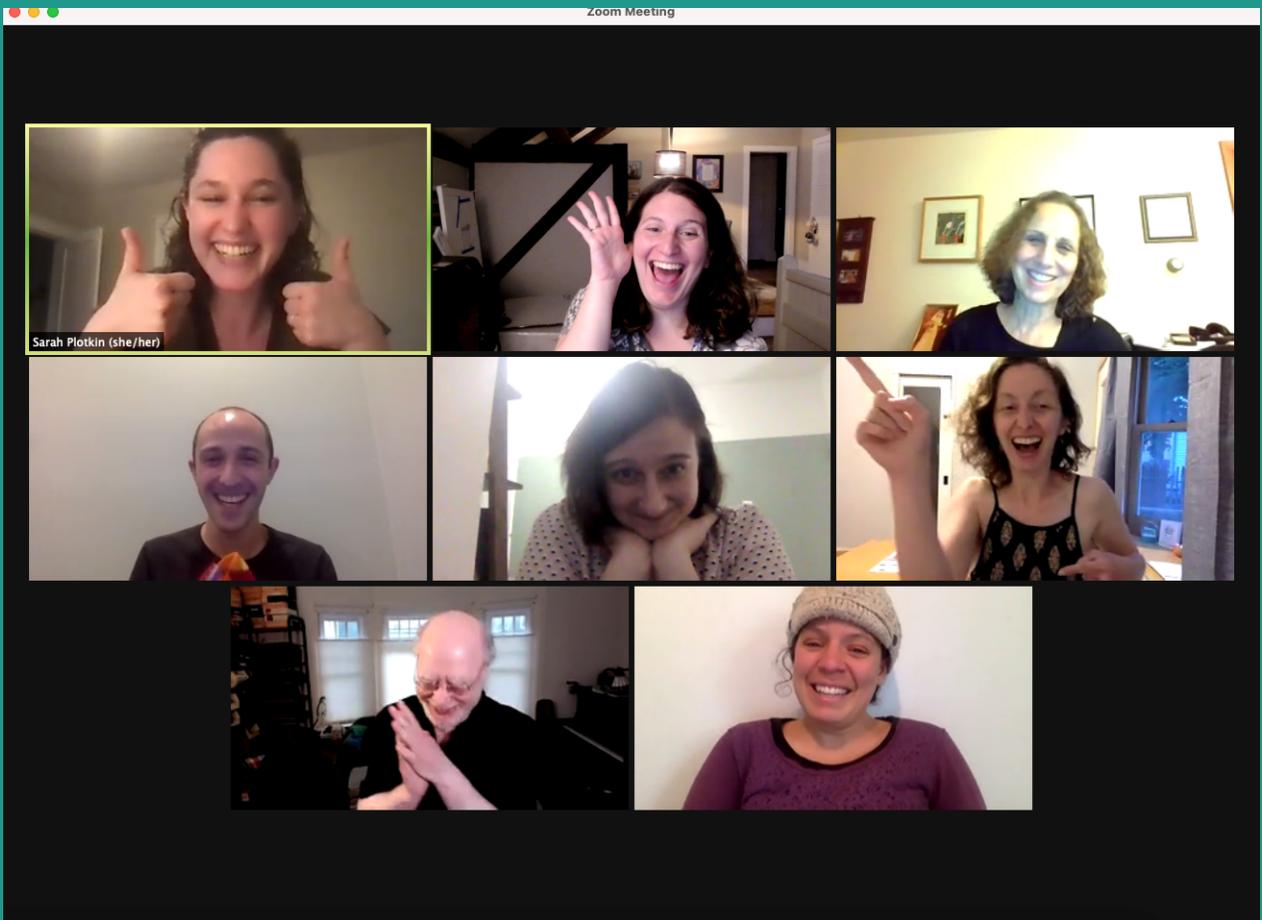


COMING TOGETHER

A virtual community-engaged storytelling project that explores the meaning of Jewish community, how we build it, and how it has transformed during COVID-19.



Ensemble Members

Co-Director: Sarah Plotkin

Co Director: Rebecca Powell

Dramaturg/Production Designer: Jesse Garlick

Ensemble:

Julia Corrigan

Beth Kaiserman

Jonathan Plotkin

Adina Polen

Naomi Ribner

Run of Show

1. Boxed In: Lawless Land - A Very Covid Seder
2. Pandemically Speaking: Part 1
3. Boxed In: Zoom Unzipped
4. Schmuck Court!
5. This Is How We Think We'll Remember
6. Boxed In: Muting Unavailable
7. Pandemically Speaking: Part 2
8. Boxed In: The New Old Normal
9. Boat of Light

Scenes

Boxed In

Writer and Director: Beth Kaiserman

Co-Director: Sarah Plotkin

Co-Director, Editor and Videographer: Jesse Garlick

Scene 1 - Lawless Land: A Very Covid Seder

Milton: Reb Moshe Waldoks

Gloria: Vicky Wallace

Caroline: Susan Putnins

David: Jesse Garlick

Eric: Drew Robinson

Judy: Julia Corrigan

Bubbe: Lucile Lichtblau

Scene 2 - Zoom Unzipped

Rebecca: Akiko Yonekawa

Sally: Naomi Ribner

Rabbi: Jonathan Plotkin

Extras: Jesse Garlick, Beth Kaiserman, Sarah Plotkin, Rebecca Powell

Music: *shtil* by Dee Yan-Key.

From the Free Music Archive, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Scene 3 - Muting Unavailable

Videographer: Andres Gedaly

Beth: Beth Kaiserman

Sam: Jesse Garlick

New Jew: Nakhie Faynshteyn

Extras: Lissa King, Josh Lutch, Shawn Provost, M.K. Murphy,

Christine Reilly, Sunessa Schettler

Music: "Adon Olam" courtesy of Cantor Azi Schwartz, Park Avenue

Synagogue, and Bruce Springsteen

Scene 4 - The New Old Normal

Brian: Jesse Garlick

Milton: Reb Moshe Waldocks

Rebecca: Akiko Yonekawa

Beth: Beth Kaiserman

Rita: Lauren Garlick

Rabbi Josh: Josh Habib

Extras: Raven Bouvier, Mitch Hilton, Lissa King, Jane Patrick

Sets provided by Congregation Kehillath Israel in Brookline, Massachusetts

Special thanks to Eric Yuan, the founder of Zoom; Rabbi Jen Gubitz/The Riverway Project; Hebrew College adult learning; Congregation Beth Shalom (Pittsburgh); Ikar (Los Angeles); the Korenthal Family; Aloni Cohen's seder plate-setting hands; Kupel's Bakery; Costco; and grocery store owners, employees, and Instacart shoppers in Boston and beyond.

Pandemically Speaking

Writer, Director, and Animator: Naomi Ribner

Co-Director: Jesse Garlick

Cast: Performed by Naomi Ribner

Becca

Adam

Rachel

Miriam

The cousins: Jesse, Jenny and Julie

The cat: Diamond Ribner Martin

Animation & Tech Consultant: Andrew Murdock

Production Assistant: Peter Schindler

Puzzle master: Carol Ribner

Cat photographers: Ruth Ribner and Lenore Martin

Nature photography: Naomi Ribner

Drawing by Jesse: Link Ribner

Drawful game participants during the filming: Sarah Plotkin, Rebecca Powell, Jesse Garlick, and Peter Schindler

Sound Effects

Geese sounds: Freesoundlibrary.com

Cat meow and motorcycle sounds: Zapsplat

Nature sounds: Naomi Ribner

Special thanks to Carol Ribner, Alan Ribner, and Ruth Ribner for sharing their stories and giving me permission to take extreme artistic license in the retelling, and to Peter Schindler who helped in so many ways I could not possibly list them all here. Much appreciation to Link Ribner for bearing with me throughout this project.

Schmuck Court!

Writer and Director: Jonathan Plotkin

Co-Director: Rebecca Powell

Video Editor: Emma Plotkin

Larry: Eric Pallant

Sophie: Beth Kaiserman

Bobby: Jim Dessauer

Irving: John Vandenberg

Murray: Dan Ruderman

Jacob: Ian Mickey Shapiro

Extras: Jesse Gottlieb, Sarah Plotkin, Adina Polen, Rebecca Powell

Story Consultants: David Sherr, Martha Plotkin, Eric Pallant

Music: *Di Zilberne Khasene* performed by Eric Pallant with Fool's Gold, used with permission

This scene was inspired by and honors the writer's father, Edward Plotkin and his "Putz Club". Thanks like you wouldn't believe to the hard-working, brilliant and delightful cast, whose previous acting experience collectively amounts to an average high school theater season.

This is How We Think We'll Remember

Writer, Director and Choreographer: Julia Corrigan

Co-Director: Rebecca Powell

Dancer: Julia Corrigan

Person 1: Rebecca Powell

Person 2: Beth Kaiserman

Person 3: Adina Polen

Special thanks to Molly Barson and Lauren Siff Siegel, whose stories were instrumental in shaping the landscape of the characters; to countless others in my life whose experiences over the last year have inspired me; and to the *Coming Together* ensemble members, who have each enriched my life and understanding of Jewish community within the pandemic and all contexts.

Boat of Light

Writer, Director, and Performer: Adina Polen

Co-Director: Sarah Plotkin

Composer and Musician: Jared Stein

This play features the poem "Leisure," by Zelda Schneurson Mishkovsky, Translated by Marcia Falk in *The Spectacular Difference : Selected Poems, Cincinnati : Hebrew Union College Press, 2004.*

Thank you to Lauri Wolff, Helen Wolff, Cheryl Magence, Ariel, Ezra, Nahum, and Daniel Mayse for your contributions to this piece. I'm grateful to be related to you! Thank you to Sarah Plotkin, Rebecca Powell, and Jesse Garlick for your facilitation of this project, and for your care-filled editing and support. Thank you to Jared Stein for the contribution of your wonderful music.

Ensemble Bios

Julia Corrigan (Ensemble) is a choreographer and storyteller who explores memory, belonging, and the collective human experience through movement. She works as an arts administrator at MCC Theater, serves on the Board of Directors of NACHMO Dance, and is the former Managing Director of Electric Eye Ensemble. Julia received a BA in Dance with a focus on Choreography & Performance from Goucher College.

Jesse Garlick (Production Design / Dramaturg) is a Boston based actor, dancer and theatre educator. He is a former faculty member at Boston Ballet's ECI Department as well as a co-founder of 360 Dance Ensemble. Jesse has taught acting, devising and movement at numerous schools (Newton South High School, Solomon Schechter Day School) and summer programs (BUSTI, Reagle Music Theatre Summer Workshop) across Massachusetts and is an artistic associate with the Boston based devising company Liars & Believers. MFA-ASDS at Pace University (Theatre Studies). BFA- Boston University (Acting).

Beth Kaiserman (Ensemble) is a copywriter and content writer with a specialty in food businesses. Beth is currently the freelance senior copywriter at food and beverage agency Off the Ground and a content producer at Agency 6B. While working for 12 years as a journalist, Beth explored food through every angle, from restaurants and breweries to better-for-you food and beverage brands for sites like Forbes.com, NOSH, The Journal News, and more. She grew up in Pittsburgh and graduated from Penn State with a B.A. in journalism and a theatre minor. She loves to tap dance and has shuffled along from high school musicals to teaching tap to the tunes of Kanye West to a massive flash mob in Times Square.

Jonathan Plotkin (Ensemble) founded and ran Sherpa Technologies, an Ithaca-based IT support, networking and security company for 20 years before starting Storyography, LLC about ten years ago in order to pursue his interest in filming personal life stories and story-telling events. Originally from Worcester, MA, he has a BA in psychology from Hampshire College and an MA from Cornell in Human Development. In retirement, Jonathan is active in several community projects, hangs out with his alter kocker friends and enjoys spending more time with his wife Barbara. He's especially proud of his two theater director/educator/cultural worker daughters, Sarah and Emma, who have gifted him his best stories.

Sarah Plotkin (Co-director) is a theater-maker, cultural worker and anti-racism facilitator who collaborates with professional artists, community members and young people to build original theater that celebrates community and connection across differences. She works as a freelance director and teaching artist with ArtsEmerson, Wheelock Family Theatre, and Arlington Center for the Arts, among others, and is the former Artistic Director of Electric Eye Ensemble. Sarah has an MA in Theatre Education and Applied Theatre from Emerson College and a BA in Directing from Sarah Lawrence College.

Adina Polen (Ensemble) is the Founder and Executive Director of Atiq: Jewish Maker Institute, an applied arts yeshiva based in Berkeley, CA. After earning her BA in Music from Barnard College, Adina studied design at the Bezalel Academy and Hadassah College, and Jewish texts at Midreshet Lindenbaum, at the Pardes Institute and at the Yakar Center for Creativity and Tradition—all in Jerusalem. Along with her work at Atiq, Adina has worked as a Maker Educator at the Brandeis Collegiate Institute, and at the Nesiya Institute. Adina has been steeped in the do-it-yourself ethos of the Havurah movement, Jewish Catalog style creativity, and the teachings of Hasidut from her earliest days. She believes that multi-sensory creative opportunities for meaning making sustain us as individuals, and strengthen our communities.

Rebecca Powell (Co-director) is an educator and facilitator committed to the intersection of pluralistic community building, creative arts, and social change. She is currently a Senior Facilitator and Educator at Resetting the Table. She formerly served as the Student Activities Director at Harvard Hillel, and as an educator at Central Synagogue and Roundabout Theater Company. Rebecca received her Masters in Experiential Education & Jewish Cultural Arts at GW in 2019 and has a B.A. in Social Welfare from UC Berkeley.

Naomi Ribner (Ensemble) is a mixed media artist whose career has hovered at the intersection of fine art, design, technology and education. Formerly a professor at Wellesley College and Holy Cross, she has since been working in communications and web design in higher ed and the world of non-profits. Her artwork has been exhibited internationally. Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Naomi received her MFA from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, and has lived in the Boston area ever since. An avid hiker and outdoors person, Naomi enjoys exploring New England's forests, mountains and rivers as often as possible.

Discussion Guide

Coming Together was inspired by real stories of the Covid-19 pandemic. We invite you to reflect on your own experiences of community throughout this unique period through discussion and storytelling with the people in your lives.

Discussion Questions

1. When did you experience powerful moments of being in community during the pandemic? Describe the experience in detail: Who was there? What did it look like? How did you gather? How did it feel?
2. What elements of community did you lose during the pandemic? What losses are you mourning? Did these losses end up surprising you? How?
3. While many elements of the pandemic were shared, people also had experiences that differ from our own. Whose stories are you unfamiliar with? Think about someone you would like to reach out to and discuss their stories. Maybe it's someone you've been in touch with, but you realize you only know their surface-level experiences. Maybe it's someone you haven't spoken to in a while. Reach out to them and ask for their stories.

Write your own pandemic story

We encourage you to use the reflections and conversations from above to write a story about an experience of community during the pandemic. You can choose to tell your own story or craft the story of someone you took the time to have a conversation with, with their permission. Sharing these stories helps connect us to one another after a prolonged time of isolation.

1. Tips for telling compelling stories:
 - Be authentic and speak in your own voice.
 - *Beginning*: Start from inside the action. Instead of beginning with “This is a story about...”, start from inside the story. For example, “I was settling into my nightly pandemic routine of dinner in front of the tv when suddenly, there was a loud knock on the door.”

- *Middle*: Challenge and Choice. Your story can include a challenge that compels you to make a choice. For example, the challenge may be whether or not to travel to family for Passover during Covid. The choice might be to host the seder on Zoom. Describe the challenge and choice in detail. Use sights, smells, and sounds to flesh out your story.
 - *End*: Why this matters. What was important about this story? How did it impact you?
2. Prompt: Tell a story about a moment when you felt connected to community or isolated from community during the pandemic.
 3. Brainstorm your beginning, middle, and end.
 4. Tell your story out loud a few times. Work with a chevruta (partner) and offer each other feedback and appreciation. What is sticking with you from the other's story? What did you want to know more about?
 5. Who else would you like to share this story with? Whether with friends and family, at a storytelling event, or simply to have for yourself, take this story with you as our lives begin to shift once more.

Interested in learning more or bringing a storytelling workshop to your community? Contact ComingTogetherStories@gmail.com

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A huge thank you to:

- Brigid Goggin of Temple Israel of Boston for managing the zoom webinar and RSVP system and working with us through countless details. You have been a true partner.
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- Laura Mandel from JArts for supporting and promoting this project
- Sophie Krentzman and Clarissa Woolf of CJP for supporting and believing in this project
- Rebecca, Sarah, and Jesse's partners - Aloni Cohen, Jesse Gottlieb, and Jo Elwood - for bringing us dinner during rehearsal, listening to us talk about this show for months, and being so supportive throughout this process.

