LAB/SHUL
www.labshul.org

BECOMING: Lab/Shul's Next Organizational Chapter

LAB/SHUL MISSION:

Lab/Shul is an everybody-friendly, artist-driven, God-optional, experimental community for sacred Jewish gatherings based in NYC and reaching the world. Lab/Shul is dedicated to exploring, creating and celebrating innovative opportunities for contemplation, life cycle rituals, the arts, life-long learning and social justice. Building on Storahtelling's vision and practice, Lab/Shul seeks to redefine the role of sacred gatherings that nourish our thirst for meaning, connection, spirituality and community.

After ten years of reimagining what Jewish spiritual community looks like for the 21st century, Lab/Shul is launching "BECOMING" - coming of age journeys and rituals for individuals of all ages and stages of life.

BECOMING is the cornerstone of Lab/Shul's next organizational chapter, and will serve as the guiding force and foundation for Lab/Shul's next strategic plan.

WHAT IS BECOMING?

BECOMING makes meaning of life's milestones through study, conversation, storytelling and ritual creation in small cohorts of fellow seekers, witnessed by and in the context of the community at large. The vision for and execution of BECOMING will be led by Lab/Shul's Founding Spiritual Leader, Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie and Co-Founder & Executive Director, Sarah Sokolic, with full support from Lab/Shul's Board of Directors.

Building on Lab/Shul's success with BMitzvah, "BECOMING" is a new model for gathering, where small groups of seekers of all ages can come together to explore identity and legacy, and mark life's milestones in meaningful and creative ways, yielding personal growth and communal belonging, leading to a lifelong commitment to what matters most.

Lab/Shul currently has 3 discrete programs that will be included under the BECOMING “umbrella”.

Raising the Bar (RTB) - Launched in 2008, RTB is a reimagined process and product of the traditional BMitzvah experience, through a bespoke Lab/Shul curriculum and pedagogy, including Storahtelling™, that is unique, artistic, and inclusive. More than 100 teens and their families have been through the RTB program over the past 15 years.

GENerate - Launched in 2018, GENerate is a rite of passage program for older adults in the “middle essence” years - transitioning from career to retirement, and from child rearing to empty nesting and wise eldering. The 4th cohort of GENerate will commence in spring 2024.

Pass/Age - Launched in 2022, Pass/Age is Lab/Shul’s newest rite of passage program for Jewish adults of all ages marking meaningful milestones and shifts in their lives such as career change, divorce, home relocation, milestone birthdays and more.

Learnings from these experiments will inform the growth of BECOMING as it expands to mark more of life’s milestones as well as offer opportunities for inter-connectivity between them. Future cohort-based programs under the BECOMING umbrella will include, but are not limited to: Preparing for Marriage, Preparing for Parenting, Empty Nesting, and Conversion/Integration.

WHY NOW?

In all cultures throughout history, Rites of Passage have marked personal milestones with meaning, offering journeys, rituals and public celebrations that help us make sense of our lives. But few of these traditions survived into our modern age. In Judaism, the marking of BMitzvah at age 13 has become a central moment of graduation from childhood, and a primary opportunity for the family’s engagement with Jewish life, and personal and collective identity. Recent data by the Pew Research Center reports that attendance at a BMitzvah is one of the top three most common occasions at which modern day Jews engage in a religious or spiritual context. This reinforces the notion that Rites of Passage matter, and shines a spotlight on their absence throughout the rest of life’s journey. For many years Lab/Shul has seen growing interest in coming-of-age programs for non-Orthodox Jews and their increasingly multi-faith families who are yearning for spiritual connection, meaning and communal care, but aren’t engaging in traditional synagogue models.

The Jewish spiritual communal infrastructure is ripe for a reset and BECOMING is a viable antidote.

VALUE PROPOSITION: STORAHTELLING

Lab/Shul began on a stage in 1999 as a Jewish Ritual Theater Company that pioneered replicable models for the integration of Jewish education and the performing arts. Storahtelling created multi-generational theatrical productions that re-imagined biblical stories and trained clergy and community leaders to become better storytellers and teachers. Thorough a tried and tested original pedagogy called, “The Maven Method™”, Storahtelling lives on at Lab/Shul as the core methodology for the translation and interpretation of Torah text and liturgy that provides tools for Judaic literacy and reimagines the role of our sacred stories in a post-affiliated world of belonging, justice and change.

Storahtelling will be utilized in all BECOMING rite of passage cohorts from beginning to end, as the core tool for grounding participants’ journeys in the study of Judaic text. Through Storahtelling, participants become their own storytellers, creating original culminating rituals to mark their milestones and transformative journeys.

CAPACITY BUILDING:

Our business planning process for BECOMING is under way, and will be finalized in June 2024. Lab/Shul is currently seeking capacity building funds to begin executing on this new strategic vision for Lab/Shul’s future starting Q3 of 2024. Our initial plans for 2024-25 include:

- Hire a full-time BECOMING Program Director and full-time Program Coordinator to execute on BECOMING program development, branding and marketing, recruitment, organizational partnerships and staffing
- Double Raising the Bar program participation through in integrated marketing and recruitment plan
- Launch Cohort 2 of PassAge in New York City
- Pilot 3 new national GENerate cohorts around the country, in possible partnership with Jewish Federations of North America.
- Launch the “BECOMING Institute” that includes annual week-long immersive trainings and year long professional development for 15-25 BECOMING cohort facilitators and 15-25 Storahtelling trainers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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