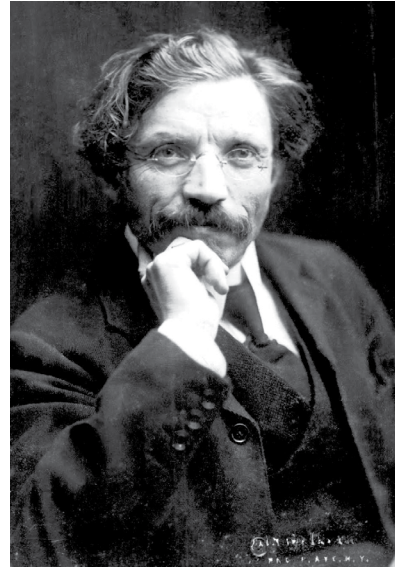




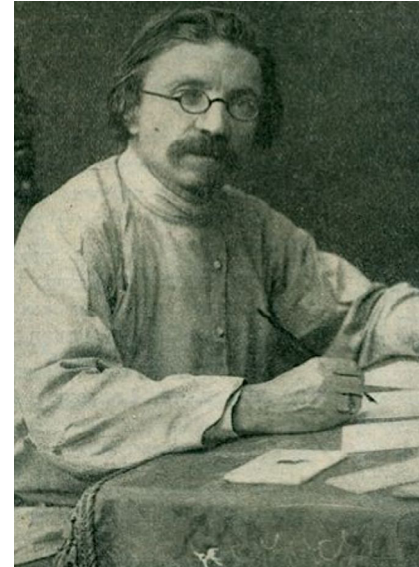
AUDIENCE GUIDE

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF Origin Story

Fiddler on the Roof is based on the stories of **Sholem Aleichem** (born Sholem Rabinovich 1859-1916), one of the most beloved Yiddish writers of his time. Writing under a pseudonym that means “peace be upon you,” Aleichem captured the humor and hardships of Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement—the region of Imperial Russia where Jews were confined to live. His most famous creation, *Tevey the Dairyman*, appeared in serialized stories written as though Tevey himself were speaking directly to the author. Often called the “Jewish Mark Twain,” Aleichem became an international literary figure, lecturing in America and drawing enormous crowds. When he died in New York in 1916, more than 100,000 people attended his funeral—the largest public gathering in the city at that time. From his Tevey tales grew the timeless story that would become *Fiddler on the Roof*.



Sholem Aleichem



Broadway Production

FIDDLER ON THE ROOF was shaped by some of Broadway’s greatest talents: composer **Jerry Bock**, lyricist **Sheldon Harnick**, and bookwriter **Joseph Stein**. Together, they transformed Sholem Aleichem’s Tevey tales into a musical that felt both deeply rooted in Jewish life and universally resonant. At the helm was director-choreographer **Jerome Robbins**, whose meticulous research gave the production its unforgettable authenticity. Robbins sent his cast to study Jewish rituals, movement, and prayer, insisting that they embody the rhythms of shtetl life before stepping onstage. His choreography — most famously the “Bottle Dance” — wove tradition into every gesture, creating stage pictures that were at once specific and timeless. Thanks to this creative team, *Fiddler* broke records, became a cultural phenomenon, and set a new standard for musical theatre storytelling.



From left to right: Joseph Stein, Sheldon Harnick, Jerry Bock, Jerome Robbins

MEET THE CREATIVE TEAM

ORIGINAL BROADWAY

Jerry Bock, Composer

Sheldon Harnick, Lyricist

Joseph Stein, Book writer

Jerome Robbins, Director +
Choreographer

SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE

Michael Unger, Director

Yehuda L. Hyman, Choreographer

David Bonofiglio, Music Director



Marquette University Collaboration

In a first-of-its-kind educational partnership, 15 **Marquette University** students join the production with support from Marquette Theatre director **Jamie Cheatham**. The resulting ensemble is a diverse mix. Our lead Broadway performers bring seasoned expertise, while many students are stepping onto a professional stage for the first time. Together, they weave a dynamic energy, connected by the music, history, and stories behind this remarkable production.

**MARQUETTE
THEATRE**

Violins of Hope

This production of *Fiddler on the Roof* features instruments from **Violins of Hope – Wisconsin**, part of the global project founded by luthiers Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein and presented by **Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra (MYSO)**. These violins, rescued from the Holocaust, have been meticulously restored so the voices and prayers of their owners may live on in performance. Skylight Music Theatre is proud to feature four of these historic instruments in *Fiddler*.



From left to right: Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein

VIOLINS OF HOPE PLAYED IN THIS PERFORMANCE

THE BARNEA VIOLIN #74, played by The Fiddler, Kimberly Hanson

Alfred Bernheim (b. 1871) married Berta in 1903 in Passau, southern Germany. They opened a small shop called Merkur that soon prospered into a four-story department store, modeled after the grand shops of Paris and boasting the first elevator and telephone in town.

In the late 1920s, Passau became an early Nazi stronghold. Hitler's family lived across the street from the Bernheims, and Nazi terror was a daily reality. In October 1935, the family was forced to sell their store, humiliated by being marched naked through the main street, and Felix was imprisoned for six weeks. Realizing the dangers, Zigbert left for Palestine, where he purchased land near Herzliya and started a new life with his wife Asebeth.

Alfred and Berta fled to France but were later sent to a concentration camp. Their daughter Lena managed to secure their release, and the family survived the war in hiding. After World War II, Alfred and Berta reunited with Zigbert in Israel, where they lived until their passing in 1953.



THE SANDOR FISHER VIOLIN #48, played by violinist, Pamela Simmons

Sandor Fisher, born in Romania in 1919, began violin at six and later studied voice and acting. When his father was sent to forced labor, Sandor replaced him, bringing his violin into the camp. Ordered to play for officers, he used the opportunity to smuggle food to fellow prisoners. In 1944 he escaped and joined Soviet forces.

Valeria Teichner was born in Hungary in 1925 and began violin lessons at age six. Deported to Auschwitz in 1944, she became prisoner A-12763 and was separated from her mother. Later sent to the Görlitz labor camp, she was ordered to sing Lorelei while playing violin for the commanders. A forbidden gift of cake from a cook led to her death sentence, but at the last moment the capo spared her. She was liberated by Soviet forces on May 8, 1945.

After the war, Valeria and Sandor married in Israel, raised three daughters, and built a family of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Sandor kept his violin close all his life, playing until his final days.



For more information, visit [Skylight Music Theatre.org](https://www.skylightmusictheatre.org)