

GOODSPEED MUSICALS

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

# CUTMAN:

a boxing musical



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The Max Showalter Center for  
Education in Musical Theatre

## CUTMAN

The Norma Terris Theatre  
May 12 - June 5, 2011

MUSIC & LYRICS BY  
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BOOK BY  
**JARED MICHAEL COSEGLIA**

STORY BY  
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&  
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SCENIC DESIGN BY  
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DIRECTED BY  
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PRODUCED FOR GOODSPEED  
MUSICALS BY  
**MICHAEL P. PRICE**

# THE CHARACTERS

**ARI HOFFMAN:** The protagonist of *Cutman* who is a native of Queens, NY and dreams of being the Welterweight Champion of the World. Weighing in at 145lbs, this Jewish boxer has been training with his father Eli since he was a young boy. Ari struggles to maintain his Jewish identity while searching for boxing recognition and representation.

**ELI HOFFMAN:** A custodian at the local synagogue who directs all of his passion towards the training of his son, Ari. After leaving his career as cutman to Marvin Hagler, Eli married Edie, Ari's mother. Eli trained Ari to be an unstoppable boxer, but he is reluctant to let Ari fight professionally.

**EDIE HOFFMAN:** A native of Queens, NY, who is mother to Ari and wife to Eli. Edie is devout in her Judaism and has owned a bridal shop since 1989. Edie does not support her son's ambition to become a professional boxer.

**OLIVIA:** A student at the Fashion Institute of Technology who comes into the Hoffman's lives after taking a window dressing position at Hoffman's Bridal Shoppe. Olivia finds herself falling in love with Ari and stands by his decision to fight professionally.

**LINCOLN:** Also known as "Toughest in the Land," Lincoln has been part of the boxing world his whole life. He trained with the best and had a short lived professional boxing career. He now owns and operates a gym in Brooklyn, NY.

**MOE GREEN:** A renowned Jewish boxing promoter in New York. He is proud, loud, extravagant, and always has his eye on the next big payday.

**RABBI ROSEMAN:** The rabbi of Beth Israel Synagogue, Rabbi Roseman has been an important person in the Hoffman's lives for many years. He is a source of solace and advice for the Hoffman's.

**AVIVA GELLMAN:** The Cantor for Beth Israel Synagogue. She has a divine singing voice and is a progressive Jew with an appreciation for tradition. She is about to be married.

**KARIM KARVER:** The reigning WBA Welter-Weight Champion of the world. Karim was born in Brooklyn, NY, and weighs in at 147lbs. With Moe Green at his side, the "Butcher of Brooklyn" is a rising star in the boxing world.



# CUTMAN AND TRADITION

Did You Know...

THE SPORT OF BOXING AND THE JEWISH religion contain a host of ancient rituals which have a significant impact on the lives of their practitioners. Therefore, tradition is a predominant theme throughout *Cutman*.

One boxing tradition appears early in the show. The term "ring" is used to describe the area where the fight takes place, but the perimeter is actually a square. Before ropes separated the fighting space from the crowd, people would often invade the circle and interfere with the fight. This prompted match organizers to create a perimeter to keep spectators away. The best method to secure the ropes was to put stakes in the ground and this created the square "ring" we see today.



Early in *Cutman*, Ari is already in the ring surrounded by fighters. His training, talent, and ambition make him a true contender. However, to function in the boxing world, Ari and his fellow fighters must embrace other traditions. For example, Ari will eventually fight with members of his own weight class, use a mouth guard to protect his gums, and battle for a coveted championship belt. He learned these rituals from his trainer, cutman, and father, Eli.

Ari is immersed in the world of boxing, and this environment forces him to question his Jewish identity. At the top of the show, Ari is wearing a skullcap head covering worn by some Jews, known as a yarmulke. Lincoln asks him to remove it and he does so without hesitation. He

then heads straight for the boxing ring to begin his training. Is Ari forsaking his Judaism or is he simply taking a step closer to his career?

In *Cutman*, we meet several characters who follow Jewish customs, one of them being Edie Hoffman, mother to protagonist Ari Hoffman. Edie, an expert "schmoozer" (a person who converses casually in order to make social connections), owns a bridal shop and is the product of a traditional Jewish upbringing. In contrast to Ari, Edie strictly follows Jewish observances, such as keeping the Sabbath (the seventh day of the Jewish week and a day of rest in Judaism).

Practicing these rituals becomes a growing problem for Ari. He is a man full of "chutzpah" (supreme self-confidence), as he dreams big and aims high. Ari not only fights in the boxing ring, he also defends his decisions in love and ambition. However, Ari must face the consequences of his actions; for example, his decision to get a tattoo only heightens his sense of internal conflict. According to some Rabbis, the presence of a tattoo makes the body unfit for Jewish burial.

Ari's struggle with tradition reoccurs throughout *Cutman*. His desire to box, his strong feelings for a non-Jewish female, and his tattoo clash with his religious heritage. Through his journey from a small synagogue in Brooklyn, NY to the ring at Madison Square Garden, Ari battles with opposing ideologies to find his own identity.

A CUTMAN is the person responsible for preventing and treating physical damage to a fighter during the breaks between rounds of a full contact match such as boxing, kickboxing, or a mixed martial arts bout. Cutmen typically handle swelling, nosebleeds, and lacerations. The rules of full contact sports stipulate that these injuries can be a cause for premature match stoppage, counting as a loss to the injured fighter. The cutman is therefore essential, and can be a decisive factor in the outcome of the match.

While most athletic commissions require cutmen to be licensed, there is usually no formal training or certification required. Most cutmen learn their trade through apprenticeship and self-education. Cutmen should not be confused with fight doctors, whose task is closer to that of neutral referees, providing medical advice and monitoring the safety of both fighters in accordance with regulations or law.

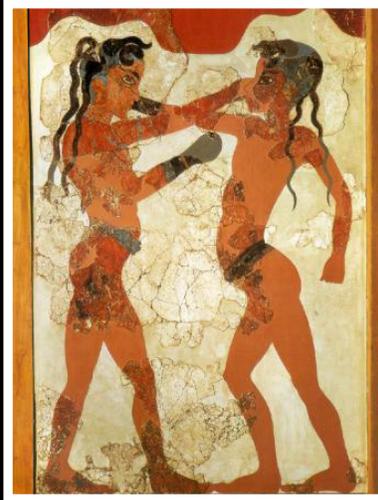


A boxer is treated by his cutman

**Welterweight:** A weight division in professional boxing which requires boxers to be a minimum of 140 pounds and a maximum of 147 pounds.

**Light Welterweight:** An extension of Welterweight requiring boxers to weigh a minimum of 132 pounds.

**Super Welterweight:** An extension of Welterweight requiring fighters to weigh a maximum of 154 pounds.



Found on the island of Santorini Greece, this ancient painting depicts two Minoan youths enjoying the sport of boxing. It is the earliest document showing the use of boxing gloves.



Maxie Rosenbloom

## THE HISTORY OF BOXING

Boxing has been part of the world of sports since 3000 B.C. Archaeologists discovered Ancient Egyptian carvings of fighters, bare-fisted, facing one another, with spectators surrounding them. The first detailed account of boxing as a competitive venture, however, exists in Homer's *The Iliad*. The tale discusses boxing as a traditional sport played by Mycenaeans to honor those lost in battle.

The first recorded boxing match was on January 6, 1681. Christopher Monck, Duke of Albemarle, organized the match. The Duke's butler and his butcher fought and the latter of the two was victorious. At that point, boxing had no regulations. The first boxing rules were called The Broughton's Rules and they were introduced in 1743.

## JEWISH BOXERS

Jews entered the ranks of American Boxing in 1928. During this time, Jews were the most dominant culture represented in boxing, followed by the Italians and then the Irish. However, by the end of World War II, there was little Jewish interest in boxing. Jewish boxing rapidly disintegrated likely due to the availability of education through the G.I. Bill.

The remaining Jewish boxers managed to acquire 26 World Championships in the first half of the last century. Despite the decline of Jewish boxers, they still shared a distinct presence in the boxing world as promoters, managers, and matchmakers.

After the war and its devastation, there may have been a reduction in Jewish boxers, but there was never a loss of pride. Many of the Jewish boxers who remained felt that boxing brought them ethnic confidence and gave them a special identity.

Maxie Rosenbloom was one of these fighters. An American boxer and actor from Leonard's Bridge, Connecticut, Maxie won his first heavyweight title in 1930 and filmed his first movie in 1933. He was nicknamed "Slapsie Maxie" by a journalist due to his open gloved style of boxing. He and other fighters such as Benny Leonard, Barney Ross, Abe Attell, and Al Singer were champions to the world and to their people.

In the 21st Century, Jewish boxers from all over the globe have won more than twenty World Championships. Two of these Jewish championship fighters are Dmitriy Salita, a former light-welterweight champion, and Yuri Foreman, a former super-welterweight champion. Since Salita's championship win in 2005 and Foreman's championship win in 2009, they have reigned as two of the most prominent fighters in the boxing world.



Dmitriy "Star of David" Salita

Watch *Orthodox Stance*, a documentary about Dmitriy Salita for free on Hulu: <http://www.hulu.com/watch/95978/orthodox-stance>

## DID YOU KNOW...

The youngest fighter to win the boxing world title was Wilfred Benitez on March 6, 1976 in San Jose, Puerto Rico. Benitez was 17 years old when he won the title.

The oldest fighter to win the boxing heavyweight world title was George Foreman on November 5, 1994 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Foreman was 45 years old when he won.

# BOXING TERMS

**BARE-KNUCKLED:** To box without protective gloves.

**BLOW:** A strike or hit swung with a clenched fist.

**BOB AND WEAVE:** Moving the head laterally and beneath an incoming punch.

**BOUT:** An athletic match (as of boxing).

**CLINCH:** Occurs when the distance between both fighters has closed and straight punches cannot be employed. The boxer attempts to hold the opponent's hands so he is unable to throw hooks or uppercuts.

**CROSS:** A powerful straight punch thrown with the rear hand.

**CUTMAN:** A person responsible for preventing and treating physical damage to a fighter during breaks between rounds of a boxing match.

**HOOK:** To swing the arm, which is bent at an angle near or at 90 degrees, in a horizontal arc into the opponent.

**JAB:** To strike a person with a short straight blow.

**KNOCKOUT:** The termination of a boxing match when one boxer has been knocked down and is unable to rise and resume boxing within a specified time.

**MATCH:** An organized contest between people or teams.

**PROMOTER:** A company or person who finances and organizes a sporting or entertainment event.

**ROUND-GIRL:** A common name for a woman who enters the ring between rounds of a boxing event carrying a sign that displays the number of the upcoming round.

**SHADOW-BOXING:** To box with an imaginary opponent especially as a form of training.

**SLIP:** Rotating the body slightly so that an incoming punch passes harmlessly next to the head.

**SPAR:** To fight with an opponent in a short practice session.

**SWAY:** To anticipate a punch and move the upper body or head back so that it misses or has lessened force.

**TECHNICAL KNOCKOUT:** The termination of a boxing match when one boxer is deemed too injured to continue.

**UPPERCUT:** A vertical, rising punch thrown with the rear hand.



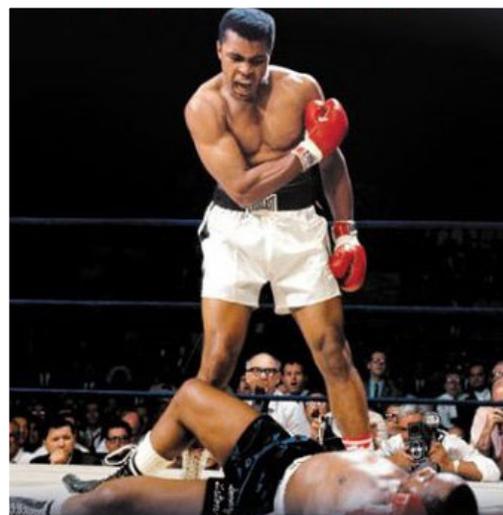
Boxers caught in a clinch



A boxer using his uppercut punch



A boxer throws a jab at his opponent



Ali knocks out Liston