

SINGING FOR A BETTER WORLD

Saturday, May 15, 2021 | 7 PM Eastern Time

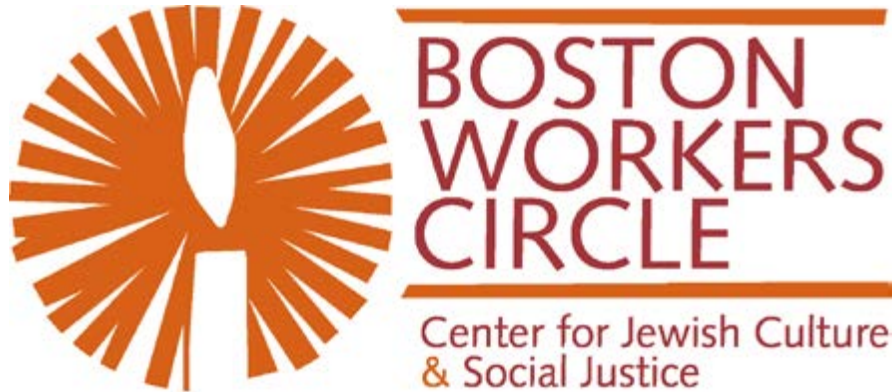
Featuring **A Besere Velt**
Yiddish Community Chorus of Boston Workers Circle
Derek David, Musical Director

With Guest Artists (in order of appearance)

Polina Shepherd
Lorin Sklamberg
Daniel Kahn
Anthony Mordechai Tzvi Russell
Judy Bressler
Merlin Shepherd



Presented by:



Welcome to Boston Workers Circle. We are:

A community home for secular Jewish life.

A voice for progressive Jewish values and social change.

An arts and education center celebrating Yiddish, Jewish, and progressive culture.

Our Jewish identity is proudly rooted in cultural heritage and a commitment to justice. Members help to create and run all programs, and our continuity is built on the foundation of our history as a 120-year old mutual aid organization founded by Jewish immigrants.

We are proud to be a community where whatever your Jewish background, whatever the faith, ethnic, or gender diversity of your family, children and adults feel welcome and participate fully at all levels of the organization. Learn more at circleboston.org.

Thank you to our co-sponsors:



A Besere Velt Yiddish Chorus

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Beth Karp

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Laura Derman
Norma Finkelstein
Marcia Goldensher
Anna Stanger Golden
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Rebecca Fraimow
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Margery Meadow
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Barbara Ruskin
Dana Schaul
Ilana Shotkin
Julie Silberman
Jenny Silverman
Megan Smith
Hannah Sobel
Susan Sommer
Erina Speigelman
Mae Tupa

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Beth Worell

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Maia Brumberg-Kraus
Judy Ehrlich
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Tolle Graham
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Joanna Messing
Ruby Poltorak
Mona Pollack
Donna Southwell
Linda Stern
Sarah Swartz
Sonya Taaffe
Lily Weitzman
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Brent Whelan

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Oliver Braunschweig
Michael Furstenberg
Richard Goldberg
Manny Howard
Michael Katz
Hal Lichtin Arnold Maltz
Tim McKenna
Steve Ostrow
Larry Rich
Joel Schwartz
Richard Segan
Mitchell Silver
Andy Strauss
Henry Wolstat
Michael Zimmer

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Ed Brody
Barbara Brown
Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus
Fred Dworkin
Renee Kasinsky
Pauli Katz
Laurie Livingston
Renee Miller
Dianne Perlmutter
Steve Perlmutter
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Dorothee Rozenberg
Sam Slate
Stephen Zisk
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Oliver Braunschweig
Judy Ehrlich
Mike Felsen
Bob Follansbee
Gena Frank
Tolle Graham
Linda Gritz
Beth Karp
Pauli Katz
Marsha Lazar
Laurie Livingston

Becky Long
Kim Meyers
Debra Poaster
Mona Pollack
Ruby Poltorak
Larry Rich
Judith Schwartz
Hannah Sobel
Sonya Taaffe
Brent Whelan
Stephen Zisk

ACCOMPANISTS (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Barry Shapiro, accordion
Christina Crowder, accordion
Steven Lipsitt, clarinet
Sherry Mayrent, clarinet
Pamela Blau, violin
Derek David, piano

CONCERT VENUES

Town and Country Synagogue, New York, NY (Yiddish New York, 2019)
Eliot Church, Newton, MA (Diaspora and Dreams, 2019)
Kresge Theater, Cambridge, MA (Roots, Resistance, Resilience, 2018)

ASL INTERPRETATION AT YIDDISH NEW YORK CONCERT

Kim Shaw

Speakers (in order of appearance)

Bob Follansbee	Andy Strauss
Ruby Poltorak	Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus
Derek David	Steve Perlmutter
Judy Rubman Ehrlich	Debbie Katz
Lily Weitzman	Sonya Taaffe
Susan Leskin	Norman Berman
Peter Rhodes	Ari Skidmore-Hess
Steve Ostrow	Leah Varsano
Helen Raizen	Susan Werbe
Anne Greenwald	Maddy Popkin
Jen Kiok	Judith Schwartz
Zayin Class of 2019:	Mona Pollack
Noah, Phineas, Jay, Jasper,	Mike Felsen
Lucas, Owen, Jonas, Reu-	Ilana Shotkin
ben, Jake & Sophia	Joel Schwartz
Linda Gritz	Donna Southwell
Pauli Katz	
Mae Tupa	And introducing Sam the Parakeet!!!



Concert Production

VIDEO PRODUCTION

Peter Rhodes, Director and Editor
Matt Shelley-Read, Assistant Editor
Mike Katz, Production Assistant
Mona Pollack, Captioning/Subtitles
Madeleine Jackman, Additional Video Production

PHOTO/VIDEO CREDITS

Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives – Cornell University
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ABV Members' personal photographs
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David Kaufman

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Margery Meadow – webmaster

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Bethany Basile - Deputy Director
Madeleine Jackman - Director of Communications
Sandy Martin - Office Manager
Maddy Popkin - Cultural Worker & Member Organizer
Meira Soloff - Education Director
Michelle Weiser - Former Deputy Director

IN MEMORIAM: We remember all our dear, departed friends who sang with A Besere Velt over the years. Their voices and spirits are firmly fixed in our memories and they continue to inspire us.

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Linda Gritz
Mona Pollack
Peter Rhodes
Andy Strauss

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(LISTED ALPHABETICALLY BY FIRST NAME)

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Barbara Rosenblum
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at verterbukh.org
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Nora Osman & Mark Pomerantz, Marjorie &
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so proud of Rueben & Alessandra
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Norma Finkelstein
Penny Glassman
Robin Barnes & David Bor
Rosa Blumenfeld
Ruby Poltorak
Sarah Axelrod
Sarah Freeman
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Steven Lipsitt
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To support our cultural programming and community,
please visit: circleboston.org/donate



Original photo by Derek Kouyoumjian of A Besere Velt Chorus performing; edit by Madeleine Jackman.

Songs

VAKHT OYF (WAKE UP)

Lyrics: Dovid Edelstadt

Composer unknown

Choral arrangement: Zalmen Mlotek, adapted by Lisa Gallatin

YIDDISH LYRICS

Vi lang, o vi lang vet ir blaybn nokh shklafn
Un trogn di shendleke keyt?
Vi lang vet ir glentsnde raykhtimer shafn
Far dem vos baroybt ayer broyt?

Vi lang, vi lang vet ir shteyn ayer rukn
geboygn
Derniderikt, heymloz, farshmakht?
Es togt shoyrn, vakht oyf, un tse'efnt di
oygn
Derfilit ayer ayzerne makht!

Un ales vet lebn, un libn, un blien
In frayen, in goldenem may.
Brider, genug far tiranen tsu knien
Shvert, az ir muzt vern fray
Shvester, genug far tiranen tsu knien
Shvert, az ir muzt vern fray.

Mir muzn vern fray, mir muzn vern fray!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

How long will you remain slaves
And wear degrading chains?
How long will you produce riches
For those who rob you of your bread?

How long will you stand with your backs
bent
Humiliated, homeless, weak?
It's daybreak, wake up, and open your
eyes!
Feel your iron strength!

And all will live, and love, and bloom
In freedom's golden May.
Brothers, enough of kneeling to tyrants.
Swear you must be free!
Sisters, enough of kneeling to tyrants.
Swear you must be free!

We must be free, we must be free!



Photo by Madeleine Jackman at Shule Hey, 5th grade, student-led protest (2021).

GRIS BAGRIS (WELCOME)

Lyrics: Leibush Lehrer (Third verse by Martie and Musia Lakin)

Music: Lazar Weiner

Choral Arrangement: Derek David

YIDDISH LYRICS

Gris, bagris zey mit gezang,
Ven di zun fargeyt,
Shpreyt zikh undzer loyb-gezung,
Iber vayt un breyt.

CHORUS:

Zingt, zingt, ale tsuzamen,
Ale, ale, kleyn un groys,
Brengt, brengt, mit freyd un lider,
Likht in undzer hoyz.

Shpreyt dayn varemen fligl oys
In dem ovnt-vint,
Vayse likht in undzer hoyz,
Ven der tog farshvindt.

CHORUS

Lomir eyn mishpokhe zayn,
Sholem in der velt,
Dort in heln zunenshayn,
Dort vu keyner felt.

CHORUS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Welcome them with singing
When the sun goes down.
Our song of praise spreads
Far and wide.

CHORUS:

Sing, sing, all together,
All, all, little and big.
Bring, bring, with joy and songs,
Light into our house.

Spread your warm wing
In the evening breeze,
White candlelight in our house
When the day disappears.

CHORUS

Let's be one family,
Peace in the world,
There in the bright sunshine,
There where no one is in need.

CHORUS



Photos by Madeleine Jackman at Lomir Tantsn: Let's Dance class (2019), and Intergenerational Shabes dinner (right, 2019).

ARBETER FROYEN (WORKING WOMEN)

Lyrics: Dovid Edelshtat
Composer unknown
English lyrics: Daniel Kahn
Choral arrangement: Derek David

YIDDISH LYRICS

Arbeter froyen, laydnde froyen!
Froyen, vos shmakhtn in hoyz un fabrik,
Vos shteyt ir fun vaytn?
Vos helft ir nit boyen
Dem templ fun frayhayt, fun mentshlekhn
glik?

Helft undz trogn dem baner dem roytn
Forverts, durkh shturem, durkh finstere
nekht!
Helft undz vorhayt un likht tsu farshpreytn
Tsvishn umvisnde, elnte knekht!

Helft undz di velt fun ir shmuts tsu der-
heybn!
Ales opfern, vos undz iz lib,
Kemfn tsuzamen, vi mekhtike leybn
Far frayhayt, far glaykhhayt, far undzer
printsip!

ENGLISH LYRICS (DANIEL KAHN)

Hard-working women, arbeter women
Women who labor in factories and homes
Join in the fight for it's only beginning
And no one should stand in the struggle
alone!

Let us all carry the red flag together,
Weathering storms in the dark of the night.
Building a temple of freedom forever,
Helping each other to carry the light.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Working women, suffering women!
Women who waste away at home and fac-
tory, Why are you standing afar?
Why are you not helping to build
The temple of freedom, of human happi-
ness?

Help us carry the red banner
Forward, through the storm, through dark
nights!
Help us spread truth and light
Among the uninformed, miserable en-
slaved!

Help us elevate the world from its filth!
Achieve everything that is dear to us,
Fighting together, like mighty lions,
For freedom, for equality, for our
principles!

How many daughters, sisters and mothers
Have given their lives for the things they
believe?
Mighty as lions, they fight for each other
For freedom and justice and equality!

We'll carry the banner as sisters and
brothers,
Waking the world to the light of the day.
As friends and companions, as comrades
and lovers,
Arbeter froyen, show us the way!

VILNE (VILNA)

Lyrics: Efraim-Leyb Wolfson
Music: Alexander Olshanetsky
Choral arrangement: Mark Zuckerman

YIDDISH LYRICS

Vilne, shtot fun gayst un tmimes,
Vilne, yidishlekh fartrakht,
Vu es murmlen shtile tfiles,
Shtile soydes fun der nakht.

Oft mol ze ikh dikh in kholem,
Heys-gelibte vilne mayn,
Un di alte vilner geto
In a nepldikh shayn.

CHORUS:

Vilne, vilne, undzer heymshtot,
Undzer benkshaft un bager.
Akh, vi oft es ruft dayn nomen
Fun mayn oyg aroys a trer.
Vilner geslakh, vilner taykhn,
Vilner velder, barg, un tol,
Epes noyet, epes benkt zikh nokh
Di tsaytn fun a mol.

Kh'ze dem veldele zakreter
In zayn shotn ayngehilt.
Vu geheym es hobn lerer,
Undzer visndursht geshtilt.

Vilne hot dem ershtn fodem
Fun der frayhayts-fon gevebt.
Un di libe kinder ire
Mit a tsartn gayst balebt.

CHORUS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Vilna, city of innocence and spirit.
Vilna, where Jewish ways were conceived.
Where quiet prayers were murmured,
Quiet secrets of the night.

I often see you in dreams,
My fiercely beloved Vilna
And the old Vilna ghetto,
In a foggy glow.

CHORUS:

Vilna, Vilna, our hometown,
Our longing, our desire.
Oh, how often your name
Brings a tear to my eye.
Vilna's streets, Vilna's rivers,
Vilna's forests, mountains and valleys.
Something aches, something yearns
For the days of long ago.

I see the Zakret forest
Enveloped in shadow,
Where, in secret, our teachers
Slaked our thirst for knowledge.

Vilna wove the first thread
Of our freedom flag.
And inspired our dear children
With a gentle spirit.

CHORUS

UN DU AKERST (*AND YOU PLOW*)

Lyrics: Chaim Zhitlowsky, based on a German poem by Georg Herwegh

Composer unknown

Choral arrangement: J. Schaefer, adapted by Derek David

YIDDISH LYRICS

Un du akerst, un du zeyst,
Un du fiterst, un du neyst
Un du hamerst, un du shpinst,
Zog, mayn folk, vos du fardinst?

Nor vu is dayn tish gegreyt?
Nor vu is dayn yontef kleyd?
Nor vu is dayn sharfe shverd?
Velkhes glik iz dir bashert?

Man fun arbet, oyfgevakht,
Un derken dayn groyse makht!
Ven dayn shtarke hant nor vil,
Shteyen ale reder shtil.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

And you plow and sow, feed and sew,
And you hammer and spin,
Tell me, my people, what do you earn?

Where is your table set, your holiday
clothes?
Where is your sharp sword?
What happiness is in store for you?

Worker, wake up to your great power!
Whenever you want,
All wheels will stand still.

KEGN GOLD FUN ZUN (*TOWARDS THE GOLDEN SUNRISE*)

Lyrics: Shloyme Lopatin

Composer unknown

YIDDISH LYRICS

Kegn gold fun zun geyt oyf mayn gold fun
veytsn,
Kegn gold fun zun geyt oyf mayn goldn glik
Naye horizontn rufn mikh un reytsn,
Naye lider zing ikh, yidisher muzhik.

Geyt di arbet freylekh fun gants fri biz
ovnt,
Zun iz mayn hudok, un feld iz mayn fabrik,
Nekhtn shkheynim vayte – haynt shoyn
azoy noent,
Ukrayiner poyer, yidisher muzhik.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

To the golden sunrise, my golden wheat is
rising,
To the golden sunrise, my golden happiness
is rising.
New horizons call me and excite me,
I sing new songs – Jewish farmer.

Our work is joyful, from dawn until evening,
The sun is my work siren, and the field is my
factory,
Yesterday's distant neighbors are today so
very near,
Ukrainian peasants, Jewish farmers.

LA ROSA ENFLORESCE (*THE ROSE BLOOMS*)

Composer unknown

Choral arrangement: Alice Parker

LADINO LYRICS

La rosa enflorece
En el mez del may
Mi alma s'escurece
Sufriendo del amor

Los bilbilicos cantan
Sospiran del amor
Y la passion me mata
Mu chigua mi dolor

Mas presto ven palomba
Mas presto ven a mi
Mas presto ven mi alma
Que yo me vo morir

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The roses come to blossom
in the month of May
My soul darkens,
Wounded by love.

The nightingales are singing
they're yearning for love.
And it's passion that kills me;
it deepens my pain.

O quickly come, dove
O quickly come to me
O quickly come, my soul
Death shall soon befall me.

MAKHETONIM GEYEN (*THE IN-LAWS ARE COMING!*)

Lyrics adapted from Mark Warshawsky

Music: Saul Berezovsky

Choral arrangement: Derek David

YIDDISH LYRICS

Di makhetonim geyen shoy'n!
Lomir zikh freyen, shat nor, shat!
Der khosn iz gor a parshoy'n!
Shpilt a lidl dem khosns tsad!

Ay, ay, ay, tshi-ri-bam....

Dem khosns shvester freydl-kroyn
Dreyt zikh vi a dreydl, shat nor, shat!
Nemt zi arayn in redl shoy'n,
Shpilt a lidl dem khosns tsad!

Ay, ay, ay, tshi-ri-bam....

Ot geyt der feter mindik-koyt
Vos hobn mir gezindikt, shat nor, shat!
Er blozt zikh vi an indik royt,
Shpilt a lidl dem khosns tsad!

Ay, ay, ay, tshi-ri-bam....

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The in-laws are coming!
Let's greet them - shhh!
The groom is quite a big shot!
Play a song for the groom's side!

Ay, ay, ay, tshi-ri-bam....

The groom's sister Freydl
Spins like a dreydel - shhh!
Bring her into the circle,
Play a song for the groom's side!

Ay, ay, ay, tshi-ri-bam....

Here comes Uncle Mindik
Whom we have wronged - shhh!
He is puffed up like a red turkey!
Play a song for the groom's side!

Ay, ay, ay, tshi-ri-bam....

MAYN RUE PLATS (*MY RESTING PLACE*)

Lyrics: Morris Rosenfeld
Composer unknown
Choral arrangement: Mark Zuckerman

YIDDISH LYRICS

Nit zukh mikh vu di mirtn grinen,
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats.
Vu lebns velkn bay mashinen,
Dortn iz mayn rue plats.

Nit zukh mikh vu di feygl zingen,
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats.
A shklaf bin ikh vu keytn klingen,
Dortn iz mayn rue plats.

Nit zukh mikh vu fontanen shpritsn
Gefinst mikh dortn nit, mayn shats.
Vu trern rinen, tseyner kritsn,
Dortn iz mayn rue plats.

Un libstu mikh mit varer libe,
To kum tsu mir, mayn guter shats,
Un hayter oyf mayn harts dos tribe,
Un makh mir zis mayn rue plats.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Don't look for me where the myrtle grows,
You won't find me there, beloved.
Where lives are withered by machines,
That is my resting place.

Don't look for me where the birds sing,
You won't find me there, beloved.
I am a slave where chains clang,
That is my resting place.

Don't look for me where fountains spray
You won't find me there, beloved.
Where tears flow and teeth gnash,
That is my resting place.

And if you love me truly,
Then come to me, my dear beloved,
And lighten my gloomy heart,
And make sweet my resting place.



Photo by Emily Glick at Boston Shiva: Rally Against Antisemitism and White Supremacy (2018).

VASERL (LITTLE STREAM)

Lyrics: Paula Teitelbaum and Rukhl Schaechter

Music: Rukhl Schaechter

Piano arrangement: Derek David

YIDDISH LYRICS

Shtil un farfroyrn
Zet oys der shtrom
Vos flegt azoy loyfn mit mut.
Es viklt im ayn itzt
Der mekhtiker vinter,
Der taykh ligt farshlofn,
Farglivert un rut.

Nor meyn nisht az alts iz
In gantzn shoyrn shtil,
Es zhümet nokh alts in der tif.
Der umru vos hot zikh
Azoy lang bahaltn
Un git itzt mit koyekh
Tsu frayheyt a rif.

Men vart az tsum vinter
Zol kumen a sof,
Tseshmeltsn zol friling dem taykh,
Vayl demolt, nor demolt
Vet er flisik vern,
Mit gayst un kolirn
Vet er vern raykh

Vaserl, vaserl,
Gib nokh nisht oyf,
Es veln di frest fargeyn!
Es kumt bald der friling tsu geyn!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Silent and frozen
Appears now the stream
Which once flowed so boldly.
Enveloped, it now lies
In wintry arms.
The stream is asleep
And at rest.

Don't think the stream
Is completely still.
Down below, there is still a murmur -
The restlessness that has been
Hidden for so long
And now calls out to freedom.

We are waiting for the
Winter to end
And for spring to melt the ice,
For then, only then,
Will the stream start to flow
And grow in strength
And in spirit

Little stream, little stream,
Don't give up hope.
The ice will melt!
Spring is almost here!



Photo by Michelle Weiser at World Fellowship Weekend Retreat (2017).

YUGNT HIMEN (*YOUTH ANTHEM*)

Lyrics: Shmerke Kaczerginski

Music: Basye Rubin

Choral arrangement: Zalmen Mlotek, adapted by Lisa Gallatin

YIDDISH LYRICS

Yugnt geyt foroys!

Undzer lid is ful mit troyer
Dreyst is undzer muntergang.
Khotshe der soyne vakht baym toyer,
Shturemt yugnt mit gezang!

CHORUS:

Yung is yeder, yeder, yeder ver es vil nor,
Yorn hobn kayn batayt,
Alte kenen, kenen, kenen oykh zayn kinder
Fun a nayer, frayer tsayt.

Yugnt geyt foroys!

Ver es voglt um oyf vegn
Ver mit dreystkayt shtelt zayn fus,
Brengt di yugnt zey antkegn
Funem geto a gerus.

CHORUS

Mir gedenken ale sonim,
Mir dermonen ale fraynd.
Eybik veln mir farbindn
Undzer nekhtn mitn haynt.

CHORUS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Youth marches forward!

Our song is full of sorrow,
But bold is our cheerful step.
Though the enemy guards the gate,
Youth storms forth with song!

CHORUS:

Young is everyone who wants to be
Years have no meaning,
The old can be children too
In a new, free time.

Youth marches forward!

Those who wander the roads
Those who set forth with a bold step,
Youth goes out to meet them
With a greeting from the ghetto.

CHORUS

We remember all of our enemies
We recall all of our friends.
We will forever connect
Our yesterday with today.

CHORUS

ZAY FREYLEKH (*BE HAPPY*)

Composer unknown; from the repertoire of Arkady Gendler
second verse by Linda Gritz

YIDDISH LYRICS

Zay freylekh, zay freylekh,
Vish oys a trer un veyn nit mer,
Zay freylekh, zay freylekh.
Keyner zol nit visn fun dayn tsar,
Zay freylekh, zay freylekh.
Der sod muz blaybn dayns!
Mit ale koykhes halt di trern ayn,
Keyner zol nit visn fun dayn payn,
Meg dos harts in dir tserisn zayn,
Freylekh zolstu zayn.

Zay freylekh, zay freylekh,
Loz aroys a trer un layd nit mer,
Zay freylekh, zay freylekh,
Zolstu mer nit visn fun kayn tsar,
Zay freylekh, zay freylekh,
Dos lebn blaybt nokh dayns!
Un zol dos lebn onvern di shayn,
Zoln zikhroynes lindern dayn payn,
Meg dos harts in dir tserisn zayn,
Freylekh zolstu zayn.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Be happy, be happy,
Wipe away your tears and weep no more,
Be happy, be happy,
No one should know of your sorrow,
Be happy, be happy,
Your secret must remain yours!
With all your strength, hold back your
tears,
No one should know of your pain,
Though your heart is broken,
Be happy.

Be happy, be happy,
Let your tears flow and suffer no more,
Be happy, be happy,
May you be spared further sorrow,
Be happy, be happy,
Life is still yours!
And if life loses its shine,
May memories soothe your pain,
Though your heart is broken,
Be happy.



Photos by Derek Kouyoumjian at Gragger! A Radical, Racuous Purim Party (2020).

DI ARBUZN (*THE WATERMELONS*)

Lyrics: Mendl Abarbanel

Music: Ben Yomen

Choral arrangement: Ethel Raim

YIDDISH LYRICS

S'iz der step shoy'n opgeshorn,
Un shoy'n alts tsunoyfgenumen.
Libster mayner, kum tsu forn,
Ikh vel vartn oyf dayn kumen, hey!

Di arbuzn zaynen tsaytik,
S'geyt di zaft fun zey ariber,
Ful mit ziskayt ongegoshn,
Vi mayn harts iz ful mit libe.

Un di karshn, libster mayner,
Zaynen shvarts vi dayne oygn.
Ongeshotn oyf di beymer
Un di tsvaygn zikh azh boygn.

Kum tsu forn, libster mayner,
Un genug shoy'n undz tsu troymen,
Rayf un tsaytik iz mayn libe,
Vi s'iz tsaytik mayne floymen!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The steppes have been mowed,
And everything has been gathered.
My dearest, come visit me -
I await your arrival.

The watermelons are ripe,
Their juice is overflowing,
They're full of sweetness,
As my heart is full of love.

And the cherries, my dearest,
Are black like your eyes.
The trees are loaded
And the branches are bending.

Come visit me, my dearest,
And enough of this dreaming.
My love is ripe and ready,
Ready as my plums are!



Photos by Michelle Weiser at HONK! (2019) and Sukkes (right, 2016).

A GEZANG FUN A TRAKTORIST (*SONG OF A TRACTOR DRIVER*)

Lyrics: Leyb Morgentoy

Composer unknown; as sung by Joseph Videtsky, Polish radio, 1950s

YIDDISH LYRICS

Bin ikh mir a traktorist,
Iz mir gut – a khiyes.
Ikh ken firn mayn mashin
Mit farmakhte viyes.

Ven ikh for aroys in feld,
Kveln ale yatn,
Vayl es folgt mikh mayn mashin,
Vi a kind – a tatn.

Yedes shrayfl lebt bay mir
In der mashinerye.
- Hey, ver s'vil farmestn zikh?
Kumt un vert a berye.

Ven ikh for aroys in feld
Akern tsu zeyen,
Veysn mayne redlekh eyns,
Az men darf zikh dreyen.

Un az redlekh dreyen zikh,
Royshn di motorn,
Veys ikh, az dos land vet zayn
Zat mit veyts un korn!

Un az zat vet zayn dos land,
Zayn vet shtol un ayzn.
Veln mir in zeks-yor plan
Vunder fil bavayzn!

Bin ikh mir a traktorist,
Helf ikh un ikh lern
Mayn brigade flaysik zayn,
Veltn iberkern.

Tsi in droysn shaynt di zun,
Tsi es hengt a khmare,
S'trogt mayn traktor zikh foroys:
Hit zikh, makht a vare!

Kh'bin der ershter oyfn feld,
Ven es nemt nor togn.
S'ken nisht keyner mayn mashin
Keynmol iberyogn.

Kh'kum der ershter fun feld,
Keyn mol nisht farmatert.
Un derfar a shlogler-fon
Oyf mayn traktor flatert!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

I'm a tractor driver,
It's good for me – a pleasure.
I can drive my machine
With my eyes closed.

When I drive out on the field
All the guys are proud.
My machine obeys me
Like a child with a father.

Each little screw lives with me
In the machinery.
Hey, who wants to compete?
Come and be an expert!

When I drive out to
Plow the field,
The little wheels know
That they now must turn.

And as the wheels turn,
The motor hums along,
I know that soon the land will be
Rich with wheat and rye!

As the land will be rich,
Rich with steel and iron,
With the Six Year Plan,
Wonderful things we'll see.

I'm a tractor driver,
Help me and I learn,
My brigade will diligently
Revolutionize the world.

Whether the sun is shining
Or if it's cloudy,
My tractor carries on -
Watch out, make way!

I'm the first one on the field
When the day is dawning,
There's no one else
Who can overtake my machine!

I'm the first one on the field
And I never get tired.
That's why a Stakhanovite flag
Waves upon my tractor!

KH'HOB DEM KHEYSHEK (I AM YEARNING)

Based on "I Am Willing" by Holly Near
Yiddish Lyrics: Yuri Vedenyapin
Choral arrangement: Derek David

YIDDISH LYRICS

Kh'hob dem gloybn, kh'hob dem kheyshek,
Zayn fartsveyflt tor men nit,
Mir gedenken doyres kemfers
Far banayung un far likht.

Mayn mishpokhe filt a veytik,
Un mayn shtot iz ful mit tsar,
S'iz dos gantse land dershrokn,
Es filt di velt a shvern gzar.

Zoln kinder zen alts klorer,
Un di firers klinger zayn,
Blozt shoyn, vintn fun banayung,
Zol es baysn, s'iz keday.

Helf mir, boym, un halt mayn dayge,
Helf mir, midber, halt mayn shrek,
Mikh farkishef, royte shkie,
Nem, du yam, mayn trer avek.

ORIGINAL ENGLISH

I am open and I am willing,
To be hopeless would seem so strange,
It dishonors those who go before us,
So lift me up to the light of change.

[not sung in concert]
There is hurting in my family,
There is sorrow in my town,
There is panic in the nation,
There is wailing the whole world round.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

I have faith, I have yearning,
To be despondent is not allowed,
We remember generations of activists
For renewal and for light.

My family feels pain,
And my town is full of sorrow.
The whole country is frightened,
The world feels a hard decree.

May children see more clearly
And the leaders be wiser;
Blow, winds of renewal,
Let it bite, it's worth it.

Help me, tree, and stop my worry,
Help me, desert, stop my fear,
Enchant me, red sunset,
Ocean, take my tears away.

May the children see more clearly,
May the elders be more wise,
May the winds of change caress us
Even though it burns our eyes.

Give me a mighty oak to hold my confusion,
Give me a desert to hold my fears,
Give me a sunset to hold my wonder,
Give me an ocean to hold my tears.

DOS LAND IZ DAYN LAND (*THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND*)

based on "This Land Is Your Land" by Woody Guthrie

Yiddish lyrics: Linda Gritz and Daniel Kahn, with Michael Alpert, Josh Waletzky, and Harry Bochner

YIDDISH LYRICS

Kh'hob mir gevandert in a land a frayen
Aroys fun midber, vi mi-mitsrayem,
Gezukt a nayem Yerushalayem,
Dos iz a land far mir un dir.

CHORUS:

Dos land iz dayn land, dos land iz mayn land,
Fun kalifornye biz elis ayland,
Fun di groyse oz'res biz di breyte yamen,
Dos iz a land far mir un dir.

Ikh gey ariber di berg un teler,
Arumgeringlt fun zise keler.
Di ritshkes murmlen, di feygl zingen:
Dos iz a land far mir un dir.

Gey ikh mir voglen, di zun fun oybn,
Nor beyze vintn tseblozn shtoybn,
Durkh di tumanen, her ikh gezangen:
Dos iz a land far mir un dir.

CHORUS

Kh'ze a groysn moyer mit a shild vos vornt
Vil men araynet, shteyt az me tor nit,
Nor af yener zayt, shteyt dortn gornit,
Ot iz di zayt far mir un dir.

Af nase gasn, in tife shotns,
Ze ikh vi mentshn betn nedoves.
Bay aza dales, tu ikh zikh klern
Tsi dos iz a land far mir un dir.

Es ken shoyn keyner undz nit farshtern,
Di fraye vegn undz nit farvern.
Nito keyn tsamen, ven nor tsuzamen.
Dos iz a land far mir un dir.

CHORUS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

I wandered into a free country
Out of the desert, as though from Egypt,
Looking for a new Jerusalem,
This is a country for me and you.

CHORUS:

This is your country, this is my country,
From California to Ellis Island,
From the Great Lakes to the wide seas,
This is a country for me and you.

I walk over mountains and valleys
Surrounded by sweet voices.
The streams murmur, the birds sing:
This is a country for me and you.

I go wandering, the sun above,
But evil winds are blowing dust,
Through the haze, I hear singing:
This is a country for me and you.

CHORUS

I see a big wall with sign that warns
If you want to enter, it says it's forbidden,
But on the other side, it says nothing,
That is the side for you and me.

On wet streets, in deep shadows,
I see people begging for change.
To see such poverty, I wonder
If this is a country for me and you.

There's no one who can stop us
Or forbid us the paths of freedom.
There are no barriers, if only we are united.
This is a country for me and you.

CHORUS

DER YOKH (*THE YOKE*)

Based on "L'Estaca" (The Stake) by Lluís Llach
Yiddish lyrics: Yuri Vedenyapin
Choral arrangement: Klezematics

YIDDISH LYRICS

Mir zaynen geshtanen in tsveyen,
Es hot nokh nisht getogt,
A ferdl farbay un a vogn,
Un kh'hob dem zeydn gezogt.
"Tsi zestu af undzere rukns,
Dem shvern ayzerne yokh?
Ken men nisht geyn, nisht flien,
Krigt men a bis un a shtokh."

CHORUS:

Tzuzamen kenen mir aroys,
Zol zayn a sho, a tog, a vokh,
Er vet shoyn faln, faln, faln
Der tsefoylter alter yokh.
Az ikh zol tsien in der mit
Un du zolst tsien in der zayt,
Er vet shoyn faln, faln, faln,
Demolt vern mir bafrayt.

Shoyn lange yorn shteyen mir,
Aropgedrikt fun dem brokh,
Es minert zikh mayn koyekh,
Es vert alts shverer der yokh.
Vayl khotsh tsefoylt un farzhavert,
Dokh halt er vi a tsvang,
Nor ven ikh halt shoyn baym faln,
Her ikh dem zeydns gezang.

CHORUS

Der zeyde iz shoyn lang avek,
Me hert shoyn nisht zayn kol.
Es hot im avekgetrogn a vint,
Nor ikh shtey do vi a mol.
Es geyen naye yinglekh farbay,
Shtrek ikh tsu zey di hent,
Un zing far zey dem zeydns lid
Vos er hot mikh gelernt.

CHORUS

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

We stood together, the two of us.
It was not yet day
A horse passed by, and a wagon
And I spoke with my grandfather:
"Can you not see on our backs
That heavy iron yoke?
We can't go, we can't fly,
We get a bite and a sting."

CHORUS:

Together we can escape,
Be it an hour, a day, a week,
Soon it will fall, fall, fall -
That rotten old yoke.
If I pull from the middle,
And you pull from the side,
It will fall, fall, fall,
And we will all be free.

We've stood by for many years,
Beaten down by the calamity.
My strength is reduced,
The yoke becomes all the more heavy.
Although it's rotten and rusty,
It grips us like tongs.
Just when I'm about to fall,
I hear my grandfather's song.

CHORUS

My grandfather is long gone.
His voice can no longer be heard.
He was carried away by the wind
And I remain here as before.
As new youngsters pass by,
I reach out my hand to them
And sing them my grandfather's song,
The one he taught me.

CHORUS

HOF UN GLOYB (*HOPE AND FAITH*) / LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING

Hof un Gloyb lyrics: Yitskhok Leybush Peretz; music: Eliyohu Hirshin

Lift Every Voice and Sing lyrics: James Weldon Johnson; music: John Rosamond Johnson

Choral arrangement: unknown, adapted by Steven Lipsitt

HOF UN GLOYB YIDDISH LYRICS

Hof! Nit vayt iz shoyn der friling.
Es veln shmeterlingen shpringen.
Naye nestn, naye feygl
Vel'n naye lider zingen!

[not sung in concert]
Gloyb! Di nakht iz shoyn farshvundn,
Un di volkn's oykh tserunen.
Bloy vet zayn der himl,
Naye shtern, naye zunen.

Naye royzn, naye blumen
Vel'n blien, vaksn hoykh.
Es vet shaynen, shmekn, zingen,
Un in undzer vinkl oykh!

LIFT EVERY VOICE LYRICS

Lift every voice and sing,
'Til earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of liberty.
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark
past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the
present has brought us.
Facing the rising sun of our new day
begun,
Let us march on 'til victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had
died.
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our people
sighed?

HOF UN GLOYB ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Hope! Spring is not far off.
Butterflies will flutter!
New nests, new birds
Will sing new songs.

[not sung in concert]
Faith! The night is already past,
And the clouds also dispersed.
The sky will grow blue;
New stars, new suns!

New roses, new flowers
Will bloom and grow tall.
There will be light, fragrance, and song,
And in our corner as well.

We have come over a way that with tears
has been watered. We have come, treading
our path through the blood of the slaugh-
tered,
Out from the gloomy past,
'Til now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is
cast.

[not sung in concert]
God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the
way.
Thou who hast by Thy might,
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our
God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the
world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand,
True to our God,
True to our native land.

ALE BRIDER/SHVESTER (ALL BROTHERS/SISTERS)

Adapted from poem by Mark Winchevsky

Composer unknown

Additional lyrics: Peggy Davis, Rabbi Eli Braun, Jeffrey Shandler, and Linda Gritz

Choral arrangement: Lisa Gallatin

YIDDISH LYRICS

Un mir zaynen ale brider,
Oy, oy, ale brider,
Un mir zingen freylekhe lider,
Oy, oy, oy.
Un mir haltn zikh in eynem,
Oy, oy, zikh in eynem,
Azelkhes iz nito bay keynem,
Oy, oy, oy.

Un mir zaynen ale shvester,
Oy, oy, ale shvester,
Vi Sore, Rivke, Rut, un Ester,
Oy, oy, oy.
Un mir zaynen ale eynik,
Oy, oy, ale eynik,
Tsi mir zaynen fil tsi veynik,
Oy, oy, oy.

Un mir zaynen ale freylekh
Oy, oy, ale freylekh,
Vi yoynosn un dovid hameylekh
Oy, oy, oy.
Un mir zaynen ale pleytim
Oy, oy, ale pleytim,
Tseraysn lomir ale keytn.
Oy, oy, oy.

[not sung in concert]
Un mir zaynen mitkinder,
Oy, oy, mitkinder,
Arop mit tsveyike reyd atsinder,
Oy, oy, oy.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

And we are all brothers,
And we sing happy songs.
And we stick together,
Like no one else.

And we are all sisters,
Like Sarah, Rebecca, Ruth, and Esther.
And we are all united,
Whether we are many or few.

And we are all gay,
Like Jonathan and King David.
And we are all refugees,
Let's break all chains.

And we are all siblings,
Down with binary language now!

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Photo by Rose Kiok-Kirshenbaum of BWC leadership in front of our new building sign (2021). Photo by Derek Kouyoumjian of part of A Besere Velt chorus (right, 2019).