

**Countless Centers  
Liber Amicorum  
for Freddie Rokem**

**מרכזים עד אין ספור  
גבורות לפרדי רוקם**

**Unzählige Mittelpunkte  
Liber Amicorum  
für Freddie Rokem**



ed. by  
Ruthie Abeliovich  
Ira Avneri  
Daphna Ben-Shaul  
Nikolaus Müller-Schöll  
Matthias Naumann

Neofelis

Ruthie Abeliovich / Ira Avneri / Daphna Ben-Shaul /  
Nikolaus Müller-Schöll / Matthias Naumann (eds)

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## INTRODUCTION

Ruthie Abeliovich / Ira Avneri /  
Daphna Ben-Shaul / Nikolaus Müller-Schöll /  
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The universe has lost its centre overnight, and woken up to find it has countless centres. So that each one can now be seen as the centre, or none at all. Suddenly there is a lot of room.<sup>1</sup>

Bertolt Brecht: *Life of Galileo*

“Each one can now be seen as the centre, or none at all” – that is the social lesson that Brecht has his Galileo Galilei draw from the Copernican turn away from the Ptolemaic worldview. In his reading of Brecht’s *Galileo*, Freddie Rokem reminds us of this, and thus of that secret agreement between past generations and our present, which is the philologist’s highest duty, that of translation. Translated into our present day, one might write: No kings! But also no first or last word, no origin and no foundation. It is not such secure knowledge that interests him, but rather the principle of change, the continuous work on the ever-new view of the familiar.

1 Bertolt Brecht: *Life of Galileo*, transl. from the German by John Willett. London: Methuen 1980, p. 8.

Freddie's career can be defined as a rare combination of intellectual rigor, wide-ranging curiosity, and a distinctive gift for building institutions and cultivating scholarly networks. Having originally studied philosophy and comparative literature, he soon turned to theatre and performance studies, bringing with him a sensitivity to language, history, and aesthetics that would shape his scholarship throughout his career. Freddie's scholarship explores the intersections of theatre, philosophy, and history. Central to this scholarly legacy are two of his influential books: *Performing History. Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre* (2000) and *Philosophers and Thespians. Thinking Performance* (2010). In *Performing History*, Freddie juxtaposes theatrical treatments of the French Revolution and the Holocaust in Europe, the United States, and Israel to examine how performance acts as a witness to otherwise almost inexpressible pasts. *Philosophers and Thespians* engages with dialogues, competitions, and border-crossings between the discursive practices of theatre and philosophy through analyzing historical or fictional encounters between philosophers and theatre-makers. These studies exemplify Freddie's multiple or 'countless centers' – his comparative and interdisciplinary approach, dissolving boundaries between textual analysis, performance theory, dramaturgy, and intellectual history. Beyond his own writings, Freddie has been a vital connector and convener, nurturing networks across Europe, North America, and Israel. His collaborations with scholars in history, philosophy, and cultural studies, as well as with theatre directors, highlight the breadth of his interdisciplinarity. His mentorship has shaped a generation of theatre and performance researchers.

This *Liber Amicorum* is conceived as both a tribute to and an extension of Freddie's intellectual legacy, highlighting the many dialogical dimensions of his work. The volume is organized around three thematic constellations that reflect central aspects of his scholarship: *Re-Performing Histories*, which examines the ways theatre engages with memory, myth, the reappearances of

collective identities, and the reimagining of the past; *Dramaturgies and Hermeneutics*, which centers on artistic and critical methodologies shaping both canonical and marginal theatrical traditions while exploring hidden (or secret) codes, offering new interpretations that can also function as an applied dramaturgy; *And Philosophy*, which explores the intersections between performance, aesthetics, and philosophical inquiry through inter-intellectual encounters as well as conceptual constellations.

Contributors to the book include former students, colleagues, family and friends from various disciplines across the humanities, underscoring the breadth of Freddie's scholarly influence and reflecting the networks he has helped to foster. The structure of the volume reflects these organizing principles, grouping essays and creative interventions into sections that mirror the theoretical, methodological, and generational dialogues prompted by his work. Together, the contributions form an interdisciplinary conversation that not only honors Freddie's achievements but also demonstrates how his ideas continue to generate new avenues of inquiry. In this way, the volume embodies both retrospective recognition and forward-looking engagement with theatre's role in the humanities.

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