

**Title:** **AWAKE IN THE DARK**, A Theater Concert work

Based on Shira Nayman's short story, *The House on Kronenstrasse*, from her collection *Awake in the Dark* © Scribner, 2006, for two actors AND Chamber Music by Ben Moore © 2006 for viola, clarinet and piano

**Producers:** Trey Tetreault, Shira Nayman

**Director:** Bill Barclay

**Playwright:** Shira Nayman

**Composer:** Ben Moore

**Actors:** Merritt Janson, Juliana Sass

**Musicians:** Jack Kessler (viola), Todd Palmer (clarinet), Nathaniel LaNasa (piano)

**Set design:** Daniel Prosky

**Genre:** Play, Drama, with original music for trio

**Copyright Holder:** Shira Nayman (script), Ben Moore (music)

**Language:** English

**Press Contact:** Trey Tetreault, [trey.tetreault@gmail.com](mailto:trey.tetreault@gmail.com)

**Synopsis:**

On her deathbed, Christiane's mother apologizes to her, then utters a street address in Heidelberg. Christiane has only hazy memories of her early childhood in Germany, which she and her mother never discussed after arriving in New York after the war. She knows only that her father, a German soldier, was killed during Hitler's invasion of Poland. Her mother's last words set Christiane on a search for her identity, leading her back to Heidelberg, and to a shocking confrontation with the truth.

**Playwright's Statement:**

Interweaving theater and chamber music, this piece explores one woman's experience of the impact of secrets and hidden pain born of collective, socio-historical trauma. As we accompany Christiane on her journey, we glimpse the ways in which repression of historical truth can weave into the self—and the redemptive power of reckoning with the past.

**Crew**

**Producers:** Trey Tetreault, Shira Nayman

**Director:** Bill Barclay

**Composer:** Ben Moore

**Playwright:** Shira Nayman

**Original Music:** Ben Moore

**Musical Director:** Ben Moore

**Production Stage Manager:** Dawn Elane  
Reed

**Tech, Sound, Lighting Designer:** Jay  
Lawrence

**Cast:**

Juliana Sass as Christiane

Merritt Janson as Hilde

**Musicians:**

Jack Kessler (viola)

Todd Palmer (clarinet)

Nathaniel LaNasa (piano)

## **Creative Team Bios:**

Trey Tetreault

- Producer
  - Trey (he/him/his) is a director, producer, and creative specialist based in New York City. He is an award-winning director of theatre and film, having attained recognition in the international independent short film circuit. He likes to stay busy on a myriad of creative projects, always looking to collaborate and expand his creative circle. Various credits include work with *Saturday Night Live*, HBO, projects with 4-time Tony Award-winning Producer, Harriet Leve, and Anthony Bourdain's *Parts Unknown*.

Bill Barclay

- Director
  - Bill Barclay (he/him) has written and directed two dozen original works of concert-theater for the world's leading ensembles. Last season featured The National Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Music of the Baroque, Chicago Symphony, Milwaukee Symphony, United Strings of Europe, Chautauqua and Caramoor Festivals, and the Harlem Chamber Players. Broadway and West End credits as Music Supervisor include *Farinelli and the King*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Richard III*, all starring Sir Mark Rylance.

Shira Nayman

- Playwright
  - Shira Nayman is the author of five books: *Awake in the Dark* (Scribner, 2006), *The Listener* (Scribner, 2010), *A Mind of Winter* (Akashic Books, 2012), *River* (Guernica, 2020), and *Shoreline* (in-press, Guernica, 2024). She has published in magazines & journals, including *The Atlantic*, *Georgia Review*, *New England Review*, *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, *Boulevard*, *Columbia: A Magazine of Poetry and Prose*, *O Magazine*, *Tikkun*, and *Tablet Magazine*. Awards include three Australia Council for the Arts Literature grants, the Cape Branch award for Women Writers, a Hadassah Brandeis literature grant, and a MacDowell fellowship. Her work has been performed on NPR, at the Brooklyn Historical Society, and at Lincoln Center (workshop).

Ben Moore

- Composer
  - The music of American composer Ben Moore includes art song, opera, musical theater, cabaret, chamber music, choral music and comedy material. His work has been called "brilliant" and "gorgeously lyrical" by the *New York Times*, while *Opera News* has praised the "easy tunefulness" and "romantic sweep" of his songs. Singers who have performed his work include Deborah Voigt, Susan Graham, Frederica von Stade, Isabel Leonard, Lawrence Brownlee, Robert White, Nathan Gunn and Audra McDonald.

## Merritt Janson

- Actor

Merritt Janson has performed Off-Broadway at The Public (*Richard II*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Theatre for a New Audience (*Julius Caesar*, *Measure for Measure*, *Tamburlaine the Great*, *Notes From Underground*), Red Bull Theater (*Coriolanus*), 59E59 (*Built*), Transport Group (*House for Sale*), Abingdon Theatre (*The Last Will*). Regionally she has worked at American Repertory Theater, Yale Repertory Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Denver Center, Two River Theater, The Wilma, Shakespeare & Company, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival. Her TV/film credits include series and films on Apple TV+, Amazon Prime, Showtime, NBC Universal, CBS and ABC, among others. She received her MFA from ART/MXAT at Harvard University.

## Juliana Sass

- Actor

Juliana Sass recently played Shelby in the world premiere of Kimberly Belflower's *John Proctor is the Villain* at Studio Theater (Helen Hayes nominated for Outstanding Lead Performer in a Play, winner for Best Production & Best Ensemble). Other theater credits include Erica Schmidt's *Mac Beth* (Hunter Theater Project) and *Julius Caesar* (Theater for a New Audience). Selected readings/workshops at Playwrights Horizons, The New Group, New York Stage & Film, Studio Theater. Film credits include *A Call to Spy*, *Radium Girls*, and *The Sisterhood of Night*. Juliana graduated with a BA in Comparative Literature from Harvard University. She is represented by Aleen Keshishian and James Thompson at Lighthouse Management + Media.

## Jack Kessler

- Musician, viola

Jack Kessler is a Master of Music student at the Yale School of Music, where he studies viola with Ettore Causa. Jack was a National YoungArts Foundation finalist and performed on NPR's *From The Top* with Jeremy Denk at Dartmouth College. Jack has studied at The Perlman Music Program, Ashkenasi-Kirshbaum Chamber Music Seminar, the Heifetz International Music Institute, the Verbier Festival Academy, and the Fontainebleau American Conservatory. At Curtis, he was the Chamber Music Coordinator alongside his mentor Steven Tenenbom. They organized a concert in the spring of 2023 to honor composers who perished in the Holocaust.

## Todd Palmer

- Musician, Clarinet

Todd Palmer, a three-time Grammy nominee, has appeared as soloist with many symphony & chamber orchestras including those of Houston, Atlanta, St. Paul, Cincinnati, Montréal, BBC Scotland; and has given recital performances at Weill Hall and the 92nd Street Y, the Kennedy Center, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. He was a winner of

the Young Concert Artists International Auditions and grand prize winner in the Ima Hogg Young Artist Auditions. He has collaborated with the St. Lawrence, Brentano, Borromeo, Jupiter, Chiara, Lark, and Pacifica string quartets; and sopranos Kathleen Battle, Renée Fleming, Elizabeth Futral, Heidi Grant Murphy and Dawn Upshaw. He has championed and recorded Osvaldo Golijov's klezmer clarinet quintet, *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*; commissioned Ricky Gordon's theatre work, *Orpheus and Euridice*, presented by Great Performers at Lincoln Center; and premiered David Bruce's *Gumboots* at Carnegie Hall. Mr. Palmer appeared as soloist in director Robert La Page's staging of *The Nightingale and Other Fables* at BAM, and gave the world premiere of *Crosswalk*, a new work for clarinet and dance especially created for him by choreographer Mark Morris. He has also worked directly with numerous composers including Osvaldo Golijov, Thomas Adès, David Bruce, Ricky Ian Gordon, Christopher Rouse, Mason Bates, Ned Rorem, and George Tsontakis. His Broadway credits include *South Pacific*, *The King & I*, *Les Misérables*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *My Fair Lady* and currently, *Sweeney Todd*.

Nathaniel LaNasa

- Musician, Piano

Fascinated with the intersection of storytelling, speech, and movement, Nathaniel LaNasa partners with singers, dancers, and ensembles in music spanning five centuries. A consummate collaborator, Nate has been praised for his “stormy lyricism” (*New York Times*) as well as his “poise and elegance” (*Feast of Music*). In early 2022, he performed “Intimate Apparel,” Ricky Ian Gordon's new two-piano opera, sixty times at the Lincoln Center Theater. His premieres include works by Nate Wooley, Matthew Ricketts, Molly Joyce, Shawn Jaeger, and Dimitri Tymoczko. Nate curates NYFOS Next at the Rubin Museum since 2022. NYC credits include Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, MoMA, and (le) Poisson Rouge; he's also performed at the Musée d'Orsay (Paris), Wigmore Hall (London), and Burning Man (Black Rock City). [Nathaniel-lanasa.com](http://Nathaniel-lanasa.com)

**Existing Press:**

New York Times

***Houses and Souls, Haunted by Holocaust Ghosts***

<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/10/books/10awak.html>

The Atlantic Magazine

***Dark Rememberings: An interview with Shira Nayman***

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2006/12/dark-rememberings/305528/>

San Francisco Chronicle

<https://www.sfgate.com/books/article/holocaust-binds-family-secrets-2487660.php>

Cleveland Plain Dealer

[https://www.cleveland.com/pdextra/2010/01/join\\_shira\\_nayman\\_awake\\_in\\_the.html](https://www.cleveland.com/pdextra/2010/01/join_shira_nayman_awake_in_the.html)

**Praise for Shira Nayman's "Awake in the Dark":**

"A haunting excursion into the past. Each story is a literary page-turner with a classic O. Henry twist." –***The Atlantic Monthly***

"The essential subject of *Awake in the Dark* is memory, as the characters gradually discover the truths of their pasts, revealed to them like Chinese boxes: boxes within boxes within boxes."

--***New York Times***

"It is to Nayman's great credit that her subtle handling of extremely dramatic material allows the reader to be deeply moved without feeling manipulated. *Awake in the Dark* quietly and forcefully insists that despite every wish to remain asleep, comforted by unconsciousness, we are all much better served by opening our eyes to the truth." –***San Francisco Chronicle***

"Shira Nayman's brave and bracing first book reminds me most of O. Henry. Much of *Awake in the Dark* is plotted in that perfect way that stops our breath even as our brain hums with pleasure at the inevitable, internal logic." --***Cleveland Plain Dealer***

"The bleak, beautiful and deftly plotted stories in Shira Nayman's *Awake in the Dark* are like nothing out there..." -- ***Newsday***

"There's breathtaking storytelling here, replete with psychological detail and stunning clarity."  
--***Library Journal*** (starred)

This book will resonate with anyone who has buried a parent without ever knowing who that person was--

--**Mary Doria Russell**, author of *The Thread of Grace* and *The Sparrow*

"Nayman, a psychologist, constructs powerful emotional journeys for her characters...these characters' observations and revelations ring true." –***Kirkus***

“Nayman's stories hauntingly and beautifully unveil the depths of her characters. Each story is full of twists and secrets, yet each has an openness that makes history immediate.” – **Book**

**Passage**

“I'm shaken by Shira Nayman's brilliant and mystical stories. She writes with wisdom and courage.

--**Ursula Hegi**, author of *Sacred Time* and *Stones From the River*

**Topic Tags:**

#nyc #jewishstories #newtheatre #nyctheatre #brooklyntheatre #theatre #brooklyn  
#brooklynconcert #brooklynchambermusic #nycchambermusic #motheranddaughter #history  
#ghoststories #identity #transgenerationaltrauma #holocaust #past #stories #historicaltrauma  
#historicalstories #storytelling #awakeinthedark #shiranayman #benmoore