

# Eclectic Mix of Storytellers Chosen for First Digital Media Cohort of the Jewish Writers' Initiative

*13 Artists from an array of media, art, film, animation, and writing backgrounds have been chosen from over 260 entries*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, August 15, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Digital Storytellers Lab](#) of the [Jewish Writers' Initiative](#) has selected thirteen digital media writers/creators for its inaugural program. A project of [Maimonides Fund](#), the Lab is an eight-month fellowship designed to kickstart the development of new digital audio/visual media exploring Jewish themes and narratives, encouraging creators to tell Jewish stories in innovative, digital-first ways. Fellows will receive a generous stipend, mentorship, and technical and subject-matter expertise to support the development of their projects.

The fellows hail from a variety of professional backgrounds – including journalists, filmmakers, novelists, songwriters, game designers, and more – and were chosen via an open call for proposals that brought in over 260 applications.

"We were overwhelmed by the response, and by the strength of the applications," said Maimonides Fund President Mark Charendoff. "It shows there is a real hunger from talented and accomplished storytellers to explore Jewish content, and we are excited to see what comes out of this first cohort."

The projects the fellows will be developing through the Lab are for both youth and adult audiences, and span a wide array of digital formats, including fiction and non-fiction podcasts, TikTok and Instagram series, live action and animated video, an interactive narrative game, and a digital graphic novel. Subject matter is similarly varied, with stories that explore Jewish history from Iran to Eastern Europe; investigate contemporary social issues and their impact on Jewish



  
DIGITAL STORYTELLERS LAB

Digital Storyteller Lab

lives; mine and reimagine Jewish texts; and examine aspects of Jewish identity and tradition through the lens of food, fashion, music and more.

“We could have built a group that was all podcasts or all animation, or that was all work for kids, or adults. We think there is value in bringing creators together crafting an array of distinct work, from different perspectives and backgrounds, and who will inspire each other,” said Sarah Lefton, who serves as Creative Director of the Lab and created BimBam, the studio behind hundreds of animated Jewish shorts on YouTube including the Shaboom preschool series.

“What unites all the projects is their use of highly crafted, scripted storytelling that delves deeply into Jewish subject matter on new media platforms.”



The Digital Storytellers Lab grew out of a similar program for screenwriters launched by the Jewish Writers' Initiative in 2019, in which fellows developed Jewish themed scripts for

mainstream film and television. More information about the screenwriting fellows and their projects is available on the Initiative website.

“

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*Sarah Lefton*

See below for the names of the 2022-23 Digital Storytellers Lab fellows and visit <https://www.jwinitiative.com> for more information on each and on their proposed projects .

#### 2022-23 DIGITAL STORYTELLERS LAB FELLOWS

1. Brian Ash - Project: WISE UP, Animated Kids' Web

Series

2. Robert Axelrod - Project: NICE JEWISH BOYS, Narrative Podcast
3. Omer Benjakob - Project: HOW TO FAKE A DEATHCAMP, Investigative Podcast
4. Josh Burstein - Project: AHEE'S KOSHER OMAKASE, Mixed Format Family Series
5. Sam Butin - Project: NORMANDIE, Choice-Based Narrative/Game
6. Danielle Dardashti - Project: THE NIGHTINGALE OF IRAN, Documentary Podcast

7. Dan Goldman - Project: MONSEY BLUES, Digital Graphic Novel
8. Sophie Greenbaum - Project: SESSIONS WITH THE MATRIARCHS, Music/Social Media
9. Yael Levy - Project: THE SOLOMON CHRONICLES, Animated Tween Web Series
10. Alex Mann - Project: ARCANA, Live Action Social Media Episodic
11. Marina Michelson - Project: VAGABOND STARS, Scripted Narrative Podcast
12. Michael O'Konis (they/he) and Marnina Schon (she/her) - Project: DOOM SCROLL, Musical Web Series
13. V (she/her) of the YouTube channel SnappyDragon - Project: THE CLOTHES ON THEIR BACKS, YouTube Series

#### About The Jewish Writers' Initiative:

The Jewish Writers' Initiative was founded in 2019 by Maimonides Fund and Crystal City Entertainment as a year-long fellowship supporting the development of film and television scripts that tell diverse Jewish stories, with the ultimate goal of launching these projects into the mainstream media marketplace. With the Digital Storytellers Lab, the Initiative expands its reach to digital media platforms, bringing innovative Jewish stories to new audiences in new ways.

The Lab is being directed by BimBam creator Sarah Lefton and arts educator Janine Okmin. It is guided by an Advisory Board including Rabbi David Wolpe, producer Jonathan Rubenstein, media acquisitions and distribution expert Jennifer Monier-Williams, Tippet Studios' Corey Rosen, former Sundance Director of Content Liz Nord, Sesame Workshop's Senior Producer of International Social Impact Estee Bardanashvili, Emmy-winning writer Jay Bushman, Director of Product Marketing for Augmented Reality at Meta Adam Berger, member of YouTube's Content Partnerships Team Jason Cosgrove, and Jewish literature professor and author Jeremy Dauber of Columbia University.

#### About Maimonides Fund:

Maimonides Fund is a private grantmaking organization that funds in North America and Israel. The Fund is passionate about supporting projects that help the Jewish people grasp their common past and play a role in shaping their shared future.

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