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**FOLKSBIENE SALUTES CARL REINER AT TOWN HALL GALA ON JUNE 17**

**NBC'S BRIAN WILLIAMS HOSTS AN EVENING OF MUSIC AND LAUGHTER**

**MARY TYLER MOORE, FYVUSH FINKEL, THEODORE BIKEL LEAD A DAZZLING  
LINE-UP OF PERFORMERS AND GUESTS**

**JEWISH ACTIVIST IRWIN HOCHBERG TO BE HONORED**

(May 21, 2008) NBC Nightly News's **Brian Williams**, a self-described Yiddish enthusiast, hosts the Drama Desk Award-winning National Yiddish Theatre – Folksbiene's laugh-filled homage to the legendary **Carl Reiner** on Tuesday, June 17, 2008 at 8pm at Town Hall, 123 West 43rd Street. In what is sure to be another illuminating cultural feast celebrating Yiddish, New York and the surprisingly varied and deep-rooted ties between the Yiddish theatre and American popular culture, Folksbiene welcomes a stagefull of prime time luminaries, surprise guests, Tony and Emmy winners, Yiddish legends and younger stars of a newer vintage with roots in television, comedy and Hollywood.

**Mary Tyler Moore**, who was discovered by Reiner when she became the beloved Laura Petrie on *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, will be joined by **Theodore Bikel, Fyvush Finkel, Jerry Stiller & Anne Meara** and **Renée Taylor**. These are just some of the show's high-wattage Gala Ensemble members who will perform an exciting array of material celebrating many of the happy convergences between Yiddish culture and the popular mainstream.

Williams, a New Jersey native, who has been known to pepper his language with Yiddish, will offer salty pronouncements about the savoury proceedings.

Reiner, who broke into showbusiness as a comedian in the Catskill Mountains, and first achieved major recognition on Sid Ceasar's *Your Show of Shows* (produced by Max Leibman), was nurtured and inspired by the unique comic stagecraft of the Yiddish theatre. He and his many great colleagues incorporated much of what they learned as they boldly set the course of television history. The Folksbiene gala concert will revel in the innovations that spurred the crossover of Yiddish into the mainstream, and that helped establish a quintessentially American performance style.

Playing for these many talents will be the Frank London & Zalmen Mlotek All-Star Band, led by **Zalmen Mlotek**, the world-recognized Yiddish music expert and conductor (who

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is Folksbiene's artistic director), and **Frank London**, of the Grammy-winning The Klezmatics. The event, produced by **Larry Adelman**, benefits the National Yiddish Theatre – Folksbiene, America's sole-surviving professional Yiddish theatre. **Scott Alan Evans** is the director. The New York Post and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Deli are the show's media and corporate sponsors.

The gala concert honors Jewish activist and philanthropist **Irwin Hochberg**. Hochberg is a past chairman of UJA-Federation of NY who currently serves on its Cabinet of the Commission of the Jewish People. He is a trustee of the Jewish National Fund, a former president of The American Friends of Open University in Israel, and he also was national campaign chairman for the State of Israel Bonds.

The eight-time Emmy winner Carl Reiner -- a comedian, actor, novelist and film director -- was born in the Bronx and awarded the Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize for Comedy in 2000. As creator, writer, producer and castmember of *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, which debuted in 1961, he revolutionized the television sitcom. He and **Joseph Stein** adapted his novel "Enter Laughing" into a hit play. His film directing credits include "Oh God!" with George Burns," and the **Steve Martin** vehicles "The Jerk," "The Man with Two Brains" and "All of Me."

The longest-continuously-producing Yiddish theatre company in the world (now wrapping up its historic 93rd consecutive season), Folksbiene is enjoying something that would have seemed impossible just a few years ago: mainstream success. With its Drama Desk-Award in 2007 for special achievement, and a string of critically acclaimed crossover hits (Folksbiene received Best Musical Revival Drama Desk nominations for "On Second Avenue" two seasons ago, and for last season's dark horse hit, the Yiddish version of Gilbert & Sullivan's "The Pirates of Penzance"), and through its numerous accommodations for non-Yiddish speakers (the company introduced live English and Russian supertitles at all its performances in 2003), the company has made impressive strides at broadening and diversifying its audience. Its mission is two-fold: to preserve the legacy of the Yiddish theatre -- dating back to the 1870's in Europe through its heyday in New York -- as well as to add to this legacy by developing new work.

For tickets, which range from \$75 to \$500, call Folksbiene at (800) 994-3347, (212) 213-2120 or online at [www.folksbiene.org](http://www.folksbiene.org)

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