

The Schmooze

Stories with a Yiddish Twist

**DON'T USE YOUR "TSELULARER TELEFON" AT LINCOLN CENTER...
OR ANY OTHER THEATER**

by
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Syosset, New York

As of 2013, cell phones ("tselularer telefons") are used by 91% of adults in the USA. It is the most quickly adopted consumer technology in the history of "di velt" (the world). Industry experts project that by the end of 2015, more Americans will be using cell phones than land line telephones.

However, there are new challenges associated with "tselularer telefon" use.

24% of cell-using adults report they often feel like they have to answer their cell phones even when it interrupts a meeting or a meal ("moltsayt").

Mobile phones are used to tell white lies: 22% of cell owners say they are not always truthful about exactly ("punkt") where they are on the phone.

Asked if they used their cells to vote in contests that had appeared on television ("televisy"), such as "American Idol," 8% of cell owners said they had done that.

And, finally, 82% of Americans and 86% of cell users report being irritated at least occasionally by loud and annoying cell users who conduct their calls in public places.

Kevin D. Williamson, in a special to CNN wrote that he was at a New York theater, seated next to a woman who was on her phone throughout most of the show, "Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812." So he took her phone from her and tossed it. She slapped him--gave him a "frask"--and then stalked off in search of her phone.

"Etiquette" slides were used in movie theaters for years. They read:

MADAM, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SIT BEHIND THE
HAT YOU ARE WEARING?

PLEASE APPLAUD WITH HANDS ONLY.

Robert Simonson wrote, "Theatregoers whose nights are ruined by cell phone rings need no longer only sit, shush, and suffer. They can call the cops!

Cell phone use at theatres, movie houses, concerts, museums, libraries, and galleries is now against the law in NYC. Mayor Michael Bloomberg's veto of a bill banning the devices at public cultural events was overridden by New York's City Council. The vote was 38 to 5. Offenders can face a fine ("geltstrot") of \$50 and eviction from the venue in question..."

Chris Jones (Chicago Tribune, 7/10/15) wrote, "We've long been interested in celebrities behaving badly, but there is a lot of new interest now in audience ("oylem") members behaving even worse."

In 2005, Billy Crystal was performing in his one-man "pyesseh" (play or drama), "700 Sundays," when a cell phone went off--despite two such warnings. At the end of the show he thanked the audience, except for the man or the lady who in the end let the cell phone go off. "Please, next time, shut it off, or better yet..." With a carefully worded instruction, he suggested where the caller put the offending cell phone.

Patti LuPone once stopped in the middle of a big number in "Gypsy" to deal with an audience member who was taking photographs. And on July 8, 2015, LuPone grabbed a cellular phone out of a startled audience member's hand ("hant") as LuPone was making her grand exit ("aroysgang") at Lincoln Center. She was appearing in a play, "Shows for Days," and was disturbed by an audience member who was texting. The woman looked "bored out of her mind."

LuPone told Playbill, “We work hard on stage to create (“bashafn”) a world that is being totally destroyed by a few, rude (“grob”), self-absorbed and inconsiderate audience members who are controlled by their phones... When a phone goes off or when a LED screen can be seen in the dark (“fintster”), it ruins the experience for everyone else (“yeder eyner”)--the majority of the audience at that performance and the actors on stage.”

LuPone continued: “I am so defeated by this issue that I seriously question whether I want to work on stage anymore.”

How did her fans react? They applauded her actions.

In conclusion, perhaps we should all follow the theater etiquette advice (“eytse”) of Chris Caggiano, musicals and theater “maven”:

“Turn off everything. This should be a given but alas it isn’t. I attend the theater at least four times a month, sometimes more. And I can’t recall a single performance when someone’s cell phone didn’t ring in the middle (“der mitn”) of the show.

Don’t just silence your cell phone. Turn it off. You know that vibrating noise (“tuml”) that you think no one can hear? Well, we can hear it...”

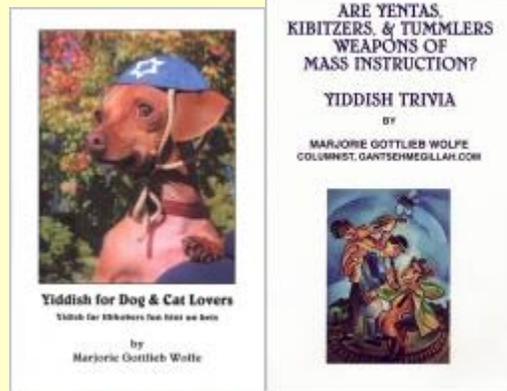
MARJORIE’S FAVORITE YIDDISH EXPRESSION:

“Redn iz gut, shvaygn iz beser.”
(Talking is good, but silence is better.)

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**Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of
two books:**



**"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and
"Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction?
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