



KOL NIDRE

AUDIO-VISUAL DRAMATURGIES

An Interdisciplinary Conference Series on the Relationships
Between Religion and the Arts

This four-part online conference aims to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue on the performance and creativity of Kol Nidre across historical periods, cultural contexts, and aesthetic forms and mediums. Focusing on its various artistic iterations, and its numerous adaptations, we aim to rethink the theatricality and musicality of the ritual, untie its affective qualities, explore its social performances, and analyze how its inherent dramaturgical structures configure.

SEPTEMBER 12 / OCTOBER 10 / NOVEMBER 14 / DECEMBER 12

For further information and registration, visit our [website](#)

Contact us: infomilkencenter@schoolofmusic.ucla.edu

Co-organized by Mark Kligman (UCLA) and Ruthie Abeliovich (The University of Haifa)

September 12th, 2021 9:30 PDT/ 19:30 IDT

**KOL NIDRE'S SYNCHRONIZATIONS: THE
INTERSECTION OF MUSIC, TEXT AND
PERFORMANCE**

Kol Nidre's Liturgical and Musical Histories
Mark Kligman (UCLA)

Kol Nidre's fascination is the haunting melody emotionally marking the beginning of Yom Kippur. The text of this prayer is a legalistic text without emotion. I will explore the history of the text of Kol Nidre and an overview of the melody investigating early manuscript sources and recordings.

Performing Kol Nidre in the Theatre
Ruthie Abeliovich (The University of Haifa)

The turn of the 20th century marks the dawning of a surge of musical and theatrical adaptations to Kol Nidre performed on popular stages and secular settings. Artistic enactments of the religious ritual, executed by performers, underscore the theatrical aspects of the ritual, and especially the duplicity entailed in its core performative speech-act: the act of permitting vows. Focusing on Kol Nidre in popular entertainment, this lecture examines the stakes at play in the amalgamation of theatre and synagogue.

Ruth Langer (Boston College), **Discussant**

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October 10th, 2021 9:30 PDT/ 19:30 IDT

**THE MOMENT AND MOMENTUM OF KOL NIDRE:
A MULTI-LAYERED ANALYSIS OF YOM KIPPUR'S
GRAND OVERTURE**

Ruth HaCohen (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem) and
Boaz Tarsi (Jewish Theological Seminary)

What makes the moment of Kol Nidre so unique? In our joint presentation, we will probe the grand overture of the Day of Atonement, liturgically, musically and as a performative event. Our discussion will commence with Kol Nidre as a significant "liturgical moment". It will continue with an examination of its intricate melodic unfolding, including major variations as transcribed and recorded. We will argue that the unique collection of its melodic constructs and the degrees of freedom by which the performer concatenates them largely explain the affective vigour of this liturgical moment.

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November 14th, 2021 9:30 PDT/ 19:30 IDT

RELIGIOUS DRAMATURGIES

Kol Nidre as Prologue: Performative Tensions

Yair Lipshitz (Tel Aviv University)

How does Kol Nidre set the stage for the performance of Yom Kippur that follows? Arguably, in quite an ambivalent manner. Its quasi-legalistic text is starkly distanced from the awestruck depictions of Temple rituals or the pious acts of confession appearing in subsequent prayers. Even its own performance (in terms of musicality and actions of the congregation) does not sit well with the text's content. The presentation suggests that these incongruencies are in fact key to deeper tensions within the Yom Kippur prayer between absence and presence, and between performance and loss.

Queering the Sacred Performance: The Kol-Nidre Prayer at Reform Jewish Congregation in Tel Aviv

Elazar Ben-Lulu (Ariel University)

This presentation, based on an ethnographic fieldwork at Reform Jewish congregation in Tel-Aviv, argues that the Kol Nidre prayer is a liminal moment that not only connects the secular with the sacred, but also bridges between the congregants and their gender\sexual identity.

Laura Lieber (Duke University), **Discussant**

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December 12th, 2021 9:30 PDT/ 19:30 IDT

FROM THE SYNAGOGUE TO THE ARCHIVE

Vocal Communities in the Twilight: Kol Nidre Before Total Eclipse

Ruth HaCohen (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Kol Nidre is preceded by a grand gesture towards the transgressors: they are allowed to take part in the moment, and through it – in the entire Yom Kippur rites of atonement. Kol Nidre thus embodies a rare moment of inclusion, in which the community, as a vocal community, finds its ultimate expression. As such, it encapsulates extreme theological, social and emotional tensions felt in particular in times of crisis. Probing “vocal communities” as a concept, I will delve into literary and filmographic cases, analyzing the vocalities they emit as expression of such crises and tensions.

Kol Nidre on the Bima and the Bine

Amanda (Miryam-Khaye) Seigal (NYPL, Dorot Jewish Division)

This musical and dramatic presentation will focus on Kol Nidre in the Yiddish theatre. I will engage deeply with primary sources—as a singer, actor, and scholar—to (re)create historical performances of Kol Nidre. I will explore how Yiddish artists have perceived and performed Kol Nidre historically—as a religious service, musical motif, cultural reference, or all of the above—and, the intersections between religious and dramatic performance on the Yiddish stage.

Mark Slobin (Wesleyan University, Emeritus), **Discussant**

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