

**Henry Bial  
Kerry Wallach  
Adi Heyman  
Paul Herzberg  
Svenja Bethke**

**Leo Baeck Institute  
Lecture Series  
London, 2019–20**

**Acting Jewish:  
Between Identity  
and Attire**

# Acting Jewish: Between Identity and Attire

Leo Baeck Institute Lecture Series  
London, 2019–20

This season's lecture series investigates the complex nature of what it means to act or appear Jewish and for whom this appearance is important. Examples are drawn from a wide range of performative settings: on stage, on screen, in daily life. Under which conditions do certain elements of fashion and attire appear as 'Jewish'? How do Jews consciously showcase or hide their identity by way of 'acting' and dressing in certain ways? And how were these elements conceptualised in the wider discourse: as 'natural' – self-expressions of an ethничal identity, as attire communicating a social role, or 'prejudiced' – as a 'costume' hiding the wearer's true identity?



## Henry Bial

Professor of Theatre and Dance,  
University of Kansas, USA

**Jewish on Demand: Representation  
and Difference in the Streaming Era**  
6.30pm, Thursday 5th December 2019

Classic Jewish film and television, from *The Jazz Singer* to *Seinfeld*, was shaped by the economic need to reach the broadest possible audience, leading to creative strategies that minimized or downplayed the difference between Jews and the rest of society. As Netflix and other streaming services have made more specialized entertainment commercially viable, new ways of acting Jewish on screen have emerged that highlight the quirkier and more contested aspects of Jewish identity.

Henry Bial is Professor and Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Kansas, where he has also served as Director of Jewish Studies, Director of the School of the Arts, and Chair of the Department of American Studies. He is the author of *Acting Jewish: Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen* (2005) and *Playing God: The Bible on the Broadway Stage* (2015).

## Kerry Wallach

Professor of German, Gettysburg College,  
USA

**'Coming Out' as Jewish  
in Weimar Germany**  
6.30pm, Thursday 23rd January 2020

In the 1920s and early 1930s – as today – Jews in Germany were concerned about growing anti-Semitism, and many took precautions to conceal their Jewishness by dressing and behaving in certain 'assimilated' ways. Yet there were still occasions when it was beneficial to be openly Jewish. This lecture explores the tensions that came with being visible as a Jew – an identity play that often involved appearing simultaneously non-Jewish and Jewish. Drawing on a wide range of images and films, this presentation explores controversial aspects of German-Jewish visibility and invisibility, as well as the complex reasons why Jews chose to appear distinctly 'Jewish'.

Kerry Wallach is Associate Professor and Chair of German Studies and an Affiliate of the Judaic Studies Program at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Passing Illusions: Jewish Visibility in Weimar Germany* (2017) and a number of articles on German-Jewish literature, history, film, and visual and consumer culture. She serves as co-editor for the German Jewish Cultures book series published by Indiana University Press and sponsored by the Leo Baeck Institute London.



## Adi Heyman

'Modest Fashion' blogger and founder  
of the 'Jewish Fashion Council', USA

**The Big Cover-Up: Modest Fashion**  
6.30pm, Wednesday 4th March 2020

What started out as religious niche has matured into a 250 billion-dollar industry largely pioneered by a group of diverse women embracing unique identities on social media. Fashion stylist turned blogger, Adi Heyman's inspiration behind launching a Jewish fashion and lifestyle blog in 2010 stemmed from her personal and professional experience as an Orthodox Jew working in the fashion industry.

In her talk, Heyman explores the possibility of being an 'Orthodox Fashion Influencer', and reflects on the lack of authentic content highlighting modest fashion and the under-representation of women from minority cultures. As one of the leading religion-focused Jewish influencers she promotes conservative silhouettes with a contemporary twist that resonates with the religiously observant consumer. Her work interprets Western identities alongside religious belief in a way that enables women to feel empowered by personal fashion and lifestyle choices. In 2019, Heyman founded the Jewish Fashion Council (JFC) to build a global community of Jewish fashion professionals and to provide funding and support for the Jewish student life at the Fashion Institute of Technology and the Parson's School of Design.



## Paul Herzberg

Actor and Writer, London, UK

**Acting Jewish: Perception and Reality**  
6.30pm, Thursday 23rd April 2020

What does 'acting Jewish' really mean? Is it a style of performance drawing on the alleged traits of global Jewry? Or is it perhaps about ancient perceptions? Paul Herzberg offers a view, drawing on his four decades in the entertainment industry.

Paul Herzberg is an actor and writer. His most recent appearances as an actor were as John Vorster in Antony Sher's *ID* at the Almeida; Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice* at The Arcola, at the RSC as Vincentio in *The Taming of The Shrew*; in 2017 Shimon Peres in the award-winning play, *Oslo*. Recent television includes Daniel Borgoraz in the award-winning serial *The Honourable Woman*. His screenplay *Almost Heaven* won the Nashville International Best Feature Award, and his stage play, *The Dead Wait*, was shortlisted for The Verity Bargate Award, nominated in three categories for the MEN theatre awards, winning best actor. His commissioned screenplay *Anna's Story* was selected for the 2018 Brit List.



## Svenja Bethke

Lecturer in Modern European History,  
University of Leicester, UK

**How to dress in Eretz Israel? Clothing,  
Fashion and Nation Building, 1880s–1948**  
6.30pm, Thursday 21st May 2020

The identities of many Eastern European and German Jews who immigrated to Eretz Israel between the 1880s and the foundation of the Israeli state in 1948 oscillated between their roots and identification with the new Zionist project. This lecture explores how immigrants expressed social, cultural and political belonging through clothing and, focusing on gender and visual materials, offers fresh perspectives on how clothing became fashion, or 'anti-fashion', and to what extent a consensual mode of dress emerged. It also explores how clothing habits of Arab people and changing Ottoman and British occupying authorities influenced 'Jewish' fashion.

Svenja Bethke is a Lecturer in Modern European History and the former Deputy Director of the Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Leicester. Her research interests include the Holocaust, legal history, the history of modern Palestine/Israel, visual culture and fashion history. She is currently a visiting Marie Curie Fellow at the Abraham Harman Institute for Contemporary Jewry at the Hebrew University Jerusalem for her project on 'Clothing, Fashion and Nation Building in Eretz Israel'.



Lectures will be held at:  
German Historical Institute  
17 Bloomsbury Square  
London WC1A 2NJ.  
Places are strictly limited  
and must be reserved in  
advance by contacting the  
Leo Baeck Institute, London  
e: info@leobaeck.co.uk  
t: +44 (0) 20 7882 5690.  
Admission is free.  
Lectures will begin promptly  
at 6.30pm. Latecomers may  
not be admitted.

The Leo Baeck Institute  
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