



ACS Local Section
New York
Westchester Chemical Society

ALEXANDER BORODIN'S KISMET: CHEMIST AND COMPOSER

**Speaker: Stephen M. Cohen, Ph.D.,
MRSC**

Writer
Podcast Host of
"The History of Chemistry"

Date: Thursday, March 7, 2024

Time: 7:30 pm

Place: ONLINE ONLY



Please contact Peter Corfield at
pcorfield@fordham.edu to RSVP for the
meeting or if you have any questions.

ZOOM LINK:

<https://fordham.zoom.us/j/5962595219?omn=87214902937>

Event is free of charge

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ALEXANDER BORODIN'S KISMET: CHEMIST AND COMPOSER

Abstract:

Nineteenth-century Russian chemist Alexander Borodin was also a composer of some of the best-known music in the world including a posthumous Tony Award for his music in the musical "Kismet." Yet his top-notch chemical contributions are nearly forgotten. This talk explores his life as both a chemist deeply in touch with the latest happenings in European chemistry, and as a composer, a member of The Mighty Handful, who struggled with writing and completing his scores, based on Russian nationalist ideas. He knew he was a divided man, and his colleagues and peers recognized this within him. The chemistry he learned at university, his home life; relationships with friends, students, and peers; music (including samples of some of his compositions); chemical research; and more are topics for this talk.

Biography:

Stephen Michael Cohen is a writer and podcaster on chemical matters. After a year of research at Nottingham University on laser spectroscopy of van der Waals complexes, he received his Ph.D. in Physical Chemistry, specializing in surface chemistry, at Rice University in Houston, Texas. He did postdoctoral stints for Lehigh University and the U.S. Navy researching protective treatments for aircraft aluminum, and laser spectroscopy of new polymers at Rutgers University. His books include *O Mg! How Chemistry Came to Be* (World Scientific Press, 2022), a graphic novel on the history of chemistry; and *America's Scientific Treasures*, 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, 2020), a travel compendium of adult-level science sites to visit in the USA. He has published studies of chemical terminology (Bulletin for the History of Chemistry, Aleph, and the Royal Society of Chemistry's Historical Group Newsletter) in Yiddish for thirty years, and has branched out into other areas of Jewish Studies, including "Leybl Botwinik's Di Geheyne Shlikhes: A Groundbreaking Yiddish Science-Fiction Novel" in Valerie Frankel's Jewish Fantasy Worldwide anthology; "The Rise of Judaic Calligraphy in the Twentieth Century" in Jewish Folklore and Ethnography; and an entry in the Shalvi/Hyman Encyclopedia of Jewish Women on Maria the Jewess. He is a Board member of the Royal Society of Chemistry-US Section, the Treasurer of the Midwest Jewish Studies Association, and is the host of the popular podcast "The History of Chemistry." He is also a professional calligrapher of Judaic art for many years, and a published composer of Jewish choral music. He speaks only Yiddish to his two children, now in their twenties.