

2018 marks the hundred-year anniversary of new nations and a new Europe, emerging from the collapse of empire and the conflagration of World War I. In the midst of the violent conflict of this period, including the war between the new Soviet Union and Ukraine, new cultural formations also developed. One of these was the Kultur-Lige, an association founded to “organize the Jewish masses and develop Yiddish culture.” The idea for the Kultur-Lige came from the Yiddish writer David Bergelson, living in Kiev in 1918. “Leagues for Yiddish culture” also were founded in Vilnius, Warsaw, Moscow, Berlin, and New York. Scores of Yiddish books came out under the imprints of the Kiev and Warsaw publishing houses carrying the same name, Kultur-Lige. The sphere of activity of the Kultur-Lige was not restricted to literature, journalism, and linguistics. Visual arts, music, and theater were important components of the Kultur-Lige program. Some of these branches had a very short life. The goal of the Kultur-Lige—the development of secular national culture without a nation state—may seem utopian. It is precisely the ephemeral and utopian qualities of the Kultur-Lige’s vision that makes it so appealing and important as an object of study.

This workshop will focus on the Kiev Kultur-Lige in the broad context of parallel developments in Ukrainian culture and literature at the same time. The workshop, organized in the year of the Kultur-Lige’s centenary, is aimed at broadening our knowledge of the history and lasting impact of this organization. Special attention will be paid to cultural and ideological interactions between the Kultur-Lige activists and their Ukrainian counterparts. The comparative study of languages, literatures, institutions, and cross-cultural cooperation and interaction even in a time of interethnic conflict—is particularly timely and consequential for suggesting new approaches to similar conflicts today. Exploring the history of networks developed outside the confines of national boundaries and with a view to the promotion of literature, music, and theater can reveal synergies, intersections, and confluences across languages and cultures.

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The Dmytro Shtohryn Endowment in Ukrainian Studies

Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center

LAS Dean’s Office

Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures

Program in Jewish Culture & Society

This workshop is free and open to the public.

One Hundred Years of the Kiev Kultur-Lige: Ukrainian and Jewish Cultural Formation



November 8

2018

English Building, Room 109

Organizers: Gennady Estraiikh
(NYU) and Harriet Murav
(Illinois)

University of Illinois at
Urbana-Champaign



8:30-9:00

Coffee, Welcome (**Harriet Murav**, UIUC), and Introductory Remarks (**Gennady Estraiikh**, Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, NYU)

9-11:00

Session 1: *Parallel Dreams*.

Myroslav Shkandrij (Professor, Slavic Studies, University of Manitoba). "Parallel Tracks: Ukrainian and Jewish Dreams of Cultural Renaissance, 1917-1926."

Amelia Glaser (Director of Jewish Studies and Director of REES, University of California at San Diego). "Dovid Hofshteyn's Ukraine: From National in Form to International in Content."

Mikhail Krutikov (Chair of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan). "Travel and Transformation: Journey as (Self)discovery in Der Nister's *Mayses* and Mayk Iohansen's *Podorozhi*."

11:00-11:15 Break

11:15-1:15

Session 2: *The Arts for All*.

Noa Tsaushu (PhD. Student, The Yiddish Program, Columbia University). "The Kultur-lige Artists' Studios Jewish Art School in the Making."

Mayhill Fowler (Professor of History, Stetson University). "Actresses in Kyiv, 1918: Theater, War, and a New Generation?"

Lyudmila Sholokhova (Director of Archives and Library, YIVO). "Music Section of the Kiev Kultur-Lige and the Idea of Music for All."

1:15-2:30 Box lunch provided

2:30-4:00

Session 3: *The History of a Contact Zone*.

Efim Melamed (Archivist and Independent Scholar, Kiev) "The Central Archives of the Kultur-Lige: A History and an Attempt at Reconstruction."

Sabine Koller (Professor, Slavic and Jewish Studies, University of Regensburg) Dovid Hofshteyn's Yiddish Poetry and the Ukrainian Space: Texts/ Contexts/Intertexts

4:00-4:15 Break

4:15-5:00 Summing up.

6:3 Dinner at Harriet Murav's house; transportation provided.