovidl.....	<i>Benji Brooks</i>
Leyzerl.....	<i>Milo Clark Sunderland</i>
Rokhele.....	<i>Leni Negrin</i>
Sholem.....	<i>Mannix Beall-O'Brien</i>

The Adults:

The Butcher's Wife.....	<i>Rachel Botchan</i>
Rabbi.....	<i>Alex Zaloum</i>
Cantor/Silhouette.....	<i>Mikhl Yashinsky</i>
Bobe.....	<i>Leni Negrin</i>

Written by Tea Arciszewska

Translated by Dr. Sonia Gollance

Directed by Caraid O'Brien

Synopsis — This epic drama follows a group of children and their accompanying adults from a *shtetl*, where they experience a pogrom, to their life as refugees traveling between towns and hiding in cellars, to Warsaw – and then to a mystical realm, as the protagonist Miryeml, initially described as a mentally ill adolescent orphan, takes on a more prophetic role and finally leads the children from Warsaw to Jerusalem. The play takes place in a Jewish, victim-centered world, where the central characters confront unnamed persecutors. Throughout the play, the children cope by playing games about the lives they have left behind and what they have experienced.

Director's Note — When Sonia read me early drafts of her translation, it was immediately apparent that Miryeml, our teenage heroine was a powerful and revelatory poetic voice, unique in the history of Yiddish drama. For this introductory reading, we omitted several scenes from the middle of the play where the children encounter a series of misguided philanthropists. Additionally, as the cast list includes almost 30 roles, we merged several characters. The entire play runs 3 hours. Tonight's reading is 70 minutes followed by a talk back.

Translator's Note — I first came to Tea Arciszewska's *Miryeml* as part of a broader project on Yiddish plays by women, with the goal of translating a play that was interesting for its literary merits, not just its authorship. Over the past few years, I've only deepened my appreciation of the rich, folklore-infused modernism of Arciszewska's masterpiece. It has been a privilege to work with Caraid as my Yiddish Book Center Translation Fellowship mentor and now as a director. Her powerful interpretation clarifies some of Arciszewska's vagueness about time and place while still permitting us to understand *Miryeml* in universal terms, as a play about children during wartime – a topic that remains tragically relevant today.



Tea Arciszewska (1890–1962) was a dazzling figure in the prewar Warsaw Yiddish culture scene – an actress, dramaturg, salon hostess, and muse to the renowned Yiddish writer I. L. Peretz. In the 1920s, she began writing a play about the experiences of children during the pogroms that followed World War I. She worked on it for decades, first publishing *Miryeml* in 1958. Yiddish critics praised the play, seeing it as a powerful response to the Holocaust, and the title character as an extraordinary figure in Yiddish drama. *Miryeml* received an I.L Peretz Prize from the Congress for Jewish Culture for best Yiddish drama. Read an excerpt of *Miryeml* online at WWW.YIDDISHBOOKCENTER.ORG/DISCOVER/YIDDISH-TRANSLATION/DRAMA/MIRYEML-EXCERPT

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YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH

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The Congress for Jewish Culture was founded in 1948 to promote Yiddish language and culture. Among the founders were such luminaries as Shmuel Charney, Shmerke Kaczerginski, H. Leivick, and Yoysef Opatoshu. We believe that the printed word is the face of a language, the spoken word its beating heart, the song its soul. We join artists and individuals to the Yiddish community through live programming, web media, and print publications with resources for all levels of Yiddish understanding.

congressforjewishculture.org

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