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## 'Kalman' is coming to Boston

Family's award-winning story will air on WGBH  
**By Alexandra Lapkin**  
Advocate Staff



"Finding Kalman" co-writer, co-director and co-producer Roz Jacobs had her Israel-born niece Maya Jacobs, now a Boston resident, perform the music for the documentary's soundtrack.

Maya Jacobs heard the story many times when she was growing up.

But every time her grandmother, Anna Jacobs, talks about escaping the Warsaw Ghetto and saying goodbye to her family as a teenager, Maya is overcome with emotion.

"The sadness will always be there," Maya said in an interview.

After escaping the Ghetto, however, Anna was captured and brought to a Nazi concentration camp. Upon her return from the camp, she learned that she was the only survivor in her family. She never saw her parents, older sister Henia or younger brother Kalman again.

In 1951, Anna and her husband, Jack Jacobs – also a Holocaust survivor – and their sons, Harold and Fred, left Poland for New York to rebuild their lives.

Anna's story became the subject of a documentary, "Finding Kalman," created by her daughter, artist Roz Jacobs, together with producer Laurie Weisman. The film interweaves images of Roz painting portraits of Kalman, Maya playing the violin and interviews with Anna, along with footage of the Warsaw Ghetto, photos, and family videos of Anna, her husband, and their children vacationing in a Catskills bungalow colony.

In addition to interviews with Anna and Roz, the film features Roy Gross, Anna's great-grandson, who is about the same age as Kalman was in the photograph, and Natalie Gross, Anna's granddaughter.

Roz has created a non-profit organization that honors Holocaust and other genocide victims through art and other media, called The Memory Project. The project combines Roz's art installation and her film, along with an educational outreach program that teaches children about the Holocaust.

The film, winner of Best Short Documentary at the Louisville International Film Festival in 2011, and two CINE Awards in 2011 and 2012, as well as official selection recognitions at film festivals around the country, will air on WGBH Channel 2 on April 6 at 11:30 p.m., and on WGBH World beginning on April 16, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Roz was inspired by Anna's stories of her brother Kalman, a precocious little boy, who was full of life at the time the family was forced to move into the Ghetto. She began painting Kalman from the only two photographs that survived the Holocaust. The film follows Roz's artistic process, as her brushstrokes create vivid portraits of the uncle she had never met.

"Painting his portrait over and over again, I felt a deep connection to his life force," Roz, the film's cowriter, co-director and co-producer, said on FindingKalman.com. "It was healing to focus on that for the first time, rather than the horror of his death. Through my mother's stories, the art exhibit and this film, we've reclaimed his humanity. That's my victory over fascism."

The paintings led to an art installation of nine portraits and corresponding video screens that show Roz painting in her studio.

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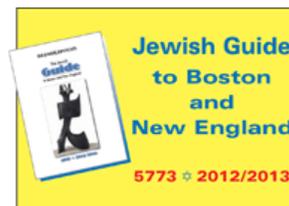
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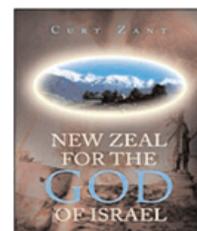
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"When you see a play or listen to a piece of music, you have time to listen or watch the play develop. The story is told in real time. It is different with a painting. You have to choose to take time with it," Roz said. "You don't see all the layers that went into making it, and I wanted to show those moments during the process when the painting falls apart or when it comes together - so that you, the viewer, can be inside the process."

The idea for the project first came to Roz in 2006, when she painted a portrait from a photograph of her friend's son, who died from brain cancer at a young age. As Roz was working on the painting, she remembered a similar photograph of Kalman. She decided to combine the process of painting Kalman together with the videos of the interviews she had been conducting of her parents and their friends, also Holocaust survivors, for the past 20 years.

When she began working on the film, Roz approached her family members about getting involved in the project. She asked her Israeli-born niece, Maya, to perform the soundtrack in the documentary.

Anna's oldest son and Maya's father, Harold, moved to Israel in 1967, where he got married and started a family. Maya, 25, one of his three daughters, was born in Tel Aviv. After serving in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) as a "distinguished musician," Maya moved to Boston to study for her master's degree at the New England Conservatory of Music. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in music at Boston University.

The passion with which Maya played Ross Levinson's original score on her violin complemented the emotions that accompany Anna's storytelling and Roz's painting.

"One melody conveyed different moods and I was able to play with my own personal voice," Maya reflected. "That's the beauty of art - it allows the freedom to portray an individual voice."

Maya adds her individuality to every piece of music she plays. In fact, when she plays "Kol Nidre," she reflects on her identity as a grandchild of Holocaust survivors.

"I connect to the music more," she said. "I don't just play this heartbreaking piece; I think about the people I've lost, even though I've never met them."

In 2008, while the documentary was being made, Maya was touring with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra of Daniel Barenboim, which brings together young Jewish and Muslim musicians from Israel and Palestine, and other Arab countries.

"Music is a good way to connect people and also a powerful tool of survival," she said of her experience. The footage of her playing in the orchestra was integrated into the documentary, along with the interviews conducted with Maya.

Even though she grew up in Israel, Maya feels close to her father's relatives in America.

"My dad's family is so close," she said. "Everyone is so supportive and every person is such an amazing individual."

She attributed that appreciation of her grandparents' story of survival, and the loss of their families at a young age. But she has an especially strong connection with Roz.

"Roz is also an artist in the family," Maya said. "That's our bond."

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