**OBITS** 

**COMMUNITY** ~

## grandmother to life in one-person play in Augusta "Bella, An Immigrant's Tale" covers the life of actor Vicki Summers' grandmother, a Russian Jewish immigrant who escaped the pogroms and started a new life in America.

BY CHRIS BOUCHARD KENNEBEC JOURNAL Share f 🍑 🍪 🔀 🚍 **BREAKING NEWS** Add your email address and we'll send you

central Maine news, weather updates and traffic alerts as they happen. Enter your email **SUBMIT** 



**NEWS** ~

SPORTS ~

**OPINION** ~

Summers eventually realized, however, her grandmother's story was better suited to a play.

The Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine hosted that play, "Bella, An

pogroms in Russia and came to America in 1920.

performing the play.

she met her husband in America.

afternoon. Sara Lennon, the center's marketing and communications director, said Summers reached out to the center just a month ago in April to ask about

Lennon said she and Executive Director Tam Huynh were thrilled to welcome

Summers to the venue and felt the play would be a great fit.

Immigrant's Tale," at the Michael Klahr Center in Augusta on Sunday

The play begins with Summers, portraying Bella, preparing a Shabbat dinner. As she describes the meal, she begins to talk about her early life, leading into the biographical play. Throughout the 50 minute performance, Summers balances

harrowing, heartbreaking moments, such as being pursued during the pogroms,

with lighthearted and humorous portrayals of Bella's life, such as the first time

Advertisement

Maine's Most Popular

Medicare Plan

Received 5 Stars

Martin's Point

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLANS "That was incredible," said Huynh after the play. "I felt like I was there." Attendant Joyce Grondin said it was fascinating to see the play's portrayal of the immigrant experience.

"Just the way people had to navigate in the US, not having very good English,

Summers, who lives in Portland and

Cape Rep Theatre in Brewster,

Cape Cod, took a course in 2017 at the

Massachusetts, that taught actors how to

write their own stories and adapt them

into plays, which ultimately inspired the

"I knew I had to write this play," she said.

"The words fell out of me almost

and knowing that they're different, so to speak," she said.

Playwright Vicki Summers with her grandmother,

Bella Indianer, in 1984. Contributed photo

instantly, almost like she channeled me. It was an incredible experience." Since writing the play, Summers said she has performed it between 20 and 25

times, and that the audience response so far has been "wonderful."

play.

She plays about 10 characters overall, with a primary focus on her grandmother.

charming optimism despite her life's many hardships, including being shot in

the leg in Russia and nearly dying because the hospital didn't have antibiotics.

Summers said Bella not only came out of the Russian hospital alive, but with her

She describes Bella as a "beautiful human being" who persevered with

legs intact. At 50, she had heart failure but managed to live through it.

But Bella would often shy away from talking about her past in Russia.

heal, and she just brought so much love and joy to everybody."

and to learn more about their family history.

RELATED •••

homes

Ukraine."

couldn't accomplish.

All Comments 0

Send questions/comments to the editors.

Saturday's hot weather broke

**ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT** 

As 254 graduate from

finishes debt-free in just

Thomas College, at least one

temperature records across

< PREVIOUS

FILED UNDER:

RELATED STORIES

three semesters

**UKRAINE** 

Maine

Advertisement

"She had an amazing way of healing herself," said Summers. "She would always bring herself back, just with whatever she had, whatever gift that she had to

"When I would tell her I wanted to write a book, she'd say 'Oh, why would you want to write a book about this? It's so sad and now my life is so happy.' And I said because it's important. It's an important story," Summers said.

The actress said she hopes the play inspires people to interview their relatives

Advertisement

**Our photos** capture the moments. **BUY PHOTOS** 

Hallowell family sends a gift to Ukrainian children who have fled their

The HHRC asked guests to make a donation to UNICEF to help with efforts in

Ukraine has created a stark parallel with her grandmother's younger life. After

Ukraine in lieu of purchasing tickets. Summers said the current crisis in

the performance, Huynh shared that they were able to raise \$800.

Bella Indianer, played by Indianer's granddaughter, Vicki Summers, during a performance of Summers' play, "Bella, An Immigrant's Tale," at the Cape Rep Theater in Brewster, Massachusetts, in March. Indianer is preparing chicken soup at a counter. Contributed photo "My grandmother was a child when she went through this," said Summers. "It's

Summers said. "So how could I not write a play? I think that's why I never wrote the book, because this was meant to be a play." **RELATED HEADLINES** > Hallowell family sends a gift to Ukrainian children who have fled their homes

so eerie, and it hit me recently, how what's going on in Ukraine right now is

almost exactly what my grandmother had to go through a little over 100 years

ago, and in the same region, because her village was in what is now current day

Summers hopes to do more shows in the future and said the experience of

playing her grandmother on the stage brings her to life in a way that a book

"The whole family, everybody adored my grandmother, just adored her,"

Comments Discussions for this article have been closed. Thank you for your contributions.

There were no comments on this article.

Only subscribers are eligible to post comments. Please subscribe or login to

participate in the conversation. Here's why.

lawsuit brought by female prison guard

Settlement reached in federal

Viewing Options ▼

NEXT >

MAINE CRIME Reporting Aside: Opening a Police: Pair from Waterville charged door to Waterville's South with robbing Fairfield Circle K store End

LATEST ARTICLES

AUGUSTA MAINE, CMNEWS, HOLOCAUST AND HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER, LISTEN, PLAY,

MAINE CRIME **VARSITY MAINE** Local roundup: Erskine Augusta man to serve 2 years in prison softball rolls past Waterville for assault of woman in vehicle

With renovations to outdoor Madison softball wins wild stage, Sidney arts center showdown with rival looks to draw bigger acts, Monmouth larger crowds **VARSITY MAINE LOCAL & STATE** Lawrence baseball team tops

Former Gardiner councilor SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION Johnston remembered for More than 300 walk at legacy of service following UMaine Augusta's first indeath person ceremony since 2019

**VARSITY MAINE** 

matchup

**LOCAL & STATE** 

Cony in major Class B North

**SUBSCRIBE** 

LOGIN





**MOST READ STORIES** Deputy: Anson woman, 32, killed when she loses control of motorcycle, hits guardrail Man charged with murder in shooting death of Wells toddler

Police: Body found in Sebasticook River

The effects of faculty cuts ripple across

Shooting death of Lewiston man at

Augusta towing company under

investigation by police

**Need help** 

Our customer service

team is here to help.

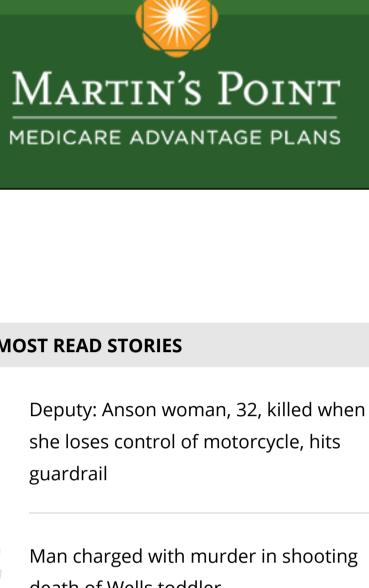
is man last seen in March

UMF campus and into homes

paying your bill?

LEARN MORE >

**SCHOOLS & CHOOSE A TOWN EDUCATION** COMMUNITY COLUMNS ■ READ THE EPAPER \*\* Maine's **Most Popular** Medicare Plan



KENNEBEC JOURNAL (f) (S) (III) MORNING SENTINEL (f) (S) (III) **EVENTS Community Voices Business Breakfast Forums** Source Maine Sustainability Awards

**CONTACT US CONNECT WITH US General Contact Information Email Newsletters** Staff Directory Facebook Submit a Letter to the Editor Kennebec Journal Twitter News Tip Morning Sentinel Twitter **FAQs** Work Here **ADVERTISE SUBSCRIBERS** Media Kit Contact Advertising Subscribe Help Wanted Ads Manage Your Account Place an Obituary Log a Delivery Issue Subscriber Benefits ePapers Mobile Apps

**NETWORK** Pressherald.com Sunjournal.com Timesrecord.com The Forecasters Varsity Maine

(X)FREE RETURN SHOP NOW >

Privacy Policy Cookie Policy Terms of Service Commenting Terms Public Notices Archive Merch Store Photo Store © 2022 | All Rights Reserve WEAR YOUR WONDERFUL

Maine Voices Live

centralmaine.com