

## ANNOUNCING THE 2020 VINE AWARDS SHORTLIST



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Diverse, original, thought-provoking and a pleasure to read: Koffler Centre of the Arts announces the 2020 Vine Awards Shortlist

Honouring the best Canadian Jewish literature in four categories,  
each with a prize of \$10,000

Toronto, ON, October 15, 2020 – The Koffler Centre of the Arts is proud to announce the shortlist for the 2020 [Vine Awards for Canadian Jewish Literature](#). Winners will be announced on **November 18, 2020** at an online Award Ceremony.

**The Vine Awards for Canadian Jewish Literature** is a national awards program that honours both the best Canadian Jewish writers and non-Jewish Canadian authors who deal with Jewish subjects in Fiction, History, Non-Fiction, Young Adult/Children's literature, and Poetry. Each winning author receives a prize of **\$10,000**. Awards in all categories are given annually, with the exception of poetry that is awarded every three years. The 2020 Jury – comprised of authors **Judy Batalion**, **Allan Levine**, and **Shani Mootoo** – reviewed 55 entries to the Fiction, History, Non-Fiction and Young Adult/Children's categories.

"The creativity and talent of the writers on the shortlist of this year's Vine Awards are exemplary," said 2020 Juror, Allan Levine. "The nominees' range of subject matter – from nineteenth century British Columbia to the ports of Halifax and Beirut in 1948 and to memoirs of the Holocaust to the Yemeni immigrant experience – is diverse, original, thought-provoking and a pleasure to read."

"The Koffler Centre of the Arts is delighted to present another stellar edition of the Vine Awards, bringing the best of contemporary Jewish writing to Canadian readers and honouring exceptional literary talent, as evidenced by this year's shortlist," said Koffler Centre Executive Director, **Karen Tisch**. "We are extraordinarily grateful to our lead donors, Lillian and Norman Glowinsky, for supporting these awards, which are named in loving memory of

Lillian's parents, Helen and Stan Vine. Their generosity provides vital recognition and support to writers exploring Jewish perspectives and themes within the broader context of Canadian literature.”

The Vine Awards winners will be announced this year at an online Awards Ceremony on **November 18, 2020**. In addition to the ceremony, the Koffler is presenting two virtual panels featuring shortlisted Vine Awards authors on **November 10** and **November 12, 2020** on the [Virtual J platform](#).

All online events are free and open to the public; registration required. Details to be announced on [kofflerarts.org](#).

### **The 2020 Vine Awards Shortlist**

#### FICTION:

**David Bezmozgis, *Immigrant City*** (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd)

*In Immigrant City David Bezmozgis masterfully elucidates the possibilities of the short story form. One can see and hear the cadence of the voices of his vulnerable characters, their quotidian trials and unexpected triumphs wrought keenly palpable by the author's humanism and perfectly weighted hand.* – Vine Awards Jury

**Sarah Leavitt, *Agnes, Murderess*** (Freehand Books)

*Sarah Leavitt delivers a most powerful story, artfully tying together the engaging voice of her protagonist with well-timed ellipses and magical drawings that are the hallmark of the successful graphic novel.* – Vine Awards Jury

**David Szalay, *Turbulence*** (McClelland & Stewart)

*Turbulence takes readers on a seat-gripping journey of desire, loss, and the unexpected ways in which we touch each others' lives.* – Vine Awards Jury

#### HISTORY:

**Zelda Abramson & John Lynch, *The Montreal Shtetl: Making Home After the Holocaust*** (Between the Lines)

*The Montreal Shtetl is a well-researched and engaging narrative about identity and belonging in a not-always-pretty period in Canadian Jewish history.* – Vine Awards Jury

**Matti Friedman, *Spies of No Country*** (Signal, McClelland & Stewart)

*Spies of No Country reads like a spy-thriller page-turner, replete with all the suspense of double identities and the close calls of betrayals—except that this is not a work of fiction. Well researched, and offering up much intriguing and gritty detail, it is the unveiling of several intricately-woven true stories of the earliest days of Mossad, and the pivotal, but until now obscured, role of the four Arab Jews who laid the underground work for the imminent birth of the country of Israel.* – Vine Awards Jury

**Heidi J.S. Tworek, *News from Germany: The Competition to Control World Communications, 1900-1945***

(Harvard University Press)

*Heidi Tworek has produced a well-researched, accessible and thought-provoking study of the power of information and how it was manipulated by both the Weimar Republic and the Nazi regime. The book's significant lessons resonate with current battles over “fake news” and the role of the media in a democracy.* – Vine Awards Jury

#### NON-FICTION:

**Naomi K. Lewis, *Tiny Lights for Travellers*** (University of Alberta Press)

*In this memoir, Lewis appears to be on a quest to retrace the actual route of her beloved Opa's escape from German Controlled Europe, but along the way, traveling alone from Amsterdam to Lyon, unexpected family secrets are unearthed. In the best tradition of the memoir form, Lewis's explorations take her well beyond her expectations, and she finds that her initial quest is a small part of a much larger understanding of herself and her Jewishness.* – Vine Awards Jury

**Ayelet Tsabari, *The Art of Leaving*** (HarperCollins Publishers Ltd)

*The Art of Leaving is an intelligent and sensuous coming-of-age memoir that sheds light on Mizrahi culture and identity.* – Vine Awards Jury

**Diana Wichtel, *Driving to Treblinka*** (Heritage House Publishing)

*A compelling, vivid and honest memoir and narrative about Diana Wichtel's heartfelt search for the truth about her troubled father, a Holocaust survivor, who she lost touch with as a young teenager, and her journey to discover the harrowing details of his wartime experiences and the hardships he experienced in the years that followed in Canada.* – Vine Awards Jury

YOUNG ADULT/CHILDREN'S LITERATURE:

**Kathy Kacer, *Masters of Silence*** (Annick Press)

*Kathy Kacer has written a superb well-researched, fast-paced wartime story, a narrative that relates the traumatic struggles and courage of her young protagonists, siblings Henry and Helen, and their relationship with the real-life Marcel Marceau, the mime artist, who though still in his early twenties, was active in the French Resistance.*  
– Vine Awards Jury

**Edeet Ravel, *A Boy is Not a Bird*** (Groundwood Books)

*Edeet Ravel has created a gripping story, based on a true one, of a young boy's initial excitement, his ensuing confusion and dawning understanding of the politics of the 1940s when his Eastern European hometown is invaded by Russia. Ravel masterfully and in clear prose lays out her protagonist's trajectory from happy-go-lucky child to one who comes to understand the value of "holding onto one another when everything else slips away".*  
– Vine Awards Jury

**Eric Walters and Kathy Kacer, *Broken Strings*** (Penguin Random House Canada Young Readers)

*Broken Strings seamlessly blends themes of young love, artistic identity, 9/11, grief, and the Auschwitz orchestra into a moving and insightful young adult novel.* – Vine Awards Jury

**The Vine Awards for Canadian Jewish Literature** are made possible by a generous donation by the Lillian and Norman Glowinsky Family Foundation to support Canadian Jewish literature, a tradition they established with the original awards in 2004, building on the Canadian Jewish Book Awards founded in 1988 by Adam Fuerstenberg. The Vine Awards are a loving tribute to Lillian's parents – Helen and Stan Vine – who were passionate about the arts and the Jewish community throughout their lives.

#### **ABOUT THE KOFFLER**

The Koffler Centre of the Arts is a cultural platform that explores critical ideas and concerns of our time through a year-round program of exhibitions, publications, performances, literary events, digital initiatives and arts education programs. We examine complex issues through transformative art experiences that stimulate intercultural dialogue and promote social change. Through our in-gallery and off-site programs, the Koffler engages thousands of visitors each year. From school children and teens, to newcomers and seniors, we provide vital opportunities for self-expression and community connection, including to those in greatest need.

As a Jewish organization, we value – and aim to foster – social justice and equality while nurturing a passion for learning and understanding. We position Jewish identity in conversation with diverse perspectives and global voices to examine complex issues in a respectful, constructive way. These principles support the Koffler's engagement with the best contemporary creative minds in producing and presenting art that provides common ground for experiences shaping our shared cultural life and defining our social values.

Visit us online at [kofflerarts.org](http://kofflerarts.org)

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