

MEMO: 26 July 1998
FROM: Jeffrey Shandler
TO: David Roskies
RE: Ideas for SA conference 1999

1. Scholarly papers:

current/recent work by literary scholars, historians, linguists, etc. on

- SA's works
- SA's use of language
- SA's career and posthumous reputation
- SA's works in performance

I would suggest either two-paper sessions with a chair or one presentation and discussant per session, unless we have three papers ^{what} would cohere as a unit and benefit from a joint presentation.

Because we are giving rather short notice, we should consider inviting people to present/revisit work already done--e.g., Ellie Kellman and/or Aryeh Goren on SA's funeral; Seth Wolitz and/or Ken Frieden on the dramatic versions of Tevye; Robert Rothstein on klezmer-loshn in Stempenyu; Zachary Baker on the USSR's exhibition honoring SA's birthday in the 1930s, Dan Miron on SA's portrait of shtetl life.

2. Discussion sessions:

--Translation of SA: a panel discussion, which should include published translators (e.g., Halkin, Leviant, Neugroschel, Shevrin) as well as scholars; might be interesting to have the discussion include translations other than into English for comparison (Hebrew, Russian, etc.).

--Teaching SA: could be either a round-table on the subject in general (what to teach, how, in what contexts, to what ends) or a series of more focused workshops--e.g., talking about approaches to teaching particular often-taught works (e.g., Tevye stories) or particular pedagogical issues (e.g., how/when to teach SA in Yiddish language classes)

3. Readings of SA works:

To be performed by experienced performers (e.g., David Rogow). This could be an evening program, modeled on NPR's "Selected Shorts" (or the SA family yortsayt) ~~again~~ I'd include stories both in original Yiddish and in English translation.

4. Screening and discussion of films:

not Tevye, but perhaps Laughter Through Tears (with live piano accompaniment), which is less well known, or a TV film: The World of Sholem Aleichem (film of Off-B'way play), Kasrilevke on the Mississippi (a Frontiers of Faith drama produced by JTS in the 1950s: SA meets Mark Twain; Huck Finn meets Motl!--has to be seen to be believed). J. Hoberman recently wrote a piece for NYBC on Laughter through Tears; I could do a presentation on either of the TV films.

5. Reading/discussion groups:

One way to spend part of Shabbes might be to give conference attendees a choice of groups to join, each of which would be devoted to discussing (with a designated leader/teacher) a pre-selected SA work--this could be a novel, a play, a short-story collection, or even just one story, etc. Some groups could be designated for Yiddish readers and/or Yiddish-speakers only, others for those reading and/or discussing in English. Works would be announced in the conference invitation; participants will be expected to have read the work in advance of conference (therefore, accessible translations should be used, or copies should be able to be ordered in advance--from NYBC?). This could include both major works of the canon (Motl, Menahem Mendl) and less-well known works (e.g., SA on Zionism, drawing on the anthology of translations on this topic; SA on America).

6. Keynote speaker -- someone to discuss SA on
a grand scale