

## **Bente Kahan (Oslo 1958) singer/actress**

Bente Kahan, the Norwegian Jewish actress, musician and playwright, had her formal training in performing arts at Tel-Aviv University and continued at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy (AMDA) in New York City.

After graduating in 1981, she worked on various stages, including "Habima" Israel's national theatre, and "Nationaltheatret" in Norway.

In 1986 she jointly wrote the monodrama "Bessie - a Bluesical" (also a TV production for Norwegian Broadcasting), with the Norwegian stage director Ellen Foyen Bruun. This collaboration was followed by "Letter Without a Stamp" (1988) and "Voices from Theresienstadt" (1995), the latter under the umbrella of Teater Dybbuk - Oslo (TDO).

All three monodramas were staged by Ellen Foyen Bruun and performed by Bente Kahan.

In 1990, the Arts Council of Norway awarded Ms. Kahan a grant for the performing arts which she used to found "Teater Dybbuk - Oslo" (TDO), the producer of all her concerts, monodramas and CDs, whose aim is to convey Jewish-European culture and history through drama and music. The concert "Yiddishkayt" with the Norwegian band Gjertrud's Gypsy Orchestra (1990), was her first TDO production. The CD was released the following year, and Polish National TV broadcasted two programs of the concert.

In December 1991, she premiered with "Gitl" ( a monodrama by Frank Kelber based on Shalom Aleichem's train stories) which was followed by "Farewell Cracow -Yiddish Songs by Mordechai Gebirtig with the two Polish musicians Dariusz Swinoga and Miroslaw Kuzniak (concert, TV program and CD, 1992); "Voices from Theresienstadt" (a monodrama and CD with an English, German and Norwegian version, 1995); "Wir Wollen Wachen die Nacht" (a commissioned concert for Berliner Festwoche 1997); Bente Kahan & Di Gojim (a concert and CD produced by Ideeel Organiseeren in Holland, 1997) and "HOME : Songs and Tales by a European Jew" (produced for Bergen European City of Culture, 2000. A CD version was released the following year).

She has also taken part in TV-Ventures' documentary film, "Karussell" (also a CD); is a guest singer on Jowel Klezmerim's CD "Jozzl der Klezmer" and on Gjertrud's Gypsy Orchestra's latest release "Jeg er pa vandring".

Her workshop, "Jiddische Lieder", is often requested by theatres and music academies in Germany and The Netherlands.

Her recent programs are "ANI MA'AMIN" (2003), with Stanislaw Rybarczyk's Breslau Storch Synagogue Choir, and "Sing with Us in Yiddish" with her daughter Voja, Polish children from the Jewish School in Wroclaw "Lauder Etz Chaim" and the folk- music band "Chudoba". The latter concert was recorded in January 2005, and a CD and song book will be released this year.

In June, the Wroclaw-owned theatre, "Firley", will premiere the Polish version of "Voices from Theresienstadt" with five Polish actresses and Bente Kahan as the director. The same theatre is planning to co-produce with Bente her new play about Wroclaw women.

The scheduled premiere is 2006.

The musical input to most of TDO's productions arises from Bente Kahan's association with the two Polish musicians Dariusz Swinoga and Miroslaw Kuzniak. They have worked with Ms. Kahan since 1992, and accompany her in most of her productions.

However, she also appears alone with her guitar or collaborates with European klezmer bands such as Gjertrud's Gypsy Orchestra (Norway), Di Gojim (The Netherlands), Jowel Klezmerim (Germany), "Sabbath Hela Veckan" (Sweden) and Chudoba (Poland).

Bente Kahan regularly tours internationally and is repeatedly called upon to perform in connection with official commemorations paying homage to the victims of the Holocaust.

Her work unfailingly receives critical praise by newspapers and audiences alike.

May 2005, the Jewish Community in Wroclaw, Poland, appointed Bente Kahan as the artistic director of the Jewish Cultural and Educational Center of the White Stork Synagogue.

24th of June 2006 Ms. Bente Kahan got The Wroclaw Mayor's Award