

The Litvak Legacy in South Africa & Contemporary Culture

**10th Litvak Days in London
6–7 October 2021**

Dear Friend,

It is with great pleasure that we invite you to our annual Litvak Days in London, which will take place on the 6th and 7th of October 2021. This year we are hosting our 10th Litvak Days and we are delighted to offer a mix of in-person and virtual discussions, which we hope will be thought provoking and enriching. We are proud of this anniversary, which marks our efforts to learn more and to deepen our understanding of the Lithuanian Jewish community, its history, art, culture and cuisine. It is especially important in the current context of historical misrepresentation, denial and oblivion.

This year we dedicate our events to the South African Litvak community and celebrate its contribution to the longevity of the Litvak identity and memory. Litvaks left Lithuania at the end of the 19th century with the hope of a more prosperous life in South Africa – the land of newly discovered gold. They initially arrived at the Jewish Temporary Shelter in London and boarded Union-Castle Line ships that took them to their new homeland. Upon arrival in South Africa, the Litvak community was influenced by the local culture while at the same time maintaining strong ties with their relatives back in Lithuania. Scholars agree that Lithuanian Jews essentially built the South African Jewish community, which is one of the most homogenous in the Jewish diaspora and is notable for its source of strength and cohesion.

Our programme in 2021 explores the history, legacy and art, which distinctively connects Lithuanian Jews to South Africa and the UK and promotes the incredible diversity and vibrant narratives of the Litvak community. It is also an exceptional opportunity to reflect on the significance of the Jewish legacy in Lithuanian, South African and British culture.

I very much look forward to welcoming all of you to this year's Litvak Days in London!



Renatas Norkus

Ambassador of Lithuania to the United Kingdom

The Litvak Legacy in South Africa & Contemporary Culture

18:30–19:30 (GMT+1), **Wednesday, 6 October**

Opening concert: **Legends**

by **Gleb Pyšniak** (cello) and **Rokas Zubovas** (piano)

Anatolijus Šenderovas – *Two Songs of Shulamith*

Vidmantas Bartulis – *I'm Seeing My Friend Off
and We Are Taking One Last Look at
the Snow-covered February Trees...*

Faustas Latėnas – *Sonata for Cello and Piano*

Opening remarks:

Renatas Norkus,

Ambassador of Lithuania to the United Kingdom

Mantas Adomėnas,

Lithuanian Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs

Wendy Morton,

Minister for European Neighbourhood and
the Americas at the Foreign, Commonwealth
and Development Office

The Rt Hon Lord Pickles,

United Kingdom Special Envoy for post-Holocaust
issues, Chair, ACOBA, and Co-Chair,
UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation

10:00–16:00 (GMT+1), **Thursday, 7 October**

10:00–12:30 Morning session

10:00–10:15 Opening remarks:

David Mendoza-Wolfson,

Vice-President of Board of Deputies of British Jews

Faina Kukliansky,

Chairwoman of the Lithuanian Jewish Community

10:15–10:30 Keynote speech: Jewish South African Personalities who shaped my life

Antony Polonsky,

Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University

10:30–12:30 Discussion: The Litvak Legacy in South Africa

Moderator – **Rosie Goldsmith,**

Founder and Director of the European Literature Network

Panelists:

Gavin Morris,

Director of the South African Jewish Museum

John Schlapobersky,

Group analyst at the Bloomsbury Psychotherapy Practice and Consultant Psychotherapist at the Traumatic Stress Clinic in London

Albie Sachs,

Activist and a former judge on the Constitutional Court of South Africa

Shimon Lev,

Curator and researcher in Indian studies focusing on Indian and Jewish studies

13:00–16:00 Afternoon session

13:00–13:30 Presentation: *The Music Shell*, the premiere of a new audiovisual project by the **Chromatikon** (Aimee Birnbaum, Rūta Vitkauskaitė, Daryl Giuliano, Özlem Çelik, Jelena Makarova)

13:30–13:50 Keynote speech: **Lithuania's Link with the World: Creating Museum of Culture and Identity of Lithuanian Jews**

Kamilė Rupeikaitė,
Director of Vilna Gaon Museum
of Jewish History

13:50–15:50 Discussion: **Contemporary Litvak Culture in South Africa**

Moderator – **Ūla Tornau**,
curator of contemporary art and researcher in architectural history working with public space and conflictual pasts, currently the Lithuanian Cultural Attaché in London

Panelists:

Virginija Vitkienė,
Head of Kaunas-European Capital of Culture 2022
and curator of the William Kentridge exhibition in Kaunas

Jillian Edelstein,
Prominent South African and British photographer
currently working in Vilnius

Karina Simonson,
Scholar of the South Litvak Photography History

Philip Miller,
Prominent South African composer currently
collaborating with Kaunas2022

15:50–16:00 Closing remarks

About the participants



At the age of 14, **Gleb Pyšniak** had already debuted as a soloist with the Lithuanian Chamber Orchestra in the Lithuanian National Philharmonic Society. A student of the legendary cellist Natalia Gutman, Pyšniak performs in the most famous concert halls all over the world including the Wiener Musikverein, Royal Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, and the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. He has received the highest accolades in significant national and international competitions and an award from the hands of Valdas Adamkus, the President of the Republic of Lithuania, for promoting Lithuania abroad. His first teacher Tatjana Kuc guided the cellist in his musical journey, which took him to studies with Prof. Rimantas Armonas and prof. Johannes Meissl and was later enriched by the master classes of Yo-Yo Ma, Mstislav Rostropovich, Silvija Sondeckienė and Heinrich Schiff.



Pianist **Rokas Zubovas** has taught piano in Chicago (Saint Xavier University), Vilnius (Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre), and Kaunas (Vytautas Magnus University), where he was granted a full professorship in 2013. He is also the director of the M.K. Čiurlionis House in Vilnius. Zubovas completed his bachelor studies at the Lithuanian Academy of Music and Theatre and received his Master Degree in piano performance from DePaul University in Chicago, USA. He has toured with concerts in South and North America and performed in most countries of Europe and in Asia. In 2010 the pianist recorded all of Čiurlionis' piano works, which were released on a 6 CD set. Zubovas has delivered papers on various aspects of Čiurlionis' art at international conferences in Lithuania, Estonia, Argentina and Belgium, he organises music festivals and other cultural events, writes articles on music and culture for various publications in and outside of Lithuania, and has created the main character in a feature film about M.K. Čiurlionis titled *Letters to Sofija*.

Chromatikon formed in 2020 during the global pandemic as an all-female collective aiming to bring a message of hope and unity to audiences. Through its audiovisual projects it explores a range of topics the performers deeply care about including mental health issues, isolation, climate change, the survival of and discrimination against minorities. Chromatikon's members are based in the UK: artist Aimee Birnbaum (Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour), composer Rūta Vitkauskaitė (Royal Philharmonic Society), and award winning *Trio Sonorité* – Canadian cellist Daryl Giuliano, Turkish clarinetist Özlem Çelik and Russian-Lithuanian pianist Jelena Makarova.

Chromatikon describe their performance *The Music Shell* for the Litvak Days 2021 as "our homage to the flourishing Jewish community in Kaunas before WW2, which was central to the cultural life of the city." Focusing on the documents of the interwar city's rich music scene, the performance aims to evoke it through collected stories, journal reviews, photos and music quotes. It is a joyful recovery of those memories through the unique blend music and art as seen by *Chromatikon*.





Gavin Morris is the director of the South African Jewish Museum. Gavin Morris has a BA degree in History and Jewish Civilization and a MBA both obtained at the University of Cape Town. Following an early career in film and advertising, he became the director of the SAJewish Museum in 2012 where he has overseen the development of numerous exhibitions, a digital social history archive, and educational and cultural diversity programmes.



Rosie Goldsmith is an award-winning journalist specialising in arts and foreign affairs. In twenty years at the BBC, she travelled the world and presented several flagship programmes. Rosie is a linguist and has lived in Europe, Africa and the USA. Today she combines journalism with chairing and curating literary events and festivals for leading cultural organisations. She is Founder and Director of the European Literature Network www.eurolitnetwork.com and since 2018 has been Chair of the Judges of the EBRD Literature Prize, a major new prize honouring both author and translator of international literary works in English translation.



Kamilė Rupeikaitė is the director of Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History (VGMJH) and a researcher at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. Since 2008, she has been a member of the Lithuanian Delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). In 2017, she was the Chair of the Memorials and Museums Working Group. Her scientific research includes the symbolism of musical instruments, multicultural contexts of musical phenomena, and the musical heritage of the Lithuanian Jews.



Antony Barry Polonsky is emeritus Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University. He is the author of many historical works on the Holocaust. Prof Polonsky was a founder in 1984, and is now Vice-President, of the Institute for Polish-Jewish Studies and he is the founder and general editor of *Polin. A Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies*, perhaps the only scholarly publication devoted entirely to Polish-Jewish history of which he is an expert. Amongst his many professional achievements, Antony Polonsky was awarded the *Kulczycki Books Prize* in 2011 by the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies for Volumes I and II of *The Jews in Poland and Russia*.



Albie Sachs is an activist and a former judge on the Constitutional Court of South Africa (1994–2009). He began practising as an advocate at the Cape Bar at the age of 21, defending people charged under the racial statutes and security laws of apartheid. After being arrested and placed in solitary confinement for over five months, Sachs went into exile in England, where he completed a PhD at Sussex University. In 1988, he lost his right arm and his sight in one eye when a bomb was placed in his car in Maputo, Mozambique. After the bombing, he devoted himself to the preparations for a new democratic constitution for South Africa. When he returned home from exile, he served as a member of the Constitutional Committee and the National Executive of the African National Congress. He is the author of several books, including *The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs*, *Soft Vengeance of a Freedom Fighter*, *The Strange Alchemy of Life and Law* and *We, the People: Insights of an activist judge*. His latest book is *Oliver Tambo's Dream*.



John Schlapobersky is a group analyst at the Bloomsbury Psychotherapy Practice that was founded in 2009. He was a Founding Trustee of the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture (now Freedom from Torture) and Consultant Psychotherapist there and at the Traumatic Stress Clinic in London. At the Institute of Group Analysis in London he has been a teacher and supervisor for decades. His internationally teaching includes courses in China, Israel, South Africa and USA. His publications include several studies arising out of his investigations into the deaths of his family during the Holocaust in Lithuania. His first book, *From The Couch To The Circle: Group Analytic Psychotherapy In Practice*, won the Alonso Award from the American Group Psychotherapy Association. His second book, *When They Came For Me: The Hidden Diary Of An Apartheid Prisoner*, was launched in June 2021.



Shimon Lev is a curator and a researcher in Indian studies focusing on Indian and Jewish studies. He received his PhD from the Hebrew University, Jerusalem (2016). Lev has curated and exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Israel and abroad. (More than 30 solo exhibitions and more than 80 group exhibitions). Lev has published widely in the fields of Indian studies, Culture and art. Among his publications: *Vesheyodea Lishol* (Xhargol, 1998); *Soulmates: The Story of Mahatma Gandhi and Hermann Kallenbach* (Orient Blackswan, 2012); *From Lithuania to Santiniketan: Schlomith Flaum & Rabindranath Tagore* (Lithuanian Embassy in New Delhi, 2018); and *Clear are the Paths of India: The Cultural and Political Encounter Between Indians and Jews in the Context of their Respective National Movements* (Gamma, 2018). He edited the Hebrew edition of *Gandhi's: Satyagraha in South Africa* (Babel, 2014) and *Hind Swaraj* (Adam Olam, 2016). In 2019 he curated the exhibition "The Mount: Viewing Temple Mount-Haram al-Sharif, 1839-2019" at the Tower of David Museum, Jerusalem (2019–2020). He is currently working on a book titled *Gandhi and the Jews – The Jews and Gandhi*.



Jillian Edelstein is a prominent South African and British photographer working in both portrait and documentary photography. An Honorable Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society, her book *Truth and Lies: Stories from South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission* was published in 2002 and won the Kobal Book Award & the Visa D'Or. The National Portrait Gallery have collected over one hundred of her portraits. In 2018 she was Included in The Royal Photographic Society's list of 100 International Photographic Heroines. Her most recent projects include the series *The Water Rats*, about cold water swimming, and two museum commissions – "Generations: Portraits of Holocaust Survivors" at the Imperial War Museum, on display until January 2022 and portraits of the last remaining Foundlings for the Foundling Museum (forthcoming). She is working on filming the final interviews and editing for her feature documentary about the BiPolar afflicted, Academy Award nominated American screenwriter, Norman Wexler.



Virginija Vitkienė is an art critic and curator, lecturer, editor of art publications, and head of international projects in arts and in research. She is a founder and since 2015 – a head of the project “Kaunas – European Capital of Culture 2022” (www.kaunas2022.eu). In the framework of this project she curated the solo exhibition of a prominent South African artists William Kentridge titled “That which we do not remember” in Kaunas (January–November, 2022). Between 2010 and 2018 she was an Artistic Director of the Kaunas Biennial (www.biennial.lt). She is an author of a concept and founder of the “Magic Carpets” project (2017–2021) which is a Platform at Creative Europe (www.magiccarpets.eu) uniting 15 European partners and empowering emerging curators and artists for co-creative processes within communities in European cities, towns and suburbs, mostly in public space. Since 2004 she has been a curator of international exhibitions and projects in cooperation with the Kaunas Biennial, the National Museum of M.K. Čiurlionis, “Meno parkas” gallery, Lithuanian Artists’ Association, Vytautas Magnus University, Contemporary Art Centre Le Magasin (Grenoble), Leipzig Baumwoll Spinnerei among others. Since 2001 she has been writing for the cultural press and artist catalogues in Lithuania and internationally. In 2008 she defended a PhD degree in Art History with a focus on contemporary art.



Karina Simonson is an art historian working at the crossroads of Jewish and African studies. After completing her MFA studies at the University of Cape Town, in 2018 she defended a multidisciplinary doctoral dissertation titled “Baltic Jewish Photographers in the Republic of South Africa (1930-1976): Leon Levson and Eli Weinberg” at the Lithuanian Culture Research Institute. Her dissertation won the Special Prize for the Best Academic Work on National Minorities, awarded by the Government of Lithuania. Karina Simonson has worked at the History department of Vilna Gaon Museum of Jewish History and in Vilnius Jewish Public Library. Since 2019 she has been lecturing at the Institute for Asian and Transcultural Studies at Vilnius University. In 2021 she was awarded a Postdoctoral fellowship by the Lithuanian Science Council for the research on “Representations of Africa and Asia in Soviet Lithuanian children's culture (1945-1990): Origins, influences, circulation and after-effects” at Vilnius Academy of Arts. She is also the main initiator and committee chair for the first in the region international conference “Art beyond the Politics: Africa and the ‘Other’ Europe during the Cold War” which will take place in Vilnius, May 2022.



Philip Miller is a composer and sound artist based in Cape Town, South Africa. Since 1994, he has worked with his long-time collaborator, William Kentridge, composing the music for the seminal film: *Felix in Exile*. His music has more recently been heard here in London with the installation, *Refusal of Time* (Whitechapel) the cine-concert, *Paper Music* (Print Room) and *Five Themes* (Tate Modern, The Tanks). In 2016, together with Thuthuka Sibisi, he composed *Triumph and Laments*, a processional march for two orchestras and choir, performed in front of Kentridge's frieze on the banks of the Tiber River in Rome. Independent projects include his award-winning *Rewind: A Cantata for Voice, Tape & Testimony*, presented at the Market Theatre (South Africa), The 62 Centre, Williams College, Celebrate Brooklyn and the Royal Festival Hall (2011). In 2013, it was selected for the South African Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Other recent commissions include the sound installation, *Biko-hausen: Steve Biko and Karlheinz Stockhausen, Johannesburg*, at Darmstadt Summer Music Festival (2016) and his most recent collaboration with Sibisi is the sound installation, *The African Choir of 1891 Re-imagined*, at Autograph ABP, London, the Apartheid Museum and National Gallery, (South Africa.) He regularly composes film scores which have garnered him many awards, including an Emmy nomination for HBO's *The Girl* (2012). He is currently working on a commission for the Kaunas-European Capital 2022.



Ūla Tornau is the current Lithuanian Cultural Attaché in the UK. She is an exhibition curator and cultural researcher with a particular interest in urban change and conflictual histories. Before starting her current position she worked as a curator and was Head of Exhibition Department at the Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius, she has also taught and founded several independent artist initiatives. Tornau has curated and co-curated numerous projects including the Lithuanian pavilion at the 22nd Milano Design Triennale (2019); Lithuanian participation in the Biennial of Sao Paulo (2018); and Lithuanian Pavillions at the Venice Biennale (2017 and 2011). She holds degrees from the Central European University and Utrecht University as well as a PhD degree in Art History from the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts. She is currently a member of the Committee for Historical Memory at the Vilnius City Municipality and a board member of the Lithuanian Architectural Fund.



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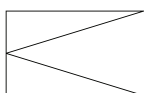
The **10th Litvak Days** in London 2021 are organized by the Embassy of Lithuania in the United Kingdom in partnership with the Lithuanian Cultural Attaché in the United Kingdom.



MINISTRY
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LITVAK
DAYS in
LONDON



Kaunas 2022
European Capital of Culture



Vilna Gaon Museum
of Jewish History



ELN EUROPEAN
LITERATURE
NETWORK



The background is a solid dark blue color. Overlaid on this are several thin, white, straight lines that intersect to form a series of overlapping triangles and other geometric shapes. The lines are oriented at various angles, including horizontal, vertical, and diagonal, creating a dynamic and modern abstract design.

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