I joined the Music Department at CWRU in fall of 2005, where I am now Associate Professor, and Director of the Center for Popular Music Studies. The path to my work on Jewish themes in music is fairly direct, but took a long time to manifest. I began playing piano at age five, having been unknowingly inspired by the soundtracks to Bugs Bunny, Tom and Jerry, and Popeye cartoons I watched on the weekends.

While pursuing a bachelor’s degree in music at the University of California, Riverside, I realized how much music I had learned from cartoons, and decided to pursue cartoon music as a research topic. After several months as an intern, watching and participating in how cartoons were made at Spümcø animation (best known for having produced the animated series Ren & Stimpy), I began graduate school in Musicology at UCLA. One of the recurring themes of my dissertation—which became my first book, *Tunes for Toons*—was how important a part music played in establishing ethnic or cultural stereotypes. Every time a person of a particular ethnicity appears in an old cartoon, generally the same corresponding piece of ethnic music shows up on the soundtrack. I was fascinated that a particular tune from a late 19th century Yiddish musical showed up on the few occasions that Jews appeared in cartoons. But this topic was really tangential to my work at the time, so I shelved it.

Since I joined the Music Department at CWRU I’ve edited several books about film music, jazz, animation, and early film music, but the idea of the Jewish music tropes in cartoons (and, by extension, films and even popular songs) never disappeared. Recently I became interested in *The Jazz Singer* (1927), the first “talkie” with a musical soundtrack, and probably the most famous film ever made about Jewish assimilation. Suddenly the long-dormant research topic rose back to life, which is now going to be the basis for a new project on Jewish themes in early 20th century mass media; a subject I’ve been able to explore with my students in the classes I teach on musicals, rock and roll, and cartoons.

In fall of 2015 I’ll be teaching an upper division undergraduate course jointly with Professor Jay Geller entitled “The Holocaust and the Arts.” In this course we’ll be exploring artistic output during World War II, and the many forms of artistic expression created in response to the Holocaust, including art, music, architecture, film and literature.
Student Awards and Honors

The Ira and Ruth Bressler Prize
To a student who has done outstanding work in the area of Jewish Studies.

Hometown: Chicago, IL

Academic Interests: Art History, Archaeology, and Judaic Studies.

Extra-curricular activities: I hold board positions in Alpha Phi, Hillel, Anthropology Student Association, and Case Collective for the Visual Arts. In my free time I love going to the museums near campus.

Madison Dore

The Eudese and Elmer Paull Prizes
To one or several undergraduate or graduate students who demonstrate an interest in Jewish Studies or Jewish contemporary life.

Hometown: Scarsdale, New York

Academic Interests: I am a biology major with a passion for insects, particularly focusing on their evolution, behavior, and morphology. I am also pursuing interests in art history, creative writing, and Judaic studies.

Extra-Curricular Activities: I enjoy exploring museums, both in the sciences and the arts. I also like to read and write poetry, especially prose poetry.

Jeremy Frank

Petah Zardoost

Hometown: Glendora, CA (suburban Los Angeles County)

Academic Interests: I am a lover of intellectual property law and I find the law of archaeological relics to be fascinating. I was a Classical Civilizations major with a love of all things Etruscan as an undergraduate student at U.C. Berkeley. After graduation and the Bar Exam (both within the next few months), I hope to mesh my interests in real estate and law.

Extracurricular Activities: Outside of classwork, I work on activities for the Jewish Law Students Association, and I help conduct a weekly youth group discussion with high school students at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Cleveland Heights. In my spare time, I love comedic television so I definitely follow several shows. I also enjoy cooking, baking, and keeping up with new developments in fashion and jewelry design.

Hometown: Wadsworth, Ohio (just outside of Akron)

Academic Interests: I am a history and chemistry major with a political science minor who is attending law school next year. I am also very interested in religious studies.

Extra-curricular Activities: I am a mathematics supplemental instructor, a resident assistant, brother of the Delta Tau Delta fraternity, and I also enjoy going to Cleveland Browns, Indians, and Cavaliers games.

Dustin Likens
Psychopomps: Religious Figures in Folk Imagination

Recognition for Outstanding Achievement

Dustin Likens

The term psychopomp derives from the Greek words psych (soul) + pompos (a conductor, or one who guides). Historically, the psychopomp is believed to be one who “stands at the crossroads in Paradise and guides the deceased to their appointed places” (Ginzberg 2003: 996). Each of the major western religions has a specific psychopomp who serves as a guide for the newly deceased. In Judaism, the fiery angel Sandalfon becomes a psychopomp in his incarnation as the Prophet Elijah. In Christianity, specifically in the Roman Catholic Church, the most familiar psychopomp is Saint Peter. In Islam, Izra’il is the specific angel that separates the soul from the deceased body, and carries it to Allah. There is brief, if any, mention of their soul-guiding duties in the sacred texts of the three major faiths, but a rich oral tradition surrounds each of them; one that is generated, modified and maintained from the pew, rather than the pulpit. Folklorist Don Yoder defines “folk religion” as the difference between what is preached in the pulpit and what is believed in the pew (1974), which would identify these psychopomps as religious figures in folk imagination.

In Jewish legend, Sandalfon is the angel-name of the Prophet Elijah. As Judaicist Louis Ginzberg states, Sandalfon was “500 year’s journey larger than his comrades and his fire was enough to scorch them all” (2003:996). His original duty was to collect garlands of prayer offered up by the people Israel, and weave them into a crown for the Holy One. But according to legend, Sandalfon was so devoted to the Jewish people, he pleaded with God for permission to serve them on earth. In the time of Ahab, God relented, allowing Sandalfon to serve on earth as the Prophet Elijah. But Elijah’s earthly mission ended before his desire to help people was satisfied. Again, God relented and made Elijah a psychopomp: one who brings the souls of sinners up from Gehenna when the Sabbath arrives, and leads them back to their merit when the Sabbath departs. After these souls atone for their sins, according to Ginzberg, it is Elijah who will conduct them “to the wondrous place of everlasting bliss” (2003: 996). Clearly, acting as a psychopomp outside of sacred text, Elijah reassured the people of what sacred text did not; an Afterlife in which the Sabbath prevails for all, and the sinner can be redeemed (Neulander 2015).

In Christian tradition, Peter was one of Jesus’ most trusted and beloved disciples. He became the first Pope, a subsequent Christian martyr, and ultimately a saint. But he is also believed to be a psychopomp, guiding souls to their appointed places. Yet, as religionist J. Stephen Lang reminds us, “There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that someone who just died passes through a gateway. Still, St. Peter at the gate of heaven is a standard part of pop religion, even if it has no real basis in the Bible” (2003: 183). Although Peter’s role as a psychopomp is absent from sacred text, the Gospel of Matthew may have planted this idea in Christian folk imagination. For example, in Matthew 16:19, Jesus says to Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” The enigmatic passage was apparently taken as a metaphor in folk imagination, suggesting that Peter uses the keys to bind or loosen the gates of heaven according to the merits of souls seeking entry.

The early philologist, Max Müller, proposed that myths occur as a kind of “disease of language,” where statements given metaphorically are taken literally (Dorson 1968: 162). Saint Peter the psychopomp, admitting worthy souls to heaven, and diverting others to purgatory or hell, is a good example of “mythopoetic” folk logic, as proposed by Müller.

The Islamic Angel of Death is mentioned in the Qur’an, but never by name (Cornell 2007: 157). Outside the Qur’an, in oral tradition, he is generally known as Izra’il, although sometimes as Azrael or Azriel. He is one of four archangels, three of whom fail to deliver seven handfuls of earth to Allah, as needed to create Adam. Perhaps because Izra’il delivered as bidden, he was the one chosen to separate soul from body at time of death, and deliver the soul to Allah. Like Sandalfon, Izra’il has features not found in the natural world—a signature of supernatural
identity and power. He has 7,000 feet, 4,000 eyes, and stands with one foot on the farthest of heavens, and one on the bridge between Paradise and hell. However, since only Allah knows the precise moment when someone is to die, Izra'il can only act under Allah's direction. In Muslim tradition, when someone's death approaches, a leaf with their name on it falls from the tree beneath God's throne, alerting Izra'il that he has forty days to separate the soul from the body, and deliver it as bidden. Izra'il's complete surrender to Allah's will, and Allah's faith in the angel's reliability, help the faithful to cope with the uncertainty of death.

Psychopomps in western religion have little or no life in formal, sacred text. But as religious figures in folk imagination, they are capable of bringing hope and reassurance at the end of life, to all who hold them in tradition. Their stories reflect the sense-making strategies and artistry of folk religion, retaining enough power to persist as riveting, mythopoetic literature, even if belief in psychopomps should come to an end.

References Cited
Neulander, Judith. Class lecture, Case Western Reserve University (Spring 2015).

Congratulations!

**Phi Beta Kappa**

JDST/RLGN Students at
*Case Western Reserve University*

**Spring 2015**
Hi,

Just want you to know I think of you quite often. I’ve been going through some of the articles and handouts from your folklore and ethnography classes. I’ve decided to do doctorate research on the various ways that folk music has been incorporated in 20th century viola repertoire. It has been so nice to work on a topic that isn’t entirely new to me--it has definitely made life a bit easier!

Take care,

Becky

LET’S HEAR FROM YOU! postit@case.edu
Courses of Interest for Fall 2015

**JDST 201**
**INTRODUCTION TO JUDAIC STUDIES**
Peter Haas

An introduction to the academic study of Judaic religion and culture, this course does not presuppose any previous study of, or experience with, Judaism. The course takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on a variety of methods to examine the diverse issues that make up the current field of Judaic Studies. The course will examine the Jewish experience across time and space, and may include some “field” experience, such as a visit to a synagogue or to the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage. Required for the minor in Judaic Studies.

**JDST 228**
**THE JEWISH IMAGE IN POPULAR FILM**
Judith Neulander

The course will explore film as social practice, from the flickering silent era through Hollywood’s Golden Age, to the technological dazzle of the present day. Standing at the confluence of society, history, ideology and culture, students will come to understand how popular film is shaped by, and how it actively shapes, the constant reconstruction of Jewish identity in the American mainstream.

**NEW COURSE!  ONE TIME ONLY!**

**JDST/ MUHI/HSTY/RLGN  326**
**THE HOLOCAUST AND THE ARTS**
Daniel Goldmark and Jay Geller

This course explores artistic output during the Holocaust, as well as responses to the Holocaust in various forms, including music, art, architecture, film, and literature. In addition to seminar-style discussions of germane readings, we will be taking field trips, meeting artists who work on Holocaust-related themes, and having guest speakers who have expertise on artistic representation of the Holocaust.

For courses in Hebrew and Arabic visit the Modern Languages and Literatures website:
http://www.case.edu/artsci/dmlil/
Sampling of Final Paper Titles

A sampling of titles for final research papers in *Women in the Bible - JDST/RLGN/WGST 268* and *Mythologies of the Afterlife - JDST/RLGN 314*, reflects the diversity of interests in a typical JDST/RLGN classroom.

**Women in the Bible**

Zipporah and the Flint: The Contested Right of Jewish Women to Circumcise Their Sons  
*Jeremy Frank*

Women at the Well: The Bible, the Grimms and Disney  
*Lina Wiley*

Read Her Lips: Mary Magdalene’s Feminist Message  
*Kaitlin Nam*

Mary and Lilith: The Angel and Demon on Eve’s Shoulders  
*Petra Van Kan*

The Women Who Kept Moses Alive: A Study of Midrashic Tradition  
*Angela Chappell*

**Mythologies of the Afterlife**

From Sheol to Gan Eden: The Evolution of Views of the Jewish Afterlife  
*Jonathan Meckler*

Transhumanism and the Quest for Immortality  
*Jon Foissotte*

Dancing Through Life: The Social Role of the Danse Macabre  
*Ameera Khalid*

What in Heaven’s Name is a Psychopomp?  
*Dustin Likens*

Connecting the Search for Life’s Meaning with Hope of Life after Death  
*Anisha Garg*
By bringing a variety of fields and disciplines to bear on its subject, the Judaic Studies Program at Case Western Reserve University conveys to students the complex interaction of forces that create Jewish ethnic identity. Students completing the program will have a broad knowledge of the field along with the tools necessary for continued academic study of Jewish civilization in all its manifestations.

Support the Program in Judaic Studies

Please consider supporting the Program in Judaic Studies as we continue building on our achievements. You can contribute to our success by making a gift to the College of Arts and Sciences. Your gift allows us to continue to offer opportunities for our students to excel academically and to conduct important research. You can give online at:

giving.case.edu

Chuck Behrens, M. Div., Spiritual Care Coordinator, Hospice of the Western Reserve, spoke with students in Mythologies of the Afterlife in March 2015.

Happy Summer!