

# THE COMMENTATOR

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## SCDS Hosts 'Soon By You' Creators for a Viewing Party

By: Sara Marcus | News | April 14, 2019

The Stern College Dramatics Society hosted Leah Gottfried and Jessica Schechter on March 5. Leah and Jessica are producers and stars of the comedy web series about Orthodox dating, “Soon By You.” The duo was hosted by SCDS for a viewing of the first episode of the show’s second season, followed by a discussion with the two actresses.

“Soon By You,” which premiered in 2016, tells the story of six Modern Orthodox singles living in Manhattan, struggling to balance ambitions, expectations and dating lives. Over 100,000 people have watched the series, and the Stern students that assembled to watch the episode represent a core audience that finds “Soon By You” one of the rare, if not only programs, where they can see themselves accurately represented.

“It was so much fun watching with you guys ... you got it. You’re like the ideal audience,” said Gottfried, when a member of the audience pointed out a genetic screening joke between characters only one week after Stern hosted a JScreen registration for the student body.

Gottfried spoke of how many of the emotions around the anxieties and aspirations of being young and single are universal, even if many of the experiences depicted on the show are specific to Orthodox Jews in New York City. Schechter added that they strove to be honest about the specificities of dating while Orthodox, the complexities of “being religious, being human, trying to navigate those two worlds of having desires that are perfectly natural but also trying to exist within a halakhic framework and pushing up against that.” Gottfried and Schechter were friends and supporters of each other’s creative

endeavors for years. Schechter joked that the creation of the show came about when the two sat down and Gottfried simply asked about her dating misadventure stories.

Gottfried said she is passionate about portraying Modern Orthodox Jews authentically, and is encouraged by the positive reactions of the show's audience.

When asked about delivering important messages amidst the humor, Gottfried explained that many of the sponsors that support the show's funding are Jewish social organizations that reflect their values, such as the Halachic Organ Donor Society and the Organization for the Resolution of Agunot (ORA), an organization "seeking to eliminate abuse from the Jewish divorce process."

They spoke about their writing and casting process, developing realistic characters, filming with child actors, their experiences in the tiny world of Orthodox artists and actors and their plans for the future of the show. "This is 'Soon By You,' uncensored!" joked Schechter as the crowd laughed and commented throughout.

Gottfried, a Stern graduate herself, added, "I always love coming back to Stern. I feel like I learned so much here. I shaped a film major here and a lot of what I learned ... I learn on a daily basis and in creating the show. It's wonderful to be back here. And there are so many young women with so many amazing ideas and we need to empower their voices. It's so important to hear our stories."

Eliana Azizallahoff, a Stern junior and SDCS member, described the event as "an incredible opportunity." YU's all about Torah U'Madah, and this is a really good representation of that in action," she said. When you see Modern Orthodoxy at play, you see the practicality of juggling your religious convictions with actually living life in New York City."

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Photo Caption: Stern students with series creators Leah Gottfried and Jessica Schechter

Photo Credit: Stern College Dramatics Society