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The Musical World of Joseph Rumshinsky’s *Mamele*

D. A. Geller

*The Graduate Center, City University of New York*

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THE MUSICAL WORLD OF JOSEPH RUMSHINSKY’S MAMELE

By

D.A. GELLER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2019
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

The Musical World of Joseph Rumshinsky’s Mamele

by

D.A. Geller

Advisor: Anne Stone

“The Musical World of Joseph Rumshinsky’s Mamele” consists of a set of three cases studies that demonstrate the enormous need and potential for further Yiddish theater music scholarship. There exists little Yiddish theater scholarship that addresses music in any meaningful way: scholars like David Lifson, Nahma Sandrow, and Joel Berkowitz tend to view Yiddish theater’s rich musical traditions as a footnote in the larger history of Yiddish theater’s dramatic development. Yet Yiddish theater music developed independently from Yiddish drama, and therefore needs to be studied from a primarily musical perspective. I connect scholarship across the fields of Jewish studies and musicology in order to add depth and nuance to the existing, limited scholarship on Yiddish theater music. Drawing on primary source materials, including play scripts, music manuscripts, and commercially published Yiddish broadsides, I begin to contextualize Yiddish theater’s rich musical legacy on the Yiddish stage and silver screen. As a form of immigrant entertainment for Yiddish-speaking immigrants in New York, Yiddish theater shows integrated many diverse musical influences from the Old
World and the New and served as a model for Yiddish-speaking immigrant audiences to renegotiate their identities to become modern Americans. Furthermore, Yiddish theater’s immediate spatial and temporal proximity to Tin Pan Alley, early Broadway, and other immigrant theaters in New York hints at the possibility of multiple musical and textual cross-influences. As such, popular theater and its music played an important, though largely unexplored, role in the process of Americanization. Studying Yiddish theater music, therefore, not only restores an important component that has long been missing from the history of Yiddish theater, it also connects this history to the larger world of New York’s music scene in the early decades of the twentieth century.
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My dissertation began as a term paper for a Master’s seminar during the Spring 2009 semester at Brooklyn College. It has since blossomed into my life’s work, representing a coming together of the most important research projects I undertook as a graduate student and my professional life at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. It has been my extraordinary good fortune that all of the pieces fell into place at exactly the right moment during the research, writing, and editing stages. I am grateful to have been supported always, in all ways, by a network of professors, mentors, colleagues, and friends who have encouraged me ever onward toward the finish.

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An army of music teachers and professors instilled in me a lifelong passion for and dedication to musical study and excellence. Thanks to Jacob Murphy, Phil Peters, Michelle Senger, and Linda Swanson for tolerating my precociousness and emboldening me to explore all of the possibilities the world has to offer. I treasure many long afternoons spent in my undergraduate advisor Joe Shufro’s sunny office. His sage advice about balancing life, music, and being human has proved to be perennially relevant to all of my life adventures since.

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INTRODUCTION

Prologue: Breaking Into the Musical World of Yiddish Theater

Beginning in the 1890s, Jewish immigrants brought their theater to America, where the demand and enthusiasm for ethnic entertainment was so great that New York City soon eclipsed Eastern Europe as the geographic and cultural center of Yiddish theater. Yiddish-speaking audiences flocked regularly to the theaters on Second Avenue in eager anticipation of an entire evening’s entertainment that included drama, music, and dance presented by their favorite stars. But the Yiddish theater represented far more than mere entertainment: its plays and operettas were a convenient and integral site for the ongoing struggle to adapt to new social and cultural paradigms while attempting to preserve aspects of traditional Old World identity. Furthermore, Yiddish theater frequently depicted familiar stories, elements of religious rituals, and otherwise provided a temporary escape from the daily struggles of its audience. It is an ironic testament to Yiddish theater’s success at acclimating its audiences to their surrounding environs that, as Jewish immigrants assimilated into American society, their theater was gradually cast aside.

Though Yiddish theater was the cultural lifeblood of the Jewish immigrant community in New York, its music in particular was a key aspect of the audience's enjoyment. A prospering sheet music industry that published Yiddish theater’s hit songs all but ensured that a given show would survive in the audience’s memory long after the final curtain had been lowered. In many cases, published hit songs are all that remains of the shows in which they first appeared. Thousands of these songs survive in libraries and archives like the Library of Congress and the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, attesting to the sheer popularity of and demand for Yiddish musical entertainment. Yet there is surprisingly little scholarship by Yiddish theater historians
that addresses music in any meaningful way; of the many Yiddish plays that have been published and/or translated, only a couple have included or acknowledged the music that would have accompanied the original production. Nahma Sandrow’s chapter on popular theater in *Vagabond Stars* devotes only two brief paragraphs to directly addressing music, for instance.\(^1\) Similarly, the only article in Joel Berkowitz’s two Yiddish theater anthologies to explicitly consider Yiddish theater music is Ron Robboy’s article on reconstructing Giacomo Minkowski’s score from *Alexander; or, the Crown Prince of Jerusalem.*\(^2\)

Modern histories of Yiddish theater often emphasize the development of highbrow art theater, beginning with Abraham Goldfaden’s earliest musical plays in Jassy, Romania in 1876 and ending sometime during the middle of the twentieth century, when American assimilation, the Holocaust, and the creation of a Jewish state contributed to the genre’s demise in the midtwentieth century. This kind of narrative tends to ignore a crucial aspect of the Yiddish theater experience in America: popular theater. Deemed *shund* (trash) by Yiddish intellectuals, these shows offered their audiences both an escape from and a window into their own lives. Emblematic of the low status accorded to popular shows is the opening of historian Alexander Mukdoyni’s essay on tearjerker dramas: “The Yiddish melodrama is the skeleton of a play. It is a play without muscles, without blood and flesh. Just bones, dry bones moving and shaking without a care. The melodrama has a soul and a moral, but the soul and the moral both hang

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from the top of one’s nose like a lung and liver.” However, sentimental melodramas, musical comedies, and variety shows constituted precisely the kind of fare that Yiddish-speaking immigrants enjoyed most. According to Stefanie Halpern, in 1918 for instance, a point at which Yiddish speakers constituted roughly twenty percent of New York’s City’s population, fourteen Yiddish theater houses earned about one million dollars each season. The most popular of these productions enjoyed revivals and traveled to cities as close as Newark and as far away as Buenos Aires and Warsaw; moreover, their immediate spatial and temporal proximity to Tin Pan Alley, early Broadway, and other immigrant theaters in New York hints at the possibility of cross-influences that extended in several directions. As such, popular theater played an important role in the process of Americanization, though this avenue of inquiry remains largely unexplored.

More importantly, popular theater was the site of Yiddish theater’s musical development. The genre’s most important composer, Joseph Rumshinsky, in turns lauded as the Jewish Victor Herbert and dismissed as “that crazy Wagner,” held lofty aspirations of elevating Yiddish theater to something resembling European light opera. During his prolific and celebrated career, Rumshinsky worked with virtually every major theater troupe, director, and actor in New York, and composed music for several dozen operettas, including arrangements of Goldfaden’s major

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5 See, for instance, Sabine Haenni, The Immigrant Scene: Ethnic Amusements in New York, 1880-1920 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). Among the most recent scholarship on the influence of the Yiddish theater on the American stage is Stefanie Halpern’s dissertation, which examines the faces, places, and spaces that crossed over from the Yiddish to American stage—and sometimes back again. See Halpern, “Crossing Over.”

works. Rumshinsky’s extant body of manuscript scores and parts, housed at the Charles E. Young Research Library at University of California—Los Angeles (UCLA), comprises one of the largest known collections of Yiddish theater music, and therefore represents an important opportunity to understand how Yiddish theater composers used music to appeal to their audiences and how the audience, in turn, understood their own world as a result.⁷

Towards a History of Yiddish Theater Music

_Music has always been the heart of theater, especially of Yiddish theater. When Abraham Goldfaden, the father of Yiddish theater, would audition a new actor for his troupe, he would first ask him to sing, in order to hear whether he was generally musical. The art of acting Goldfaden would teach him later; but first the Yiddish actor needed to have a voice and be musical._⁸

—Joseph Rumshinsky

_The situation of the composer in the Yiddish theater is, in general, a sad one, in that the world can never get to know his better musical creations because the whole score, in which the ensembles, serious duets, romances, and better songs are found, is seldom—actually almost never—published. Only the few simple numbers, those that people can easily sing, are ever printed. That has produced an unserious relationship with the Yiddish-theater composer. And the saddest thing is that as soon as the operetta closes down, all its music dies._⁹

—Joseph Rumshinsky

Yiddish theater historiography was launched in the nineteenth and early twentieth century by Yiddish intellectuals, playwrights, and critics who, for ideological and artistic reasons, emphasized the development of art theater and its perpetual reformation. These histories took a

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⁷ Joseph Rumshinsky Papers (Collection PASC-M 27), Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
dismissive view of popular theater, which they deemed *shund*. Theater critic Alexander Mukdoyni, quoted above, for instance, likened his distaste for the Yiddish melodrama to the stench that would emanate from a lung and a liver hanging from one’s nose. As a result of such scholarly treatment, *shund* theater and its music was seemingly all but erased in the annals of Yiddish theater history.

The two quotes by Rumshinsky, above, highlight the conflicted relationship of Yiddish theater’s musical aspects to Yiddish theater itself. On one hand, the extent to which Jewish musical traditions are fundamentally entrenched in Yiddish theater’s historical development is widely recognized by those in the know: Yiddish theater scholars from Alexander Mukdoyni and B. Gorin to Joel Berkowitz and Nahma Sandrow acknowledge, to varying degrees, the importance of music to Yiddish theater. At the same time, however, even as Yiddish plays have been widely copied and—more recently—translated and published, the music is sometimes unwritten and rarely published, meaning that it has remained largely invisible. As Rumshinsky notes, often a published broadside for a hit song is the only remaining trace of the show in which it was once performed. It is no wonder that research on Yiddish theater music has lagged behind research on Yiddish theater itself.

When Yiddish theater music is discussed in the scholarship, it is generally treated as a bit of color in the historical narrative of Yiddish theater’s dramatic development. In their histories of Yiddish theater, for instance, Nahma Sandrow and David S. Lifson limit their consideration of Yiddish theater music to an acknowledgement of its importance to dramatic productions and a

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10 In his introduction to *Yiddish Theatre: New Approaches*, for instance, Berkowitz briefly mentions music in the early history of *badkhonim* [wedding entertainers]. While Mukdoyni held a low opinion of Yiddish melodrama, he did acknowledge the importance of Rumshinsky’s music in *Dos Rumshinsky bukh*. See Berkowitz, “Introduction: Writing the History of the Yiddish Theatre,” in *Yiddish Theatre: New Approaches*, 1-25; and Mukdoyni, “A vort tsu Yosef Rumshinski’s yubiley [A word on Joseph Rumshinsky’s jubilee]” in *Dos Rumshinsky bukh*, 11.
brief list of the major composers. Similarly, Joel Berkowitz’s first Yiddish theater anthology, *Yiddish Theatre: New Approaches*, includes two articles on Goldfaden’s operettas, but neither scholar ventures beyond descriptive generalizations of Goldfaden’s music. Yiddish theater music fares better at the hands of music historians like Irene Heskes and Mark Slobin, yet their most important scholarship on Yiddish theater music dates from the 1980s and early 1990s, over twenty years ago. Heskes, in “Music as Social History: American Yiddish Theater Music, 1882-1920,” provides a broad overview of how music was used in Yiddish theater, its musical roots, and how the audience would have related to what they heard and saw onstage. Slobin’s *Tenement Songs*, based on the vast sheet music collections at YIVO, is a large-scale attempt to categorize and contextualize different kinds of songs and their appeal to Yiddish-speaking immigrants. Both Heskes and Slobin are unequivocal in demonstrating that Yiddish theater music was an important tool in the process by which immigrant audiences acclimated and assimilated, but their work is limited by scarce discussion of specific songs and shows, and isolating the published songs from the shows in which they appeared, respectively.

More recently, Michael Ochs includes a thumbnail history of Yiddish theater music in the front matter to his critical edition of Joseph Rumshinsky’s *Di goldene kale* [The golden bride], emphasizing Yiddish theater’s musical development from Goldfaden to Rumshinsky. While Ochs is able to frame *Di goldene kale* within the context of Yiddish-language immigrant theater, his discussion of the music does not look beyond the world of Rumshinsky himself. A handful

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of recent articles by Joshua Walden, Daniele Levy, and Nina Warnke address Yiddish theater music less directly through research on Jewish violin music, opera, and the reception history of Yiddish theater in the Yiddish press. Warnke’s research on the coverage of Yiddish operettas and music halls in the Yiddish press lends an important perspective to the existing scholarship on Yiddish theater music. While Walden and Levy are the only musicologists to have recently published on Yiddish theater music, the focus of their work is decidedly different than that of Slobin, Heskes, or Ochs.

In this section, I begin piecing together the roots of the history of Yiddish theater music in America from a primarily musicological perspective. I expand the work begun by Heskes, and Slobin in order to foreground historical and coterminous musical traditions that contributed to Yiddish theater’s musical development. My work is very specifically not an attempt to expand the existing histories of Yiddish theater to include a more substantial musical discussion; I am not attempting, for instance, to flesh out the musical details that would render Nahma Sandrow and David Lifson’s work more complete. Instead, I emphasize the early dramatic and musical traditions of Ashkenazi Jews in Eastern Europe, coterminous musical moments, and important figures who contributed to Yiddish theater’s musical development. I follow Mark Slobin in considering Yiddish theater music as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that lies at the nexus of Jewish expressive culture, coterminous European and American performance traditions, a transnational Yiddish culture that spanned both sides of the Atlantic, and the possibilities afforded by modern commercialism. Unlike its dramatic aspects, Yiddish theatre’s music was

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largely confined to the realm of lowbrow popular theatre, a phenomenon which has historically been ignored in the scholarship—and which is also predominantly American.

In fact, an examination of the music from YIVO’s earliest theater collection, the Esther Rokhl Kaminska Theater Museum (RG 7), which was assembled and donated in the 1920s in Vilnius, Lithuania, reveals that a significant number of music manuscripts are copies of American shows. Entry number eighty-four in the finding aid, to cite one of numerous examples, lists director’s and orchestral parts for *Shir Hashirim* [Song of Songs], a show by Anshel Schorr and Rumshinsky which was performed numerous times in Warsaw, Odessa, Simferopol, Melitopol, Elizavetgrad, Ekaterinoslav, Kerch, and Lublin between 1912 and 1921, according to annotations on the manuscripts themselves. Yet the show originally premiered at the Thalia Theater on the Lower East Side in October 1911, and an earlier set of instrument parts is located among Rumshinsky’s papers at UCLA. In other words, the provenance of the manuscripts found in RG 7 is indisputably European, since the music was, at the very least, copied and performed throughout Eastern Europe, but a significant number of entries are actually American shows that traveled back across the Atlantic, attesting to New York’s status as the musical nexus of Yiddish theater. Furthermore, I argue that Yiddish theater music scholarship needs to look beyond “the Big Four” composers. Alexander Olshanetsky, Abe Ellstein, Sholom Secunda, and especially Rumshinsky, have an outsized presence in the archives and in the existing scholarship as a result.

The early history of Yiddish theater begins in the fifteenth century with the emergence of the *purimshpil*, which represents a shared early point in Yiddish theater’s musical and theatrical development. The *purimshpil* combined Jewish folk music with dramatic performances based on the Book of Esther, and were usually performed in the liminal, private spaces of yeshivas and—
more frequently—private homes. Many scholars note the influences of coterminous European musical and dramatic traditions on the purimshpil. Sandrow, for instance, traces some of the stock characters and clowns to the Italian commedia del Arte.  

In an essay on Purim music, A.W. Binder notes that early opera proved to be an important influence on Jewish music, and particularly purimshpils, citing musical entr’actes, aria form, and the use of choral numbers in the music from surviving purimshpils, as well as increased vocal virtuosity. The use of musical parody, in which newly-written song texts about the Purim story were set to pre-existing melodies of prayers or popular songs, dates back even further than purimshpils themselves. Such songs were sung by purimshpilers upon entering a home in which a performance would take place, during interludes between scenes, and during a grand finale in which the audience would join in the singing.

Furthermore, the purimshpil marked the intersection of several important Jewish musical traditions that would converge in the late nineteenth century to form early Yiddish theater. In addition to a well-developed tradition of sacred vocal music, itself containing many sectional and regional variations, there was an equally significant repertoire of music that fell outside this tradition: the ecstatic nigunim (wordless melodies) of the Hasidim, instrumental music of the klezmorim, the repertory of the badkhonim (wedding entertainer), as well as a wealth of secular folk songs whose texts encompassed nearly every subject under the sun.

Like other folk traditions, much of European Jewish music until the nineteenth century existed primarily as an oral tradition, with one of the sole exceptions being trop, the musical

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18 Sandrow, Vagabond Stars, 9-11.
20 Ibid., 213.
notation found in the Torah. Diasporic Jewish musical traditions both influenced and were influenced by the surrounding culture, and the flexibility of these musical boundaries can be traced at least as far back as the Middle Ages, when songs of the *troubadours* found their way into the Jewish liturgical repertory, and *khazns* composed liturgical melodies that sounded intentionally folk-like.22 One of the most enduring influences of the Middle Ages that has survived until today is the *badkhen*, or wedding entertainer. The *badkhen* was the only form of the medieval German-Jewish *shpielman*, or traveling minstrel performer, to survive after the sixteenth century.23 The *badkhen* combined dramatic and comic elements in his performance, sang extant songs, composed new songs, and provided other forms of entertainment on festive occasions, including Purim. Despite his unofficial role as a cultural historian, however, the *badkhen* never rose above the lowest of social statuses in Yiddish culture.24

The various folk musicians who accompanied *purimshpils* included *klezmorim*, the dance bands who also performed for weddings. *Klezmorim* were often itinerant, and their music absorbed influences from several other ethnicities, including Gypsy, Greek, and Romanian. Hankus Netsky suggests that, despite shared influences, *klezmer* music is distinguished by its Jewish ornamentation—*krekhts* (groans), *tshoks* (laughs), and *kneytsh* (catches).25 *Klezmer* also bears important influences from Jewish music: Netsky attributes the contour and phrasing of improvisation to cantorial music, and the use of *nigunim* to the *klezmorim* who would play the wordless melodies for Hasidic celebrations.26 In the late 1800s, with the emergence of Yiddish

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23 Ibid., 22.
24 Roskies, “Ideologies of the Yiddish Folksong,” 147.
26 Ibid., 6.
theater and its migration to America, klezmorim comprised part of the orchestra. After crossing the Atlantic, klezmer ensembles not only constituted the earliest Yiddish theater orchestras, they also began to conform more to the style and instrumentation of vaudeville and jazz ensembles.

One ubiquitous musical tradition, the meshorer system, or cantorial apprentices, represents the final point where Jewish musical traditions intersect. The choirs for purimshpils often consisted of meshorers, who frequently performed for religious and festive occasions outside the synagogue to earn extra coins. By the late nineteenth century, khazonim (cantors) had attained something akin to celebrity status among the cities and shtetls of the Pale of Settlement. Khazonim recruited young boys to sing in choirs, where they learned music notation, harmony, and vocal techniques. Many of these boys later found their way to the Yiddish theater beginning in the late nineteenth century; actors as famous as Boris Thomashefsky, Sigmund Mogulesko, and Herman Yablokoff began their performing careers as meshorers. But the meshorer system also provided the earliest musical training for numerous composers, including Jospeh Rumshinsky and Sholom Secunda. While numerous biographies of Yiddish theater composers and actors mention their early musical training, the importance and ubiquity of the meshorer system is not always connected to Yiddish theater’s musical roots. Mark Slobin, for instance, briefly comments on meshorers in Tenement Songs and a short chapter on theater music in The Cambridge Companion to Jewish Music, but Heskes does not

28 Binder, “Purim in Music,” 214.
mention *meshorers* at all. Yet in *Yidishe dramaturgn un teater-kompozitors* [Yiddish
dramaturgs and theater-composers], Sholem Perlmutter writes:

> If music history was seeking the “beginning” of Yiddish theater composers, they will
come across a lot of young men who had begun to sing as children for *khazonim* and
became professional *meshorim*, then choristers, or actors in Yiddish theater. When
Abraham Goldfaden, who by himself was not musical, began to beat out melodies and
nigunim on the piano with one finger, what he put together from the different *khazn’s*
compositions, he must have asked *meshorim, khazns* and musicians, who helped him to
write and orchestrate his songs and operettas.  

Nearly all of the composers for whom Perlmutter supplied brief biographies were former
*meshorers*. Furthermore, Rumshinsky, Secunda, and Ellstein all continued to write and conduct
liturgical music throughout their prolific careers as Yiddish theater composers.

The emergence of Yiddish theater in the late nineteenth century marks the second
convergence of dramatic and musical folk performance to create a new genre of Yiddish
entertainment. By the late 1870s, *badkhonim* had begun performing in public spaces like beer
gardens and cafes. Abraham Goldfaden (1840-1908), often referred to as the father of Yiddish
theater, combined the *badkhen* traditions of jokes, banter, and poems with staged drama,
costumes, and songs in 1876 in Jassy, Romania. Goldfaden’s operettas drew upon the influences
of European operettas, opera, and vaudeville; many of his works were widely performed and
copied during his lifetime, firmly establishing his place in the canon of Yiddish theater. But
Goldfaden’s work also marks one of the first points where Yiddish theater musical history begins
to diverge from the dramatic history.

While *The Sorceress, Schmendrik*, and *Two Kuni-Lemls* are practically canonical, it is
Goldfaden’s biblical operettas, *Shulamis* and *Bar Kokhba*, that hold the greatest musical

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33 Sholem Perlmutter, *Yidishe dramaturgn un teater-kompozitors* [Yiddish dramaturgs and theater-composers] (New
significance. In his autobiography, *Klangn fun mayn lebn*, Rumshinsky recalls that he first became familiar with *Shulamis, Bar Kokhba*, and *Shloyme Hamelekh* while he was in Grodno around age twelve. A few years later, in Bialystok, a circus troupe asked Rumshinsky to conduct performances of *Bar Kokhba*, and he wrote that he “immediately plunged into the work of memorizing and arranging the music for *Bar Kokhba*, which I knew well, having heard it so many times in the short time I had been in Grodno.”

Although the troupe did not perform the full show, Rumshinsky noted that it was a “colossal success.” Songs from Goldfaden’s operettas like “Rozhinkes mit mandlen [Raisins and almonds]” eventually attained folk song status, yet Goldfaden only published the dramatic texts of his works.

As early as the 1880s, Goldfaden’s operettas traveled with immigrants to America, where they were not only widely performed, but also fueled the creation and performance of new theatrical works that would soon make New York City the musical center of Yiddish theater. Unlike Yiddish drama, whose development spanned both sides of the Atlantic after the 1880s, Yiddish theater music became a primarily American phenomenon. It was in New York that Yiddish music encountered Tin Pan Alley, the early twentieth century popular music industry in which numerous sheet music firm relentlessly published and promoted one popular song after another in hopes of manufacturing the next great hit. The songs of Yiddish theater became commodified goods, bought and sold as piano-vocal, violin-vocal, and violin arrangements (and, slightly later, recordings) which could be performed at home, or—equally as important—sent

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35 See Paola Bertolone, “Goldfaden’s *Kishefmakherin* and Operetta,” 83. Bertolone suggests that one possible reason for this was an attempt by Goldfaden to protect the copyrights of his work while ensuring he received authorial credit.
back to Europe to friends and relatives.\textsuperscript{38} While RG 7, YIVO’s large collection of Yiddish theater music manuscripts from the Kaminska museum, contains numerous instances where an American show was copied and performed throughout Europe, there are even more instances where several copies of the same Goldfaden operetta appear throughout the collection. This attests to the lasting popularity of Goldfaden’s works, which were revived and rearranged by several composers, including Rumshinsky, in the early decades of the twentieth century. Yet it was the sheet music arrangement of Goldfaden’s \textit{Two Kuni-Lemls}, published in New York, that allowed Joel Berkowitz to include the music as an appendix alongside their translation of the play, which appeared in \textit{Landmark Yiddish Plays: A Critical Anthology}.\textsuperscript{39} Thus, Yiddish theater’s near proximity to Tin Pan Alley, and the commercial publication of Yiddish theater songs as sheet music and records, represents the final historical milestone of Yiddish theater’s musical development. Furthermore, the connection to Tin Pan Alley and the commercial implications of Yiddish theater music mark a drastic departure from the existing narratives of Yiddish theater’s dramatic development.

**Joseph Rumshinsky’s \textit{Mamele}: A Dissertation**

The dissertation project I conceived in 2013, when I began my preliminary research, involved creating a critical edition of a Rumshinsky operetta and then writing a musical and dramatic analysis that situated the show within the larger context of Yiddish theater. My first


choice had been a Thomashefsky-Rumshinsky hit from 1917, *Tsubrokhe Fidele* [The Broken Violin], which featured an expanded orchestra that included harp and double reeds, ballet sequences, and more advanced compositional techniques, none of which had previously been seen—or heard—on the Yiddish stage. I had initially begun to research *Tsubrokhe Fidele* in 2009 as a Master’s student at Brooklyn College after encountering Rumshinsky’s name in the “Jewish Music” entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. My project led me to the Dorot Jewish Division of the New York Public Library and to the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, both of which house important collections of Yiddish sheet music and theater manuscripts. I quickly discovered that the materials most useful for my work were all in Yiddish, and that there was, in fact, very little secondary scholarship about Joseph Rumshinsky and the rich Yiddish theater music tradition he helped to define. Although I had not yet learned Yiddish, I was intrigued by the forgotten musical world of Yiddish theater and hooked on the thrill of discovery that represents archival research at its best.

But reconstructing *Tsubrokhe Fidele* proved to be impossible: Rumshinsky’s papers at UCLA only contained a radio synopsis, and the Library of Congress seemingly misplaced the copyright deposit long ago. Instead I selected a hit show from the mid-point of Rumshinsky’s career, *Mamele*, based on the completeness of the source material and its popularity. *Mamele*, which starred Molly Picon, premiered in 1926 and was revived for several touring performances that lasted into the 1930s. In 1938 the show was adapted into a film with new music written by

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41 In Yiddish, *mamele* is the diminutive form of *mame* [mother]. Meyer Schwartz’s copyrighted script, deposited in July of 1926 at the Library of Congress, is titled *Di kleyne; oder di kleyne mame* [The little one; or the little mother]. The show’s title was changed to *Mamele* in the intervening months before the December premier. While the show’s
another Yiddish theater composer, Abe Ellstein, and in 1950, it was adapted again for radio broadcast. Comparing the staged version to its film and radio adaptations would, I believed, shed light on the complex relationships between popular shows, Yiddish-speaking audiences, and assimilation in the 1930s and 1940s.

The task of reconstructing the show proved to be fairly straightforward. With only one set of parts, there were few musical discrepancies to resolve: the most prevalent issue I encountered was articulations and tempo indications that were notated inconsistently across instrument parts. Reconciling the libretto was more difficult: the copy at UCLA was incomplete, and the copies at the Library of Congress and AJHS differed significantly from one another. Consulting the film and radio adaptations, as well as critical reviews from the show’s premiere, offered some additional insight as to the plot. Ultimately, as I explain in the introduction to the edition, I decided to use the Library of Congress script where Rumshinsky’s copy ended.

Though Michael Ochs’s critical edition of a 1923 Rumshinsky operetta, *Di goldene kale* [The Golden Bride], published in 2016, was a welcome resource as I compiled my own edition, Ochs faced a very different set of circumstances in assembling his edition: he had to reconcile a handful of sets of instrument parts that he located at UCLA, YIVO, and Yale, and the lone copy of the script was complete. Further, as a cohesive work, *Di goldene kale* proved to be too different from *Mamele* to form any meaningful context or draw larger conclusions about *Mamele*, Rumshinsky’s musical style or the state of Yiddish theater music in the 1920s.

Writing an analysis of *Mamele*, therefore, turned out to be significantly more difficult than I anticipated. My attempt to write a chapter on the staging of Jewish femininity in the show ground to a halt during the summer of 2018 as I struggled to contextualize my observations about protagonists. sixteen year-old Khaye Feygl, occupies her late mother’s place as family caretaker, the term *mamele* is much more nuanced here than a simple reference to the character’s age.
the musical and linguistic portrayals of the title character and her sisters within the larger tradition of popular Yiddish immigrant entertainment. Meanwhile, I had already drafted a chapter on the 1938 film adaptation of *Mamele*, and what began as a peer-reviewed article on the genre of Yiddish mother songs quickly exceeded the word limit and grew into a dissertation chapter.

A second set of circumstances shaped the direction of my dissertation: in February 2016, I accepted a part-time position as a quality assurance archivist for the Edward Blank Vilna Collections Project at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and began working full time a year later. A significant component of the dissertation I originally proposed involved devoting a full chapter to writing a preliminary history of Yiddish theater music that would be drawn from a comprehensive study of two of YIVO’s largest theater music manuscript collections, RGs 7 and 289, from Esther-Rokhl Kaminska’s collection of Yiddish theater materials and theater prompter Sholem Perlmutter’s papers, respectively. My paid work at YIVO, spanning the same hours each day that the reading room is open to researchers, ruled out the possibility of any further extended archival research for my dissertation. By this time it was clear that I would need to balance the work I had already done on *Mamele* with the considerable limitations on the additional work I would need to complete in order to arrive at a finished product. Though Rumshinsky’s music, and *Mamele* in particular, have together been the driving interest of my research for nearly a decade, the solution for my dissertation was ultimately to deemphasize both and widen my focus to consider other aspects of Yiddish theater’s musical legacy.

This, the present and final incarnation of my dissertation, consists of a series of three case studies that, taken together, demonstrates the enormous potential and need for Yiddish theater music scholarship. I connect research from the fields of Jewish studies and musicology in order
to extend the existing, limited scholarship on Yiddish theater music. These case studies are prefaced by a preliminary consideration of Yiddish theater’s musical roots in this introduction.

By far the largest of these case studies is a critical edition of *Mamele*. Reconstructing theater shows from their surviving musical and dramatic parts is arguably the work most necessary to begin to write the history of Yiddish theater’s musical development. Surviving Yiddish theater scores usually consist of either a vocal lead sheet or a piano reduction and lack the dialogue that would have taken place between musical numbers. As a result, it is difficult to develop a sense of what the music for a given production sounded like with an orchestra and how the music itself fit into the context of the script. On a larger scale, this lack of musical knowledge not only makes it difficult to ascertain the compositional style of a prolific composer like Rumshinsky, whose music is easily found in theater archives, it renders the task of studying the contributions of lesser-known composers virtually impossible.

In “Singing the Jewish Mother On and Off the Yiddish Stage,” I expand the work that Slobin began in *Tenement Songs* by conducting an in-depth exploration of a single Yiddish song genre. During the course of my research and collection of Yiddish mother songs, I located sheet music for over seventy commercially published songs, originally published between 1907 and 1958, at the Library of Congress, YIVO, and the New York Public Library. As I began to contextualize this body of songs and the Jewish mother figure who inspired them within the larger story of Yiddish immigrant culture, I turned to Jewish studies scholars like Joyce Antler and Riv Ellen Prell, who have written extensively about the Jewish mother as she has evolved in American Jewish culture in the twentieth century. Even though the Jewish mother figure has been widely studied in American culture, her emergence in Yiddish immigrant culture in the early twentieth century remains largely ignored: Antler and Prell acknowledge that she was an
important part of popular Yiddish entertainment, but the body of their work on Jewish femininity and motherhood concentrates on women and stereotypes who emerged as part of Jewish American mainstream culture.

My work on Yiddish mother songs does not offer any ground-breaking revelations about Yiddish immigrant culture: the figure of the Yiddishe mame who survives in the sheet music is self-sacrificing and perpetually devoted to her children, even though she is as likely to be repaid by neglect and abandonment as nakhes fun kinder [pride from children] in her old age. So why devote a portion of my dissertation to Yiddish mother songs? As Stefanie Halpern writes in the introduction to her dissertation on crossovers from Yiddish theater to the American stage,

The oft-cited notion that Yiddish theater has had a lasting influence on American popular culture is taken at face value, but it remains bereft of historical and cultural nuance. This has led to the misinformed belief that the legacy of the Yiddish theater is one of comedy and jokes, of amusing antics and colorful Yiddish phrases, the result of which is the marginalization of a rich and influential cultural phenomenon.42

The same is especially true of Yiddish musical culture. The mother figure described in the songs is more or less the same Jewish mother who emerged in the Borsht Belt jokes of the midcentury. Yet in the songs, her altruistic and total devotion to her children is not humorous or guilt-inducing, but heartfelt bordering on tragic. My close readings of several Yiddish mother songs enriches the existing scholarship on Jewish mothers by Prell and Antler. With this larger context in place, I then reconsider what may be the most famous mother song of all, Sophie Tucker’s “My Yiddishe Mame.” While this song has often been cast as the zenith of the Yiddish mother songs genre, both the culmination of the genre and an outlier as the only Yiddish mother song to have crossed over into mainstream American culture, the song was neither the culmination nor

an outlier.43 “My Yiddishe Mame” was published and recorded in the mid-1920s, exactly the period during which the mother figure was described with the most potency and that saw the highest number of mother songs published.

In Part Two, I draw on theories of Jewish self-consciousness and performance to analyze the musical narratives of four Yiddish films produced by Joseph Green in the late 1930s: *Yidl with a Fiddle; The Purim Jester; Mamele;* and *A Letter to Mother.* Yiddish film scholars like Eric Goldman, Zehavit Stern, and J. Hoberman have read Green’s films and the Jewish world he creates as affirming Jewish culture. Yet Green’s films are rife with aesthetic and dramatic tension between traditional and modern, religious and secular, and *shtetl* and city, reflecting the contradictions inherent in his own vision of creating Yiddish films whose subjects are “Jewish yet universal-European.” Further, although a substantial part of Green’s vision includes the role he wants music to play, blending “folk themes with modern themes,” the musical aspects of Green’s films have remained largely unstudied. The music lives up to Green’s vision, frequently borrowing melodies from well-known Yiddish songs, but the music also plays a role in flouting the same religious traditions that these films supposedly affirm. Using the work of Josh Kun, who explores multi-faceted performances of American Jewish culture, I explore the many levels of performance at work in Green’s films. In many instances, as in Kun’s analysis of the Marx Brothers “Abie the Fishman” sketch in *Animal Crackers,* this self-consciousness works as comedic effect, a way of calling attention to the boundary of performance in order to toy with the audience’s expectation of what, exactly, constitutes the

43 Joyce Antler, Irv Saposnik, and Mark Slobin, among other scholars, make a distinction between “My Yiddishe Mame” and the larger context of Yiddish mother songs. Antler, for instance, writes that “My Yiddishe Mame’ drew upon the tradition of ethnic nostalgia songs that had become popular in the early twentieth century. Earlier emigration songs emphasized the intimacy and warmth of the Old World environment and the pain of leaving.” See Joyce Antler, *You Never Call! You Never Write! A History of the Jewish Mother* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17.
performance—and what lies underneath. I hear these ideas at play in the musical scores to Green’s films. Sander Gilman and Ruth HaCohen’s respective work on Jewish vocality and the Jewish noise complaint provide the basis for my analysis of how the musical tensions inherent in Green’s films can be understood as musical self-consciousness: both scholars begin from the premise of an ages-old understanding of Jews as noisy and musically inferior in the Western Christian world. Their work lends itself well to analyzing the sonic landscape of Yiddish films that extensively experiment with the boundaries of performance. Further, although Green’s films conjured an enclosed Yiddish world for Yiddish-speaking insiders, they cannot help but respond to both the noise complaint and the rising anti-Semitism that formed the backdrop to the production of these films in late 1930s Poland.

Finally, my conclusion looks towards future avenues of research, including a call to look beyond the contributions of the Big Four composers. I critically engage with the existing understanding of Rumshinsky’s contributions to the development of Yiddish theater music in America. By the time he died in 1956, Rumshinsky had worked with virtually every major Yiddish theater troupe, director, and actor. His presence in the surviving Yiddish theater archives is outsized: he is credited as the composer for over one hundred shows produced between 1903 and 1956 among the collections at UCLA, YIVO, and Library of Congress; the finding aid for YIVO’s RG 112 credits Rumshinsky as the arranger of dozens of commercially published songs and instrumental numbers, and he also arranged several Goldfaden operettas that survive among the manuscript collections at YIVO and UCLA.

Rumshinsky’s musical contributions were so great that a jubilee volume, *Dos Rumshinski Bukh*, was published in honor of his fiftieth birthday, an honor that no other Yiddish theater composer has ever been afforded. A Master’s thesis by Bret Werb, titled “Rumshinsky’s
Greatest Hits: A Chronological Survey of Yiddish-American Songs, 1910-1931," drawn from his first-hand knowledge of the composer’s archival collection at UCLA, is the only other scholarly work to date that focuses exclusively on Rumshinsky.

Rumshinsky also wrote an autobiography: *Klangn fun mayn lebn*, published in 1944, first appeared as a series of articles in two Yiddish newspapers, *Der Tog* and *Forverts*. The composer’s memoirs provide an important account not only of his early musical training and the *meshorer* apprentice system, but also a unique window into Yiddish theater music: while synagogue music’s influence upon Yiddish theater has been well established, Rumshinsky’s perpetual childhood fascination with all things secular, and his subsequent familiarity with Russian operetta and a wide swath of popular songs, suggests additional influences that may have been incorporated into Yiddish theater music.

Together these case studies constitute the beginning of a meaningful consideration of the place of popular Yiddish theater music in the larger narratives of Yiddish theater history and the Americanization of Yiddish-speaking immigrants. My work is by no means exhaustive—the definitive history of Yiddish theater music, well beyond the scope of my endeavor, remains as yet unwritten—and there are undoubtedly many unexplored avenues of inquiry I have not considered in the course of my work. Nonetheless, this dissertation demonstrates how the fields of Jewish studies and music history can be blended to consider the music of Yiddish theater, an area of Jewish musical history that has remained largely overlooked by scholars of both disciplines. It is my hope that these case studies ultimately enrich the existing understanding of popular Yiddish theater in America and the ongoing role it played in the assimilation of its immigrant audiences.
PART ONE
Singing the Jewish Mother On and Off the Yiddish Stage

The stereotype of the ethnic mother is a staple of turn-of-the-century American immigrant culture. Immortalized in verse and song, she represents the Old Country, and along with it, a nostalgically imagined past. While many mother songs exist across different immigrant cultures, the large number of Yiddish theater songs specifically about mothers suggests that the Jewish mother, and all that she symbolized, occupied a special place both on and off the Yiddish stage. It is no coincidence, for example, that the only ethnic mother song to transcend its origins and assimilate into mainstream American culture is a Jewish one—“My Yiddishe Mama.”

In their scholarship on the subject, Joyce Antler and Riv-Ellen Prell, among others, argue that the Jewish mother became the vessel into which American Jews poured their anxieties about assimilation, class, and gender in the middle of the twentieth century. In You Never Call! You Never Write! A History of the Jewish Mother, Joyce Antler argues that “representations of the Jewish mother reveal deep-seated anxieties about Jews' relation to the culture at large and to each other. Like the American-as-apple-pie mother, the Jewish mother became a vessel into which the cultural contradictions of a society grappling with ethnic, gender, class, and racial tensions were poured . . . . [and] a foil for the self-doubts and insecurities of her children.” Indeed, American popular culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is littered with caricatures of excessive Jewish women, an unending parade of yiddishe mames who, from one incarnation to

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1 Written for Sophie Tucker in 1925, “My Yiddishe Mama” was covered by several musicians both Jewish and Gentile throughout the twentieth century. For a sense of how Tucker’s performance has been discussed in the scholarship, see Joyce Antler, You Never Call! You Never Write! A History of the Jewish Mother (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15-45; Joyce Antler, The Journey Home: Jewish Women in the American Century (New York: The Free Press, 1997), 142-3; Slobin, Tenement Songs, 202-5.

the next, in fiction and in real life, continue to reaffirm the trope of Jewish femininity as too consuming, too materialistic, too loud, too devouring, too Jewish, or otherwise simply too much.

In Part One, I challenge the existing understanding of the Jewish mother figure by recontextualizing her within the substantial repertory of commercially published Yiddish songs that were first performed for Jewish immigrant audiences in the early twentieth century. Prell and Antler presume that the Jewish mother figure has always existed in some form, and their survey skips straight from the East European Jewish mother of the late nineteenth century to the Borsht Belt jokes that catapulted the Jewish mother stereotype to mainstream fame in the 1940s. Yet there is no scholarship on Jewish mother stereotypes within Yiddish immigrant culture: Prell and Antler confine their study of the Jewish mother stereotype to the ways it has manifested in Jewish-American mainstream culture, only briefly acknowledging that the Jewish mother stereotype was an important part of Yiddish immigrant culture. When Prell and Antler cite immigrant Jewish women as agents of cultural production in America, they tend to only consider English-language culture. Sophie Tucker and Fanny Brice have been widely analyzed in this context; both performers abandoned their Yiddish cultural origins in favor of the more lucrative American stage. There is very little scholarship on immigrant Jewish women as agents of cultural production for Yiddish-speaking audiences, especially women associated with the Yiddish stage. Scholars like Sharon Power name a few Yiddish actresses in passing, and even the modest secondary scholarship on Molly Picon (who crossed over to the American stage) is mostly confined to her gender-bending performances. Yet Picon, along with actresses like

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Regina Prager, Jennie Goldstein, and Lucy Gehrman, among countless others, were renowned for their powerful performances of Jewish motherhood on the Yiddish stage. Their contributions are absent from any exploration of the ways in which the lives and work of powerful female performers shaped ideas about Jewish femininity in the early twentieth century. Instead, Yiddish-language entertainment tends to be dismissed as monolithic and perpetually outdated: the path from Yiddish immigrant entertainment to mainstream American culture is a one-way street, the thinking goes, so as second- and third-generation immigrants forgot their *mameloshn* in the 1920s and ‘30s, Yiddish theater, which offered generous servings of nostalgia for greenhorn audiences, struggled unsuccessfully to remain relevant.4

At the height of Jewish immigration to America between 1895 and 1930, Yiddish-language entertainment constituted the cultural point of entry for immigrants. New York City alone boasted a dozen theaters where nightly performances combining drama, dance, comedy, and music mirrored the same economic and cultural struggles faced by its audiences.5 It was these nightly offerings of popular fare—sentimental melodramas, musical comedies, and variety shows—that Yiddish-speaking immigrants enjoyed most.6 The most popular of these shows were consumed by audiences around the world thanks to productions that toured cities as close as Newark and as far away as Buenos Aires and Warsaw; commercial recordings and published sheet music; and Yiddish-language radio stations that featured performances of hit songs and abridged versions adapted especially for broadcast. By conjuring the familiarity of tradition,

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4 Several factors contributed to dwindling audience sizes in the 1920s and 1930s, including strict immigration laws, the Great Depression, and the increasing popularity of radio and film. The “one way street” understanding of Jewish assimilation is evident in Sophie Tucker’s autobiography, as well as the cultural scholarship on this era by Antler and Prell. See also Irv Saposnik, “Jolson, the Jazz Singer and the Jewish Mother: or How My Yiddishe Momme Became My Mammy,” *Judaism*, 43, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 432-42.


Yiddish popular culture offered Jewish immigrants a nostalgic, comforting, and temporary escape from the otherwise constant struggle to adapt to modern American life. The Eastern European *yiddishe mame* that Prell and Antler take for granted, therefore, is an early American cast on the stereotype that would, by the 1940s, evolve into the guilt-inducing punchline of Borsht Belt comedians.

My research into the Jewish mother stereotype in Yiddish-language immigrant culture began as a quantitative data experiment. I wanted to know how Jewish mothers were depicted in popular Yiddish theater productions; how these depictions evolved in response to Americanization, the enactment of immigration laws in the 1920s, and increased economic mobility; and how the lives of Yiddish actresses influenced their performances of Jewish femininity. The obstacles to studying popular shows are many: virtually all of them are unpublished; the surviving manuscripts are languishing in archives throughout the U.S. and Europe, and must be accessed in person; the music is often separate from the script, and vice versa, assuming both components survived at all; reading a script requires proficiency in Yiddish and, in the case of the many plays that were jotted down in notebooks, the ability to read Yiddish handwriting. Further, most Yiddish theater actresses neither wrote autobiographies nor enjoyed substantial press coverage. Their entries in Zalman Zylbercweig’s *Leksikon fun yidisn teater* [Lexicon of Yiddish Theater] are often the sole source of information for lesser-known stars. These entries tend to be brief and are not always accurate.

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7 Zylbercweig began publishing the *Leksikon* in 1931. When he died in 1972, he had published six volumes; the galleys for volume seven, housed at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, RG 662, were recently published on the Digital Yiddish Theatre Project blog: [https://yiddishstage.org/encyclopedia](https://yiddishstage.org/encyclopedia). Covering history, troupes, actors and actresses, theaters, unions, composers, and critics, the *Leksikon* contains exhaustive articles on major figures like Abraham Goldfaden and Ester-Rokhl Kaminsksa and remains the only source of information for some lesser-known figures.
Table 1 represents a partial list of research institutions in the United States with significant collections relating to Yiddish theater. The Dorot Jewish Division of the New York Public Library and the Library of Congress together hold around two thousand Yiddish play scripts; the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research’s three largest theater collections contain well over three hundred thousand pages of play scripts, music manuscripts, photographs, playbills, and posters; and the University of California—Los Angeles houses the substantial Rumshinsky collection. In short, there is an overwhelming amount of material to sift through in order to fully understand a given popular production.

Table 1: Institutions in the United States with Substantial Collections of Unpublished Yiddish Theater Materials

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Collection</th>
<th>Quantity (est.)</th>
<th>Type of Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NYPL Dorot</td>
<td>Yiddish Plays</td>
<td>672 titles</td>
<td>play scripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library of Congress</td>
<td>Marwick Collection of Copyrighted Yiddish Plays</td>
<td>1292 titles</td>
<td>play scripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YIVO Institute</td>
<td>Kaminska Theater Museum</td>
<td>40 linear feet (72,000 pages)</td>
<td>play scripts, play bills, posters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YIVO Institute</td>
<td>Theater Music Collection</td>
<td>36 linear feet (65,000 pages)</td>
<td>music manuscripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YIVO Institute</td>
<td>Perlmutter Collection</td>
<td>105 linear feet (189,000 pages)</td>
<td>play scripts, music manuscripts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCLA Special Collections</td>
<td>Rumshinsky Theater Memoribilia</td>
<td>24 linear feet (43,200 pages)</td>
<td>play scripts, music manuscripts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Instead, I turned to the substantial repertory of commercially published Yiddish popular songs about mothers. I wanted to know what kinds of trends might emerge by tracking song texts and publication information for a large number of songs from a single genre of Yiddish popular songs. Two important tools paved the way for my research: first, Mark Slobin’s *Tenement Songs*, a general exploration of the roughly twelve hundred titles in RG 112, YIVO’s sprawling Yiddish sheet music collection, categorizes several genres of popular songs, including
mother songs. Slobin argues that popular Yiddish music from 1895 to 1920 constitutes the most important musical legacy of Jewish immigrants: “[S]heet music texts are as valuable as [newspapers and literature] in depicting shared values and aspirations. Indeed, since music directly reflects audience interest both in terms of marketability and affective value, in some ways it may be even more significant than other forms of evidence.” Second, popular songs, which were commercially published, survive in various libraries and archives around the world. While YIVO and the Library of Congress arguably house the largest sheet music collections in the U.S., at over twelve hundred titles each, research institutions like the Dorot Jewish Division at the New York Public Library, Yale, and UCLA, boast their own modest collections. More importantly, some of these collections have now been digitized and are easily accessed online. Drawing primarily on the collections at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York and the Library of Congress, I located over seventy mother songs composed between 1907 and 1950 that form the basis for the discussion that follows. A list of these songs and their publication information can be found in Appendix A. The Yiddish mother songs genre represents an early attempt to reconcile traditional Old World identities with the modern American identities that the New World demanded of all its inhabitants. The image these songs paint of the Jewish mother is a precursor to the stereotype that developed in American culture in the midcentury.

I argue that a Jewish mother song is one in which the mother herself—her nurturing presence and, in some cases, lack thereof—is the main subject. The genre of mother songs overlaps at its edges with songs about both mothers and fathers; lullabies, which are often sung by mothers; orphan songs, which sometimes lament the mother’s absence; and wedding songs, if the mother should be lucky enough to see her children under the wedding canopy. While all

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8 Slobin, Tenement Songs, 119.
commercially published Yiddish songs are a direct product of Tin Pan Alley, the Yiddish mother songs genre marks something of a departure from the conventionally understood formulas for song-writing success. In an article on the numerous Tin Pan Alley song-writing manuals published in the early 1900s, Daniel Goldmark notes that mainstream mother songs fluctuated in popularity, and were especially popular in mainstream American culture during World War I. He then quotes a 1916 manual by Edward M. Wickes, who dismisses the entire mother songs genre as “hackneyed” and encourages the reader to write about romantic love instead. Yet Wickes also grudgingly admits that neither publishers nor songwriters can resist dabbling in the genre: “‘Each must have his fling at mother.’” The popularity of Yiddish mother songs steadily increased from 1910 through the 1920s, but had not reached their zenith during World War I. Further, while Wickes seems to suggest that most songwriters did not write more than a single mother song, the opposite seems to have been true in Yiddish popular culture: numerous lyricists and composers, including Joseph Rumshinsky, David Meyerowitz, and Louis Friedsell, each wrote several extant mother songs. Finally, the sentiments in songs about Jewish mothers are non-transferrable to fathers: while there exists “Mayn libster fraynd iz mayn mamenyu [My best friend is my mother]” and “Di eybike mame [The Eternal Mother],” there is no “Eybike tate [Eternal Father].”

In the songs, the Jewish mother, a steadfast figure and transmitter of heritage who is inevitably abandoned by her children, is frequently positioned against the adaptive process of Americanization. As a result, her representation in song does not symbolize a lost world so much as a lost identity. Tracing the evolution of the Jewish mother stereotype in American

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popular culture, Martha A. Ravits writes, “All the embarrassing baggage of ethnicity—
unassimilated habits, Yiddish accent, incomplete understanding of American mores—was
projected onto the [Jewish] mother, a representative of outmoded values. . . . Therefore, the
mother, by virtue of gender and generation, functioned as a scapegoat for self-directed Jewish
resentment about minority status in mainstream culture.”11 The mother songs are hardly an
expression of embarrassment or resentment, yet they describe many of the qualities Jews would
need to leave behind. Thus, in the songs, it is not only the Jewish mother who has been forgotten
by her successful, Americanized children, it is Jewish identity itself. Though they lagged behind
the Jewish mother’s real-life economic and social empowerment, the songs themselves reveal a
surprisingly complex response to the ongoing anxiety of assimilation. Ultimately, like the
Jewish mother jokes of the mid-century, immortalizing the Jewish mother in song allowed
Yiddish-speaking immigrants to embrace a cultural identity from which they were
simultaneously trying to distance themselves.

The Jewish mother comes to America

The Yiddish mother songs genre is strongly rooted in the real-life figure of the Jewish
mother and her intimate connections with Jewish identity. The most obvious connection is a
biological one: as a matrilineal religion, it is the mother who connects her children to their
Jewish identity. Second, Yiddish itself is known as mame-loshn [the mother tongue] because of
its practical association with Jewish domestic life. Until the late nineteenth century, Hebrew was
reserved for religious study and worship, activities that were exclusively associated with men.

The Jewish mother supported her family’s religious identity in other important ways. With three symbolic flicks of her wrist over the candles, she would welcome the Sabbath each week, modeling for her children standards of conduct that befitted an observant Jew. Sylvia Rothchild locates the nexus of the Jewish mother’s embodiment of religious practice in the historically symbolic relationship between food and tradition.

Special foods were symbolic and prepared in a ritualistic [fashion] that gave her the feeling she was participating in historic events. Her baking was not just an excuse to provide an accumulation of fattening “goodies,” but part of the history lesson she was teaching her children. The honey cake for the New Year included her prayers for a “good, sweet year.” The blintzes at Shavuoth [sic], hamentashen at Purim, pancakes at Chanukah invoked the holidays, gave her home a holiday atmosphere, and reason for blessings.\(^\text{12}\)

In America, Jewish immigrant mothers were not only concerned with their children’s religious development, but also proved to be more devoted to their children’s physical well-being than other immigrant mothers. A 1922 report of the New York City health commissioner concluded that babies born to Jewish mothers on the Lower East Side were healthier than those who were born to 'uptown' women because the former went to great lengths to ensure their offspring received milk. Jewish mothers were particularly eager for opportunities to learn, and regularly sought out “the most up-to-date advice from officials, unlike other foreign-born mothers.”\(^\text{13}\) A clinic director in Brownsville proclaimed that the Jewish mother was “the most sacrificing mother in the world . . . 'The board of Health is second only to the Almighty in her eyes.'”\(^\text{14}\) Moreover, multiple first- and second-hand accounts attested to the great lengths and

\(^{13}\) Quoted in Antler, *You Never Call!,* 33. Other sociological surveys of Jewish, Italian, and Irish immigrants note differences in family dynamics and attitudes towards children between ethnic groups from the early twentieth-century, affirming Jewish immigrants as the most concerned with their children’s overall development.
\(^{14}\) Ibid.
personal expense to which Jewish mothers went in order to provide for their families' every need.\(^\text{15}\)

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Yiddish-speaking immigrants were acutely aware of the implicit mainstream expectations about their assimilation. Discussing the incompatibility of being both American and Jewish, Prell notes that, “To be an American and a Jew necessitates relinquishing one or another of those identities. Social class, career aspirations, styles of interaction and sexuality—separately and together—are codes for and symbols of how one is American.”\(^\text{16}\) In Eastern Europe, it was not uncommon for women to go out and work to help support their husbands, an arrangement they hoped—though it was seldom realized—would allow their husbands to study Torah all day.\(^\text{17}\) In the ideal middle-class American household, however, women working outside the home amounted to moral failure on the part of the husband. Jewish families therefore traded spiritual and intellectual wealth for economic prosperity: wives still oversaw domestic affairs, but seldom worked outside the home, while their husbands worked at increasingly lucrative jobs. Jewish children, especially boys, tended to remain in school longer than their mainstream American counterparts, and in many cases, even attended college, an opportunity that was not readily available to Jews in Eastern Europe. This increased education among Jews, a vital factor in their upward economic mobility, was facilitated in part by Jewish girls, who tended to enter the workforce slightly earlier than their brothers in order to support their families. Because they often were allowed to decide how much of their income went to their families, and were expected to keep a portion for themselves,  


\(^{16}\) Prell, “Rage and Representation,” 242.  

Jewish girls generally felt empowered, rather than burdened, in their new roles as breadwinners.\textsuperscript{18}

In 1931, the Yiddish newspaper \textit{Der tog} sponsored an essay contest on the topic of whether a 50/50 marriage, in which both spouses earned salaries and tended to the household, was preferable to a traditional one. While many responses favored a modern marriage, young men and women alike suggested that such an arrangement was only acceptable until the couple had children. From that point on, the only acceptable course of action was for the marriage to revert to a traditional one.\textsuperscript{19} Given the dramatic shifts in family dynamics and economic status for first- and second-generation immigrants during the early decades of the twentieth century, it is perhaps surprising that even “modern” young Jewish adults proved reluctant to revise their views about motherhood. Yet for both popular Yiddish culture and young Americanized Jewish adults, the frontier of modernity was not without limits: the period from 1911 to 1930, roughly corresponding to both the peak and effective cessation of Jewish immigration, saw no less than fifty mother songs performed and published. This number, which comprises two-thirds of the total number of mother songs I have located, cannot be a coincidence: even as Yiddish-speaking immigrants took on new roles to assimilate into American life, they still needed the comfort that popular Yiddish culture, and especially the mother songs, provided. In the songs themselves, the Jewish mother remained such a powerful symbol because of her strong connection to both her children and to Jewish identity itself.


\textsuperscript{19} Wenger, “Budgets, Boycotts, and Babies,” 195.
The Emergence of Mother Songs, 1907-1920

The earliest surviving mother song, “A brivele der mamen,” penned by Yiddish-language entertainer and American immigrant Solomon Schmulewitz, dates from 1907 and remains one of the best-known examples of the genre. A handful of performers recorded the song in the years immediately following its publication, including Simon Paskal (1908), Sara Gingold (1909), Salcia Weinberg (1909), and Schmulewitz himself (1908). Other Jewish performers continued to record the song into the mid-century, including Jacob Lerman, Leo Fuld, Miriam Kressyn, and the Barry Sisters. In the late 1930s, the song would be used in the score to a Yiddish film by the same name, which starred Lucy Gehrman. Written from the mother’s perspective, “A brivele der mamen” describes her dearest wish—for her child, who is leaving for America, to write her a letter each week.

I beg you with tears and fear, your dear, loyal mother
You’re traveling my child, my only child across the faraway sea
Just get there in good health and don’t forget your mother
Oh, be well, and go with luck
Each week send a letter, delight your mother’s heart my child.

The second verse reveals that the child does not write any letters, to the deep anguish of his mother. And in a perhaps predictable twist of fate, the child, who has become successful in America and a parent himself, learns in the final verse that it is now too late to write a letter, for his mother is dead. The pain and anxiety of familial separation during the peak of Jewish immigration is in this song poignant, and also transferrable. Though this song text describes the

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20 Although the sheet music shown in Figure 1 lists the title as “A brivele der mame,” the song is most frequently referred to as “A brivele der mamen,” which is the spelling convention I have adopted throughout my dissertation.

21 The online database for the Judaica Sound Archive at Florida Atlantic University yields over a dozen search results for “A brivele der mamen” and its numerous spelling variants. Many of these recordings, particularly after 1920, appear on compilation albums, suggesting the ubiquity of the song, even absent a larger number of earlier recordings.

separation of mother and child, adapting the sentiments to other relationships proved to be a fairly simple formula for Schmulewitz, who also published “letter” songs to Father, the Bride, and the Groom.

The similarity of the sheet music covers between Schmulewitz’s “letter” songs echoes the similarities between the song texts. Figures 1-3 show three of these songs: “A brivele der mamen,” “A brivele der kale,” and “A brivele dem taten.” All three songs were published between 1907 and 1911, and all feature line art by Joseph Keller. Like countless Yiddish popular songs from this time, the sheet music covers feature fairly generic line drawings that illustrate increasingly overt images of transatlantic separation. The earliest of these is shown in Figure 1: “A brivele der mamen” shows a post man delivering a letter—perhaps even the same letter shown under a portrait of Sarah Kanner, credited with singing the song to great acclaim. The cover of “A brivele der kale” in Figure 2 shows an expressionless couple standing at a pier, about to part ways. The man has a satchel in his left hand, and in the background are two steamships. But “A brivele dem taten,” shown in Figure 3, takes the transatlantic imagery the furthest: this cover features two images labeled “In Rusland [In Russia]” and “In Amerike [In America].” The “In Rusland,” drawing, shown at the top left, is remarkably similar to the image on “A brivele der kale.” Here, however, two men, a father and son, are about to be separated. In America, depicted on the bottom right, the men’s efforts to reunite seem to have been thwarted. The father is standing at the New York harbor, with steam ships and the Statue of Liberty in the background, separated from his son by a tall iron fence. In all of these songs, a family unit—mother and son, father and son, bride and groom—have been separated by the beckoning goldene medine [Golden Land]. The exchange of letters back and forth is their only hope of remaining connected to the other side, and in all cases, the connection is lost.
It is worth noting here that, although the sheet music covers use Roman characters and even some English vocabulary, these songs were not marketed to a mainstream or assimilated American audience. The broadside lyrics were usually printed using Hebrew characters, and were transliterated beneath the music to allow for seamless reading from left to right.
Figure 1 Solomon Schmulewitz, “A brivele der mamen,” 1907. Yiddish American Sheet Music Collection, Library of Congress.
Figure 2 Solomon Schmulewitz, “A brivele der kale,” 1910. Yiddish American Sheet Music Collection, Library of Congress.
Figure 3 Solomon Schmulewitz, “A brivele dem taten,” 1911. Yiddish American Sheet Music Collection, Library of Congress.
The mother songs that followed in the 1910s and 1920s would become less formulaic and more closely tailored to the Jewish mother herself. Unlike Schmulewitz’s “letter” songs, which adapted the same theme of transatlantic separation to interchangeable subjects, the majority of the mother songs repertoire abounds with very specific, recurring descriptions of the mother’s sacrifices and struggles. She is often lovingly described from the perspective of the child or a narrator; in “A mame iz der bester fraynd,” a song from 1914 by H.A. Russotto, for example, the child remembers his mother as a protective figure: “When someone spoke badly of me/ She smoothed everything over with her tenderness/ . . . . So I knew then of the world/ Her hopes, her efforts—nothing compares/ There is simply no other friend like her.”23 In the second verse, the mother’s status as a protective figure is enhanced through a brief description of a father’s sternness. When a father strikes his child in punishment, “it is only the mother who cannot stand to hear her child’s cries.” The final verse reaffirms the extent to which the mother is attuned to her child’s suffering: “The worst may happen to her/ Even the impossible is not hard for her/ As long as her child’s desire is fulfilled.” This description of the mother’s sacrifices is echoed throughout countless other Jewish mother songs. In “A muters gebet [A mother’s prayer]” for instance, “The mother groans and begs with tears/ That evil and wrongdoing her child won’t bear,” and in “A mames vert [A mother’s worth],” she stays up all night tending to her sick child. “The mother is tired, broken, and weak/ Still she sings without stopping and cries/ The child is refreshed from her song/ Closing his little eyes gladly.”24

The cover art on these songs is varied. Many sheet music covers did not use any imagery at all. Some continued to use line drawings, and many others also began to include photographs.

of composers or performers. Figure 4 shows Joseph Rumshinsky’s “Az ikh ken keyn mame nit zayn [If I cannot be a mother],” featuring a photograph of the composer embedded in a line drawing of a lyre. To the right a dark-haired Grecian woman holding a lute is surrounded by birds and trees. This cover design was frequently used by the Hebrew Publishing Company between 1910 and 1918, including for Arnold Perlmutter and Herman Wohl’s song “Di toyre [The Torah],” shown in Figure 5.
Figure 4 Joseph Rumshinsky, “Az ikh ken keyn mame nit zayn,” 1913. Yiddish American Sheet Music Collection, Library of Congress.
Figure 5 Perlmutter and Wohl, “Di toyre,” 1912. Yiddish American Sheet Music Collection, Library of Congress.
Figure 6 M. Ratner, “Di mame,” 1910. Yiddish American Sheet Music Collection, Library of Congress.
Figure 7 David Meyerowitz, “Wen es felt unz a mame’s gebet,” 1921. Yiddish American Sheet Music Collection, Library of Congress.
Figure 8 Solomon Schmulewitz, “A mames vert,” 1913. Yiddish American Sheet Music Collection, Library of Congress.
Other sheet music covers began to incorporate photographs of the performers. Figures 6 and 7 show two mother songs that were sung by Sarah Kanner and Taino Poland, “Di mame [The mother]” and “Ven es felt unz a mame’s gebet [If a mother’s prayer leaves us],” from the show *Every Woman’s Desire*. The reader might even notice that the photograph of Sarah Kanner is the same as that used on the cover of “A brivele der mamen,” shown in Figure 1. Finally, “A mames vert [A mother’s worth],” shown in Figure 8, combines both photographs and line drawings to unique effect. A photograph of Schmulewitz is shown next to a photograph of an unidentified woman holding an infant. Underneath, a couplet reads “Men shetst ersht dan a mames vert/ Ven ir keyver iz shoyn tsugedekt mit erd. [People only value a mother’s worth/ When her grave has already been covered with earth].” At first glance, the couplet seems to have been drawn from the lyrics, but one has only to open the music to see that this is not the case. The publisher, or perhaps Schmulewitz himself, wrote the additional words to enhance the pathos of the cover. A drawing of tomb stones in a cemetery in the bottom left corner emphasizes the idea that mothers are only appreciated once it is too late.

The music of these songs is fairly homogenous, and conforms with the standard Yiddish popular song characteristics that Mark Slobin notes in *Tenement Songs*. These include a verse-chorus form, the use of waltz time, especially in the chorus, and a vocal part usually comprised of simple intervals and within the range of a single octave. The use of a minor key and a *krekht* (sob) in the singer’s voice round out the standard musical contributions to the gravitas of the mother songs genre.

The early 1920s saw the enactment of two immigrant quotas that reduced the annual flood of hundreds of thousands of East European Jewish immigrants down to a few thousand. It

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is no coincidence that at the same time, the theme of the mother songs began to shift away from the pangs of transatlantic familial separation and first-generation economic hardship. Instead, mother songs went in three directions through the rest of the 1920s and beyond, reflecting some of the ways in which Yiddish-speaking immigrants adapted to their American surroundings. Most of the genre continued to use increasingly hyperbolic language to amplify the Jewish mother’s qualities. Second, a handful of songs by Molly Picon constitute an attempt to Americanize the Jewish mother from within Yiddish culture for an increasingly assimilated audience. Finally, “My Yiddishe Mame” is the lone example of a Yiddish mother song produced by and for mainstream (Jewish) Americans that nonetheless straddles the divide between Yiddish and American culture.

The Tragic Motherhood of Lucy Gehrman and Jennie Goldstein

In response to new anxieties around immigration and Americanization, most Yiddish mother songs simply became even more of what they already were: with only minimal linguistic changes, they continued to paint the Jewish mother in an increasingly unequivocal and hyperbolic manner. An ever-tragic figure, she watches over her children when they are ill, refusing sustenance and sleep until they are well; she toils tirelessly that they might not know hardship; about suffering she is wont to say, “mir zol zayn far dir!” [it should be me instead of you!]; and when all is said and done, she finds herself alone, having been abandoned by her successful, Americanized children.

The period from 1921 until 1940 saw some of the most potent mother songs to be performed on the Yiddish stage, at least thirty-six of which survive as sheet music and records from this time. Thirty mother songs were published from 1921 to 1930 alone, suggesting that the
genre reached its height at precisely the same time that the annual influx of Jewish immigrants drastically decreased. Moreover, to a far greater degree than their predecessors, the Yiddish mother songs of the 1920s and beyond became closely associated with Yiddish actresses like Regina Prager, Jennie Goldstein, and Lucy Gehrman.

Sharon Powers notes that Yiddish actresses were viewed as positive role models, "symbolizing a two way bridge between the Old World and the New. As talented, glamorous, modern American women who nevertheless maintained a strong connection to Jewishness and the Jewish community . . . Yiddish actresses portrayed a desirable balance between Americanization and Jewishness."26

The New York-born Jennie Goldstein (1896-1960), shown in Figure 9, was famous for playing tragic, fallen women, so much so that her obituary in The New York Times characterized her as “the greatest Yiddish tragedienne."27 Reviewing her performance in Souls for Sale (1936), another critic commented that “Miss Goldstein can act with genuine warmth and with genuine pathos, but unfortunately she does not stop at that point, but goes on to break the thermometer.”28 Goldstein’s hit song from the 1927 show Her Great Secret, “Ikh bin a mame,” describes an especially tragic circumstance of motherhood:

I am a mother—so where is my child?
I am a mother—and suffer for a sin
I am a mother—and must be from afar
A khupe—and the mother won’t be there
I am a mother—it’s just not meant for me
To be loved and respected like every mother
Oh mothers, feel my heartache now:
A terrible punishment, to be a mother without a child.29

29 Jennie Goldstein, Morris Rund, and J. Jaffe, “Ikh bin a mame [I am a mother],” arr. Alexander Olshanetsky, 1927.
Figure 9 Mr. Yaffe, “Ikh bin a mame,” 1927. Sheet Music Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
“Ikh bin a mame,” alternatively known as “Vu iz mayn kind?”, refers to a different kind of familial separation than the Transatlantic divide in “A brivele der mamen”: in the show, Goldstein’s character gave away her baby, perhaps as a result of economic hardship. Nonetheless, Goldstein’s distress in the song is immediately apparent, and the text reaffirms the unique bond between her and her child. The verse utilizes the ubiquitous imagery of the mother asking God for her child’s health and success in life, of hoping that someday she will be lucky enough to attend to her under the khupe. But in the chorus, quoted above, Goldstein’s tragedy becomes clear: she is a mother who has been deprived of the immediacy of her child’s wellbeing, and will never see the singular joy of her child under the khupe. While other songs about familial separation and abandoned children are narrated by the child in question, “Ikh bin a mame” is one of comparatively few mother songs to be told from the first-person perspective of the mother. Further, as the penultimate line reveals, it is only other mothers who will understand her plight. Goldstein’s direct appeal across the fourth wall to the mothers in the audience, another unusual feature, clinches the emotional pathos of the song.

“Di eybike mame [The eternal mother]” (1929), by Israel Rosenberg and Harry Lubin, was sung by Lucy Gehrman in a Yiddish drama with the same title. Like many mother songs, the lyrics cobble together several standard tropes and variations on stock phrases to paint an especially tragic picture of the Jewish mother. The first verse alone declares that every woman’s desire is to be a mother, overtly references the genre of cradle songs, details the lengths that the mother will go to support her children, and laments her subsequent abandonment in her old age. Like “Ikh bin a mame,” this song appeals to other mothers’ special understanding of their role: “only a woman can feel a mother’s joy and good fortune” when she first looks at her children. The mother is blind to her child’s flaws: to her, he is charming, always a perfect angel.
After the familiar image of the mother singing a cradle song, there is a startling description of the lengths she will go to provide for her children in times of hardship:

She meets days of hunger, of hardship,  
Her child is forbidden from knowing  
The mother, she tears off her flesh  
To her child she gives the last morsel.  

The mother’s motivation for such extreme sacrifices is the hope that in her old age, she will be repaid with *nakhes fun kinder* [pride from her children]. Instead, she is “forlorn at night, alone by day, noticed by no one, valued by no one.”

The chorus laments the mother’s sacrifices in light of her thankless efforts: echoing the mothers from other songs, she has given up her life, luck, and health, and her sorrow at being subsequently abandoned by her children is unknowable. The second verse, marked “deklamatsie [spoken],” explores the dynamic between the mother and father: when the father raises his hand to strike the child, she will intervene, blind to her child’s flaws. She guards her child day and night if he falls ill, another stock image of mother songs: “already she does not know day from night/ Over the child’s life she trembles and guards.” If the father should die, the mother will bear hardship until the child grows up, despite the meager rewards.

In the mid- to late 1920s, music publishing companies began to abandon the use of illustrative line art and increasingly favored the use of photographs for Yiddish sheet music covers. Stock photos of performers, composers, and lyricists, as shown in Figure 9 above, were already commonplace in published mother songs. The cover for “Di eybike mame” not only uses stock photos of Rosenberg and Lubin, however, but also incorporates a production photograph of Lucy Gehrman made up as the title character in the show. I have not studied the prevalence of using production photos in published Yiddish sheet music, but the sheet music

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collection at YIVO includes music from the 1910s which feature production photographs, such as “Tatenu, mamenyu,” the song shown in Figure 11. Within the genre of mother songs, using production photographs does not seem to have been very widespread. However, the handful of mother songs I found that feature production photos, including “Tatenu, Mamenyu” and “Venes felt unz a muters gebet,” shown in Figure 12, lend additional weight to the gravity of the song texts.
Figure 10 Henry Lubin, “Di eybike mame,” 1929. Sheet Music Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
Figure 11 Joseph Rumshinsky, “Tate-mame,” 1913. Sheet Music Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
Figure 12 David Meyerowitz, “Ven es felt unz a muters gebet,” 1921. Sheet Music Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
“Di eybike mame” is one of many mother songs to proclaim that every woman’s wish is motherhood, while simultaneously detailing the many ways in which the Jewish mother’s role is a thankless one. Though the excesses of the mother’s devotion are made apparent at every turn, the song’s real message is not a warning to either mother or child to change their ways, but rather, that nothing should change at all: the chorus ends with the words, “eybike mame, blaybst eybike nar [eternal mother, remain ever a fool].” More importantly, the language used to describe the Jewish mother in this song—not to mention Lucy Gehrman’s performance in an undated recording—is nearly as excessive as the Jewish mother herself was later accused of being in real life. For instance, the second verse ends with the words, “Great children, great suffering/ So many tears, so little happiness,” reinforcing what seems to be the inherent tragedy of motherhood. The first verse also utilizes an especially graphic metaphor: while “raysn fun di hoyt” is not an uncommon phrase, and is akin to “tearing one’s hair out”, it nonetheless brings to mind a kind of sacrifice at once more self-destructive and severe than the accompanying stock phrase, “she sacrificed her life, health, and luck,” that appears in the chorus. And while this song is more hyperbolic in describing the Jewish mother than most, the entire repertory of mother songs amplifies, to varying degrees, the real-life characteristics of Jewish immigrant mothers that have been documented in numerous oral histories and sociological studies.31 Daniel Soyer’s article highlighting autobiographies of Jewish immigrant mothers from YIVO’s American Jewish Autobiography collection, for instance, cites several mothers who saw themselves as the proactive guardians of their families’ well-being. Notably, “many of the immigrant mothers . . .

disagreed with the assessment of many historians that they had fared badly in America. . . . 

[T]hey claimed much of the credit for having made the decision to bring the family to America. Finally, they proudly pointed to the careers of their husbands and children as evidence of their own success as mothers and as partners in the family economy.”

It is certainly true that Jewish mothers in real life were prepared to go to extraordinary lengths for their children, and in America, they were often innovative in the methods they employed to provide for their families. The songs, in exaggerating the Jewish mother’s sacrifices and overlooking her resourcefulness, contribute to the tension between the very real phenomenon of Jewish women adapting to American life and the comforting image of a stable, traditional maternal figure in an uncertain and ever-changing world. Further, the excessive language used to describe Jewish mothers in these songs have arguably contributed to the impression of her as excessive in real life.

**Americanizing the Jewish Mother**

The lone exceptions to the common tropes of the mother songs genre are a handful of songs written by Molly Picon for some of her Yiddish musicals in the 1920s. Picon, one of the most enduring icons of the Yiddish stage, was a second-generation immigrant and a woman, unlike the majority of the first-generation Yiddish-speaking male lyricists from this time period. It is worth noting that the American-born Picon was somewhat insulated from the anxieties and tensions surrounding assimilation that her audience—and other songwriters—would have faced.

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33 In “Budgets, Boycotts, and Babies,” for instance, Wenger relates the story of a family who applied for welfare, only to be turned down because the investigator did not believe that the family of four could possibly subsist on a food budget of five dollars a week.
As a second-generation immigrant, she consciously underwent a reverse assimilation, touring Eastern Europe with her husband in the early 1920s in order to improve her Yiddish. Further, even though Picon began to cross over to American mainstream entertainment in the 1930s, she continued to perform for Yiddish-speaking audiences until the final decades of her life. Unlike Goldstein and Gehrman, who were known primarily for their dramatic performances of tragic Jewish women, Picon was a petite, spry soubrette, known for gender- and age-bending performances in shows like *Yankele* and *Mamele*, in which she starred as the title characters.

The handful of mother songs for which Picon wrote the lyrics are the only ones that contain the Americanized sentiments one might expect from mother songs that were written after the early 1920s. While many earlier mother songs add a bit of refinement by incorporating varying degrees of *daytshmerish*, the Germanized Yiddish that characterized Yiddish theater productions, Picon’s songs are fairly modern, tending more towards Americanized sentiments about mothers whose descriptions are at best only vaguely Jewish. For instance, the song “Ikh vil a meydl vi mayn mamen iz geven” from the 1925 production *Molly Dolly* proclaims,

> I want a girl like my mother used to be  
> A girl like my mother is difficult to find  
> With a plain calico dress  
> With manners, beauty, and gentility  
> I want a girl like my mother used to be.  

Despite its brevity, this song represents several significant departures from the usual imagery found in the mother songs. Of the girl that the narrator’s mother “used to be,” we are given only the most generic description of a woman who dresses plainly. She is beautiful, well mannered, and genteel. Not only might a mother of any ethnicity fit such a description, these characteristics, especially gentility, suggest a middle-class American mother. By contrast, the

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most common physical description of the Jewish mother, when her features are mentioned at all, is of a woman who is constantly crying. The song “Nakhes fun kinder” mentions that “From crying and wailing the mother becomes blind,” undoubtedly a result of the hardships she struggles to bear and her profound loneliness once her children are grown.\(^{35}\) The songs “Di Eybike Mame” and “A Mame Darf Men Hern” declare that “alone she carries the heavy weight” and “much blood, sweat, and tears she shed for you.”\(^{36}\) “A mames vert” describes the mother as “tired, broken, weakened” after countless sleepless nights spent watching over sick children, and a song called “Mayn libster fraynd iz mayn mamenyu” adds that “The mother grows old (sick) and gray before her time.”\(^{37}\) These songs together present a picture of a Jewish mother who is haggard and exhausted, an image that is hardly compatible with beauty or gentility.

Another mother song by Picon, “Oyb s’iz geven gut far mayn mame, iz es gut far mir,” the hit song from Mamele, loudly proclaims that “if it’s good enough for Mama, it’s good enough for me.” In the show, Picon plays sixteen-year-old Khaye Feygl, who is interchangeably addressed by her American name, Ida, and her title, Mamele, or Kid Mother. Following the death of her mother, Mamele shoulders the domestic responsibilities of caring for her ungrateful family. Her siblings are all keen to become modern Americans, and it is only Mamele who seems interested in upholding the traditional ways of her immigrant mother and the Old World. “Oyb s’iz geven gut far mayn mame” is a commentary on the tensions between the New World and the Old:

If it’s good enough for Mama, then it’s good for me
Her opinions, her virtues were always tasteful
Wise men weren’t around, everyone lived happily
Now everyone says “for the old world I don’t care”

I don’t envy them the new, I like the old much more
If it’s good enough for Mame, then it’s good for me.38

In the second verse, Picon observes that modern women have time for a menagerie of pets, but not for children:

She has a poodle, a canary, and a bulldog that’s named Mary
But for a child she doesn’t have time
And my Mama had no trouble giving birth to eleven children
And she was all right.

Like “Ikh vil a meydl,” “Oyb s’iz geven” is a far cry from virtually every other mother song. Avoiding any physical description of the Jewish mother, she is here characterized as tasteful and traditional, traits that seem out of place among the legions of Jewish mothers who tearfully wring their hands and pray to God for the health of their children. Further, the second verse hints towards motherhood as being easy, even with eleven (!) children. There is no mention of the economic, cultural, and linguistic struggles that Mamele’s mother undoubtedly faced, only an affirmation that the old ways that Mama represents are superior to the new.

More importantly, though the Jewish mother’s sacrifices and the toll they take are remembered fondly in all of the songs about her, she is ultimately a figure of the past, one whom—if the song texts are to be believed—the male songwriters are content to leave behind. It is only Picon’s songs that promote the Jewish mother’s qualities, vague as they may be, as being desirable and attractive, and it is only these songs that attempt to bring the Jewish mother into the future. It is unclear whether the discrepancies in Picon’s songs are a result of her gender or her assimilation: there simply are not enough surviving songs by either second-generation immigrants or women to make an adequate comparison.

In straddling the worlds of being American and Jewish, Picon’s mother songs evoke a figure who is traditional, affectionate, unconditional in her love for her children, and, most importantly, restrained: the very qualities that her Jewish audience, perpetually struggling against being “too Jewish”—would have found palatable. Americanizing the immigrant Jewish mother, however, proved to be a difficult undertaking. In Picon’s songs, the mother she describes is at best only vaguely Jewish, and while her increasingly Americanized performances remained successful with her Jewish audiences, only one mother song followed her lead.

A Yiddishe Mame Off the Yiddish Stage

Sophie Tucker’s “My Yiddishe Mame” is the only Jewish mother song under consideration whose genesis and performance history primarily took place in mainstream American culture. The song is often cast as the nostalgic pinnacle of the Yiddish mother songs genre. Irv Saposnik, for example, writes, “For all its reverence for the Jewish Mother, ‘My Yiddishe Momme’ [sic] is more elegy than celebration. While its Yiddish voice is reluctant to let go, its intimations of impending mortality suggest the inescapable passing of time. Like much in Yiddish American culture, it refuses to admit defeat, but instead recalls the recent past in order to restrain the inevitable.”39 While there may be some truth to this assertion, “My Yiddishe Mame” has neither been considered within the context of Yiddish mother songs nor as more than a footnote in the story of Sophie Tucker’s legacy, an ingredient that calls into question her identities as an assimilated Jew and a blackface performer, as well as the sincerity of her relationships with her mother and children.

39 Saposnik, “Jolson, the Jazz Singer and the Jewish Mother,” 439.
In fact, as Part One demonstrates, there are compelling reasons to consider “My Yiddishe Mame” within the larger context of the genre of mother songs that were produced by and performed for Yiddish-speaking immigrant audiences. Contrary to “My Yiddishe Mame’s” characterization as a musical outlier, the song was written and recorded when the Yiddish-language mother songs were at the peak of their production in the mid- to late 1920s. It is worth noting that most of the songs performed by Goldstein, Gehrman, and Picon that I reference in the preceding sections were published after “My Yiddishe Mame.”

Table 2: “My Yiddishe Mame,” two versions of the lyrics (after Slobin, Tenement Songs, 203-4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Yiddishe Mame (translation from Yiddish)</th>
<th>My Yiddishe Mame (English)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As I stand here and think my old mother comes to mind.</td>
<td>Of things I should be thankful for I’ve had a goodly share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No made up, well-dressed lady, just a mother.</td>
<td>And as I sit here in the comfort of a cozy chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bent over from great sorrow, with a pure Jewish heart</td>
<td>My fancy takes me to a humble East Side tenement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And with cried-out eyes.</td>
<td>Three flights up in the rear to where my childhood days were spent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the same little room where she's gotten old and gray</td>
<td>It wasn’t much like paradise, but ‘mid the dirt and all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She sits and cries and dreams of long-gone days</td>
<td>There sat the sweetest angel, one that I fondly call:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When the house was full with the sound of children's voices</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You can be sure our house did not lack poverty,</td>
<td>My yiddishe mame, I need her more than ever now,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But there was always enough for the children.</td>
<td>My yiddishe mame, I’d love to kiss that wrinkled brow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She used to voluntarily give us bread from her mouth</td>
<td>I long to hold her hands once more as in days gone by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And she would have given up her life for her children as well.</td>
<td>And ask her to forgive me for things I did that made her cry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millions of dollars, diamonds, big beautiful houses</td>
<td>How few were her pleasures, she never cared for fashion’s styles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But one thing in the world you get only one of from God:</td>
<td>Her jewels and her treasures, she found them in her baby’s smiles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Oh, I know that I owe what I am today to that dear little lady so old and gray,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Jewish mother, nothing better in the world.</td>
<td>To that wonderful yiddishe mame of mine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Jewish mother, oh how bitter when she is gone.</td>
<td>I see her at her daily task in morning’s light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How beautiful and light is the house when the mother is there</td>
<td>Her willing hands forever toiling far into the night.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In memory of her mother’s death in 1925, Sophie Tucker turned to her accompanist, Jack Yellen, and Lew Pollack, both of whom cowrote “My Yiddishe Mame.” The song exists in multiple versions; Tucker recorded the song in 1928 with a Yiddish version on one side of the record, and English lyrics on the other. As shown in Table 2, the lyrics are not lateral equivalents. The Yiddish lyrics lack the specifically Jewish setting of the “humble East Side tenement”; however, the woman with the “cried-out eyes” who would “voluntarily give [her children] bread from her mouth” is undeniably Jewish, a description straight out of mother songs like “Eybike Mame.” Many of the lyrics, both Yiddish and English, ring true to Tucker's descriptions of her mother. Though her childhood home “wasn't much like paradise,” Tucker’s mother ensured there was something to eat, and the house was always filled with the smell of cooking from the family’s restaurant. Moreover, Tucker always felt a sense of guilt for abandoning her family, though as long as she was working, she sent home a significant portion of her earnings to help her mother.

Tucker devotes a considerable amount of space in her autobiography, Some of These Days, to poring over her relationship with her mother, Jennie Abuza. Tucker recalls that her mother was often stern, but not out of unkindness. "We knew if Mama was cranky it was because she was tired from standing in the kitchen all day. Her back ached and her feet were
killing her. And she had worries.” However, the family's always-precarious financial situation did not stop her mother from being charitable. Tucker's assessment of her mother continues:

Poor as we were, Mama always managed to have something to give away to the ones who were worse off than we were. Scraps of food were carefully saved to be carried to some woman whose husband was out of work and whose children would have gone to bed hungry but for Mama's charity. . . . Oftentimes a knock would come at the back door, and there would stand a woman with a shawl over her head, or an old man, bearded and long-haired under his black skullcap. There would be whispers, and then Mama would ... bring out her worn leather purse. She would count out some silver or even a dollar or two to buy coal or medicine or to satisfy a landlord. A lot of the money I earned singing went that way. I turned the tips over to Mama as a matter of course and, true to her own nature, she used as little of them as possible for ourselves and as much as possible for those she considered really poor.

Despite how unsatisfying Tucker presumed her mother's life to be, the latter nevertheless strictly upheld the most salient aspects of Jewish identity, insisting on an Orthodox wedding upon discovering that Tucker had eloped with her first husband, Louis Tuck, and observing the rules of kashrus (keeping kosher).

By contrast, the main theme of Tucker's biography—besides the payoffs of hard work—is that of constant reinvention. Throughout her adult life, Tucker enthusiastically reinvented herself in a manner which took her increasingly further from her mother and her Jewish heritage.

Sophie Abuza became Sophie Tuck, wife of a beer wagon driver. Dissatisfied with domestic life and fearing the prospect of the persistent economic hardship her mother endured, Sophie Tuck left her new family to become a star. Once again, however, she turned away from her heritage, deciding against pursuing Yiddish theater on the grounds that it was often unprofitable and volatile, opting instead to find work on a more mainstream stage. But her reinvention was not limited to her career choice: she also renamed herself throughout her career, both to distance

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41 Ibid., 9.
herself from her ethnic identity and to inaugurate new performance personas. At her first job in New York, she became the American-sounding Sophie Tucker, and then the “World-Renowned Coon Shouter,” and much later, the vaguely erotic “Last of the Red-Hot Mamas.”

Further, both versions of “My Yiddishe Mame” show evidence of reimagination. Tucker's yiddishe mame lived in a nice house in Hartford, Connecticut, purchased by Tucker, after selling the family's restaurant in the 1910's. Nor did Tucker's mother sit idly in a small room and reminisce about the past: once her children were grown, Jennie Abuza would take the bus each day to her favorite charities, where she would not only help, but also give away most of the money that Tucker sent her.\(^\text{42}\) Though she was frugal her whole life, Jennie was able to indulge in material comforts, including her predilection for ostentatious hats (the more laden with birds and flowers, the better) and a penchant for purchasing a new dress each time she went to see Tucker perform.\(^\text{43}\) Finally, given the pattern of Tucker's life choices, it is unclear how much of her adult persona is indebted to her mother, or whether her desire to “cross the trails of time/ Back to those childhood bygones” is truly sincere. But the story of Sophie Tucker's identity is far more complex than a mere one-way street carrying her away from her Jewish mother.

It is Sophie Tucker’s legacy, as a Jewish-American entertainer who arguably owed the success of both her assimilation and her career to blackface performance, that explains “My Yiddishe Mame”’s enduring popularity in the twentieth century. Much has been written in recent years about Jewish blackface performers, and Sophie Tucker in particular. Michael Rogin, for example, suggests that "[Blackface] . . . enacted the feature that, together with racialism, defined the exceptionalist character of American nationality: the power of subjects to make themselves

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 169.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., 170-1.
over. In turning white to black and back again, minstrelsy played with the process of identity change that transformed poor into rich, daughters into wives and mothers, and immigrants into Americans."  Tucker's blackface stage persona was so convincing that eventually she resorted to removing one of her gloves (in some later performances, her wig) at the end of her act in order to prove her whiteness to the audience. But Tucker further complicated the lines between her various personas. Very early in her career, she began to incorporate Yiddish words into her act to “give the audience a kick.” And even though Tucker claims in her memoirs that she was careful only to sing the Yiddish version of “My Yiddishe Mame” when she was certain that a majority of the audience would understand the words, it was still the song audiences most frequently requested that she sing. Tucker concluded that “[Gentiles] knew, by instinct, what I was saying, and their hearts responded just as the hearts of Jews and Gentiles of every nationality responded when John McCormack sang 'Mother Machree.’ You didn’t have to be an old mother in Ireland to feel ‘Mother Machree,’ and you didn’t have to be a Jew to be moved by ‘My Yiddisha Mama’.” From Tucker's accounts of how the song was received abroad, however, it is clear that a significant portion of the song's appeal was not so much its universalism, but the Jewish particulars. Arguments broke out at a performance in Paris over the use of Yiddish words, while in Vienna, “My Yiddishe Mame” was Tucker's best-selling record among Gentiles; when World War II began, Hitler ordered all recordings of Tucker's music be destroyed, as they were seen as Jewish.

45 Tucker, Some of These Days, 40-1.
46 Ibid., 260.
47 Ibid., 258-60.
Sophie Tucker approached the Jewish aspects of her performance persona—like using Yiddish words to “give her audience a kick”—much like the wig and gloves of her blackface performance, as a kind of mask that could be donned or removed at will. Writing on Tucker’s place in American culture, Lori Harrison Kahan argues that "Tucker's allusions to her Jewish background provide comedic overtones that augment the multidimensionality of her performance. . . . In her performances, Jewishness did not simply represent who Tucker 'really was'; instead, it functioned as another complicating ingredient that bedeviled attempts to pin down her identity." Tucker was not the only performer to use Jewishness as an interchangeable facet of her identity, nor was she the first performer to distill the potency of “Old World” culture. In fact, this process of distillation, in which the essence of Jewish identity was simultaneously reduced to a series of stereotypical tropes and also watered down in order to be more palatable, accounts for most of Jewish cultural production in the twentieth century, from Al Jolson and The Jazz Singer to Fanny Brice and Mickey Katz to The Goldbergs and Woody Allen and even to Seinfeld. And of course these examples only scratch the surface. “My Yiddishe Mame’s” success, therefore, lies precisely in the way both versions call on the tropes of the mother songs genre while avoiding its hyperbolic specificity.

As a testament to the newfound palatability of Jewish mothers in American culture via “My Yiddishe Mame,” the song’s performance history took on a life of its own well beyond Sophie Tucker. Countless Jewish performers, including cantor Yosele Rosenblatt, The Barry Sisters, and Leo Fuld recorded their own covers. During the Latin craze of the mid-century, the Irving Fields Trio even retranslated the song into a mambo on their seminal 1959 album Bagels

This cover of “My Yiddishe Mama” is instrumental, with the melody being played on piano to the accompaniment of Afro-Cuban rhythms. The Latin cover appears alongside other popular Jewish mainstays, including “Havannah Negilah,” a reimagination of perhaps the best-known Jewish song of all time, “Havah Negilah”; “Raisins and Almonds,” a song from one of Goldfaden’s Biblical operettas that has since attained folk song status; and “Bei mir bist du sheyn,” which was penned by Yiddish theater composer Sholom Secunda, and later rearranged and popularized by The Andrews Sisters. In absence of the descriptive lyrics and with a more fashionable accompaniment, the Irving Fields cover of “My Yiddishe Mame” updated and re-exoticized the Jewish mother in a way that appealed to many Americans—Bagels and Bongos sold two million copies, and Fields continued his successful formula of combining Latin American music with other cultures on albums that “toured” Hawaii, France, and Italy.

But neither was “My Yiddishe Mame”’s performance history limited to Jews: goyish performers like Tom Jones, Billie Holiday, and Connie Francis also recorded the song. Francis, an Italian-American, was a veritable cultural tourist of the American West, Ireland, Spain and Latin America, Germany, Italy, and Hawaii, releasing albums of indigenous songs for each destination beginning in 1959. Her Jewish album, Connie Francis Sings Jewish Favorites, released in 1960, is one of her earliest forays into exotic cultures, containing a blend of traditional folk songs, Yiddish theater hits, “Hava Negila” (of course), and “My Yiddishe Mama.” Unlike some of the other cultural albums, Francis is not marked as Jewish on the

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50 These records include Connie Francis Sings Italian Favorites, MGM Records SE3791, LP, 1959; Country & Western—Golden Hits, MGM Records, SE-3795, LP, 1959; Connie Francis Sings Spanish and Latin Favorites, MGM Records, SE3853, LP, 1960; Connie Francis Sings Irish Favorites, MGM Records, MGM-CS 6056, LP, 1962; Connie Francis Sings German Favorites, MGM Records SE4124, LP, 1964; and Hawaii Connie, MGM Records, SE-4522, LP, 1968.
Jewish Favorites album cover by appearing in either a prominent cultural location or cultural attire. She does, however, sing several of the songs in their original language (Yiddish). “My Yiddishe Mama” bears some additional traces of Jewishness that enhance the believability of her performance. First, unlike Jewish performers, who generally sang either the Yiddish or English versions, Francis merges the two, transitioning from the English verse to the Yiddish chorus, and finishing with the end of the English chorus.

Francis goes even further in her performance of Jewishness for this song by using a couple of distinctly Jewish features. One is the krecht, or sob, that is so frequently heard in klezmer music. Francis sobs several times and at various points throughout the song, including during the first verse on the words “cozy” and “dirt.” Second, she concludes her performance with a melismatic passage that for all intents and purposes sounds as though it belongs in the synagogue. Last, though certainly not least, is the insertion of the most Jewish interval of all, the augmented second, in Francis’s cantorial cries. In some ways, this performance seems more Jewish than many of the versions sung by Jews themselves, calling upon the Jewishness inherent in the song, and also inserting a few recognizably Jewish sounds for good measure. But then, as a cultural tourist, Francis’s Jewishness is only temporary—she is just passing through.

“My Yiddishe Mame” also appeared in the final scene of a fifth-season episode of The Nanny in 1998. In the episode, Ray Charles plays Sammy, the fiancé of Fran Drescher’s grandmother, Yetta. At the beginning of the episode, Sammy arrives at the home of the Sheffields, Fran's employer, to meet Yetta's family. Initially, Fran and her mother are resistant to the idea of Yetta remarrying: Sammy is black (a fact which had escaped the notice of the nearly-blind Yetta) and therefore a Gentile; moreover, Fran's mother feels that twenty-five years after her father's death is simply too soon for Yetta to remarry. Sammy wins the women over once he
mentions that his nephew is Bryant Gumbel, host of the *Today Show*, and sends Fran to the studio to audition as a weather girl. While most of the episode centers around Fran's audition, Sammy reappears behind a piano in the last scene, with Yetta at his side, to perform an abridged version of the chorus of “My Yiddishe Mama.” On a show that drew heavy criticism for its negative, stereotypical portrayals of both the Jewish American Princess and the Jewish mother, this performance is important for several reasons.\(^{51}\)

First, the deliberate choice to use “My Yiddishe Mame” affirms Jewish femininity in ways that “Bei mir bist du sheyn” and “Hava Negila,” the only other possible contenders for most iconic Jewish songs, do not. In Charles’s rendition, the tragic Jewish mother of yesteryear has been recast as a sexually attractive figure. He refers to Yetta not by name, but as his “yiddishe mama,” which in this context carries sexual implications along the lines of the identity Sophie Tucker coined later in her career, a “red-hot mama.” Yetta, the yiddishe mama in question, also intimates in the beginning of the episode that she has a physical relationship with Sammy, despite her advanced age. In this context, the chorus can be read not as a nostalgic yearning for an unattainable re-imagining of the Jewish mother, but as a gently erotic expression. Charles's performance does not end after singing “days gone by”: instead of singing the next line of text, “And ask her to forgive me for things I did to make her cry,” in order to complete the verbal and melodic phrase, Charles hums an improvised conclusion to end the song—and the show. Instead of a song that is specifically from a child's point of view about his mother's love, and his desire to make amends for any actions that caused her distress, this rendition is pointedly unapologetic. With its improvised ending, culturally situated somewhere between the cantorial

\(^{51}\) For some sense of the criticisms the show drew, see Antler, *You Never Call!*, 184-5.
wails of the shtetl and a smoky jazz club in Harlem, Charles's performance complicates the song’s interpretation more than any of the prior versions under consideration.

Second, we cannot ignore the fact that Sammy is a black man who is trying to integrate into a Jewish family, a prospect that plagues Fran's mother throughout the first half of the episode. His rendition of “My Yiddishe Mama” in the concluding moments of the episode, then, is suggestive of a kind of blackface in reverse; instead of Jews “commandeering … African-American culture,” it is now Jewish culture that is being appropriated for comedic effect, as critical subterfuge of Jews acting black by presenting blacks acting Jewish, as a means of acculturation into the dominant white culture or the dominant Jewish subculture.

Finally, Ray Charles's performance had an unintended consequence: in addition to legitimizing his character within the episode, for at least one critic, The Nanny's rendition of “My Yiddishe Mama” also helped to legitimize the entire show. Several episodes after this one, Slate writer Jeff Goldberg penned an article that addressed The Nanny, focusing on a recent episode in which Fran schemed to go out with her employer's eldest daughter's philosophy professor, who was not only young and handsome but, more importantly, Jewish. Goldberg concluded, “If it's a choice between secularized sitcoms such as Mad About You and The Nanny, which, while sometimes embarrassing to Judaism, are unembarrassed by it, I'll take Fran Drescher. After all, any sitcom that hires Ray Charles to sing "My Yiddishe Momme" can't be all bad.” Thus “My Yiddishe Mama,” has, in the course of its performance history, drawn on both the rich history of mother songs from whence it came, even as it has, in other ways, echoed Picon’s songs that attempt to Americanize and modernize the Jewish mother.

The Legacy of Yiddish Mother Songs

The Yiddish mother songs published between 1907 and 1930 constitute an increasingly urgent attempt to reconcile traditional Old World identities with the modern American identities that the New World demanded of all its inhabitants. The mother figure described in the songs symbolized the Jewish identity to which immigrants clung, and from which they needed to distance themselves to become Americans. Devoid of place and time, the songs laud the extent of the Jewish mother’s unwavering devotion to her children, warts and all. Many years later, Borsht-Belt comedians would draw on this same unflinching devotion to create the Jewish mother jokes that would help to define Jewish American humor.

To conclude, I would like to return very briefly to the song, “A brivele der mamen.” A contemporary audience might notice that the second verse contains the seeds of countless Jewish mother jokes from the middle of the twentieth century. Despite her entreaties, her son never writes her a letter:

These eight years I’ve been alone, my child went far away.
His childish heart is hard as a stone, not a single letter has come.
How can my child go on? How is his life?
It must be going well for him there because he has forgotten me
I have sent him a hundred letters and he still has no idea that my pain is so deep.

In fact, the last two lines of this verse can be reformulated into the comedic accusation that doubles as the title of Joyce Antler’s book: *He never calls! He never writes!*

Yiddish culture in America—experienced through theater, radio, and commercially published songs—provided an exclusive space for immigrants to navigate the tensions of the New World. As immigrants and their children became increasingly Americanized, they left Yiddish behind, and with it, the comfort and safety of an insider culture. Within the safety of
Yiddish culture, the Jewish mother’s outsized efforts are lauded with sincerity and, of course, nostalgia. Who loves better, more unquestioningly, than a Jewish mother?

But it is precisely the Jewish mother’s outsized efforts that mark her as excessive, as “too much,” and therefore as Other. Second- and third-generation American Jews, who owed their successful assimilation at least in part to their mothers, could hardly present her as anything other than a caricature, a punchline, to a homogenized American audience. For all of Picon’s success on the American stage, and despite attempting to modernize the Jewish mother, Picon’s stage persona was always inseparable from her Jewish identity. It was Tucker’s ability to wield “My Yiddishe Mame,” her signature “Jewish song,” as a prop of her performance that allowed other Jews—and non-Jews—to do the same. Ultimately, the yiddishe mame of the mother songs represents all of the potency of Jewish identity that Yiddish-speaking immigrants could not carry into their lives as modern Americans. And the Jewish mother figure, eternally devoted to her children’s well-being, was only too happy to oblige.
## APPENDIX A: List of Yiddish Mother Songs And Publication Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Show Title</th>
<th>Lyricist</th>
<th>Composer/Arranger</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>A brivele der mame</td>
<td>Yo</td>
<td>Solomon Schmulewitz</td>
<td>Theodore Lohr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Oy is dos a name!</td>
<td>Dos Yiddishe herta</td>
<td>Sigmund Moguleo</td>
<td>Theodore Lohr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Vey dem tate, vey der mame</td>
<td>Di yidishe neshome</td>
<td>Leon Blank</td>
<td>Theodore Lohr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Di name</td>
<td>M. Ratner</td>
<td>M. Ratner</td>
<td>S. Goldberg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>A gemas fun der mame</td>
<td>Louis Gilrod</td>
<td>Otto Motzan</td>
<td>S. Schenker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>A muters gebet</td>
<td>Solomon Schmulewitz</td>
<td>Solomon Schmulewitz</td>
<td>HPC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Bet Tates. Mames of kinder</td>
<td>Di Neshome fun mame folk</td>
<td>Boris Thomashefsky</td>
<td>Perlmutter &amp; Wohl</td>
<td>A. Teros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>Mamenu! (Elegy for the triangle fire victims)</td>
<td>A. Shorr</td>
<td>Joseph Rumshinsky</td>
<td>HPC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>A muters gebet</td>
<td>H. Altman</td>
<td>H. Altman / Henry Russotto</td>
<td>Saul Schenker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Oy tatenyu, oy mamamay</td>
<td>H. Altman</td>
<td>Brody &amp; Friedell</td>
<td>S. Schenker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>A mames vert</td>
<td>Solomon Schmulewitz</td>
<td>Solomon Schmulewitz</td>
<td>A. Teros</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>A muters herts</td>
<td>Louis Gilrod</td>
<td>I. Friedell</td>
<td>A Teros</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Az ikh ken keyn mame nit zayn</td>
<td>A. Shorr</td>
<td>Joseph Rumshinsky</td>
<td>HPC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>Tate-mame</td>
<td>A Mame’s Opfer</td>
<td>Boris Rosenthal</td>
<td>Joseph Rumshinsky</td>
<td>J &amp; J Kamen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>A name iz der bester freynd</td>
<td>M. Zavodnick</td>
<td>H.A. Russotto</td>
<td>S. Schenker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Mutter und kind</td>
<td>Blinde Manner (Gebel)</td>
<td>Louis Gilrod</td>
<td>Joseph Rumshinsky</td>
<td>HPC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>Vey dem kind ven a mame felt</td>
<td>Di Lebodik Yosoynym</td>
<td>Joseph Rumshinsky</td>
<td>Joseph Rumshinsky</td>
<td>A. Teros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Gedenk mayn kind der mames tern</td>
<td>Her Awakening</td>
<td>Joseph Rumshinsky</td>
<td>Joseph Rumshinsky</td>
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PART TWO
Unmasking the Jewish Noise Complaint in Yiddish Films of the 1930s

In the late 1930s, at the height of Yiddish film’s Golden Age, the Polish-born Hollywood actor Joseph Green produced four films that depicted the full range of Jewish life in Poland, from shtetl to city, rags to riches, and traditional to modern. Released from 1936 to 1939, Yidl with a Fiddle (1936), The Purim Jester (1937), Mamele (1938), and A Letter to Mother (1939), remain among the most popular Yiddish films of all time. Using Jewish rituals and music, Green conjured a specifically Yiddish space, an imagined community that depicted the same rituals, sounds, scenarios, and character types, in Yiddish, that Yiddish-speaking audiences everywhere already recognized from their daily lives.

The construction of the Jewish spaces in Green’s films has been explored by scholars including Zehavit Stern, J. Hoberman, and Eric Goldman. They conclude that these spaces, even when they critique traditional Jewish rituals and stereotypes, ultimately work to affirm the Jewish identity of the film audience. Scholars typically cite visual and dramatic evidence, as well as Green’s self-proclaimed goal of creating high-quality Yiddish films that avoided stereotypical depictions of “caftan-wearing Jews,” contained “Jewish and universal-European” subjects, incorporated Yiddish folklore, and blended folk and modern musical themes. Despite the emphasis that Green places on music, the role of sound and music remain the least-discussed aspects of his films. Furthermore, none of the above scholars comments on the complex tensions

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inherent in a handful of films that purposely avoid Jewish stereotypes even as they draw on Jewish traditions. What are we to make of the fact that Green’s films often manage to subvert the same traditions that they portray, and that this is most frequently accomplished through music?

In Part Two, I argue that the musical consciousness inherent in Green’s films frequently works to call attention to the boundaries of performance, ultimately toying with the audience’s expectation of what, exactly, constitutes the performance, and what lies underneath it. At the same time, however, the use of music also calls into question the sincerity of the Jewish traditions being depicted on screen. In an essay on music as an ethnic marker of Jewishness in film, Andrew Killick writes, “music can add new information that is not otherwise apparent either in the immediate context of the film in which it is heard, or in the broader context of the society and culture in which the film was produced and consumed.” Killick focuses on several American films produced in the 1960s and 1970s, yet the idea that music has the capacity to comment on other aspects of a film, and that doing so carries subversive connotations, speaks to how Green’s films have been traditionally understood by scholars, and the new dimensions that considering the musical score adds to the discourse.

To understand the ways that performance works in the films, I turn to the beginning of an essay by Josh Kun, who writes:

For Jews, names are the outer shells of inner struggles. Their length, their cadence, their absence or presence of -bergs or -steins, their sheer multisyllabic Jewy-ness, their ability to make someone ask, “Is that a Jewish name?” have long been signs of deeper, more complicated stories of Jewish self-performance and visibility, stories that often house the residue of painful memories, shame, and loathing. The names we change and the names we keep are merely the props of our performance, the most common traces of the vexing question of what it means to perform oneself as Jewish.

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In his reading of the 1930s Marx Brothers film *Animal Crackers*, Kun is fascinated by Abie the Fishman-turned-Roscoe Chandler who, having been outed as “himself and not himself . . . the imposter and the real” must choose “which masquerade he will continue to wear, which secret he will keep.” \(^5\) For Kun and the portion of American Jewish culture under his consideration, the interplay between masks, disguises, and performances are all ways of navigating the seemingly incurable visibility of Jewishness. The fluidity of Jewish identity, the ability to “take on the tastes and smells of what surrounds them,” is both part and parcel of Jews’ diasporic existence, as well as the chief target of anti-Semitism: “the Jew is immutable, and eternally mutable at once; always the same and always mercurial.” \(^6\) The same kinds of interplay that Kun exposes in this essay—between the performance of tradition and tradition itself, and between the actual performances and the ways in which they are ultimately revealed to others—are also at play via the music in Green’s films, and for many of the same reasons: between the pressures of assimilation and Americanization, and rising anti-Semitism across Europe, the late 1930s were particularly fraught for Yiddish-speaking Jews.

The same intersections between passing, assimilation, and masking that Kun explores in American Jewish culture reflect a similar consciousness within the imaginary Yiddish world Green creates in his films. I would argue that in Green’s films, it is not names, but assumed identities—and frequently also music—that act as the props of performance. In my reading of these films, I am most interested in the numerous moments of revelation, the moments when the true nature of characters, ritual moments, and particularly the musical score, is unmasked or otherwise revealed within the diegesis and to the film audience. I analyze a number of ritual moments in Green’s films through the lens of Ruth HaCohen and Sander Gilman’s work on the

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\(^5\) Ibid., 52.
\(^6\) Ibid., 62.
Jewish noise complaint, an understanding of Jewish vocality as inferior to Western (Christian) music, which these scholars trace from the Gospels of Mark and Matthew through the twentieth century. I argue that it is precisely the use of sound and music throughout these films that suggests an awareness not only about the act of performing Jewish identity, but also specifically about how performing Jewish identity sounds. These moments illustrate the insular nature of the Yiddish world Green creates even as they reveal its susceptibility to the outside world. Ultimately Green’s films demonstrate that, even in a Yiddish world that existed solely for its audience, the sounds of Jewish identity are not immune from the need to conform to the standards of Western (Christian) music.

I begin by contextualizing Green’s films within the critical frame of Ruth HaCohen and Sander Gilman’s work on the Jewish noise complaint. Both scholars explore the privileging of Christian vocality vis-à-vis a negative stereotype of Jews as producers of noise that is deeply entrenched in the history of Western (i.e., Christian) culture. The noise complaint also suggests some degree of double-consciousness from Jews themselves, an idea that might inform the ways in which Jews sonically represent themselves out in the world and, for the purpose of Part Two, within Green’s films. It is important to understand the noise complaint not only as an analytical tool with which to understand how Green uses music and sound as props of performance in his films, but also as a centuries-old manifestation of European anti-Semitism that shaped the production of these films in the late 1930s. Next, I demonstrate several ways in which the noise complaint manifests itself in Green’s films. The intersecting musical, dramatic, and geographic


narratives in these films invariably privilege the progression from noisy Jewish folk music to polished Western harmony; as a result, the fates of the characters most closely tied to Jewish musical traditions lie invariably somewhere out in the Western world. More importantly, in *Yidl* and in *A brivele*, it is music that provides the means for revelation that ultimately leads to the films’ resolutions. I then consider how the subversive effect of sound and music, as an extension of the noise complaint, works to disrupt or undermine the visual and dramatic portrayal of Jewish traditions in Green’s films.

Finally, I offer a close reading of *Mamele*’s musical narrative, which seems to privilege traditional values over modern ones. As the only film in Green’s oeuvre to have been adapted from a stage play, *Mamele*’s place is further distinguished by being the only film where musical or theatrical performance does not drive the plot. *Mamele* lacks the geographic progression, either from shtetl to city or from Eastern Europe to America, commonly featured in Yiddish films from the same time period. Two of the three films that starred Molly Picon, *Ost und West* (East and West, 1923) and Joseph Green’s *Yidl mitn fidl* involved such geographic shifts, as did two other Green films, *Der Purimshpiler* and *A brivele der mamen*. *Mamele*, the final film that both starred Picon and was produced by Green, not only remains in the same setting through much of the film, but takes place in an industrial city in Poland. By changing the setting from New York on stage to Łódź on film, and by excluding the ubiquity of both shtetl life and Americanization that so pervaded Green’s other films, *Mamele* creates a rare, urban, Polish Yiddish space that reaffirms traditional Jewish values even as the music betrays its self-consciousness about doing so.

By contrast, *Yidl mitn fidl*, the film to which *Mamele* is most closely related and frequently compared, tells the story of a young klezmer violinist (Picon) who dresses up like a
boy to make life on the road easier. With the increased popularity of critical theory, Yiddish studies, and the klezmer revival since 1980, it is easy to understand why *Yidl*, with its pastoral shots of *shtetl* life and a plot that foregrounds gender-bending, klezmer musicians, and accidental fame leading to a bright future in America, has inspired analytical interpretations by scholars from various fields.\(^9\) Lacking these distinguishing characteristics, *Mamele* has received only cursory treatment (until now) in the more general histories of Yiddish film by Judith N. Goldberg, Eric A. Goldman, and J. Hoberman.\(^10\) Though *Yidl* and *Mamele* have little in common besides shared personnel, both films exemplify Green’s goal of creating Yiddish films that were realistic ethnographic and artistic representations of their audience.

### Joseph Green and the Golden Age of Yiddish Film

Following the release of *Yidl mitn fidl* in Poland in September 1936, Green outlined his vision for Yiddish film in an interview published in *Literarishe bleter*:

1. Produce all technical opportunities so that the film should meet appropriate technical standards.

2. The film subject should be Jewish and yet universal-European. As far as possible avoid the Diaspora Jew, caftans, leaving tradition to the extent that it gives the film nuance. A certain degree of Yiddish folklore and ethnography. I also made an effort that the emphasized moments of social injustice do not appear too much like loud propaganda, just purely artistic moments. Emotional moments like joy, misery, and life experiences are entirely universal.

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3. The film should have a cultural world, purity of the Yiddish language, folklore and ethnography and at the same time also humorous. I placed a lot of value on the musical side of film. There is an abundance of music. Limitless folk-themes along with modern themes.

4. The acting in the film should be brought up to a certain artistic standard.\textsuperscript{11}

Green’s goal of creating Yiddish films that were “Jewish and yet universal-European,” avoided stereotypes, and balanced folklore with modern themes remains the most widely-discussed aspect of his vision. Despite Green’s artistic emphasis on modernity, his aesthetics nonetheless acknowledge the importance of religious ritual in creating a realistic cultural world. Goldman, for instance, notes, "it is no mistake that each of the Green pictures has at least one major Jewish custom in it. [. . .] A connection with the Jewish people is the major thrust of . . . all the Green films; in fact it is the governing force of all Yiddish cinema."\textsuperscript{12} Goldman further suggests that the main theme of \textit{A Letter to Mother} is maintaining a connection with Jewish tradition, and ascribes a great deal of significance in this vein to the religious rituals on display in Green’s other films. J. Hoberman and Joshua Walden, in their scholarship on Yiddish film history and the music in \textit{Yidl}, respectively, seem to agree that Green’s use of Jewish traditions is sincere, if not idealized. The centerpiece of \textit{Yidl} is an extended wedding scene; \textit{Der Purimshpilers} features a \textit{purimshpil} (Purim play, a forerunner of Yiddish theater); and \textit{A brivele der mame} features a Passover seder. \textit{Mamele}, too, features a major ritual, a communal dinner in a \textit{sukke} during Sukkot, although in the stage version, Mamele’s family is so Americanized that the only ritual included is the singing of a \textit{Shabes zmire} (Sabbath hymn). Synopses of all four films can be found in Appendix B.

\textsuperscript{11} Green, “Der nayer yiddisher film,” 625.
\textsuperscript{12} Goldman, \textit{Visions, Images, and Dreams}, 104.
In her discussion of folk performance in Yiddish film, however, Zehavit Stern challenges these earlier analyses. She argues that, far from being truly ethnographic, Green’s first two films rely on carefully constructed versions of cultural authenticity to appeal to European and American audiences alike. Moreover, she demonstrates that Green’s portrayal of shtetl life and use of ritual in *Yidl* and *Der Purimshpiler* are not entirely nostalgic, but are in fact critical. In *Yidl*, the shtetl is “a site of poverty, heartless matchmaking and gossiping women, where economic pressures and traditional mores lead to dreadful conditions such as homelessness or forced marriage.” On its surface, *Der Purimshpiler* features the same narratives of progress—from shtetl to city, and from traditional to modern—commonly found in other Yiddish films of the time. But Stern also suggests a subversive reading of the plot that exposes the effects of this progress on those left behind. Ultimately the purimshpil performance, the centerpiece of the film, “goes beyond the decorative value Green has assigned it, offering instead cultural criticism, and a challenge to the alleged superiority of the urban stage, promoted in the main storyline.”

An important motivation for the production of Yiddish films, particularly after World War I, was as a response to increasingly overt demonstrations of anti-Semitism across Europe. Arguably, by the time Green produced his final two films in 1938, this need had become more pronounced than ever. While anti-Semitism was always a backdrop to the production of Yiddish film, it became increasingly overt by the late 1930s. Both Green and Picon recalled rising anti-Semitism during the production of *Yidl* and *Mamele*, and Goldman’s history of Yiddish film also cites moments of anti-Semitism in Germany and Poland. Yet film scholars approaching Green’s

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13 Stern, “From Jester to Gesture,” 118.
15 For instance, Goldman cites rampant anti-Semitism in Austria in the early 1920s as the initial impetus for Jewish film-making after World War I. Furthermore, he argues that part of the very definition of a Yiddish film is one that reinforces Jewish identity. See Goldman, *Visions, Images, and Dreams*, xvi, 11.
films, which affirmed and validated the experience, language, and culture of its audiences by portraying the circumstances, rituals, and physical spaces of Jewish life, in Yiddish, have focused neither on anti-Semitism nor on how Green’s films sound. But it is precisely the use of sound and music in Green’s films that calls into question both the insularity of Yiddish film against the outside, non-Jewish world, and the very Jewishness that the films supposedly affirm.

The beginning of 1938 saw the Anschluss, and by the end of the summer, Germany had expelled all Jews who were Polish nationals. The Evian Refugee Conference in July yielded few results: neither Europe nor the United States proved willing to relax their immigration quotas for the hundreds of thousands of Jews trying to flee Germany. Although Jews in Poland did not yet feel particularly threatened by the situation in Germany, Hoberman describes the Yiddish cultural scene in Warsaw as chaotic when Green returned to shoot A brivele and Mamele. Several attempts by various producers to garner interest in new films, including a new version of Mirele Efros, one of the most canonical plays in Yiddish literature, never materialized. Green felt a sense of urgency to finish shooting Mamele, sensing that filming in 1939 might not be possible. In a 1977 interview with Goldman, Picon recalled that “the situation was beginning to get very strained[,] . . . . They have kind of a custom in Poland [that] at the end of the making of a film they name one of the big lights for you, you know, so they named one for me [after Yidl]. In Mamele—they were already anti-Semitic all along, but here it began to show—so they didn’t name a light for me. Little things like that—it was uncomfortable.” Green was finishing postproduction on Mamele and A brivele der mamen during Kristallnacht; afterward, he closed his office in Warsaw and returned to New York for good. While filming A brivele, two German technicians were brought in to supervise the studio’s use of newly purchased German equipment;

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16 Hoberman, Bridge of Light, 287-9.
17 Molly Picon, interview by Eric Goldman, August 10, 1977; see Goldman, Visions, Images, and Dreams, 208.
in an interview with Hoberman, Green noted that “when the War broke out these two men came in uniform and took over the film business in Poland. . . . They knew where every print was, where every company was. They learned all this while working on my film.” It is difficult to imagine that the Jewish spaces conjured by Green’s films were immune to the widespread hostility that its personnel encountered during production.

**From Jewish Noise to Western Harmony**

Near the beginning of *Mamele*, the title character escorts her youngest brother, Avremele, to *kheyder* (religious school for young boys). For nearly a minute the camera lingers on the exterior of the building: we see women escorting young boys inside; through the window, we see the teacher, a bearded man wearing a black hat, sitting and rocking at a table over an opened book, young boys surrounding him on either side. However, we do not hear any of the diegetic sounds that would be associated with Jewish learning at that point: instead, the diegetic noise of the most religious space in the film has been silenced by the score. This sequence is little more than a bit of ethnographic color in the context of a story about the tense interplay between tradition and modernity, and yet the muted presentation of the *kheyder* in this scene is emblematic of a much larger issue in Green’s films.

As Goldman points out, the *visual* portrayal of Jewish rituals is an important feature of Green’s films. However, it cannot be a coincidence that the same rituals on display avoid synagogue scenes that would feature the most authentic Jewish sounds of all: the cacophonous heterophony of liturgical prayer, especially when punctuated by the loud blasts of the *shofar*.

In her ground-breaking study, *The Music Libel Against the Jews*, HaCohen considers the ways in which a historically entrenched understanding of Jews as producers of noise within a

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18 Quoted in Hoberman, *Bridge of Light*, 297.
harmonious Christian universe have manifested in Jewish and Christian liturgical and art musics beginning in the Middle Ages. Locating the source of Jewish noise within the synagogue, she writes, “notorious for their ‘yells’ and ‘lamentations’ and for their terrifying shofar (ram’s horn) blasts, synagogues’ vocalities . . . could not but become a symbol of offensive noise for ages to come: Lärm wie in einer Judenschule (noise/shouts/ado as in a synagogue).”19 It is not only Jews’ liturgical music that is heard as noise, as HaCohen points out; even in attempting to master (Christian) harmony, composers like Meyerbeer and Mendelssohn were considered imitators who, lacking inherent (Christian) musicality, had no music of their own.

Sander Gilman begins an essay on the Jewish voice with a similar premise: the Jew who sounds “too Jewish” stereotype symbolizes contradictory negative associations within the Christian world: the Jew as lacking an indigenous language of his own but yet unable to master the language of the nation where he resides; the Jew as possessing a hidden language that reflects his deviant nature and also possessing a language of revelation (Hebrew).20 Gilman dates the noise complaint back even further to the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, and both he and HaCohen demonstrate that the negative connotations surrounding Jewish vocality were pervasive across Europe well into the twentieth century, and provide ample evidence suggesting centuries’ worth of attempts to respond to and rectify the noise complaint. These responses suggest an inherent double consciousness about how Jews heard themselves; the idea resonates when considering the Jewish responses to the noise complaint that HaCohen explores, and also the ways in which it could inform how Jews might sonically represent themselves out in the world. Though Gilman and HaCohen mainly reference literature and Western art music, the idea that

19 HaCohen, The Music Libel Against the Jews, 2. In Chapter One, HaCohen traces the use of the word ululare, which she defines as a mournful, howling sound produced by nocturnal birds and animals, to describe synagogue prayer in papal texts (22-3).
20 Gilman, 12.
Jews have always heard their vocality through the ears of non-Jews lends itself well to the aural world of Green’s films.

To hear this awareness at work, we need look no further than the beginning of Green’s final film, *A Letter to Mother*. Dovid, his son Arele, neighbor Shimen, and the town *khazn* are listening to a beautiful melody being sung by a group of young peasants seated nearby, a melody that the *khazn* immediately dismisses as being *goyish* (Gentile). The Yiddish-speaking film audience on both sides of the Atlantic would have immediately recognized this so-called *goyishe* melody as the refrain from one of the most enduringly popular commercial Yiddish mother songs of all time, Schmulewitz’s “*A brivele der mamen*,” discussed in Part One, and shown below in Example 1. Writing about Stephen, the first Christian martyr, Gilman writes that “the movement away from the ‘hidden’ language of the Jews . . . is also an appropriation of the discourse of the Jews which . . . [has] been misused by the Jews themselves. By stripping away the polluting nature of the ‘hidden’ language of the Jews, Stephen reveals to the reader that the very discourse of the Jews was never really their own.”

On screen, the famous mother song has been confiscated from the Jews and reattributed to Gentiles. Quite literally then, Dovid and his friends are hearing their own Jewish music through the ears—and voices—of non-Jews.

![Example 1 Refrain from “A brivele der mamen,” mm. 57-64.](image)

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21 Ibid., 17.
This opening sequence might perhaps have been read as an inside joke to the Yiddish-speaking audience, and yet it also speaks volumes about the same dynamic relationship between Jewish utterance, Christian reactions, and the resulting anxiety among Jews that HaCohen and Gilman trace across a wide swath of Western history: one of the most recognizable Yiddish songs has succeeded in passing itself off as not Jewish. In fact, the explicit suggestion of anything being goyish, let alone a beautiful melody, is unheard of in Green’s films, where one can generally assume that even the most secular, modern characters are Jewish. The floating, perfectly harmonized melody being hummed by the goyim is a far cry from the kherekhts and ornaments in Schmulewitz’s recording. Stripped of its schmaltzy origins, the melody heard onscreen might be considered an improvement: with the right harmony, it is now acceptable in the non-Jewish world.

![Example 2 Dovid’s melody, mm. 1-2.](image)

But the “Letter to Mother” melody also embodies the “too Jewish”-hidden Jew binary that Gilman explores: “The language used by the Jew reveals or masks the Jew’s corrupt nature. But the informed listener hears the Jew hidden within no matter whether this difference is overt or disguised.”22 On screen, the music of the Jew is masked in one moment, but revealed in the next. Dovid is unbothered by the revelation of a goyish melody and suggests, “Yedn nign kenen zingen af unzer shteyger [Every melody can be sung our way],” and then improvises a new tune.

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22 Ibid., 19.
(shown in Example 2) to prove his point. His friends eagerly join in, but alas—the perfect harmony heard just moments before has been corrupted by their unskilled efforts.

HaCohen’s understanding of the noise complaint can also be extended to include non-liturgical Ashkenazi (folk) music, which was produced by a group of marginalized people historically and culturally considered to be unmusical and of low social status. Furthermore, with its unpolished timbres, flexible rhythms, synagogue modes, and improvisatory nature, Jewish secular music shares many of the same sonic qualities as American Jazz, a musical genre that, at various points in the twentieth century, has been deemed primitive noise by its critics.\(^\text{23}\)

By contextualizing the figure of the noisy, non-musical Jew within the discourse of popular music as noise, I interpret the characters in Green’s films as needing to alter not only their appearance, actions, and vocabulary, but also the way that they sound.

This progression from Jewish noise to Western harmony—and American music by extension—is a key plot point in A brivele der mamen. Even if Dovid’s suggestion that “every melody can be sung our way” is read as an affirmation of traditional Jewish music, the plot of the film suggests otherwise. Dovid’s melodies earn praises from his friends, but they do not make him a living. Scorned by his children and many of the townsfolk, he sets off with his youngest son for the beckoning opportunities of America, where he is never heard from again. Perhaps every melody can be rendered Jewish, but to what purpose? There is no place for Dovid’s melody in the Old Country, and its place in America is predicated upon his son’s progression from Arele Berdziczewska, a boy from the shtetl, to Irving Bird, famous American singer. This idea, that there is no inherent place for Jewish folk music, that it must somehow conform to

\(^{23}\) Michael Rogin, for instance, cites numerous newspaper articles from the early twentieth century that refer to jazz as primitive music in need of refinement and cleansing by white musicians. See Rogin, Blackface, White Noise 113-14.
Western musical traditions, involves a musical progression, from Dovid the amateur folk performer to his son Arele, the classically trained professional singer. This musical progression, arguably the noise complaint at work on a larger scale, is closely bound with the dramatic and geographic progressions of the plot. After the widespread destruction of World War I, there is nothing left of the shtetl but tombstones, which forces Dovid’s wife Dobrish, neighbor Shimen, and his wife to relocate to America to find Arele and a new Jewish community.

Figure 13 Isaac, Froyim, Yidl, and Aryeh in Yidl mitn fidl. Molly Picon Papers, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
In *Yidl*, the raucous klezmer music, considered here as a secular variety of Jewish noise, requires remediation in order to be palatable to the ears of the other characters in the film. First, Yidl and her father clash with a rival pair of musicians. The two duos’ competing musics, each attempting to overpower the other, are together noisy and dissonant, driving away everyone unfortunate enough to overhear them. Finally Yidl begins playing an irresistible melody that inspires the other musicians to slowly join in. Now pleasant to the ear, their music captivates everyone within earshot as they wander from *shtetl* to *shtetl*. The band’s music becomes even more beautiful once Tauba, the runaway bride, joins the ensemble as its singer. Ultimately however, the klezmer ensemble becomes subsumed by the more harmonious—and notated—music of the theater orchestra in Warsaw. By the end of the film, Yidl and Froyim’s identities as itinerant *klezmer* musicians must be remediated for them to find artistic and financial success, as a vaudeville singer and band leader, respectively, in more orderly Western musical traditions.

The progression from Jewish noise to Western harmony is implicit in Green’s second film, *The Purim Jester*, in which the exciting vaudeville stage triumphs over the humble Purim play. Like *Yidl*, *The Purim Jester* features an itinerant folk performer, Getsl the Purim player, played by Zygmunt Turkow. When some local villagers first discover Getsl’s talents, his modest tricks and impersonation of the king from the Purim story are soon disrupted by a commotion outside: a modern circus parade, with marching band, animals, and a variety of costumed performers, has just arrived in town. As in *Yidl*, the itinerant nature of folk performance provides a means for the bride-to-be, Esther, to escape an arranged marriage, but not before Esther’s father makes it abundantly clear that there is no place for the *heimish* Purim performance in the *shtetl*. Getsl and Esther travel to Warsaw, where Esther is reunited with her true love, the singer from the circus, and together they sing and dance happily ever after. Here
again, a geographic progression, this time from rural to urban, is closely related to both the plot and the performance.

It is worth noting that the progression from Jewish noise to Western harmony is also manifest in mainstream American films such as *The Jazz Singer*, and also mirrored the lives of real musicians such as violin virtuoso Mischa Elman, whose grandfather was a *klezmorim*, and Irving Berlin, whose father was a *khazn*. Further, the lives of the “Big Four” Yiddish theater composers Joseph Rumshinsky, Abraham Ellstein, Alexander Olshanetsky, and Sholom Secunda, are essentially a story of trying to blend their religious musical backgrounds into more secular—and Western—endeavors. All four composers, to varying degrees, turned away from their training as *khazonim* in favor of writing music for the American Yiddish stage. As early as *Mamele*’s run during the 1926-7 season, New York critics in the mainstream press were acknowledging that Rumshinsky, dubbed “the Jewish Victor Herbert,” possessed vast musical talent that belonged on Broadway. Both Secunda and Ellstein studied at Juilliard, though the former never saw success with his attempts at serious art music: his musical legacy is the hit song, “Bei mir bist du sheyn.” Ellstein, who scored three of Green’s films, continually navigated the dual worlds of his religious musical background and his formal training at Juilliard. In addition to writing music for Yiddish theater, radio, and film; conducting orchestras; and accompanying famous Jewish singers such as Molly Picon, Ellstein also wrote for Broadway and premiered an opera, “The Golem,” at Lincoln Center in 1962. The hybridity of his professional life is also evident in his film music. Yiddish theater scholar Ronald Robboy, for instance, has demonstrated how adeptly Ellstein blended elements of Jewish music into the harmonic progressions of Broadway and Tin Pan Alley, even going so far as to closely model the hit songs from *Mamele* and *A Letter to Mother* after coterminous mainstream hits.
Jewish noise is addressed very differently in *Mamele*, which lacks the inherent musicality of *Yidl’s* klezmer musicians and *A brivele’s* composer father. While the ultimate resolution of the former two films, both musically and dramatically, lies in the expansive certainty of America, *di goldene medine*, *Mamele* completely excludes the possibility of Americanization. As a specifically Polish film, *Mamele*’s musical progress is ambiguous and opportunities for traditional Jewish music within the context of the plot are limited.

One difference between stage and film versions becomes especially important in the context of resolving the matter of Jewish noise. *Mamele*’s love interest in the stage version is Louie, the cantor’s son, a detail that calls to mind *The Jazz Singer* (1927). Here, too, is a dramatic and sonic narrative about forsaking the ululations of the Old World synagogue in order to be heard and accepted as a star of the American music hall, a progression which the film version of *Mamele* avoids altogether. In the film, *Mamele*’s love interest is now Schlesinger, a classically trained musician with a German name, both features that suggest cosmopolitanism more strongly than Jewishness, despite his near proximity across the courtyard to the very Jewish, very traditional *Mamele*.

Schlesinger is marked as inherently modern through his apparent formal, classical music training, but has already either transcended or elided the progression from traditionally Jewish to more mainstream, universal performances. In *Yidl* for instance, the young klezmer violinists Itke (disguised as Yidl) and Froyim ultimately find their success as stage singer and orchestra leader, respectively. Not only does Schlesinger’s status as a classical musician mark him as modern, he is also on the verge of musical success with his new post as principal violinist of the orchestra in the nearby resort town Ciechocinek, a narrative that seems poised to invert the usual geographical progression, from urban to rural, instead of vice versa. Despite Schlesinger’s
apparent success in Ciechocinek, however, he is ultimately drawn into the fold of the Samet family, and returns to Łódź to marry Khavche. While the film positions their wedding as an inevitable, happy ending, it also renders the geographic and cultural progressions ambiguous: Schlesinger’s career had apparently been leading up to his position in Ciechocinek, a rural place that suggests the happiness and success afforded by modernity that the economically impoverished residents of Łódź seem to lack. Will he be able to earn a living in Łódź, or will he join the ranks of the other unemployed men shown in the film?

Though Mamele’s musical offerings are abundant, its balance of “limitless folk themes along with modern themes” tends more sharply towards the latter. Further, Mamele is the only film by Green that is not somehow about Jewish artistic performance. While it is true that Schlesinger is a musician, his presence does not drive the plot so much as provide Khavche a temporary escape from her family. More importantly, Schlesinger’s identity as a classical musician does not require any remediation or alteration ensure his artistic or romantic success. Schlesinger’s most prominent artistic performance, “Ikh zing [I Sing]” reinforces his status as a modern, Western musician instead of a traditional Jewish one.
While putting on a new dress, Khavche hears the sound of Schlesinger singing across the courtyard. As he continues singing and accompanying himself on the piano, she races over to his apartment to listen, and begs him to keep playing (Figure 14). He obliges, and this time, instead of just the piano, he is accompanied by a lush string orchestra. “Ikh zing” utilizes 32-bar form, an organization that was common to Tin Pan Alley songs from the early decades of the twentieth century. The A sections are in a major key, and are built around a I-vi-IV-V progression. The A melody, shown in Example 3, features step-wise motion and a hemiola in the second measure. The B section is loosely based in Dorian mode around the iv chord, but does not resolve until the A section returns for the last time.
“Ikh zing” is a modern popular song, and only a single phrase in the lyrics suggests the song’s Jewish origins. “Shir hashirim,” the phrase in question, refers to King Solomon’s Song of Songs, and its use in Yiddish theater and film alludes to romance, as it does here.

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Ikh zing far dir mayn shir hashirim
Mit libe ikh batsir im
Far dir nor neshome mayn
Ikh zing far dir mayne khaloymes
Mayn libe vi a troym iz
Fun dir nor neshome mayn.

Ven ikh gey oys fun benken
Nor dir gelibte mayn
Un ven ikh halt in ayn denken
Az du vest nokh amol mayne zayn
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But even as Schlesinger’s musical performance is romantic, it also reveals the full breadth of his modernity. Song of Songs’ biblical connotations aside, “Ikh zing” is thoroughly modern, as mentioned above. Nothing else, not formal organization nor harmonic progressions, follow any of the conventions of Jewish music. Further, Schlesinger’s proficiency on piano hints at both his formal musical training and some degree of economic affluence, setting him apart from not only Khavche’s family, but also the musical characters in Green’s other films.
Tellingly, in the remaining instances when Schlesinger is shown or heard as a musician, he “passes” as non-Jewish. After serenading Khavche, he offers to take her to the opera that evening. In Ciechocinek, we see an outdoor orchestra concert with a full audience crowding around a band shell. As Khavche and Schlesinger’s mother make their way to their seats, they wave at Schlesinger in the violin section. Throughout this extended shot, the orchestra is playing a Viennese waltz, the last diegetic music heard in the film. In her autobiography, Picon recalled that Jews did not vacation in Ciechocinek, a detail that affirms Schlesinger’s ability to pass, musically and otherwise, as a non-Jew.24

Unlike the play, however, the film does not end in Ciechocinek, and Schlesinger’s musical future is left unresolved. By returning to Łódź and allowing Mamele to “adopt” him into the Samet family, Schlesinger turns his back on a promising career. It is worth noting that, even as Mamele’s directors wrote Americanization completely out of the story, some of the most successful Yiddish films relied on various aspects of Americanization as important plot points. If the sonic narratives of Yidl and A brivele, Green’s most successful films, rely on the ability to reconcile traditional and modern music in America, Mamele’s musical self-consciousness stems precisely from its inability to balance tradition and modernity in absence of a similar space.

Unmasking the Kheyder and Other Musical Revelations

Among the most compelling musical moments in Green’s films are those that call attention to the performance at hand. As Kun begins to consider the legacy of all the Jewish Roscoe Chandlers who found success in the American entertainment industry, he wonders, “how many songs actually are about Jewish life? These are not, by and large, Jews in hiding like

Roscoe, but they are Jews who perform themselves as something other than Jews. Because they make music in disguise, their music is about disguise.”

Similarly, there are moments in all of Green’s films in which music serves both as the means of disguising the true nature of Jewish identity and as the means through which that same identity is unmasked. Such moments reveal the boundaries of performance and the ways that it troubles and enriches the supposedly affirmative portrayal of Jewish identity in Green’s films.

I begin by revisiting the kheyder scene I described in the previous section. In this brief, ethnographic moment, the diegetic sounds of the kheyder are silenced by Ellstein’s (notated, harmonized) score. The diegetic sounds of Jewish learning—rustling pages, swaying bodies on creaking benches, thuds of hands and feet on table tops and floor, the sing-song style of declamation frequently used in sacred study—collectively point towards the sounds of the synagogue, the locus of Jewish noise, and it is this noise that is muted by the score. Ellstein uses two contrasting motifs played by the woodwinds and strings, as shown in examples 4 and 5.

Example 4 Kheyder scene, “Knocking motif,” mm. 1-4

Example 5 Kheyder scene, String melody, part 1, mm. 1-3

25 Kun, “Abie the Fishman,” 64.
The five-note motif shown in Example 4 begins with the oboes and bassoons, and is answered by a rhythmic variant in the flutes and clarinets. Musically, this motif seems anxious against the fuller, substantial string melody shown in Example 5. For audience members in the know, this melody is one of the most famous Yiddish “folk” songs by Mark Warshavsky called “Oyfn pripetshik [In the little hearth]:

\[
\begin{align*}
Oyfn pripetshik brent a fayerl & \quad \text{In the little hearth flickers a little flame} \\
Un in shtub iz heys & \quad \text{Warmth spreads through the house} \\
Un der rebe lernt kleyne kinderlekh & \quad \text{And the rabbi teaches little children} \\
Dem alef-beys. & \quad \text{The Hebrew alphabet.}
\end{align*}
\]

The “Oyfn pripetshik” melody arises from a plucked ostinato accompaniment and not only overpowers the knocking motif, but also displaces it: the knocking motif returns a minor third higher, and played by muted trumpet. Soon the strings interrupt this motif for the second time, and again drown out the knocking motif with a melody that, with its fourths and minor thirds, resembles liturgical cantillations (Example 6). After Khavche and Schlesinger show Avremele inside, there is a close-up shot of the former two walking past the window of the kheyder. At the very moment where we might expect some liturgical sounds, the score returns to the knocking motif, now punctuated by dissonant squawks from the high woodwinds.

The sounds of the kheyder, whether viewed as a kind of synagogue noise or as the familiar sound of tradition, have been represented in important ways. Ellstein first masks the diegetic sounds with the melody of a folk song whose words describe the very scene being
accompanied. This idea competes with the knocking motif, and then deteriorates into the most unpleasant sounds heard in the entire film. Further, Ellstein’s decision to mask the kheyder sounds with Jewish and Jewish-sounding music cannot be a coincidence. It is precisely his aural control over this scene, even as he pits themes against each other, that admits to an awareness about how Jewishness sounds to outsiders. But then Ellstein winks at us: the score that masks Jewish noise culminates with . . . Jewish noise.

Although Yidl does not contain a comparable musical moment, it is nonetheless through music that the true identity of Picon’s character is revealed within the diegesis of the film. Itke disguises herself as a boy to make life on the road easier, but falls for the handsome violinist Froyim along the way. As Eve Sicular points out, Itke’s decision to disguise herself as Yidl was not transgressive, but instead preserved her modesty: “Picon’s trouser role . . . afforded contemporary audiences the vicarious, guilt-free pleasure of what might otherwise have been a shocking spectacle: the nice Jewish girl roving around Poland with a band of klezmorim.”

Sicular further contextualizes Picon’s gender-bending performance as a response to anti-Semitism that centers around the Jewish male body as being weak and effeminate. By assigning these stereotypical qualities to Itke-disguised-as-Yidl, Green at once provided a foil to the handsome, athletic Froyim and a way of casting off the stereotype.

Tauba’s talent is discovered in Warsaw when a theater impresario invites her to appear onstage, but right before the show is supposed to begin, she elopes with her true love. Itke, who has tried on Tauba’s costume in a fit of wistful envy, wanders onstage to call off the performance. Instead, as shown in Figure 15, she finds herself suddenly a star after recapping her travels and revealing her true identity to the audience—and Froyim, who is playing in the

orchestra. It is ultimately her unmasking, the ability to separate herself from what would otherwise be perceived as Yidl’s effeminate boyhood, that provides the key to her musical success as star of the vaudeville stage and the possibility of romance with Froyim. After the performance, Itke is offered a contract in America, but Froyim disappears so as not to hinder her success. But the ending of the film contains one final moment of revelation: a heartbroken Itke and her father set sail for America.

![Yidl (Picon) on the vaudeville stage in Warsaw](Molly Picon Papers, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research)

**Figure 15** Yidl (Picon) on the vaudeville stage in Warsaw. Molly Picon Papers, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

On the ship, however, Itke hears “Yidl mitn fidl” being played on a violin by none other than Froyim, and the film ends as the two finally embrace (Figure 16). As Zehavit Stern points out, the respective musical transformations of Yidl and Froyim are different: Yidl’s success as a
vaudeville singer would have been considered, in the 1930s, a more appropriate profession for a woman than a violinist. “The end point of Yidl’s journey allows Picon to showcase her talents, while also expressing the film’s ideology which aims at economic success rather than the broadening of artistic horizons.” By contrast, Froyim’s musical transformation follows the conventional progression from klezmer fiddler to concert violinist, resembling Schlesinger in Mamele.

Figure 16 Yidl and Froyim are reunited on a ship bound for America. Molly Picon Papers, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

A brivele der mamen uses a similar revelation to resolve the film. Dovid, who went to America to ease the burden on his wife, soon sends for Arele, whose musical future he hopes to cultivate. While Dobrish and her neighbors are enduring the hardship of World War I, Arele has grown up to become a famous singer in America, Irving Bird. When Dobrish arrives in New York, she attends a benefit concert put on by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) that features Irving Bird as the star attraction. Bird sings one of his compositions, “Memories of My Old Home,” which recaps his upbringing in the shtetl and the song his father composed. As Bird sings the song, his true identity—Arele Berdicewska—is, unbeknownst to him, revealed to his mother, who is sitting in the audience. The musical revelation is twofold: Irving Bird’s song not only reveals his true identity, it also culminates by conjuring an old, forgotten mother “bent over with sorrow” who sits and waits for a brivele der mamen. Schmulewitz’s melody, which has haunted the entire film, hovering somewhere between its true Jewish identity and its goyish attribution in the film, is finally restored to its Yiddish origins.

Finally, it is worth noting that many of the musical moments under discussion in this section—“Yidl mitn fidl,” the kheyder/“Oyfn pripetshik” theme, and “A brivele der mamen”/Dovid’s theme—further complicate Green’s musical intentions for his films. With one exception, these melodies are not true, authorless folk songs, but popular songs that have attained folk status. As Joshua Walden points out in “Leaving Kazimierz,” “Yidl mitn fidl” is based on a Yiddish folk song, “Tsen brider [Ten brothers],” which was published in Shaul Ginzburg and Pesach Marek’s seminal 1901 Yiddish folksong anthology. The original text is subtractive: with each verse, another brother dies, and the refrain appeals to musicians to play each funeral. Furthermore, Walden points out that Ellstein’s melody for “Yidl mitn fidl” follows the countour of the folk song, despite some changes. Itsik Manger, the great Yiddish folk poet, wrote the song.
lyrics, which speak in general terms about life’s difficulties. Yet Manger’s lyrics, both for “Yidl mitn fidl” and for other songs in Yidl and Der purimshpilers are not true folk songs. The song “A brivele der mamen,” which was discussed in the Part One, is a commercially published Yiddish American song whose popularity has rendered it one of the most ubiquitous mother songs for Yiddish-speaking audiences. But in some ways, the story behind “Oyfn pripetshik” and Warshavsky’s other published folksongs troubles the idea of Green’s use of folk songs in his films more than the previous examples.

The publication of Warshavsky’s collection of folk songs in 1900 sparked a debate between Warshavsky and members of the Russian Jewish musical community. Joel Engel, a founding member of the Society for Jewish Folk Music in St. Petersburg, proclaimed the collection to be inauthentic: Warshavsky himself had written many of the song texts, the music was mostly borrowed from popular songs, and the songs were otherwise too new to truly be “of the folk.” For Warshavsky to call his arrangements folk songs, when they had not been properly vetted by the folk was, according to Engel, tantamount to fraud. Though Warshavsky admitted that his songs were not from the folk, he nevertheless asserted that they certainly were for the folk. And the folk agreed: a handful of songs, including “Oyfn pripetshik,” attained instantaneous folksong status and have remained popular ever since.

The debate between Warshavsky and Engel shows that the very idea of authentic Yiddish folk music in the early twentieth century is somewhat contentious. More importantly for the

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29 Mark Warshavsky, Notn tsu di yudishe folkslider (Kiev: n.p., 1900).
purpose of Part Two, the use of “Oyfn pripetshik” and “A brivele der mamen” not only hints towards the manufactured nature of the folk themes that Green endeavored to use in his films, it also calls into question the nature of the divide between folk and modern: Warshavsky’s folk songs and “A brivele der mamen” were published less than a decade apart and even in the 1930s, would have been too new to be considered true folk songs. Further, the decision to use notated folk-like music, instead of true folk music from an oral tradition, can be read as a way of mitigating the noise complaint.

Subverting Tradition and the Refusal to Perform

The final broader aspects of performance I consider in Green’s films are the ways in which Jewish rituals and traditions are either inverted or subverted through musical means. While this discussion lies slightly outside the scope of the noise complaint, it nonetheless speaks to the fraught nature of Jewish performance in the late 1930s and the ways that the music in Green’s films navigates and responds to this instability. HaCohen notes that, despite attempts to maintain the boundaries between fictional worlds and real ones, “they tend to blur, overlap, intersect, interpenetrate, and coincide with each other through various semiotic bonds. Fictional worlds often serve as models and inspiring modes of imagining ‘real’ ones,’ and ‘real’ worlds provide much of the fabric of fictional ones.”31 Similarly, in the moments I explore below, the boundaries between ritual performance and “real life” within the diegesis of Green’s films are often blurred. The rituals scenes are not exactly as affirmative as they may appear visually: the rituals are not depicted for their inherent value, but serve as a means to some other end. Taken together with more overt examples of the noise complaint I have pointed out elsewhere, my

discussion here adds yet another element to the idea that the Jewish musical identities of the characters in Green’s films require remediation and alteration, that in fact Jewish (musical) traditions are incompatible with the characters’ ability to find romantic and artistic fulfillment out in the world.

My analysis in this section returns to the final portion of Kun’s essay. His exploration of seminal American Jewish performers, from Groucho Marx to Bob Dylan, and the ways in which they (un)mask their identities in their work, frequently blurs the line between textual and biographical narratives. Thus, in Kun’s reading of “Talkin’ Hava Negeilah Blues (sic),” when Bob Dylan tries—haltingly, painfully—to sing the “foreign song he learned in Utah” with the purposely misspelled title, the performance is convincing within the logic of the song text. But for those who know that Bob Dylan is Robert Zimmerman, descended from Orthodox East European immigrants, the plausibility of the performance crumbles: “Hava Nagila,” among the best-known Jewish songs of the twentieth century, would have been neither foreign to Dylan nor learned in Utah. Kun explains that “[Hava Nagila] is [Dylan’s], he just chooses not to perform it as it should be performed. . . . Which leaves ‘Talkin’ Hava Negeilah Blues’ [sic] as a song about not singing ‘Hava Nagila,’ a performance about the refusal to perform.”32

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The centerpiece of *Yidl* is a full wedding scene, shown in Figure 17, that muddles the boundaries between affirming and subverting the rituals being shown on screen. On the one hand, Green and Picon, in separate interviews with Goldman, both recalled the lengths they went to in order to film an authentic ritual. Green took over thirty hours to shoot the scene, capturing all of the *kupe* rituals, feasting, and a succession of authentic dances performed by extras hired from the village. Caterers from Warsaw continuously replenished the food, and someone found a violinist for the *kale bazetsn* (seating the bride) in the middle of the night. The townsfolk hired as extras had, at best, only a weak grasp of the fictitious nature of film production, which ultimately blurred the line between fiction and real life. One woman from Kazimierz, upon

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33 Interview with Joseph Green in Goldman, *Visions, Images, and Dreams*, 185.
learning that the wedding wasn’t a real one, famously lamented, “With so much food, I could have brought my daughter to get married for real. She has a khosn [groom], but we have no money . . . to make a proper wedding.”  

Despite the care Green displayed in creating and filming an authentic ritual, on screen, the elaborate, time-intensive wedding comes to naught: the extended dancing provides the cover for the bride to escape her arranged marriage undetected. Ultimately, Stern notes, the wedding reads as a critique of the ritual on display: “In [Yidl] the gap between rejoicing and luxury on the one hand, and the spirit of gloom that comes to rest upon the bride on the other, creates dramatic tension[.]. . . Thus, while providing a colorful display of Jewish folklore . . . [Yidl] exploits the folkish customs . . . to criticize Jewish tradition.”  

Mamele, too, offers a critique of Jewish life through the ritual centerpieces of the film. Building the sukke, an activity in which Khavche’s father Berl, his friends, and other men from the neighborhood all participate, turns out to be a rather lackadaisical effort that has as much to do with joking and kvetching as earnest preparation for the impending holiday. Much of this scene is light-hearted on its surface—the jokes are clever, and the men’s lack of physical coordination is comical. The men are so unskilled in assembling the sukke, in fact, that they appeal to Khavche to come supervise their efforts. But this scene also invites a second reading. The men, after all, surely already knew how to construct the sukke, an annual undertaking in which they would have participated or watched since they were young boys. Following Kun’s interpretation of Dylan then, this sequence suggests a similar refusal to perform. Enlisting Khavche, who is herself performing the traditional role of the Jewish mother, to observe and supervise their work, adds yet another layer to the performance. Jewish mothers are a symbol of

34 Picon tells this story in her memoirs; also quoted in Goldberg, Laughter Through Tears; Goldman, Visions, Images, and Dreams; Hoberman, Bridge of Light. Picon, Molly! 67-8.
35 Stern, “From Jester to Gesture,” 139.
religious tradition: Khavche’s presence, therefore, sparks the men’s religious memory and purpose. In the sukke that evening, the blessings are chanted in Hebrew, and we see a not untraditional configuration of menfolk all seated around the table while the women serve the food. While the Sukkot meal seems to be sincere, the ritual is soon revealed to be perfunctory when a young boy asks why his mother is not present, and is told by the adults that “on Passover [he] can ask questions. For now—eat!”

The second half of the Sukkot scene is shot from the exterior, and provides the backdrop for a criminal plot to unfold. Khavche’s brother Zishe, who is apprenticed to a locksmith, sneaks away from the meal to help break into a bank. As the burglary is being planned, the sounds of a nign can be heard coming from inside the Sukke. Khavche follows Zishe, and foils the break-in attempt when she sneezes and causes a ladder to collapse on top of the men. As she helps Zishe home, we once again hear the nign, which has presumably been sung uninterrupted this entire time.

The Sukkot ritual is a double-edged sword: it is a space where the entire community, including merchants, landlords, and tenants, have come together as equals for one of the most important holidays of the Jewish calendar. But the potency of nigunim, songs that convey such ecstasy as to render words unnecessary, is here relegated to background accompaniment. Further, the Sukkot guests do not notice when Zishe slips away, and are consequently oblivious to the nefarious burglary plot unfolding outside of the sukke’s walls. It is only Khavche’s mother’s intuition, and her deep concern for her brother, that saves the day during the celebration. Ultimately, by juxtaposing the importance of unquestioning communal participation against the well-being of the individuals involved, the Sukkot ritual offers the same kinds of critiques of tradition that Stern reads into Yidl’s wedding scene.
In *A brivele der mamen*, the subversion of tradition centers around the Passover seder, which inadvertently foregrounds Dovid’s abrupt departure to America. Like the other celebrations Green depicts, the Passover seder is a familial and communal affair. The holiday itself celebrates the Biblical Exodus story, and emphasizes the comparative luxury of being free over the hardships of slavery in Egypt. It is a holiday about (re)counting and comparisons, of being *here* and not *there.* On screen, the chair that is traditionally left empty for Elijah, the future Passover guest who will herald the Messiah, more immediately signifies the painful absence of Dovid. As Arele begins to ask the Four Questions, he cannot help but turn “why is tonight different than all other nights?” into a question of why his father is *there* (unbound by a more traditional obligation to his family) and not *here* (directly supporting his family). The family continues the seder, but it is clear that Dovid’s absence has eclipsed the religious importance of the ritual. The eldest son, Meyer, is angry over Dovid’s inability to support the family, and the daughter, Miryem, is biding time until she can slip out and run away with her dancing instructor. Dobrish and Arele are devastated by Dovid’s absence and the double significance of the empty chair at the head of the table. Further cementing the importance of Dovid’s absence, the seder scene cuts away to a montage that pans over the New York harbor and skyline. We then see Dovid seated on a park bench, musing to a fellow immigrant about his disenchantment with America. Instead, he wishes he was with his family, and begins singing a traditional Passover song, “Chad gadyo.” The scene once again cuts away, panning back over New York, and the audience is returned to the seder scene, where the family has reached the

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36 Here I refer to the various methods of counting the Ten Plagues and God’s miracles that are recited during the Passover seder. In addition to comparing the luxuries of freedom (symbolized by reclining left during the seder) against the hardships of slavery (symbolized by special salty and bitter foods consumed during the seder), the impetus for the seder ritual is found in the Four Questions, which ask what distinguishes Passover from all other days.
point near the end of the seder in which “Chad gadyo” is traditionally sung. “Chad gadyo” is a cumulative song, adding a new line with each subsequent verse:

One little goat, one little goat that my father bought for two zuzim.
A cat came and ate the goat that my father bought for two zuzim. One little goat, one little goat.
A dog came and bit the cat that ate the goat that my father bought for two zuzim. One little goat, one little goat.

Etc.

However, A brivele der mamen’s plot is essentially subtractive. One by one, Dobris’s entire family slips away from her: Arele goes to America to join Dovid, and only reappears at the end of the film transformed into Irving Bird. Meyer, the oldest son, is killed in World War I, and Miryem eventually marries her childhood love and moves to Odessa. After he sends for Arele, Dovid is not shown again. In the wake of the war, and the loss of virtually her entire family, there is nothing left of the shtetl but tombstones, and her only choice is to travel to America to try and find her son and a new community. At the end of the film, Bird’s impending voyage to the Old Country in search of his alte heym [old home] is rendered unnecessary: Dobrish has already sailed to America, and the two are reunited at long last. But the film’s ending also works to subvert what would have been Bird’s inevitable discovery on the other side of the Atlantic: his past, so intimately associated with the mythic shtetl, no longer exists. Even as the shtetl has become the focal point of Jewish cultural nostalgia for the Old World and its traditions, both in Green’s films and in real life, its connotations of poverty and backwardness anchor it firmly to the past. Its very status as an imagined mecca inherently implies an earlier exodus: it was only after leaving the shtetl that Jews could become modern, a fact to which all of Green’s films attest.37

37 In Yiddish literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the shtetl was frequently the subject of satire and derision. See David Roskies, “The Shtetl in Jewish Collective Memory,” in The Jewish Search for a Usable Past (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 41-66.
But perhaps the greatest subversion of tradition in any of Green’s films takes place in Der purimshpiler. The title character, Getsl, is an itinerant performer who wanders from town to town in hopes of picking up odd jobs. In the opening scene, Getsl is walking through the countryside when he hears singing coming from nearby: a group of young people are picking apples from an orchard, singing while they work. An apple falls out of a bushel basket and rolls towards Getsl’s feet; he picks it up and offers it to Esther, who responds by shrieking with laughter. In fact, Getsl’s only line in the first four minutes of the film is to thank Esther’s friend, Lea, for pouring him a glass of water and to ask how far away the town is. Once he arrives, he tries to find work at one shop after another, only to be unceremoniously thrown out. Finally, he enters a cobbler’s shop, which turns out to be owned by Esther’s father, Reb Nokhum. Nokhum
gladly gives him work, and Getsl soon reveals his true calling as a purimshpiler. The opening scene is, in fact, emblematic of Getsl’s existence: despite being the film’s title character, and despite having played the king of the Purim story as a purimshpiler, he quickly becomes the laughingstock of the town. His status as a folk performer is usurped, first by the arrival of the traveling circus, then by Nokhum’s displeasure at Getsl’s Purim performance, and eventually by the vaudeville stage, where Esther sings and dances happily ever after with the singer from the circus.

If Getsl is a kind of Everyman in the world of Jewish folk performance, the implications are troubling. The wider incompatibility between Jewish tradition and “happily ever after” in Green’s films is, once again, the subtle workings of the noise complaint. In Green’s films, artistic and romantic success only seems possible for characters who have shed their folkish ways, particularly their Jewish musical traditions. While Esther and her beau find success by transforming their nostalgia for the shtetl into polished performances in the urban concert hall, for Getsl the Purim jester, the film ends exactly the way it began: unwanted, left to wander the countryside in search of the next friendly audience.
Between Tradition and Modernity: *Mamele* on the Silver Screen

*Mamele* in 1938 represents a significant departure from both the staged original and, to some degree, the ways that the noise complaint manifests itself in Green’s other films. The film adaptation reads, in part, as an attempt to validate Jewish life outside of America: relocating the story from a tenement in New York City to Łódź, Poland, *Mamele* is refashioned from a specifically American-Jewish story into a Polish-Jewish one. Picon plays mother to an even larger family, but ultimately her modern romance with Schlesinger is subsumed by her unwavering commitment to her family. Furthermore, because none of the characters in *Mamele* are folk performers, they do not require the same kinds of geographic and musical progressions undertaken by Yidl, Froyim, Esther, and Arele/Irving. Considered alongside Green’s other

**Figure 19** Khavche (Picon) and her brothers Zishe (left) and Dovid (seated) in *Mamele*. Molly Picon Papers, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
films, *Mamele* seems to trouble Green’s vision of portraying Jewish life in a way that renders its traditional identities and folk roots obsolete. In some ways, *Mamele* affirms tradition in ways that Green’s other films do not: in the end, the Samet family is restored in Łódź, with the addition of Schlesinger, who forsakes his post in Ciecocinek to marry Mamele.

Although *Mamele* is not about Jewish *artistic* performance, it is nonetheless about *Jewish* performance, specifically the performance of Jewish motherhood. In an essay on mother figures in Yiddish film melodramas, Zehavit Stern suggests that Khavche’s performance of motherhood comes into conflict when she tries to fulfill her “destiny” (in the universe of Yiddish drama, anyway) of getting married. Khavche’s maternal performance can only become real once she has successfully broken away from her assumed role, allowing her to actualize her romance with Schlesinger, which presumably leads to both marriage and children.38

Arguably, however, Mamele never stops being a mother, despite new, fashionable clothes and her consumption of leisure activities in both versions. On stage, she takes her youngest brother Archie along on her vacation with Louie, and in her absence, her sisters struggle to fill her role. In both versions, the family journeys specifically to convince Mamele to return to the status quo, and though the stage version ends ambiguously in this regard—Benny drives the family away in his taxi while Mamele and Louie sing to each other in the moonlight—the film does not. The Samet family, with a newfound appreciation for Khavche’s role, beg her to return, and when Schlesinger asks what will become of their romance, she cheerfully replies that she can “adopt” one more child. In the end, Mamele’s refusal to perform her role is momentary, which

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distinguishes her from Tauba’s flight from an arranged marriage and the shtetl in Yidl, and Dovid’s absent fatherhood in A brivele der mamen.

The discussion of Picon’s performance of young Khavche’s performance of motherhood is further complicated in a musical sequence where Picon appears as a bobe (grandmother). Unlike other numbers in Mamele, “Dos lebn iz a tants [Life is a dance]” is not situational, and does not take place within the immediate chronology of the narrative. It arises instead from Khavche’s internal reminiscence as she looks through the family photograph album during her brother’s engagement party. Schlesinger sneaks away from the celebration to check on her, and together they look through the album. When they reach the bobe photograph, Khavche turns to Schlesinger, and remarks, “they say I look just like her.” The audience, who sees a closeup of the photograph in question, is in on the joke: Khavche is Picon is the bobe. Schlesinger’s affectionate moniker “Bobche Khavche”, therefore, not only suggests the extent to which Khavche herself is viewed as a mother figure by those around her, but also, written differently—bobche/Khavche—encompasses Picon’s dual roles in the film.

But “Dos lebn iz a tants” is not embedded within Khavche’s memory: it is, in fact, the reminiscences of Khavche’s bobe. The sequence is firmly encapsulated away from the chronology of the plot as a series of photographs that come to life, and is invoked when Khavche recalls her bobe’s motto, “Life is a dance, but one must know how to dance it.” The entire musical number, which features the bobe recalling how she used to dance from childhood to old age, emphasizes the literal performance of dancing: in childhood, the bobe dances with her feet, then with her hips as a young woman, then with her hands in middle age, and finally, on her seventy-eighth birthday, with her “altn vaysn kop [old, white head].” Embedded in the immediate physical performance, however, are two additional subtexts. Picon, of course, plays the bobe,
and also successfully passes as a girl of various ages from girlhood to middle age. But “Dos lebn iz a tants” also hints at a performance of Jewish identity. When the bobe is a young girl and then a young woman, her interests are modern: at eight, she learns to dance in school each week so she will get a husband quickly, and at eighteen, she dances with an unseen beau because it is romantic. In the third vignette, however, the bobe is forty-eight, and finds herself clapping her hands at the Purim ball, a specifically Jewish event. Finally, the bobe’s reminiscence in the “present,” as she is on the cusp of her seventy-eighth birthday, draws upon the standard imagery of popular Yiddish mother songs. She had hoped to invite her children and grandchildren to a celebration, but they were too busy to attend. The bobe is well cared for, as all bobes are in the mother songs, but she is also lonely: her family will give her everything except a few minutes of their time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yiddish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S’iz haynt mayn geburtstog</td>
<td>Today it is my birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akht un zibetzig vert ikh</td>
<td>I turn 78 today</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hob ikh getrakh zikh frier</td>
<td>I was thinking to myself earlier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikh vel a simkhe makhn</td>
<td>I’ll have a celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Di kinder mit eyniklekh</td>
<td>The children and grandchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veln ale zayn mit mir</td>
<td>Will all be with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor di kinder kenen nebekh keyns nisht kumen.</td>
<td>Only none of the children can come.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geshefin do, geshefin dort</td>
<td>Business here, business there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zey zenen shtark farnumen</td>
<td>They are very busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me shikt mir gelt</td>
<td>They send me money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me halt mikh oys</td>
<td>They support me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oy zeynen ale zeyer gut</td>
<td>Oh, they are all very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor a par minit zayt far di bobe</td>
<td>Except they do not have a few minutes of time for their grandmother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot men nisht.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the song text alludes to the pervasive understanding of the Jewish mother figure’s close relationship with tradition, the music itself is not especially Jewish. The interludes between photographs are melodramatic, with a chorale-like accompaniment underneath the bobe’s narration, and the beginning and ending sections are in a harmonic minor key. “Dos lebn iz a
tants” is not a moment of revelation or unmasking, yet it nonetheless calls attention to the various layers of Jewish performance at work throughout the film. At the same time, however, this sequence also illustrates the subtleties of the ongoing tension between traditional and modern that is inherent to Mamele.

One compelling pair of musical sequences illustrates a different manifestation of the tension between tradition and modernity. The first number, “Mazl,” whose themes underscore important moments in the film, functions as a chaste love duet between Khavche and Schlesinger on either side of the tenement courtyard. When Max Katz arrives at the Samet house to pick up Berta for a night out, Khavche insists on accompanying her sister, only to be laughed out of the room when everyone realizes that her most suitable clothes are an outdated outfit from her mother’s trunk. As the rest of the family sees Berta off, Khavche retreats to her room as a solo violin, accompanied by a harp, begins to play a subdued melody. The film score crosses the diegetic boundary as she looks from her window across the courtyard and sees Schlesinger playing his violin. This melody, first heard in the opening credits, turns out to be the introduction to “Mazl.”

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*Mazl es shaynt a mol far yedn*
*Far yedn nor nit far mir*
*Mazl, du brengst a yedn freydn*
*Far vos farzoymst\u2019tu mayn tir?*
*Oy vi es tut benk a yede sho*
*Dos lehn fargeyt*
*Un keyn hofenung iz alts nito oy,*
*Mazl es shaynt a mol far yedn*
*Far yedn nor nit far mir*

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Luck shines sometimes for everyone, For everyone but not for me
Luck, you bring everyone happiness Why are you late to my door?
Oh, how one longs every hour Life passes by
And there is no hope oh, Luck shines sometimes for everyone, For everyone but not for me.

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*Ven es kumt on di nakht*
*Blayb ikh zitsn un trakht*
*Nokh a tog iz shoyn vider far bay*
*Un der kholem vos ikh*
*Hob gekholem\u2019t far zikh*
*Iz avek mitn vint af es nay*

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When night comes I sit and think
Another day has passed by And the dream that I Have dreamed for myself Blew away with the wind of a new dream
The initial melody of “Mazl” (shown in Example 7) is theoretically hybrid, belonging to the realm of Jewish music through its use of the *adonai malokh* mode, which “passes” as a natural minor scale. While Moshe Beregovski, the Soviet Jewish ethnomusicologist, noted that the natural minor scale is quite common in Jewish folk music, its use is hardly limited to this one context. Further, organized into two four-measure periods, characterized first by intervallic leaps of fourths and fifths and then by small motivic sequences in the penultimate measures, this melody clearly benefits from Western musical developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Following the violin introduction, the song unfolds in ABA form. The melodic idea of the A section (Example 8) is more obviously Jewish, in *ahava rabah* mode, a natural minor scale where the fourth scale degree is raised a half-step to create an augmented second, in this case between A-flat and B-natural in the second measure. More than any other musical element, it is

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this interval that is most closely associated with Jewish music.\footnote{James Loeffler notes that, at the turn of the twentieth century, the augmented second was one of many musical characteristics that comprised an Oriental element in Russian national music. This Orientalism encompassed all Eastern influences, including from Georgia, Armenia, the Caucasus, and Near East, in addition to Jews. Therefore, in Western music, the augmented second often symbolized generic exoticism, rather than Jewishness specifically. See Loeffler, \textit{The Most Musical Nation}, 36-41.} In a song like “Mazl,” which might be interpreted as an existential lamentation on the plight of Jews in the Diaspora, we might expect the augmented second to feature prominently. But in the context of the melody, the harmonic significance of B-natural is obstructed by C, reducing the former to a neighboring tone, a decoration instead of a crucial participant.

As she finishes singing the first A section, Khavche again looks across the courtyard to Schlesinger, who repeats the same section, though he does not meet Khavche’s gaze. Nonetheless he, too, is filmed close up in front of his window, through which we see Khavche, who is still watching. The camera cuts back to Khavche, who sings the B section. At the return of the A section, the camera returns to Schlesinger’s room as we hear a woman humming the melody (presumably Khavche, who is again visible in the background) doubled by a violin (presumably Schlesinger, who is playing in the foreground). As the violin repeats the first half of the A melody, Khavche laments her lot in life in a brief melodrama section before the music culminates in a vocal duet between Khavche and Schlesinger that, until now, was only implied. By the end, “Mazl” is not only internal to its two participants, who remain chastely separated in

![Example 8 First half of the A section of “Mazl,” mm. 10-25](image)
their respective homes, but has become a performance: as the song finishes, the camera pans across several neighbors outside, all of whom are gazing upwards, presumably transfixed by what they are hearing.

The music reverts to background score in the next scene when Khavche awakens in the middle of the night to check on her siblings and discovers that Zishe and Berta are both missing. We hear “Mazl’” again, but this time it is the initial motive of the B section that is passed around and developed by the string and brass sections. The growing musical tension matches Khavche’s increasing alarm as she discovers first one, then two empty beds. At what should be the most climactic moment, the scene dissolves into a close-up of a group of musicians. As the camera pans out to reveal a band playing in a nightclub, the high-pitched blast of the wind instruments descends into the introduction of the next diegetic number, “Trink, meydl, trink” [Drink, young girl, drink].

| Trink, trink, meydl trink | Drink, drink, young girl drink |
| Un zorg zikh nit | And don’t worry |
| Trink, trink, meydl trink | Drink, drink, young girl drink |
| Vet ir zayn gut | You will be fine |
| Vilstu fargesn dayn payn | You will forget your pain |
| Gis a glezl vayn arayn | So pour us a glass of wine |
| Vayl s’iz gut shiker tsu zayn | Because it’s good to be drunk |
| Dokh folg mir trink, meydl trink | So follow me drink, young girl drink |
| Trink ven du bist farlibt | Drink when you are in love |
| Trink ven du bist batribt | Drink when you are troubled |
| Ven in hartsn dir kveylt | When your heart is heavy |
| Un du filst epes faylt | And when you feel nothing |
| Freylekh darfstu nor zayn | Only happy should you be |
| Trakht nit fun dayn payn | Don’t think about your pain |
| Zorgn iz nit keday | There’s no use in worrying |
| Di velt blaybt zi zelber say vi say | The world stays the same anyway |
| Trink, trink, meydl trink . . . | Drink, drink, young girl drink . . . |
Berta and Katz are at a nightclub, clearly enjoying themselves after having just prevailed over Khavche’s concerns about the propriety of Berta going away without a chaperone. They laugh, drink, and dance as they sing “Trink, meydl, trink,” which is easily the most cosmopolitan diegetic number in the film. “Trink, meydl, trink” is in a major key, with a melody that consists almost entirely of step-wise motion, avoiding the frequent fourths and fifths in “Mazl.” Max and Berta’s duet is accompanied by the ensemble shown at the beginning of the scene.

Unlike Khavche and Schlesinger who were shown at a chaste distance, Berta and Max Katz face each other for the entire number, suggesting a degree of intimacy absent from the preceding scene. Their happy expressions match the exuberant nature of the song, and there is little doubt that both are enjoying a carefree evening on the town. Not even the smallest detail (aside from being situated in a Yiddish film, of course) exists that reveals either song or scene as being explicitly Jewish. The dance orchestra is uniformly dressed in black suits, and the crowd is well-dressed and carefully groomed. Small tables bedecked with floor-length cloths are arranged around the dance floor, while couples young and old drink out of cocktail glasses and dance the foxtrot to the jazzy music of the orchestra: the setting could just as easily have been The Cotton Club in New York City instead of an unknown nightclub in Łódź.

In Part One, I explored the hit mother song of the original stage play, “Oyb s’iz geven gut far mayn mame, iz es gut far mir [If it was good enough for my mother, then it’s good enough for me].” Even as the song critiques so-called modern values, its affirmation of the Old World (signified here by the mother) is distinctly New World in expressing its nostalgic sentiment. Following its performance in the first act, “Oyb s’iz geven” returns numerous times in the play, as music for curtains and encores, ultimately reinforcing the overall message of the play: one cannot become a good American without retaining some of the traditional values.
Even though the sentiments of “Oyb s’iz geven” apply at least as well to the film, Ellstein and Picon wrote entirely new music and lyrics; and though mother songs were a musical staple of the Yiddish stage, the genre is entirely absent in the film. Instead, the songs “Mazl” and “Abi gezunt” occupy a similar place, musically. As the first musical number in the film, “Abi gezunt” appears at roughly the same point as “Oyb s’iz geven” does in the stage version. Instead of an Americanized nostalgia, however, “Abi gezunt” emphasizes that life’s happiness is found in the simple things: a quiet place to sleep, a shirt without holes, a few coins in one’s pocket. While most of the rest of her family seeks material advantages, Khavtche proclaims her contentedness with her difficult life:

Ayner zukht ashires Some look for riches
Ayner zukht gvures Some look for strength
Aynemen di gantsn velt To conquer the entire world
Ayner meynt dos gantsge glik Some believe that happiness
Hengt nor op in gelt Only is found in money
Zoln ale zukhn So let them all search
Zoln ale krikhn And let them all grovel
Nor ikh trakht bay mir While I just think to myself
Ikh darf dos ales af kapores I have no use for any of it
Vayl dos glik shteyt bay mayn tir. Because happiness waits at my door.

Further, the song seems to mildly critique too much emphasis on materiality. It is no coincidence, for example, that one of the only times that “Abi gezunt” returns is during the scene where Mamele foils the robbery attempt and rescues Zishe. Here the song’s presence seems to admonish Zishe for getting mixed up in the wrong kind of work.

The contrasting message of “Mazl”—feeling excluded from the happiness and luck enjoyed by everyone else—adds further tension to a plot already preoccupied with the conflict between traditional and modern. Tellingly, “Mazl” not only reappears but is also musically developed throughout the film, a luxury that Yiddish operettas never enjoyed. In fact, “Mazl”
haunts the film from the very beginning: the opening score during the credits is a wordless variation of the song’s introduction, and various portions of the song reappear throughout the film. If “Oyb s’iz geven” is a gentle reminder to its audience affirming tradition, “Mazl” suggests a pervasive feeling of isolation and despair, an ongoing conflict between Khavche’s competing identities as a mother figure and a young unmarried woman.

This conflict comes to a head in Ciechocinek, when Khavche and Schlesinger return from a walk to find the entire Samet family, who demand she return to Łódź. While Schlesinger’s mother shepherds everyone inside to eat dinner, Khavche lingers outside to think. At this moment, the A theme from “Mazl” returns for the final time, and its meaning is unmistakable. As she contemplates her decision between her thankless life as a mother in Łódź and her contentment as a young modern woman in Ciechocinek, Schlesinger’s mother returns outside to say she won’t let Khavche go. This does little to reassure Khavche however, for the “Mazl” theme continues without pause until Zishe slips outside and pleads with her to return home. But his pleas fall on deaf ears: Khavche remains unmoved by the knowledge that her father’s gambling friends have moved in as boarders, that Avremele has stopped attending kheyder, and that the house will surely fall apart unless she steps in to save it. It is only when she notices a grubby Avremele standing off to the side that Khavche’s mother’s heart moves her to change her mind and return to her responsibilities.

Despite plots that prevent the most wayward characters from straying too far afield, neither stage nor film version of Mamele quite manages to resolve the inherent issues that lie just below the surface. The play’s ambiguous ending lends to its lightheartedness: the family is literally driven away after Mamele, in an American show of pluck, has promised to resume her caretaking duties—but as a person, not a servant!—in her new life with Louie. But a vacation to
Ciechocinek does not make Khavche into a modern woman, despite new, fashionable clothes and a modern lover.

Though the Samet family’s pleas and exhortations fall on deaf ears, it is hard to believe that Khavche considered refusing her family to be a serious option. When she notices Avremele, it is as if she has also remembered her real identity as mother figure. After all, if she does not make sure he goes to kheyder and learns how to perform his identity as a Jew, who will? And so she agrees to return—and who, exactly, spruced up the Samet home, shown in shambles only minutes earlier, in preparation for all of the guests who crowd around the dining table just before Khavche’s wedding? As a final statement on tradition’s victory over modernity, it is only in the final moments of the film, back at the Samet’s newly-cleaned home in preparation for Khavche’s wedding, that “Abi gezunt” returns as score. The film ends musically on the phrase “abi gezunt, ken men glikekh zayn” [as long as you’re healthy, who can ask for more?], recalling Khavche’s earlier performance of the song while doing household chores, and also ultimately reinforcing the notion that she has been restored to her mother figure role. It is not only significant that the film is, in many ways, a different story than the play; but also, where the latter accepts modernity and Americanization as inevitable, the former demands that its characters—even Mamele’s unrepentantly modern sister Berta—accept the confines of tradition over the seeming freedom of modernity.

Yet despite the ways that Mamele affirms tradition at the expense of modernity, the use of music throughout the film suggests a significant amount of uneasy ambivalence about doing so. “Mazl” avoids the Jewish sonic marker of the augmented second interval, and “Ikh zing” all but obscures the connection to its Biblical roots. Further, the film’s ending calls into question Schlesinger’s musical future. In Green’s other films, the shift to more polished performances of
Western music on the concert and vaudeville stages works to stabilize the itinerant identities of the folk musicians, and affixes their oral traditions to the notated sheet music page. By contrast, Schlesinger and Mamele’s romantic future necessitates Schlesinger abandoning his only apparent musical success in the film, rendering his future uncertain.

Produced on the cusp of World War II, the Yiddish world of Green’s films was a historically uneasy one. A Letter to Mother premiered in New York on September 14, 1939, two weeks after the Nazis invaded Poland; it cannot be coincidence that this film, building upon the poignancy of the immigrant mother song that shares its name, was the highest-grossing Yiddish film of all time. If Yiddish films constituted an affirmative response to increasingly overt demonstrations of anti-Semitism across Europe, then by the time Green produced his last two films, the need for such a response was more pronounced than ever. As Hankus Netsky points out in an article on Polish klezmer musicians, the 1930s constituted “the very era when Polish Jewry had arrived at its cultural peak.”42 But Green’s films cannot be said to fully embrace the flourishing culture that his oeuvre tries to affirm, for the futures of the characters most closely tied to Jewish musical traditions lie invariably somewhere out in the Western world.

The significance of this last point ultimately holds implications for the film audience. As HaCohen notes, “vocalities defy fictionality and often, if not always, become real.[.]”43 Within the context of Green’s films, the numerous layers of performance and the ways they alternatively respond to the noise complaint and question the validity of Jewish traditions not only blur the lines between the boundaries of performance within the film diegesis, but also threatens the stability of the supposedly insular world on screen. Ultimately, even in the Yiddish world that

43 HaCohen, The Music Libel Against the Jews, 12.
Green constructed for his audience, the sounds of Jewish identity are not immune from the need to conform to the standards of Western (Christian) music.
APPENDIX B: Yiddish Film Plot Synopsis

**Yidl mitn fidl (1936)**

Directed by Joseph Green and Jan Nowina-Przybylski  
Screenplay: Konrad Tom  
Music: Abe Ellstein  
Lyrics: Itzik Manger  
Cast: Molly Picon (Yidl); Simche Fostel (Aryeh); Max Bozyk (Isaac); Leon Leibgold (Froyim); Dora Fakiel (Taybele)

*Yidl* tells the story of a young itinerant klezmer violinist, Itke (played by Picon), and her father Aryeh (Fostel). They team up with a competing klezmer duo, and Itke, who has dressed like a boy to make life easier on the road, falls for the handsome violinist Froyim. Along the way Tauba, a young bride fleeing an arranged marriage, becomes the group’s singer and—to Itke—competition for Froyim’s affections. When the group reaches Warsaw, they are discovered by two impresarios and recruited to perform in a vaudeville show. Taube runs away to be reunited with her true love right before the show is supposed to begin. Yidl wanders onstage to call off the performance, and in the course of recounting her travels, she reveals her true identity to Froyim. As Yidl unwittingly becomes the vaudeville sensation of Warsaw, Froyim leaves in order to avoid hindering her career. They are reunited in the final scenes on a ship bound for America.

**Der Purimshpiler (1937)**

Directed by Joseph Green and Jan Nowina-Przybylski  
Screenplay: Chaver-Pahver and Joseph Green  
Music: Nicholas Brodsky  
Lyrics: Itzik Manger  
Cast: Hymie Jacobson (Dick); Zygmund Turkow (Getsl); Miriam Kressyn (Esther); Isaac Samberg (Nukhem); Max Bozyk (grandfather)

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44 Production information for all four films is taken from Goldman, *Visions, Images, and Dreams*, 234-8.
As an itinerant Purim performer, Getsl, walks to the next shtetl, he passes an orchard where a group of young people are picking apples, and immediately falls in love with Esther (Miriam Kressyn). When he arrives in town, he searches unsuccessfully for work, and accidentally ends up working in a cobbler’s shop that is run by Esther’s father. A traveling circus comes to town, and Esther falls in love with a charming circus actor, Dick (Jacobson), to the disapproval of Esther’s family. Esther’s father suddenly inherits a fortune, and the family hosts a Purim celebration to celebrate their newfound wealth, complete with a Purim play led by Getsl. When Getsl criticizes Esther’s father, he is thrown out of the house, and Esther decides to run away with him. They end up in Warsaw, where they soon run into Dick, who makes Esther a vaudeville star and allows Getsl to tag along. Getsl returns to the shtetl, where the townsfolk blame him for Esther’s disappearance. As Esther and Dick, now happy and successful, return home to bask in the townsfolk’s admiration, Getsl wanders off alone, much the way he began.

**Mamele (1938)**

Directed by Joseph Green and Konrad Tom  
Screenplay: Konrad Tom, based on a stage play by Meyer Schwartz  
Music: Abe Ellstein  
Lyrics: Molly Picon  
Cast: Molly Picon (Mamele/Khavche); Edmund Zayenda (Schlesinger); Max Bozyk (Berel Samet); Gertrude Bullman (Berta); Menashe Oppenheim (Max Katz); Ola Shlifko (Yetke); Max Perlman (Dovid)

Set in the industrial city of Łódź, *Mamele* tells the story of young Khavche Samet (Picon), who takes on the role of mother and housekeeper after her own mother’s death. The family is ungrateful for her efforts, and ridicule Khavche when they are not poking fun at her outdated, shabby clothing and old-fashioned ways. While preventing a match between her sister, Berta, and a local gangster, Max Katz, and successfully arranging a match between her best friend and
her brother Dovid, Khavche falls in love with the handsome violinist, Schlesinger, who lives across the courtyard. Katz recruits her younger brother Zishe, an apprentice locksmith, to help rob a bank during the Sukkot celebration. Khavche foils the plot and rescues her brother, then forces Max Katz to break up with her sister and leave town. The family tensions come to a head after Berta and Yetke (Khavche’s other older sister) discover Khavche and Schlesinger’s budding romance. The entire family has a heated argument that ends with Khavche “quitting” her job as Mamele and accompanying Schlesinger to Ciechocinek, a nearby resort town, where he has a job as first violinist with the orchestra. Predictably, the house devolves into chaos, and instead of taking on the responsibilities themselves, the entire family travels to Ciechocinek to convince Khavche to return. Her mother’s heart prevails and Khavche agrees, “adopting” Schlesinger into the family; the film ends with the family restored and about to celebrate Khavche and Schlesinger’s wedding.

*A brivele der mamen* (1939)

Directed by Joseph Green and Leon Trystan  
Screenplay: Mendel Osherowitz  
Music: Abe Ellstein  
Cast: Lucy Gehrman (Dobrish); Edmund Zayenda (Irving Bird); Max Bozyk (Shimen); Gertrude Bullman (Miryem); Alexander Stein (David); Itshok Grudberg (Meyer); Simche Fostel (cantor)

Dobrish Berdiczewska (Lucy Gehrman) works tirelessly to support her three children and her husband Dovid, a composer. While Dovid’s compositions are respected by his wife and friends, they do not earn him a living, much to the scorn of his eldest son Meyer and many of the townsfolk. Dovid and his youngest son Arele go to America in search of a better life right before Passover, to Dobrish’s great distress. Dobrish’s daughter Miryem runs away with her dance instructor, only to return home when she discovers that the instructor is already married.
Miryem is wed instead to her childhood sweetheart, son of their neighbor Shimen, and they move to Odessa. When World War I strikes, Meyer is conscripted into service and is killed in battle. To make ends meet, Dobirsh moves in with Shimen and his wife. After the war, the three are sponsored by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) to go to America. In New York, they attend a HIAS benefit concert starring a famous American singer, Irving Bird (Zayenda). As Bird sings one of Dovid’s melodies, Dobrish realizes that Irving Bird is really her long-lost son, Arele. After the concert, Bird is supposed to sail to Europe to find the remains of his shtetl, but is miraculously reunited with Dobrish instead.
PART THREE
Introduction: Reconstructing Mamele

*Mamele* premiered on December 24, 1926, at the Second Avenue Theater in New York. That same night approximately a dozen other Yiddish shows were also playing around town, a mixture of low- and high-brow entertainment that catered to the full spectrum of Yiddish-speaking audiences. For the Second Avenue Theater, at that time owned by actress Molly Picon, her producer husband Jacob Kalich, and composer Joseph Rumshinsky, *Mamele* would prove to be the hit show of the 1926-7 season. In the weeks immediately following the show’s closing in April 1927, *Mamele* played in Rochester, NY; Baltimore, Boston, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Hartford, and shattered box office records in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.45 Scrapbooks of clippings in Molly Picon’s archive at the American Jewish Historical Society document additional performances in Cleveland, Warsaw, and Buenos Aires. Mamele remained one of Picon’s favorite character roles; the show was revived in New York as late as 1936 and was adapted into film and radio versions in 1938 and 1950, attesting to the lasting popularity of the show and its themes.

*Mamele* tells the story of sixteen-year-old Khaye Feygl Kravchik, or Mamele, played by Picon, who must care for her father Shimen, older siblings Benny, Selma, and Gertie, and youngest brother Archie, following the death of her own mother. Between raising Archie, keeping house, and trying to arrange suitable matches between two of her older siblings and Louie and Bernice, the children of her friend and neighbor, the Khazn’s wife, Mamele has no

45 These cities were drawn from web searches of digitized newspapers from May 1927. On May 16, 1927, the *Daily News* in New York reported that *Mamele*’s one-week run in Philadelphia the previous week had netted $14,000, a record for Philadelphia. See “Theatre Notes,” *Daily News*, May 16, 1927, 23. Advertising an upcoming performance of *Mamele* in Hartford, CT, the *Hartford Courant* wrote: “Some measure of the enormous success of ‘Mamele’ may be gathered from the fact that at one performance in Pittsburgh last week the box office receipts reached the staggering total of $4,160, a record for a single Yiddish performance in this country.” See “Parsons’s,” *Hartford Courant*, May 31, 1927, 17.
time for herself. The show opens with a grand prologue, a “Mothers of the World” number in which Spanish, Russian, Italian, Chinese, Native American, African-American, and finally, Jewish mothers, demonstrate their nurturing devotion to their children. At the end, Mamele’s own mother appears from beyond the grave to introduce “a new kind of mother” in Mamele. In Act One, Gertie has returned from a shopping trip and shows off her new purchases to Bernice and a skeptical Mamele. When Mamele tries to collect the rent from her siblings, she comes up short: Benny is out of work, and Gertie’s pay envelope is perpetually short thanks to her fondness for shopping trips. Gertie’s beau, the smooth-talking Sidney Katz, arrives to convince Shimen to allow them to go away for a weekend at a bungalow in Long Beach. Unsurprisingly, Mamele refuses to allow Gertie to travel unchaperoned and volunteers first the uncooperative Selma, and then herself, to accompany the couple. Mamele’s frantic, vociferous objections are soon overruled by Shimen, who readily agrees to the vacation. Undeterred by the family’s objections about her wardrobe shortcomings, Mamele dons a frumpy outfit that belonged to her mother and is promptly ridiculed by the entire family.

Gertie and Sidney’s trip goes so well that when they reappear in Act Two (set several weeks later), they seem to be practically engaged, if only Sidney would ask Shimen’s permission. Meanwhile, Benny has decided to buy a taxi cab and tries to raise money from his siblings, turning first to Selma (who vehemently refuses) and then Mamele. The tearful Mamele struggles to collect her siblings’ share of the household expenses each week and has no money to spare; however, she suggests that Benny approach their neighbor Bernice, who is in love with Benny and whose dowry would be sufficient to buy a taxi cab. In an extended dream sequence, Benny and Mamele daydream about what their lives would be like if they were rich. Mamele continues her matchmaking efforts by attempting to set up her love interest and neighbor Louie,
Bernice’s brother, with Selma. Selma, Gertie, and Mamele get into an argument as a result, which ends with Mamele “quitting” her job as mother figure and escaping with Louie to the country for a vacation.

Act Three opens with Louie, Mamele, Bernice, and Archie enjoying themselves at a hotel. Bernice has just received a letter from her mother, who writes that the Kravchik home is in chaos in Mamele’s absence. Sidney Katz appears and tries to seduce Mamele, who promptly confesses everything to Louie. Soon the rest of the Kravchik family appears to convince Mamele to return home; Bennie drives them off in his new taxi while Louie and Mamele serenade each other under the moonlight.

Americanization on the Yiddish Stage

*Mamele* earned accolades in both the Yiddish and English press for its contemporary plot and the hybrid blend of American and Old World musics. It is true that Mamele remained one of Picon’s favorite character roles, and the solitary figure of the beleaguered “kid mother,” orphaned by both the death of her own mother and the loss of her family’s *yidishkayt* as they Americanized, would have continued to be universally relatable to Jewish immigrants long after they had assumed their New World identities. Though it is well beyond the scope of this study, a sweeping survey of Yiddish popular theater and its role in navigating between ethnic and American identities would enrich the existing scholarship on the history of Jewish femininity as performed in the twentieth century. Nonetheless: using one of the most popular shows from the 1920s, *Mamele*, as a case study demonstrates that the history of representations of Jewish femininity on the Yiddish stage is more complex than the existing mainstream narratives might suggest.
Consider, for instance, the opening of Clare Ogden’s essay about Molly Picon:

Down on the Little White Way there is an electric sign over a theatre [sic]: ‘Molly Picon in Mamele.’ To get inside that theatre on Saturday evening you push your way through a jovial, discoursive [sic], excited flood of Yiddish: Yiddish from big, round, complacent mothers, leading groups of youngsters, all in their Saturday night best; Yiddish from slim young girls, with lovely dark eyes working over time [sic] on the slim young blades of the East Side, also clad in their Saturday night best; Yiddish from the cops attempting to keep order in the crowd.⁴⁶

Unlike Hutchins Hapgood’s seminal account of Second Avenue and the Bowery in The Spirit of the Ghetto at the turn of the twentieth century, Ogden’s aim was not to translate immigrant culture for uptown society: he had ventured downtown in 1927 to see Molly Picon star in Mamele, a performance that the mainstream critics deemed worthy of Broadway. Ogden’s observations about the Yiddish-speaking throngs and the modern themes of the show were corroborated by several other mainstream critics who also trekked downtown to see Mamele. That the immigrant audiences of 1927 were multi-generational, as the uptown critics observed, suggests that Yiddish shows continued to hold contemporary appeal. Further, the fact of their presence at a Yiddish musical comedy speaks to the fluidity of the boundary between the supposedly insular world of immigrant entertainment and mainstream American culture.

In the 1920s, the Yiddish-language daily Forverts began to feature young Jewish women each Sunday. Their dresses and hair styles marked them as modern Americans, a Yiddish-Jewish-immigrant success story in the process of Americanization. Known as East Side Girls or Ghetto Girls, they were essentially “cultural pioneers” in uncharted territory, forging the link between their immigrant parents and modern Americans. While real-life East Side Girls were viewed favorably by the Jewish community and American outsiders alike, their newfound

economic power and material consumption proved to be a double-edged sword: at the turn of the century, the image of the Ghetto Girl emerged as the first in a long line of negative stereotypes about Jewish women. The Ghetto Girl provoked ridicule from non-Jews as the vulgar embodiment of cultural ignorance, and inspired deep-seated anxiety among Jews for her economic and social autonomy. Riv-Ellen Prell, who devotes an entire chapter of Fighting to Become Americans to tracing the stereotype, writes,

The Ghetto Girl’s qualities . . . figured into intra-ethnic gender stereotypes for the remainder of the twentieth century because Jews’ difference from the nation continued to find expression in an anxious place at the margin. . . . Her capacity to embody what was frightening and desirable about America—consumption, freedom, economic dependence through marriage, and display—cast her in this problematic role as an icon of Americanization.47

Prell’s examples mainly come from the Yiddish and English press, as well as writers like Fannie Hurst. The Ghetto Girl also appears in Yiddish-language popular entertainment, of course: Gertie’s character in Mamele is the very embodiment of the cultural and economic anxieties that Prell notes above.

The majority of the Kravchik family is well along on the path of Americanization, and like real-life immigrant families, the children—Selma, Gertie, Benny, and Archie—are more Americanized than either Shimen or Mamele. There is the American English that intertwines, to varying degrees, each family member’s dialogue. Archie, the youngest and Mamele’s ward, makes his first entrance on roller skates after spending the afternoon chasing an ice cream truck. Benny, the eldest, schemes in the second act to buy a taxi cab. As a young working girl, Gertie is perhaps the most Americanized member of the family. Unlike Mamele, who is addressed interchangeably as Khaye-Feygl or Ida, in addition to Kid Mother and Mamele, Gertie has

47 Riv-Ellen Prell, Fighting to Become Americans: Assimilation and the Trouble Between Jewish Women and Jewish Men (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 57.
already abandoned her Old World name. Her speech and song characterize her as the worst kind of Ghetto Girl. The following exchange with her friend and neighbor, Bernice, about bargains and boys (particularly Louie, Bernice’s brother and Gertie’s apparent former love interest) encapsulates Gertie’s personality:

Gertie: Oh Bernice, I bought such beautiful things. Just look at this! [pulls out a dress]
Bernice: Very pretty. Was it very expensive?
Gertie: No, the opposite, a bargain in a sale. Eighteen ninety-five, marked down from forty-nine ninety-eight. Here is a bag just to match the dress. Pretty right? Three ninety-eight. And look at these stockings. Oh what a bargain. Practically free. Free, I tell you. One twenty-nine a pair. I took no more than four pairs. Say what can I do? The pay envelope soon came down with consumption. But wait til I get married, then I'm going to go out and buy and buy and buy.
Bernice: Yes, you'll buy if you have the means. Do you know whom you'll marry?
Gertie: I don't know who I'll marry. I only know whom I won't marry.
Bernice: Who?
Gertie: A pauper. Someone who can't buy me all the beautiful things I deserve, I certainly wouldn’t marry.
Bernice: Poor Louie.
Gertie: Yes, Louie is poor and that's the trouble with him. Besides that he is a real swell boy. If only he didn’t want to be a cantor. 48

As the above exchange suggests, Gertie seems to be prepared to trade in Jewish traditions for American materiality. It is no coincidence that the very next musical number—the second of the show, and one of two numbers to feature Gertie—is called “Bargains.”

Rumshinsky’s score for Mamele earned accolades in the Yiddish and English press for blending Old World melodies with American music. Yet in contrast to the music closely associated with Mamele, “Bargains” is thoroughly modern, with no traces of the Old World. The lightly syncopated verses are in G minor, but avoid the augmented second interval that characterizes many of the other musical numbers. The first verse describes the imagery of women at a bargain sale, encouraging the audience to flee:

48 Critical edition, dialogue 2A.
Gertie: When you hear a racket, an enormous commotion,
Bernice: You run over fast, you believe, God forbid, it’s a fire.
Gertie: Women push and if you value your life
Bernice: Run away
Gertie: What a horror!
Bernice: Run quickly
Gertie: You’ll be ruined
Both: Because there is a bargain sale. Oh!

The humorous lyrics are supported by the orchestration: the flute and clarinet have small flourishes, and most of the strings provide light harmonic accompaniment. The first violin, right hand piano part, and occasionally the trumpet, all double the melody. The verse ends with a \( V^7/V-V \) progression on the words “bargain sale,” which gives way to a more syncopated, catchy chorus in G Major.

Bargains, bargains, lucky finds
Bargains, bargains, what a creation
Bargains, bargains for a shoestring budget
Even though it’s torn and missing a button
But then you can have it for two cents less. Oy
Bargains, bargains, everyone wants them
Bargains, bargains, constantly
Us wives search for them endlessly
Sometimes luck is meant for us and sometimes it's just the opposite
If you seek, you shall find, and sometimes you win a bargain, a great catch.

On the one hand, the song lyrics portray exactly the kind of greedy materialism that defined the negative aspects of the Ghetto Girl stereotype. The first verse seems to hint towards a kind of primal savagery that manifests in women who encounter a bargain sale—they become loud and physically forceful, a menace to others. Finding bargains is an obsession, suggests the chorus. However, the song is not as sinister as the above reading suggests. Instead the springy, syncopated melody and the use of a major key seem to validate women’s fondness for bargain sales as a positive attribute. “Bargains” is, in fact, unapologetic in its materialistic glory.
In a similar vein, the opening chorus, “Freyt akh” [Rejoice!] from a 1923 Rumshinsky show, *Di goldene kale* [The Golden Bride], centers around the power of the American dollar. In a small, impoverished town in Russia, the townsfolk eagerly await the arrival of heroine Goldele’s rich American uncle, who brings news of Goldele’s father’s death and subsequent inheritance.

*Verse 1*
Kalmen: The American with his dollars
Has bought off the leading citizens:
The rabbi, the cantor, the synagogue warden, the ritual slaughterer,
The rabbi’s wife, the warden’s wife, and even the mikve lady.
The dollar, the dollar.
All: God, where do we get the dollar?
Toybe: Who, today, has the greatest possible power?
Chorus: The dollar, oy, oy, the dollar.
Kalmen: Who will buy a handsome young man for an old shrew?
Chorus: The dollar, oy, oy, the dollar.
Pinkhes: A little wife, beautiful as gold, charming and pious,
Kisses her rich, old husband and embraces him.
With her little fingers in his pocket searching for
Chorus: The dollar, oy, oy, the dollar.

*Refrain*
The dollar, oy, oy, oy, the dollar,
It buys off everyone; you’ll be the leading citizen,
You can perform the greatest feat
Merely by minting money.
The king of money is the dollar
In the whole world. 49

There are no Ghetto Girls in *Di goldene kale*, nor negative feminine stereotypes to explore. Nonetheless, the literal currency of Americanization foregrounds both acts. Michael Ochs reads the latter song, particularly Kalmen’s warning about money’s corrupting influence, as a veiled reminder about the dangers of capitalism for a “first-run audience with socialist

49 Rumshinsky, *Di goldene kale*, 599.
tendencies.”  Like “Bargains” and the women it characterizes, “Rejoice” speaks to the latent anxiety of Americanization. At the same time however, both numbers are buoyant and unapologetic about the New World identity they each promote. America remained, after all, *di goldene medine* [The Golden Land]—a place of prosperity and economic mobility for those who could assume the modern identities that the New World demanded of all its inhabitants. Thus, “Bargains” lends a tongue-in-cheek validation to Gertie’s status as a budding modern American.

Yet her shopping prowess is called into question when Mamele returns home and demands to see the so-called bargains. The same eighteen-ninety-five dress can be purchased on Pitkin Avenue, a once-bustling commercial thoroughfare in the impoverished Jewish neighborhood of Brownsville, for almost half the price—a claim that hints as much at the extent of Gertie’s prowess as a consumer and aspiring fashion maven as Mamele’s cluelessness about the latest fashion trends.

Gertie takes a similarly transactional approach to her love life, evaluating romantic suitors based on their financial prospects; further, her preoccupation with leisure activities leads her to forsake social propriety. She dismisses her brother, Benny as “not a good bargain” for the love-stricken Bernice, and is similarly critical of Bernice’s brother Louie above. Instead, Gertie takes up with the smooth-talking Sidney Katz, who is poised to whisk her away for a weekend at a bungalow in Long Beach.

When Gertie and Sidney return from their vacation in the second act (set several weeks later), they seem to be practically engaged, if only Sidney would ask Shimen’s permission. But here, too, Gertie’s preoccupation with material comforts surfaces:

Sidney: Business is business. Sometimes up, sometimes down.

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Gertie: Up is all right. But down is not useful. You know I am a poor man's daughter. I have a poor man's desires: a pretty house, pretty things ....

Sidney: Well, and love?

Gertie: Of course love is the main thing. But all the other things are not bad either. Love without everything else is like a good meal without salt or pepper.

Sidney: But you can't eat salt and pepper by themselves.

Gertie: Of course not. If I didn't love you I wouldn't go out with you even if you were Browning himself.\(^5^1\)

Sidney promises to speak to Shimen after Gertie’s vacation, and then the two sing “Farsheydene Libe” [Different Love].

Like “Bargains,” “Farsheydene Libe” is in a major key and lightly syncopated, avoiding the telltale signs of the Old World. However, “Farsheydene Libe” takes Americanization in an entirely different direction, appealing to the universality of love via high culture. In the first part of the song, Gertie and Sidney describe the ubiquity of love in every language (verbal and nonverbal) and every art form, from literature to music. Rumshinsky then quotes bits of *La Traviata* and *Carmen*, with recitative passages connecting one section to the next.

In the final portion of the song, Sidney asks Gertie to “sing to [him] of love like people tell us,” and the duet reinforces that the two are so in love they cannot live without one another.

As Riv-Ellen Prell notes, love and marriage were integral to the process of Americanization.\(^5^2\) It is therefore unsurprising that each couple—Benny and Bernice, Sidney and Gertie, and Louie and Ida—has their own love duet.

Yet Gertie and Sidney’s duet is duplicitous. On the one hand, with its appeal to opera as a testament to love’s lofty heights, this is the most impressive love duet in the show. At the same time however, its grandiose sentiments prove to be hollow and insincere. In the dialogue preceding “Farsheydene Libe,” Gertie reveals herself to be far more interested in material wealth

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\(^{5^1}\) Critical edition, pp. 142-3.

\(^{5^2}\) See Prell, *Fighting to Become Americans*, 58-61.
than love. And in the third act Sidney, under the guise of concern for the Kravchik family, ventures to the country to convince Mamele to return to the city. His intentions are quickly revealed to be amorous instead of altruistic: he promises to treat Mamele like a princess, showering her with sparkling jewels, expensive dresses, and extravagant evenings chauffeured around town in fancy cars—a Ghetto Girl’s dream come true. This plot twist carries two implications for its female audience. First, Sidney’s attraction to Mamele’s maternal femininity reads in part as a rebuke to the modern, materialistic sensibilities that Gertie embodies. In the exchange above, Gertie seems all too willing to forsake romantic love in exchange for increased material comfort, a prospect that Sidney seems to regard with some concern. Second, it is only after Mamele has adopted some modern sensibilities, defying her family and updating her speech and dress to be more American, that Sidney seems to acknowledge her romantic potential. If the Ghetto Girl is being rebuked for being too modern, then arguably Mamele can be read as being not modern enough: adopting some Americanisms increases her attractiveness.

Although it is the strength of Gertie’s character that provides the dramatic foil for Mamele, Selma’s character warrants a brief discussion here. She is also an East Side Girl, but destabilizes the image of Jewish femininity in ways that Gertie does not. Selma is neither materialistic nor amorous. She hoards her paychecks, refusing to lend Benny money for the cab; she is interested neither in fashion nor boys, proclaiming to her family that she does not need a husband because she can work to provide for herself. Yet her story does not seem to end happily ever after: her family finds her insufferable, not endearing. Though Selma seems like a model immigrant, her pointed disdain for love and marriage nevertheless renders her a threat to the Jewish-American community, which would have viewed marriage as vital not only to the process of Americanization, but also to the continuation of Jewish identity.
Cast Members from the Original Production\textsuperscript{53}

*Mamele’s* cast featured several veterans of the Yiddish stage, including Picon, Boris Rosenthal, Kalman Yovelier, and Regina Prager, as well as newer talents like Lucy Levine. With the exception of the chorus girls from “Mothers of the World,” every cast member below has an entry in Zalmen Zylbercweig’s *Leksikon fun yidishn teater* that includes a thumbnail biography, notable performances, and family background. It is worth noting that several actors and actresses came from musical or theatrical families: Picon’s mother was a seamstress for the Yiddish theater in Philadelphia, both Rose Greenfield and Mildred Block had actor fathers, and Kalman Yovelier began his musical career as a *meshorer* in Galicia.

Mamele (Ida/Khaye Feygele):  Molly Picon  
Shmuel Kravchik:  Boris Rosenthal  
Selma Kravchik:  Rose Greenfield  
Gertie Kravchik:  Lucy Levine\textsuperscript{54}  
Bennie Kravchik:  Max Wilner  
Archie Kravchik:  Motele Brandt

Khazn:  Kalman Yovelier  
Khazn’s Wife:  Regina Prager  
Louie, Khazn’s son:  William Schwartz  
Bernice, Khazn’s daughter:  Mildred Block

Sidney Katz:  Benny Adler

Mothers of the World (Chorus)  
Mother of the World 1:  Milly Manie  
Mother of the World 2:  Rose Schultz  
Indian Mother:  Lottie Altman  
Spanish Mother:  Annie Ziegenlaub  
Chinese Mother:  Lottie Olmer

\textsuperscript{53} This cast list comes from a review by Harry Abramson that was pasted into a scrapbook that chronicled Molly Picon’s career. Many other Yiddish and English reviews included cast lists, but Abramson’s is the only one that included information about the “Mothers of the World” number. Found in Molly Picon Scrapbook 1923-193, Box 60, Molly Picon Papers Undated, 1877-1971, American Jewish Historical Society, Center for Jewish History.

\textsuperscript{54} Levine also played the title role for matinee performances.
Italian Mother: Selda Saltzman
Russian Mother: Luba Malina
Black Mother: Dotty Lipshitz
First Yiddish Mother: Celia Rosen
Second Yiddish Mother: Paddy Cohn

_Mamele’s Reception in the Yiddish and English Press_

Between its opening on Christmas Eve in 1926 and its closing in April 1927, _Mamele_, and particularly Picon, enjoyed a great deal of attention in both the Yiddish and mainstream New York press. A two-page photo spread in the _Forverts_ on December 26, 1926, with thumbnail photos of the cast members and several production photos of Picon in her _Mamele_ costumes, was only the beginning of the show’s coverage. The theater critics of the Yiddish press lauded the high dramatic quality of _Mamele_’s script, which was penned by Meyer Schwartz, a member of the high-brow Yiddish Art Theater, Picon’s show-stealing acting talents, and Rumshinsky’s melodies. Abraham Cahan of the _Forverts_, for instance, noted that “The show ‘Dos Mamele’ is one of the entirely few exceptions [to the usual quality of operettas]. Not only does it have a subject with substance, it also has ... a lot of real humor, traces of craftsmanship, and talent.”

Alexander Mukdoyni of the _Morgn Zhurnal_, a skeptic of popular theater, enthused,

> J. Rumshinsky has demonstrated a wide range of his musical invention. An entire encyclopedia of music he has arranged; here you have heartfelt Jewish folk music, there you have light and gracious music for lullabies and couplets; here you have pensive and delicate music for a whole scene of a dream and there you have a sparkling number of religious music in the zemirot “Yom zeh m’khubad.” In short—everything has good cohesiveness and works together, the music with the author, the actors with author and music and with them all—the director, Jacob Kalich.

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The critics of the mainstream New York press, who attended the show in February 1927, seemed to agree with Cahan and Mukdoyni’s assessments. Harry Abramson’s review concluded, “I want to say that ‘Mamala,’[sic] now playing at the Second Avenue Theatre [sic], is the best ‘Jewish’ show I ever attended—and I heartily recommend it to all my friends.”57 Rumshinsky’s music seems to have been a particular draw, with reviewers commenting on the hybrid blend of American and Old World musics. Burton Davis of the Sunday Telegraph called Rumshinsky “the George Gershwin of Second Avenue,” and a critic from Variety suggested that Rumshinsky had “even greater possibilities than Miss Picon on Broadway.”58

57 Molly Picon Papers, AJHS, scrapbook p. 133.
Critical Report

Sources

Primary Sources

A. Libretto, typescript. Dos mamele, komedye in 3 aktn fun Meyer Schwartz, muzik fun Yosef Rumshinski [Hebrew characters]. In Yiddish [Hebrew characters]. Lyrics included.
   Incomplete copy; missing approximately ten pages from the end of Act 3. Heavily annotated in pencil, with sections of dialogue crossed out and, in numerous instances, additional dialogue and song texts penciled in the margins and on versos. 82 pp. 8.5 x 11”. Present location: University of California Los Angeles, Library, Performing Arts Special Collections (PASC-M 27, Box 33). Provenance: Joseph Rumshinsky Papers.


C. Short Score, manuscript. No title page. Text underlaid in Yiddish (Hebrew characters), Hebrew, and English. Includes vocal parts with text and shows instrumental melody line during introductions, interludes, rests, etc. Few tempo and dynamic indications. In ink and pencil, heavily annotated in ink, pencil, and colored pencil. Contains extraneous material for two additional songs. 31 pp. Same location and provenance as A.

D. Piano-vocal score, manuscript. Mamele, by Joseph Rumshinsky. At head of title: “Piano Directione.” Text underlaid in Yiddish (Hebrew characters), English, and Hebrew. Same location and provenance as A. Likely copied from C: musical numbers appear in correct
sequential order, and errata in C and E were omitted. 51 pp., 10.5” x 14”. Same location and provenance as A.

E. Instrumental parts, manuscript. Parts for flute, clarinet, cornet, trombone, drums, violin I, violin II, viola, cello, and bass. Two bass parts; all other instrument parts have a single copy. In ink, some pages with pencil annotations. Contains same additional material as C. Same location and provenance as A. Pages unnumbered. The flute and clarinet parts boast extensive doodles in pencil and ink.

Additional Sources


G. Libretto, typescript. Kid mother. Typed English translation of B. Two identical copies. Same location (Box 39) and provenance as F.

H. Radio script, typescript. Mamale. For broadcast in 1950, text in Yiddish (Roman characters). Same location (Box 33) and provenance as F.

Editorial Policies

The present edition endeavors to balance the scholarly nature of a critical edition with the practical demands that mounting a performance might require. Owing to the disparate nature and poor preservation of popular Yiddish theater shows and their attendant music, reconstructing the
“text” from the original performance run is, at least in part, a speculative endeavor. For *Mamele*, this endeavor has proved to be more speculative than most, since no two scripts quite agree on characters, dialogue, or plot details. Further, one copy of the script (Source A), is missing a handful of pages from the ending.

In popular Yiddish theater productions, the music was often revised and adapted during the run of the performance, or afterward for revivals and leaner touring productions, with changes annotated directly into the instrumental parts, and with some numbers swapped out for new ones. In most cases, such changes amounted to omitting musical passages or entire numbers, or recycling parts of previous numbers elsewhere in the show. Instead of preserving such directions, which would require the performer to flip back and forth in the score, I have simply written out the recycled numbers in the order in which they would have appeared in the original production. The additional sources listed above were consulted during the collation and editing process but were not otherwise used in the present edition.

To create the current edition, I used A as the primary source for the dialogue. Despite the incomplete text, it is this manuscript that seems most likely to have been used in creating the show that premiered in 1926, since it transmits song lyrics in sequence with dialogue. Additionally, the song texts in A correspond to several of the musical numbers that critics from the mainstream press described in their reviews. On this basis, I have used this script, emendations and all, up until the point where it was no longer possible to do so. All of the sources above, though they adhere to the same general plot line, nonetheless bear significant differences in terms of musical numbers, characters, plot details, and dialect, making the task of reconstructing the ending of the show a difficult one. I have chosen to use the ending from B, a decision which may be revisited if, in the future, a complete version of the Rumshinsky
manuscript is discovered. First, the various dialects, and especially the prevalence of “Yinglish” among Mamele’s more Americanized siblings, closely matched the Rumshinsky manuscript. Second, given the importance of romantic subplots in Yiddish theater shows, B also contains the most satisfying resolution of the love story between Mamele and Louis, and with the engagement of Benny and Bernice.

Yet using B where A leaves off is not a perfect solution and creates further problems for those who might wish to mount a performance of Mamele. The transition between sources is not seamless: there are noticeable differences in the Yiddish syntax and vocabulary between A and B, namely that the dialogue in A is more Americanized and less formal. Futher, Jacob Kalich, Picon’s husband, made extensive revisions to the plot; the exact progression of events in Act Three is different enough between the two sources to result in a handful of instances where dialogue exchanges in B had already appeared earlier in A.

One possible alternative to using both sources to reconstruct Act Three would have been to only use B. In addition to the linguistic differences mentioned above, some of Kalich’s revisions included character changes. Louie, son of the khazn next door was originally Louie Farber, boarder of the Levitan family in B. Instead of Louie’s sister Bernice acting as the chaperone in Act Three, it is Louie’s landlady, Mrs. Levitan, who accompanies Louie and Mamele on their vacation. Given the extent to which Kalich Americanized the dialogue and the younger characters, Bernice is a more natural chaperone for Mamele and Louie’s vacation. Finally, it would be difficult to determine, on the basis of B, where to break the dialogue and insert “Du bist bashafn far mir,” the penultimate musical number of the show.

A (typed libretto, UCLA) is the primary source for dialogue. B (typed libretto, Library of Congress) is the primary source for dialogue where A is incomplete, and a supplemental source for stage and scenery directions.
C (short score, UCLA) served as a reference for the voice part and score for numbers not included in D.
D (piano-vocal score, UCLA) is the primary source for the vocal part and tempo indications.
E (instrument parts, UCLA) is the primary source for the orchestral parts and tempo indications where they are more inclusive than D.

**General Notes on the Text**

_Notes on Transliteration and Translation_

Yiddish is a Germanic language written in Hebrew characters, with vocabulary stemming from Hebrew, Polish, and Russian, as well as German. Despite numerous attempts at orthographic reforms in the early twentieth century, Yiddish has remained a diasporic language, with several dialects differing in grammar and pronunciation, and even more approaches to spelling. To complicate matters further, Yiddish plays frequently made use of several dialects to denote social status. _Daytshmeyrish_, a “German-affected” strain of Yiddish (much in the manner of Miss Piggy’s “French,” or the use of Olde English suffixes in twenty-first century parlance), was especially common in Yiddish theater productions, denoting high social status. Alternatively, throughout the 1920s, popular shows like _Mamele_ increasingly incorporated “Yinglish,” mirroring the increasing Americanization of theater audiences.

In the original manuscripts, the song texts are written out in Hebrew script. Since Hebrew and Yiddish are read from right to left, fitting the words to music, which reads in the opposite direction, presented a special challenge for Yiddish theater composers. In most cases, including for _Mamele_, the composers simply wrote the words “backwards” by syllable.

In the present edition, both libretto and song texts are transliterated following the standard YIVO orthography, or _klal_ Yiddish, which lessens the burden of readability for performers. Russian and English words in the text, which were written out in Hebrew characters, have also been transliterated using this approach. It should be noted, however, that Yiddish
theater shows generally used the Southeastern (also known as the Ukrainian) dialect, which would result in slight variations in vowel sounds should the performer choose to use it in a production of *Mamele*.

*Notes on Performing Act Three*

The present edition ultimately places the burden of resolving *Mamele*’s ending on potential performers who might wish to mount a production. There are a handful of routes that might be taken to arrive at an edition that could be used for a performance. The easiest of these would be to simply use Act Three from B. In this scenario, performers would need to make minor modifications to the characters to be consistent with the details of the preceding acts from A. Alternately, performers could polish Act Three as it exists in this edition by removing instances where dialogue was inadvertently duplicated and Americanizing the portion of the script that comes from Act Three. A third possible solution would be to use sources A and B to write a new ending in the spirit of Meyer Schwartz and Jacob Kalich, an approach that would be appropriate to the adaptive nature of the Yiddish theater tradition.

*Emendations*

Owing to the great haste with which the manuscript parts were copied for the original production, there are minor discrepancies between some of the instrumental parts in terms of tempo indications, dynamics, and articulations. Reconciling these instances comprises the bulk of the report. Stem direction, beaming, ties, and other indications with no bearing on how the music sounds have been normalized. Cautionary accidentals in the instrument parts have been omitted in the present edition.
1. **Overture**
   1. **D:** no tempo indication; **E:** Allegro moderato; **Vn1, Vcl, Cb:** $f$; **Vn2, Vla:** $ff$; **Pno:** no dynamic
   2. **Fl, Cl, Ct:** $f$; **Tb:** no dynamic
   3. **Ct:** no articulation
   12.2-14.1, **Ct:** no articulation
   16, **Fl:** staccato
   17.2-19.1, **Ct:** no articulation
   19-20, **Vla:** staccatos indicated
   36, **Fl:** staccato, **Vn 1, Vn 2, Cb:** no articulation indicated
   41.2-.3, **Vn2:** staccatos indicated
   55-57.3, **Vn2:** staccatos indicated
   59.2-.3, **Vn1:** no articulation indicated
   67, **Fl:** $ff$

2. **Mames fun der velt**
   1. **D:** no dynamic; **Ct:** $mf$
   4.1, **Fl,** no articulation
   4.2, **Fl, Cl,** no tempo indication, **Vn1 rall.**, 5: **Vn2 dolce**
   8.4, **Va,** accent added to match mm. 9-11
   11.4, **Fl,** accent added to match 10.4
   20, **Vel p**
   39, **Vn2,** arco added
   41, **D Allegretto,** **E Molto allegretto; D:** no dynamic
   41, **Fl and Vcl,** no dynamic
   79, **D:** no tempo
   92-3, **Vn1:** crescendo added to match mm. 83-8.
   127, **D, E,** no tempo indication
   133.1, **Vn1:** $p$
   174.1, **Vn1:** no articulation
   204 (2\textsuperscript{nd} time), **Ct:** $p$
   211, **Dr:** no dynamic
   227, **Vn1:** Maestoso,
   226.1-3, **Vn 1, Vn 2,** no articulation
   230.2, **Dr:** rall
   230.3, **Tb:** rite
   230.4, **Fl:** $ff$
   231, **D:** no tempo indication; **E:** Maestoso; **Pno, Vcl,** no dynamic
   235, **Vn1:** no articulation
   261, **Ct:** accent
   285.1, **Cl, Vln2, Vla** no dynamic

3. **Bargains**
   1 **D:** no tempo indication; **E:** Allegretto; **D:** no dynamic, **Vn2, Va:** $f$
2, Cl: no articulation
11-2, Vc: no dynamic
13.1, Cl: no articulation
14.2, Vcl: no articulation
18, Ct: no articulation
22.2, Vcl: no articulation
28.1, Fl: no articulation
33.2, Fl: no tempo indication
45-7, Tb: accent marks
48, Cb: accent marks; Vcl no articulation
49-51, Tb: accent marks
52.3 Vn2: c’
61-4, Fl, Cl, Tb: no articulation
71-2 Ct, Vn1, Va, Vcl: no articulation
73-4.1, Vcl: no articulation

4. Bruder mayn
1, Pno: ff
3-4, Cb: staccato
6 (51), Vcl: arco not indicated
7-11 (52-6), Cb: no articulation
12.2-.3, Vn2: no articulation
15-6, Vla: staccato
17 (62), Vn2: p
18.3, Vla: f
19.3, Cb: ff
21, Vcl: p
23, Cl, Vn2, Vla, Cb: Allegro; Vn1, Vcl: Allegretto; Cl p
24.4 (69.4), Vn1, Vcl: no dynamic, Vn2, Cb ff, Vla f
28, Vla: no articulation
31-5, Vla: no articulation
35, Cl, Vcl: no articulation
37-9, Vla: no articulation
39-40.1, Vcl: no articulation
40.3, Fl, Tb: no dynamic
41.1-44.1, Vla: no articulation

5. Oyb s’iz geven gut
1, D: Andantino, E: Andantino assai
1.4-2.1, Vn1: slurred (2.4-3.1)
5.2, 6.2, Vcl: accent added to match Vn2, Vla
5.2, Fl: mf
9.2, 10.2, Ibid.
6.4-7.1, Vn1: slurred (7.4-8.1)
19-20, Vn2: staccato indicated
21-5, Cb: staccato indicated
35-6, Vn2: staccato indicated
40, Vn1, Cb: no accent; Fl, tb, dr: ff

8. *Mutzu kutz*
1, Fl: ff
7, Vn 2, Va, Vcl: no articulation
11, Vn2: no articulation
11-12.1, Vcl: no articulation
15, Vn2: no articulation
21-31, Cl: staccatos added to match mm. 5-15
23, Va, Vcl: no articulation
24 (69), Fl, Cl, Vcl: no dynamic
27, Vn2, Va, Vcl: no articulation
32, Vcl: no articulation
35-36.1, Vn1: staccatos added to match mm. 33-4
40.3, Cl, Vcl, Cb: no dynamic
44-5, Va: no articulation
44.1, Fl: no articulation
44.2, Cl, Vl: f
45-52.1, Cl: staccatos added to match mm. 37-44.1
53.2-57, Cl: no articulation
57-8, Ct: no articulation
57.2, Vn1: staccatos added to match m. 53
59-60, Fl: no articulation
66-7, Cl: no articulation
67, Fl: no articulation
69, Cl: no articulation

9. *Farshyedene libe*
1, Fl: no dynamic; Vn1 mf
9-11.1, Fl: no articulation
29, Fl: no tempo indication
31, Fl: no tempo indication
31-33.1, Fl: no articulation
42.2, Tb: f
43, Fl: no dynamic
44.3, Fl, Cl: p
47, E, Allegro; Tb, Vn 1, Vla, Vcl: no dynamic
50.1, Vn1: f
69.1, Ct, Vla, Vcl: no accent
74, Vn1, Vcl: Allegretto, Ct: no tempo indication
78, Vn2, Vla: no dynamic
93, Fl, Cl, Vn1, Vla: no dynamic; Cl: accent
104-5, Cl: staccato
114, D: no tempo indication; E: Andante
118, VlaL no dynamic
119.1, Cb: no dynamic
119.2, Vn2, Vla: no dynamic
125 (145), Tb, Vla, Cl: no articulation
128.2 (148.2), Ct, Tb, Vn1, Vcl, Cb: no dynamic; Cb: accent
129, Cl: p
161, Fl, Cl, Ct, Tb, Vla, Cb: no dynamic; Ct, Vn1, Vcl: accent
162, Ct: ff

10. **Zmires**
1, D: no tempo indication; E: Allegro moderato
7-8, Vla: staccatos indicated
11-2, Vla: *ibid.*
13.2-14, Fl, Cl: no articulation
15.2-18, Fl, Cl: no articulation
22, Cb: staccatos indicated
24, Cb: *ibid.*
30, Vla: *ibid.*
31.2, Vn1 no articulation
32, Vla: staccatos indicated
35.2-36, Fl: no articulation
36, Cl, Vn2: no articulation
47-48.1, Vcl: added slur to match m. 43
49, Vla: no articulation
51, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
57-74, E: not included; repeated 39-56
75-92, E: all in dm; voice part not in D
83-84.1, VCl: added slur to match m. 79
85, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
87, Vn2, Vla: no articulation

11. **Mary-Charlie Duet**
20, Vn2: staccato
23.4, Cl, Vla: no dynamic
24, Vn1: no articulation
25, Fl: Allegro
30, Cl, Ct, Tb, Vn2, Vla: no dynamic
31, Vn2, Vla, Vcl: *Allegro*
31-2, Cb: no articulation
34, Vn1: no dynamic indicated
35, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
39, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
45.1, Cb: accent
47-8, Vla: no articulation
49-50, Cl: no articulation
51, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
53.2-54.1, Fl, Cl: staccatos added to match m. 50.2-51.1
55-56.1, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
56, Vn1: \textit{f}
57, Ct: \textit{f}
57-8, Fl, Cl, Vn2: no articulation
58, Vn1: staccatos added to match m. 57
62, Vn1: staccatos added to match m. 50
63, Vn2, Va: no articulation; Fl: \textit{f}
67, Vn1: staccatos added to match m. 63, Vn2, Va: no articulation
69, Cl: no articulation
73-4, Fl, Cl, Vn1: no articulation
85, Vcl: staccatos indicated
94.1-96.1, Vcl: no articulation
96.1, Vla: no articulation
96.2, Cb: staccato
97-109, Vn1: articulation added to match Tp
100, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
104, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
110-3, Fl, Cl, Vn1: no articulation
121, Vn1: staccatos added to match m. 127
122.1, Fl: no articulation
122-3, Cl: no articulation
122.2, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
128, Fl: no articulation
128-9, Cl: no articulation
128.2, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
133, Vn2: no articulation
136-7, Cl: no articulation
136.1, Fl: no articulation
136.2, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
140-141.1, Fl, Cl: no articulation
140.2, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
148.2, Vn1 \textit{rall.}, Vn2 \textit{rit.}
149, Ct: \textit{mf}
153, Cl: no articulation
158-9, Cl: no articulation
171, Vla: no articulation
174, Cl: no articulation
174-5.1, Cb: staccato
177, Vcl: crescendo added to match m. 161
179, Vcl: crescendo added to match m. 163
182-3, Vn1: staccato; Cl: no articulation
185-6.1, Cl: no articulation
187: \textit{C} and \textbf{D}, no tempo; \textit{E}, Allegro
187, Vcl: no dynamic
188, Fl: staccato
197, Tb: $p$
222, Cb: no articulation
235, Fl, Ct, Vn1, Vn2: no dynamic; Vla, Vcl, Cb $ff$
237, Vla: $f$
237-240, Fl, Tb, Vn1: no accents
244.1, Vn1: slur added to match m. 268.1
291, C and D, no tempo indication; $E$ a tempo; Fl, Ct: Valse
295, C and D, a tempo; $E$ no tempo indication; Vla: no dynamic
330, Vn2, Vla, Vcl, Cb: no dynamic
332, Vn1, Vcl: no dynamic
356-7, Vn2: staccato
363, Vn1 rall., Vn2 rit.
366-7.1, Cb: staccato
368, Fl: $p$
372-83, Cb: staccato
379, Vn1: slurs added to match m. 371
390, Cl, Vn2, Vla: no articulation; Vcl no dynamic
391, Fl: accent
394, Cl, Vn2, Vla: no articulation
400 (2), Vn1, Vn2, Vla: arco not indicated after first repeat at m. 414; Fl, Cb: $f$
412, Vn1: no articulation
416.2-417.1, Cl: no articulation
427, Tb: $f$
447.2, Vcl: no articulation; Cl: accent
451, Tb, Vcl: no articulation
452, Fl, Vn1 and Vn2: no dynamic
452-3, Tb, Cb: no articulation
454, Cl: $ff$; Vla: $f$
460.2, Cl: no articulation
463, Vcl: crescendo added to match m. 455
465, Vcl: crescendo added to match m. 457
476-7.1, Cb: staccato
484.1, Vn2: no articulation
488, C and $E$ allegro; Ct, Tb: no dynamic
492, $E$ Andantino; Vcl: no dynamic
507, Cl: $p$

13. In der kontri
1, Vn2, Vla: $f$; Pno: no dynamic
20, Cl: staccato
20.1, Vla: no articulation
24-7, Vla: no articulation
31.1, Vla: no articulation
31.2-4, Vcl: accents
35-39.1, Vcl: no articulation
35.2-39.1, Vla: no articulation
46-7, Vla, Vcl: no articulation
50, Vcl: no articulation

14. *Du bist bashafn far mir*
1, Ct, Vcl: *f*; Pno: no dynamic
13, Cl: *f*
17, Fl, Cl, Tb, Vn1, Vcl: no dynamic
29, Vla: *pizz* added to match Vn2
37.2, Vn2: *mf*
50-51.1, Vcl: staccato
52, Vcl, Cb: accent indicated
62-3, Cl: staccato
66-67.1, Cb: no articulation indicated
83.2, Vla: *f*
83.2-.3, Vcl: no articulation
85.3, Vla: no articulation
153.4, Fl: staccato
154, Vn1, Vn2, Cb: no accent

**Untitled (omitted from final score)**
1, Ct: *ff*
1-2, Vcl: no articulation
3, Vn1: no articulation
10, Vn1: no articulation
13-5, Vn1: no articulation
14, Vcl: no articulation
17, Fl, Cl, Ct, Vn1, Cb: no dynamic
17.1, Cl: no articulation
19, Fl, Cl: no accent
20, Vn2: staccato
21-2, Vn2: no articulation
23.4, Vcl: no dynamic
25, Fl, Cl: no dynamic
33, Vcl: no dynamic; Cb: *ff*
37, Fl, Cl: no articulation
38.2, Vcl: no fermata; Tb: staccato

**Yizkor (omitted from final score)**
6, Ct: no dynamic
7, Va: *dolce*
8, Vcl: missing, copied from Cb
9, Cl: no dynamic
10, Tb: *mf*
11.3, Vn2: accent
12.1, Va, Vcl: accent
14.1, Va: accent
21, Ct, Tb: mf
29, Cb: accent
33.2, Va: p
35, Va: p
51, Va, Vcl: ff
69, Tb: no articulation
69.2, Va, Vcl: f, Vn1, Cb: no dynamic; Vcl: accent
69.2-.4, Cb: accents
70, Vn2: f; Vn1, Vn2: no accent
Cast (in order of appearance)

Simon Kravtshik, an old man
Selma, his daughter, a shop girl
Benny, his son, a taxi driver
Gertie, his daughter, a shop girl
Ida (Khaye-Feygl, dos Mamele)
Archie, his son
Mendel, a khazn
Tsipe, the khazn's wife
Louie (a modern khazn), their son
Bernice, their daughter
Sidney Katz, a businessman

Instruments

Flute
Clarinet in B♭
Cornet in B♭
Trombone

Percussion
Castanets
Triangle
Tambourine
Snare Drum
Bass Drum
Timpani

Piano
Violin 1
Violin2
Viola
ViolonCello
Contrabass

Scene
Acts 1 and 2: New York
Act 3: In the countryside
ERSHTER AKT [ACT ONE]

No. 1: Overture
No. 2: Prologue, Mames fun der velt (Mothers of the world)

Chorus
Ruslands von der Ruslands kin der synen shoyn gezanti
216
2A: Dialogue

Simon, Gertie, Bernice

Simon

Half kitchen, half dining room. Shimon sleeps on the couch. Someone knocks several times.

Gertie


Simon

Half kitchen, half dining room. Shimon sleeps on the couch. Someone knocks several times.

enter Gertie, with packages

Gertie

Khaye Feygl! Khaye Feygl! Dray sho darf men klapn biz men efnt.

Simon

I didn't hear. I was asleep. I thought it was Mamele.

enter Gertie, with packages

Gertie

Three hours you gotta knock until someone opens.

Simon

I didn't hear. I was asleep. I thought it was Mamele.

Gertie

Where is Mamele? Doesn't she know that when you come home from work you need to eat?

Simon

I didn't hear. I was asleep. I thought it was Mamele.

enter Bernice

Bernice

My mother isn't here?

Gertie

Hello Bernice. What are you doing?

enter Bernice

Bernice

Nothing.

Gertie

Oh Bernice, I bought such beautiful things. Just look at this! [shows a dress]

Bernice

Very pretty. Surely it's expensive?

Gertie No, the opposite, a bargain in a sale. Eighteen ninety-five, marked down from forty-nine ninety-eight. Here is a bag just to match the dress. Pretty, right? Three ninety-eight. And look at these stockings. Oh what a bargain. Practically free. Free, I tell you. One twenty-nine a pair. I took no more than four pairs. Say what can I do? The pay envelope soon came down with consumption. But wait til I get married, then I'm going to go out and buy and buy and buy.


Bernice Yes, you'll buy if you have the means. Do you know whom you'll marry?

Gertie Ikh veys nit mit vemen ikh vel khasune hobn. Ikh veys ober mit vemen ikh vel nit khasune hobn.

Gertie I don't know whom I'll marry. I only know whom I won't marry.

Bernice Mit vemen?

Gertie Mit a kaptsn. Mit eynem vos vet mir nit kenen koyfn al di byutiful things vel ikh zikhernit khasune hobn.

Bernice Whom?

Bernice A pauper. Someone who can't buy me all the beautiful things, I certainly wouldn't marry.

Gertie Yes. Louie iz pur end dets di hol trobl vith him. Khuts dem iz er zeyr a voyler boy. Ven er zol nur nit veln zayn a khazn.

Bernice You committed an injustice by breaking his heart.

Bernice Poor Louie.

Gertie Yes, Louie is poor and that's the trouble with him. Besides that he is a real fine boy. If only he didn't want to be a cantor.

Bernice Hast getun an avle, vas du hast im tsubrakhn dos harts.

Bernice Just like your brother.

Bernice Pliz pliz. Dos gleykh ikh nit. Ay vant no lektshurs.

Bernice Please, please. I don't like that. I want no lectures

Gertie: Oh, you are mad at my brother so you're taking it out on me. Let me tell you something, kid. Thank God that my brother doesn't want to marry you. Forty a week and that's not steady. You see, he's not such a big bargain after all.

Bernice: Dir ligt nur in zinen bargens.

Gertie: Yes. Bargens iz a vumens dizayr.

Bernice: All you think about is bargains.

Gertie: Yes. Bargains is a woman's desire.
No. 3: Bargains
3A: Dialogue

Archie, Benny, Bernice, Khaye Feygl, Gertie, Selma


Gertie: Zi iz shoy do! Ver fregt bay dir?

Selma: Bald vestu dokh kumen tsu mir. Ikh zol dir bargen a finverl.


Gertie: Di plezshur iz al yurs. Ikh darf nit seyven keyn nadn. Ikh ken krign a khosn on nadn.


Selma: Halevay valstu beser gehat eynem a rekhtn.

Bernice: Iz nit mayn bruder Louie a vanderful bay?

Enter Selma

Selma: Just look! Mamele still isn't here? Aha! She dragged along the entire department store. There's nowhere to move in this house with all these rags of hers.

Gertie: She's already here! Who asked you?

Selma: Soon you will come to me. I should lend you a fiver.

Gertie: Like hell I need you and your fivers. Go, go, people are waiting for you at the bank. You were just at the bank? [sings] To the bank, to the bank....

Bernice: What's wrong with the bank? Is it something to be ashamed of? I also have some money in the bank.

Gertie: The pleasure is all yours. I don't need to save for a dowry. I can get a husband without a dowry.

Selma: A husband! Oh right here! [makes a fig with hand] Charlatans, bums you can get. Not a husband. Today they go out with you and tomorrow they throw you away.

Gertie: They throw me away? I have got them by the dozen, by the hundred!

Selma: If only you had one good one.

Bernice: Isn't my brother Louie a wonderful boy?
Selma

Zol ikh hobn aza yor.
Selma

I should be so lucky.

Gertie

Gertie

You like Louie? You can have him. Go on, take him. Congratulations. I don't want to be a cantor's wife.

Selma

Du ... du... Red mir nit keyn shidukhim. Ikh vel mir shoyn aleyn redn.
Selma

You... You... Don't make matches for me. I can make my own.

Gertie

Dontshu bot in tu may biznes, du yu hir mi?
Gertie

Don't you butt into my business, do you hear me?

Selma

Ikh vel mikh yo arayn mishn in dayne biznes. Ikh bin an eltene shvester. Ver den zol zikh mishn?
Selma

I will so meddle in your business. I'm your older sister. Who else should meddle?

**enter Benny**

Benny

Vatsemeter? Vatsemeter?
Benny

What's the matter? What's the matter?

Gertie

Di noyrv! Di aydiya! Misht zikh in mayne biznes det sauer ald meyd.
Gertie

The nerve! The idea! Sticking her nose in my business, that sour old maid.

Selma

Ver iz an ald meyd! Derleb nit mayne yarn! Biz mayne yarn vestu fardreyen di kep toyzender yunge leyt.
Selma

Who's an old maid! May you not reach my age! 'Til my age you'll drive a thousand young men crazy.

Gertie

Vayz a kunts, fardrey eynem. Nat vith det feys.
Gertie

What a trick, drive someone crazy. Not with that face.

Selma

Ikh vel ir haynt tsupatshn di ongefarbte bakn ire. [vil tsu]
Selma

I'm going to smack those painted cheeks of hers today! [wants to approach]

**Beni halt zi**

Selma

He he! Hold yur horses! [beyde shrayen] Shodop!
Selma

Hey, hey! Hold your horses! [both shout] Shut up!

Benny

[tso Goyrti] Yu shodp tu.
Benny

[to Gertie] You shut up too.

Gertie

Dont tel mi tu shodop! Shodop yurself!
Gertie

Don't tell me to shut up! Shut up yourself!

Bernice

Ah stap it! Far gads seyk stap it! ale shrayen tsuzamen; enter Khaye Feygl
Bernice

Oh stop it! For God's sake stop it! everyone yelling at the same time; enter Khaye-Feygl
Khaye-Feygl comes in from the street with a full basket in her hand and a large paper bag in the other. They do not see her and keep yelling

Khaye

Sha! Sha! Shodop! Shodop! [es vert shtil men vil vider shrayn]
Shodop! Men hert dokh ayere koyles far tsen blok.

Selma

Aza ongeshmirte lyalke.

Gertie

Aza alte...

Khaye

Shodop! Ze, ze vi men lozt mikh shteyn mitn gantsn bagazh un keyner git zikh nit a rir tsu.
Kaman! Nemt tsu emetser. [Beni vil nemen di beg] Pavolye pavolye vi du nemtst gib akhtung. [shelt dem besket nemt bay beni dem beg shtelt oyf tshier un nemt aroys a ketsele]

Selma

Vos iz dos?

Khaye

A ketsele.

Selma

Tsu vos? Ver darf do ketselekh?
S'iz dokh a pitsl, a brekele. Es toyg den tsu epes? Me darf dokh es ersht hodeven.

Khaye


Gertie

Ah vos den! Dos ketsele. Tsi mir viln esn fregt zi nit. Yu ar a hel af a hoyzkiper.

Khaye

Sey shvester mayne! Shray oyfn tatn nit oyf mir.

Khaye

Sha, sha! Shut up! Shut up! [it quiets down and they want to yell again] Shut up! You can hear your screams from ten blocks away!

Selma

What a painted doll.

Gertie

What an old ...

Khaye

Shut up! Look, see how I'm left standing with all my bags and nobody makes a move in my direction? Come on! Someone take them. [Benny wants to take the bag] Easy, easy, careful how you take it. [sets down the basket, takes the bag from Benny, sets it on a chair and takes out a kitten]

Selma

What is that?

Gertie


Khaye

So what? I'll raise it. If I can raise big cats like you, then surely I can raise a tiny little kitten. Kitty, kitty, kitty. [plays with it] Should we give the kitty some milk? [Takes milk from the icebox, pours it in a saucer, and gives it to the cat; Benny takes out a chicken drumstick, challah from the bread box, and eats standing up]

Gertie

Oh what then! The kitten. She doesn't ask if we want to eat. You are a helluva housekeeper.

Khaye

Say, sister of mine! Yell at Papa, not at me.
Selma: Vos zi iz gerekht iz zi gerekht. Opgeshvitst a halbn tog in shop me kumt aheym darf men geyn in delikatesn stor esn. [op]

Selma: When she's right, she's right. After sweating all day at the shop you go home, and then you have to go to the delicatessen to eat. [exits]

Bernice: Der yu ar! Kent get di best an litl Ayde.

Bernice: There you are! Can't get the best on little Ida.


Bernice: Ekskyuz mi. [op]

Bernice: Excuse me. [exits]

Khaye: Du, du vos baleydikstu menshn vos? Bist haynt oyfgeshtanen oyf der linker zayt?

Khaye: You, you, why must you offend people? Did you get up on the wrong side of the bed?

Gertie: Kam an gib mir esn az nit gey ikh avek.

Gertie: Come and give me food or else I'll leave.


Khaye: Really! You'll leave? May younger ones than you never leave. Have a good trip. Write a postcard sometimes. Send a picture. [busy]

Khaye: Vayz nor vayz nor. Vos iz dort? Oh gee! [wants to take things]

Khaye: Show us, show us. Whadya got there? Oh, it's the holy sabbath: a bunch of bargains. Do you still have something left of your paycheck? Show us, show us.

Gertie: Ah dshi! [vil nemn zakhn]

Gertie: Oh gee! [wants to take thing]


Khaye: Here, here's $6. I'll give you $2 next week.

Khaye: Ikh vel farshraybn oyf der linker zayt koymen. Yede vokh blaybt zi mir shuldik. Lomikh khotsh zen vi dayn geld kunnt ahin. [nempt zakhn]

Khaye: I'll write that on the left side of the chimney. Every week she owes me something. Let's just see where all your money is going. [takes things]


Khaye: Nit 19. 18.95.

Gertie: Not 19, $18.95.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>Gertie</th>
<th>Khaye</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Vilst nit darf men nit. [makt oys a fartukh] Nu dos vel ikh koyfn far zikh? Dos iz der dank. Vayl men hot zi iz zinen.</td>
<td>If you don't want, then you don't have to take it [unwraps an apron] Well, would I buy this for myself? This is the thanks. For thinking of her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>A kvoder! Tray end get it. 48 cent.</td>
<td>A quarter! Try and get it. 48 cents. Marked down from 69.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Tsu mayne sonims kep. Oyf belmont evenu oyf di pushkarts tsu kvoder a shtik viif men vil. Na gib es op tsurik un nem op dos gelt. Ikh ken krign tsvey farn gelt.</td>
<td>On my enemies' heads. On Belmont Avenue by the pushcarts, a quarter a piece all you can buy. Here, return it and get your money back. I can get two for that price.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Vilst nit darf men nit. Never never vel ikh far dir epes koyfn.</td>
<td>If you don't want then you don't have to take it. Never will I ever buy you anything again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Far zikh oykh nit, koyferke mayne. Vifl zogtn di mame, olevasholem, &quot;yak glamp idshe to shmiyeyedshirshe.&quot; Az a nar geyt oyfn mark freyen zikh di kremers. Mit mir zolstu geyn koyfn. Nit aroyos varfn dayn gelt in der blote. [Beni lakht] Kuk im on. Hot zikh avek geshtelt mit der pulke in pisk un lakht. Vozshe liakhe?</td>
<td>For yourself either, my little shopper. What did Mama used to say (may she rest in peace), &quot;if a fool goes to the market, the shopkeepers rejoice.&quot; You should go shopping with me and not throw your money in the trash. [Benny laughs] Look at him. Standing there with a chicken leg in his trap and laughing. What's so funny?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Az men makht tsu di oygn ven du redst iz in gantsn di mame.</td>
<td>Benny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Ershtens veln dir di tseyn nit vey tun az du vest zogtn di mame olevasholem. Azoy fil hot dokh di mame fardient bay dir. Un tsveytns az ikh tu di mames arbet meg ikh redn vi zi fleg redn. Vu iz ergets mayn ketsele? Kiti kiti kiti ...</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Ot hostu dir. A mame vos shpilt zikh mit ketselekh? Dos ketsele vet aber nit brengen shabes keyn peydey.</td>
<td>Benny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Host mikh take dermont. Kum take aroys mit dayn peyde. Un farges take nit az donershtog hastu gekhapt bay mir $2.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Du megst hobn besere. Kum nur aher. Ikh bin nokh nit fartik mit dir. Zogt mir nur. Hast dikh shoynt vayter fartshepet mitn khazns tokhter?</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Vos geyt es dikh on. Bist tsu yung tsu redn fun azelkhe zakhn. [op/ stsene milkh skeyts]</td>
<td>Benny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Oy mame, mame! Hostu mir ibergelozt a bande! Me ken oser fun zey oyshaltn. Ober ikh hob dir tsugezogt az ikh vel fim dos hoyz, akhtung gebn oyf zey vel ikh mayn vort tsu dir haltln.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Khaye kukt af bild
Khaye looks at a picture
Glaz, glaz, glaz, glaz tut dokh a kling
Glass, glass, glass, give a ring

Un az a meydele shpilt a libre, shpayt zi oys di lung
And if a girl has an affair, she spits out a lung

Tfuy! Oy vey tsu mayne yorn, aza libre hob ikh ongevorn.
Phooey! Oh woe, on my life, I lost such love.

Mame mame mame, mame zolst mikh nit shmaysn
Mama, mama, mama, mama, don't whip me me

Az a meydl shpilt a libre, tut ir in hartsn raysn.
If a girl has an affair, her heart is broken.

Oy vey...
Phooey! Oh woe ...

Artshi [mit skeyts]59
Archie [with skates]

Archie
Oh Ayda!
Oh Ida!

Khaye
Aha! Shoyn do der bandit!
Aha! There's the bandit!

Archie
Kom an giv os a nikl. Ay vant tu bay hat korn.
Come on, give us a nickel. I want to buy popcorn.

Khaye
Me darf nit. S'iz do in shtub a filer beg. Khoyshekh iz mir, vi hostu dikh azoy oysgenioret tsu alde gute yor?
It's not necessary. There's a full bag here at home. Woe is me, how the devil you get so messed up?

Archie
Ikh hob mikh oysgeglitsht af a benene pil. Kaman giv mi a nikl.
I slipped on a banana peel. Come on, give me a nickel.

Khaye
Vos meynstdu es vaksn bay mir nikels. Vey mir a por naye zokn shoyn tserisn. Ersht betsalts 20 sent. Gazlen merder hold-opnik vos hostu tsu mayne yunge yor!
What, you think nickels grow on trees by me? Woe is me, a new pair of socks and already torn. Just paid 20 cents. Thief, murderer, bandit, what do you have against me!

Archie
Oh vhat du yu ker! Kaman giv mi a nikl.
Oh what do you care! Come on, give me a nickel.

Khaye
Vi hostu dikh azoy oysgenetst? Haynt in der fri im ongeton a reyne shoyrt.
How did you get so wet? This morning I put him on a clean shirt.

Archie
[lakht] Ikh hob mikh ongehaltn in an ayzvogn un geskeyt.
[laughs] I held onto an ice wagon and skated.

Khaye
Vi hostu dikh azoy oysgenetst?

59 Several lines omitted.
Khaye In an ayzvogn! In an ayz vogn vestu dikh onhengen! Az gehongen zolstu nit vern. Un tu oys di skeyt. In shtub vestu bay mir zitsn. Aher di skeyt. [reaches for them]

Archie Oh get aut of hir!


Archie Al tel papa an yu.


Archie Ay don vana.

Khaye Nu gikher! Tu tu oys di skeyt hob ikh gezogt. [geshiet] Nu itst trink a gloz milkh.

Archie Ay don vana.

Khaye Trink oys di milkh az nit gis ikh zi dir in kaler arayn. [er trinkt] In gantsn! In gantsn. Ot azoy. Atsind na dir 10 sent vest hobn tsu geyn in di movis.

Archie Sis yu ar a ril mather. Du bist dos beste mamele in der velt.

Khaye An ice wagon! You'll hang onto an ice wagon! You shouldn't be hung. And take off the skates. You'll stay home with me. Hand over the skates. [reaches for them] An ice wagon! You'll hang onto an ice wagon! You shouldn't be hung. And take off the skates. You'll stay home with me. Hand over the skates. [reaches for them]

Archie Oh get out of here!

Khaye To whom are you speaking, you little worm. You bandit! So okay, I can't handle them, the grown-ups. But with you must I also have such a to-do? Get over here! [lays him down and spans him] On an ice wagon! On an ice wagon! I'll give you an ice wagon! [spans him, he kicks]

Archie I'll tell Papa on you.

Khaye Tell Papa. Go on and tell him. I'll tell him too. Come here. [drags him to the sink] Just look at your face. [washes his face] You'll either be a miracle or dead. Take off the skates!

Archie I don't wanna

Khaye Well then! I told you to take off the skates. (removes them) So now drink the glass of milk.

Archie I don't wanna.

Khaye Drink the milk, because if you don't I will pour it down your collar. (he drinks) All of it! All of it. Atta boy. And now here's ten cents so you can go to the movies.

Archie Sis, you are a real mother. You are the best little mother in the world.
No. 4: Bruder Mayn
4A: Dialogue

Khaye Feygl, Khazn’s wife


Khazn’s wife: Vi an emetse baleboste. Mit eyn hand shtroft got un mit der tsveyter helft er. Tsugenumen bay aykh di mame dir tsu lange yor hot er dikh gemakht far a mame. A sheyne yerushe hastu geyarshnt.

Khaye: Yo. Mayn mame, o"h hot mir ibergezlozt a gute yerushe. 3 groyse un eynem a kleynem mitn tatn a tsuulog. Freg nit s'iz mir vohl.

Khazn’s wife: Ikh bin gekumen mit dir redn vegn Boyrnis. Zi zet mir oys erger fun tog tsu tog. Ikh veys nit vos mit ir tsu tun.

Khaye: Vos iz ir? [mayse froy] Epes invenig?

Khazn’s wife: Ikh veys nit. Nor zi hot nit keyn apetit.

Khaye: Pruvt a bisl zoyerkroyt un gezaltsn vaser. Dos iz zeyr a gut milt apetit. Oder a shtikl oysgeveykter hering.

Khazn’s wife: Oy du alter kop vos du bist. Kha-kha-kha! Zoyer kroyt un gezaltsn vaser. Oder hering!

Khaye: Ya. S'iz zeyr a gute refuah. Ikh gib es mayne kinder ven zey hobn nit keyn apetit, ven?

Khazn’s wife: Oy du alter kop vos du bist. Kha-kha-kha! Zoyer kroyt un gezaltsn vaser. Oder hering!

Khaye: Pruvt a bisl zoyerkroyt un gezaltsn vaser. Dos iz zeyr a gut milt apetit. Oder a shtikl oysgeveykter hering.

Khazn’s wife: Oh, you old fool, you. Ha ha ha! Sauerkraut and salt water! Pickled herring!

Khaye: Pruvt a bisl zoyerkroyt un gezaltsn vaser. Dos iz zeyr a gut milt apetit. Oder a shtikl oysgeveykter hering.

Khazn’s wife: I came to speak with you about Bernice. She looks worse and worse each day. I don't know what to do with her.

Khaye: What's wrong? [woman trouble] Something internal?

Khazn’s wife: I don't know. But she's got no appetite.

Khaye: Try a little sauerkraut and salt water. It's a very good remedy for the appetite. Or a bit of pickled herring.

Khazn’s wife: Oh, you old fool, you. Ha ha ha! Sauerkraut and salt water! Pickled herring!

Khaye: Pruvt a bisl zoyerkroyt un gezaltsn vaser. Dos iz zeyr a gut milt apetit. Oder a shtikl oysgeveykter hering.

Khazn’s wife: I don't know. But she's got no appetite.

Khaye: Pruvt a bisl zoyerkroyt un gezaltsn vaser. Dos iz zeyr a gut milt apetit. Oder a shtikl oysgeveykter hering.

Khazn’s wife: Oh, you old fool, you. Ha ha ha! Sauerkraut and salt water! Pickled herring!

Khaye: Yes. It's a very good cure. I give it to my children when they don't have an appetite.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khazn's wife</th>
<th>Ikh hob moyre az Boyrnis filt azoy tsulib dayn bruder Beni.</th>
<th>Khazn's wife</th>
<th>I'm afraid that Bernice is in that state because of your brother Benny.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Ikh hob mikh dos oykh ongeshtoysn.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>I also suspected as much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khazn's wife</td>
<td>Dos kind hot lib dayn bruder un du veyst dokh vi es iz. ... Du farshyteyst dokh. A mame hot dokh a harts.</td>
<td>Khazn's wife</td>
<td>The child is in love with your brother and you know how it is ... You understand. A mother has a heart for these things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>A shayle! Tsi ikh veys tsi ikh farshtey. Mir mames dershmekn bald azelkhe zakhn. S'iz oser an avle az a mame vil derlebn a bisl nakhes in kinder. Halevay helft mir got tsu derlebn a bisl nakhes fun mayne vey is mir.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Of course!! Do I know? Do I understand? We mothers sense these things immediately. I swear it's a sin for a mother to want to live to see her children bring her pride and joy. If only with God's help I should live to see a little happiness from mine, woe is me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khazn's wife</td>
<td>Vos hostu gezogt? Vilst derlebn nakhes fun dayne kinder? Vi alt bistu, Mamele? 15 tsi 16?</td>
<td>Khazn's wife</td>
<td>What did you say? You want to live long enough to see happiness from your children? How old are you, Mamele? 15 or 16?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Vos iz der khilek vi alt ikh bin? Vi fleg mayn mame o&quot;h zogtn yak zembi yest ta khleba niema. Az s'iz do tsores feln nit keyn yorn. Un az mayn bruder Beni iz elter fun mir? Nu meynt ir hob ikh epes nakhes fun im. Mayn Beni iz gornit keyn leyt. Ven ir zolt mikh fregn tsu ir zolt im gebn ayer tokhter volt ikh aykh oser geratn. Bay im hob ikh moyre vet a vayb hobn dos vos mayn mame o&quot;h hot gehat bay mayn tatn. A sakh kinder un a sakh tsores. Ayer Boyrnis iz a voyl meydl a balabatishe ... zi darf koydem kol ... oy di poteytes.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>What's the difference how old I am? As my mother, may she rest in peace, used to say, “if your life is hard, it lasts forever.” And if my brother Benny is older than me? So you'd think I have some happiness from him. My Benny is not a mensh. If you were to ask me if you ought to give him your daughter I would damn well advise you against it. I'm afraid that with him a wife will have what my mother, may she rest in peace, had with my father. A lot of children and a lot of problems. Your Bernice is a nice girl, well-bred ... she should first ... oh, the potatoes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Khazn's wife: Ver mir guts vinsht zol hobn aza kind vi du. Der tate dayner shatst khotsh op vos du tust far im farn hoyz? May all who wish me well have a child like yours. That father of yours, does he at least appreciate what you do for him running the house?


Khaye: What do I know! My father knows a lot. What do you think? If one isn't destined to have pride and joy in their life, then you don't have it from anyone. Including your father. But it can't be helped. Maybe later when, God willing, I marry them all off, then I will also be able to enjoy life a little. You remember how my mother, may she rest in peace, called me to her bed and made me swear to take care of the house, the children. [pauses] What do you think, does my mother, may she rest in peace, know up there that I kept my word? That I work hard and miserably here, that I don't have day or night? Does she at least know? [cries]


Khaye: Oy mamenyu, ikh baklog zikh nit s'iz afile a bisl tsu shver far mir. Nur oykh s'iz geven gut far mayn mamen iz es gut far mir. [zing]

Khazn's wife: Shush, don't cry child. Of course she knows it. Of course she knows it. Oh woe is me. I forgot to sew a button onto the cantor's pants. [scene potatoes boiling in pot and then falling under the lunch?]

Khaye: Oh Mama, I don't complain even when it's a bit too difficult for me. Still too if it was good for my mama it's good for me. [sings]
No. 5: Oyb s’iz geven gut far mayn mame, es iz gut far mir

Andantino assai

Flute

Clarinet in B-

Trumpet in B-

Trombone

Timpani

Percussion

Piano

Khaye Feygl

Violin

Violin

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

mf

p

mf

mf

pizz.

p
alt vorfüh' nu' dorn koir  
far-gin i'ch zoy dem na-ye mir  
ge-felt di al-te mehr. Oyh s'Ie ge-ven  
gut fur mayn
**5A: Dialogue**

*enter Simon [someone knocks]*

Simon Kom in.

*enter Sidney*

Sidney Gud efternum.


*enter Simon [someone knocks]*

Simon Come in.

*enter Sidney*

Sidney Gud efternum.

Simon Good afternoon. Khaye Feygl! Where are you! There's a strange man here.

Sidney Mayn nomen iz Ketz. Sidni Katz.

*enter Khaye*

Khaye Oy vey vu iz ergetz mayn ketsl.

Sidney Iz Goyrti hom?

Simon Zi kumt bald. Ikh bin der foter. Shimen Kravtshik.


Sidney Kam hir, litel goyrl.

Khaye Litel goyrl! Ven ir zet a layn vesh ikh hob nekhtn tsvashen ruft ir mikh nit litel goyrl. Zogt nur, ir zent shoyn lang bekant mit mayn shvester?


Simon Shpilt zikh mit mayn Goyrti. Nito keyn sakh a zelkhe.


Simon Going out with my Gertie. Not a lot of girls like her.
Khaye
Mr. shokelt aykh nit. Brekht nit di benklekh. S'iz naye famitshur.

Sidney
Yes yu si ... Ikh mit nokh fraynd hobn a bongelo in long bitsh. Vik end spenden mir dort. Hob ikh ayngeladen ayer tokhter.

Simon

Khaye
Ekskyuz mi, Mr. Katz, ir vilt mayn Goyrti zol zayn mit aykh in ayer bongelo biz montik? Papa, fun shabes biz montik mit fremde mentshen in a bongelo?

Simon
Nu vos iz? Zol zi forn.

Khaye
Soukh TSURI Mr. Kravtshik un red tu mir. Mayn shvester vet mit aykh nit forn.

Khaye
Ekskyuz mi tate. Ober goyrti vet nit forn.

Sidney
Oh may god Mr. Kravtshik!

Khaye
Leave Mr. Kravtshik alone and speak to me. My sister will not be going with you.

Khaye
Because I don't like your nose. That's why. For sleeping my sister has a home, thank God. Unless you would want to take the older sister Selma too. She is a nice girl, she has money in the bank. Selma! Selma! [exits]

Simon
Oh with pleasure. Why not? By all means. With pleasure.

Khaye
Ekskyuz mi, Mr. Katz, you want my Gertie should be with you in your bungalow until Monday? Papa, from Saturday til Monday with strange men in a bungalow?

Simon
So what's the matter? She should go.

Khaye
Excuse me, Mr. Katz, you want my Gertie should be with you in your bungalow until Monday? Papa, from Saturday til Monday with strange men in a bungalow?

Sidney
Yes you see ... I and some friends own a bungalow in Long Beach. We're spending the weekend there. I invited your daughter.

Khaye
Mister, don't rock. Don't break the chairs. It's new furniture.

Sidney
Yes you see ... I and some friends own a bungalow in Long Beach. We're spending the weekend there. I invited your daughter.

Khaye
Mister, don't rock. Don't break the chairs. It's new furniture.

Sidney
Yes you see ... I and some friends own a bungalow in Long Beach. We're spending the weekend there. I invited your daughter.

Sidney: Dets alrayt. Vay vith plezshur.

Khaye: Du herst dokh mit plezshur. Gey tu dikh on.

Selma: Ikh vil nit forn. [op]

Khaye: Az zi vil nit forn for ikh

Sidney: Dets alrayt. Yu ar most velkom.

Khaye: Molt aykh az ikh bin aykh nit azoy velkom. Ober ikh for.

Gertie: Vhat du yu min du forst? Ver hot dikh gebetn?

Khaye: Ikh hob mikh aleyn farbnetn. Vos meynstu s'iz hefker petrishka? Vest forn af 3 teg aleyn mit a man?


Khaye: Mr. ikh bin nit ir litl sister, ikh bin ir big mather.


Gertie: Dikh! Dikh! May litl dopu! Zi fort! Nu forn! Kom on tu dikh on. Host a dres? Host a beding sut? Host epes? Zi fort?

Khaye: Come, come. Don't be an animal. This here is my older sister. If you want Gertie should hang out with you til Monday, you must take Selma along too. I will not let her go alone.

Khaye: You hear that, with pleasure. Go get dressed.

Khaye: If she doesn’t want to go, then I will.

Sidney: That's all right. Why, with pleasure.

Sidney: That's all right. You are most welcome.

Khaye: I imagine that I am not so welcome. But I'm going anyway.

Gertie: What do you mean you're going? Who invited you?

Khaye: I invited myself. What do you think, anything goes? That you can go off for three days alone with a man?

Sidney: Why Gertie dear? That's all right. She is your little sister.

Khaye: Mister, I am not her little sister, I am her big mother.

Gertie: You little sneak! Keep out of my business I tell you. I am not going to be ruled by a little dope like you.

Khaye: Who's a dope? Who are you calling a dope? You! You!

Gertie: You! You! My little dope! She's going! So go! Come on, get dressed. Do you even have a dress? How about a bathing suit? Do you have anything? And she's coming?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Bist gerekht. Ikh hob gor färge sn. Ikh ken nit forn. Ikh hob nit vos antstutun. [pisht a trer] Ekskyuz mi Mr. Kets. Ikh ken nit mitforn. Mayne kleyder zenen nokh nit fartik. Ir veyst dokh ... Dresmeyker ... Sam ather taym vel ikh mitforn. Yu vil eksyuz mi, vontshu?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>You are right. I completely forgot. I can't go. I don't have anything to wear. [cries a tear] Excuse me Mr. Katz. I can't go along. My dresses are not ready yet. You know... Dressmaker... Some other time I'll go along. You will excuse me, won't you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Of course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Can I come along with you til Merrick Road?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Thank you. Well, let's go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Go ahead, enjoy yourself. Come, I'll see you out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Wait a while. Papa, don't let her go. She's not allowed. She doesn't have enough common sense to be allowed to go by herself. Mr. Katz, I am sorry, but I'm coming along. It's true I don't have nice dresses like my sister, but I have a couple good eyes and see more than my sister and I will not let her go alone. If she goes, I go along.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>What do you mean you're going? And with such clothes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Never mind the dresses. [goes to closet] I can take care of her in these clothes, too. Maybe you are ashamed of Mama's dresses. Maybe you don't want to be seen in mama's clothes, but they're good enough for me. And I am not ashamed of them. [puts one on]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Never maynd di kleyder. [geyt tsu shafe] Akhtung gebn af ir vel ikh kenen in di kleyder oykh. Ir shemt aykh efsher mit der mames kleyder. Dir past efsher nit ontsuton der mames kleyd mir ober pasn zey. Un ikh shem mikh nit mit zey. [tut on]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Oh gee! Looks like a circus.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Benny: Kid mother, you look like a freak. (crossed out in Rumshinsky: Papa, look at how she's dressed.)

Simon: Madwoman! In such a dress you want to go out among people? Have you gone crazy? Know what children, go and enjoy yourselves, don't listen to her. Go and have a good time.

Gertie: Goodbye, crazywoman. I'll deal with you later.

Sidney: Goodbye. [leaves with Gertie and Benny]

Simon: You think she's not right? You've become intolerable? You're just jumping out of your skin for a good time. So this is the thanks I get from you, for giving you a house to run with full control. You think that you are already the big kahun a and I, the father, am nothing at all. You think that just because you can boil a spoonful of water you are already a big shot. You dried up worm that you are. I will deal with you. I will show you what a father is. I will ignore the fact that you are already a 16 year old girl. I will take the strap to you and will teach you. Teach! To me you are still a child and I will teach you with the strap. Like this. [takes strap]

Khaye: Oh Father, don't hit me. You were right. You were right. I am a child. Teach me. But don't hit me. I don't deserve it. For me the strap isn't necessary, Papa.

Simon: You don't think she has a right? Just look at the dresses that you put on. You look like a madwoman.

Khaye: [zing] Oyb es iz geven gut far mayn mame iz es gut far mir.

Khaye: [sings] If it was good for my mother, then it's good for me.

No. 4.5 Oyb s'iz geven chorus

Farhang

Curtain
No. 6: Oyb s’iz geven chorus
Several weeks later. The same stage. A Saturday afternoon. Benny stands in the kitchen and irons his pants. Selma enters with some clothes.

Selma: Nu preser mayner, loz mikh shoyn amol tsu.

Selma: Well, my presser, let me have a turn sometime.


Benny: I got time, I'll finish damnit! Go iron such wide pants with such a narrow iron. Just give them a press. Maybe they'll come out better with you.

Selma: Ikh hob shoyn nit vos tsu ton nur presen dayne hoyzn. Ikh hob mayne eygene tsores.

Selma: I don't have anything better to do than iron your pants. I have my own problems.

Benny: Dayne tsores af mir gezogt gevorn. A stedi dzshab, gute veydzshes, a bambele in bank ...

Benny: I should have your troubles! A steady job, good wages, a nest egg in the bank...

Selma: Nu iz vos? Farginst mir nit? Volst opgehit dayn dzshab volt er oykh geven stedi. Volst nit farspendt dayn gelt volstu oykh gehat gelt in di benk. Vos zogsttu? S'iz epes geshmak arum tsu geyn on a dzshab?

Selma: So what? You begrudge me? You would also have a steady job if you were careful with it. You would also have money in the bank if you didn't spend it all. What are you saying? You think it's fun being unemployed?

Benny: Her mir oyf tsu zogtn muser. Oyb du host rakhmones af mir helf mir beser aroys.

Benny: Stop preaching. If you feel sorry for me then help me out.

Selma: Loz mikh tsu ru. Ikh hob nit keyn eysek mit menerishe hoyzen.

Selma: Leave me alone. I have no business with men's pants.

Benny: Ikh meyn nit mit di hoyzn. Ikh meyn helf mir azoy aroys in algemeyn.

Benny: I don't mean with the pants. I mean help me out in general.
Selma: Yo ven meshiekh vet kumen. Loz mikh shoyn amol tsu tsum bigelbret.
Benny: Nu nu shray nit. A glaykh vort ken es nit aroysredn.
Selma: Gefelt dir nit? Vest bay mir nit layen keyn gelt. [bigelṭ]
Selma: Dayne vikhtike zakhn veys ikh.
Benny: Neyn. Du veyst nit.
Selma: Nu vos iz es?
Benny: Ikh hob a zeyr gutn fraynd un zeyr a voyler pay
Selma: Gib mir dayne hoyzn. Vel ikh zey far dir oyspresn. Yo? Ver iz er?
Benny: Er iz a teksi drayver.
Selma: A teksi drayver! A knape metsie.
Benny: Er traybt an eygene teksi. Nit keyn fremde.
Selma: An eygene teksi iz olrayt. Vifl fardeint er a tog?
Benny: Er fardint durkhshnitlikh $15 a tog.
Selma: $15 a tog iz zeyr a guter fardinst. Nor az er iz dayner a fraynd shtel ikh mir for az er seyvt nit a nikel.
Benny: Er seyvt! Er seyvt! Er hot $2,000 in di benk. Shoyn gut?
Selma: That's all, Benny, that's all. You already cheated me out of $15 since you're not working. Enough! I am not a bank.
Benny: What are you afraid of, that I won't pay you back? I'll pay it back, I'll pay it back.
Selma: Yeah, when hell freezes over. Let me have the ironing board already.
Benny: Well, well, don't yell. A straight word she doesn't know how to say.
Selma: You don't like it? You won't get any money out of me.
Benny: I want to get along with you. But you're trying to pick a fight. Listen, I want to talk to you about something really important.
Selma: I know about your important things.
Benny: No. You don't know.
Selma: So what is it?
Benny: I have a very good friend and he makes very nice pay.
Selma: Give me your pants, I will iron them for you. Yes? Who is he?
Benny: He's a taxi driver.
Selma: A taxi driver! Hardly a gem.
Benny: He drives his own taxi. Not someone else's.
Selma: One's own taxi is all right. How much does he earn in a day?
Benny: He earns $15 a day on average.
Selma: $15 a day is a very good living. Only if he's a friend of yours I bet he doesn't save a nickel.
Benny: He saves! He saves! He has $2,000 in the bank. Good enough?
Selma  Nit shlekht. Nu vayter?  
Benny  Hot er tsu mir gezogt azoy vi er ken mikh gut un azoy vi du bist mayn shvester un du host sheyne etlikhe hundert dolar in di benk, zolstu mir borgn gelt oyf tsu koyfn a tekst.  
Selma  Not bad. So what else?  
Benny  He told me that since he knows me so well and since you are my sister and you have several hundred dollars in the bank, you should lend me money to buy a taxi.

Selma  Tfuy tsu dayn kop! Ikh hob gemeynt ver veyst vos.  
Benny  Vos hostu gemeynt? A betshu du hast gemeynt ikh red dir a shidekh.  
Selma  Ikh darf dikh af kapores mit dayne shidukhim. Az ikh vel veln khasune hobs vel ikh mir an eytse gebn on dir.  
Benny  Vel, vest mir leyen gelt af tsu koyfn a tekst. Men darf bloyz ayntsohn $300.  
Selma  For my money I should make you a taxi driver? A brother of mine, a taxi driver?  
Benny  But a taxi driver for a husband you do like?  
Selma  Vos far a man? Ver darf a man? Ikh ken makhn a lebn on a man. [exits]  
Benny  What husband? Who needs a husband? I can make a living without a husband. [exits]  

*enter Bernice*  
Bernice  Vhats di trabel, Ben? Vos azoy shlekht geshtimt?  
Bernice  Mit a sheyn meyd?  
Benny  Vos far a meydel. Mit boyes nit mit a meydl.  
Bernice  With a pretty girl?  
Benny  What girl? With boys, not with a girl.
Bernice: Un az mit a meydel vemen art es?
Benny: Az es art dikh nit vos zshe fregstu?
Bernice: Dzshast layk det. Ikh tor nit fregn?
Benny: Far vos freg ikh dikh nit?
Bernice: Freg yo.
Benny: Tsu vos? Ay layk tu maynd may on biznes.
Bernice: Ober s'iz amol geven an andere tsayt oykh. Ha Beni?
Benny: Vos meynstu?
Bernice: Az du veyst nit vos ikh meyn darf men nit.
Benny: Nu darf men nit iz nit. Ikh bin nit supozd tsu trefen vos du meynst.
Bernice: Di tsayt vos du bist gegangen mit mir bistu gor nit geven aza nar?
Benny: Ah dos meynstu? Vel yeder mensh iz entayteld tsu tshendzshen zayn maynd.
Bernice: Ikh meyn dayn shvester Goyrti. Oykh gegangen a vayle mit mayn bruder Louie un hot oykh getshendzshd ir maynd.
Benny: Nu vel iz vos? Tor zi nit?
Bernice: And if it's with a girl who cares?
Benny: If you don't care, why do you ask?
Bernice: Just like that. I'm not allowed to ask?
Benny: Why don't I ask you?
Bernice: Do ask.
Bernice: But things were different once, huh Benny?
Benny: What do you mean?
Bernice: If you don't know what I mean, then there's no need.
Benny: Well, if not, not. I am not supposed to guess what you mean.
Bernice: Back when we used to hang out you weren't such a fool.
Benny: Oh that's what you mean? Well every guy is entitled to change his mind.
Bernice: Of course. I wasn't saying otherwise. You're allowed to change your mind. It runs in your family.
Benny: What now? What are you saying now? Oh come on! You want to say something. So come out and say it.
Bernice: I mean your sister Gertie. Also went for awhile with my brother Louie and also changed her mind.
Benny: So what about it? Isn't she allowed?

Benny: Vel. Ikh bin nit fun di menshen.


Benny: Vel men ken nit in zinen hobneyne un zogtn tsu a tsveyter kutsenyu mutsenyu.

Bernice: Yes of course. But poor Louie suffered horribly. It's a pity about him. It's a horrible feeling when someone goes out with you, leads you on and then ... Never mind. There are different kinds of people in the world. There are people who don't change their minds. There are people for whom a promise is a promise.

Benny: Well. I am not one of those people.

Bernice: But several days ago I was your one and only. We were all lovey-dovey with each other. And now you're already promising to be lovey-dovey with someone else.

Benny: Well you can't be thinking of one person and promise to be lovey-dovey with someone else.
No. 8: Mutsu Kutsu

Allegretto

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Trumpet in B♭

Trombone

Allegretto

Percussion

S.D.

B.D.

Piano

Bernice

Benny

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goyrti</th>
<th>Sidney</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ze nur! Keyner nito.</td>
<td>Avade insayd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at that! No one's here.</td>
<td>Probably inside.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goyrti**


**Gertie**

Wait, I'll see. [goes back] Also not there. What do you think of that? The little one must have left the door open. I am telling you that kid is getting to be trouble.

**Sidney**

Dets alrayt. Darfst nit fargesn s'iz fort a kind.

**Sidney**

That's all right. You shouldn't forget that she's just a kid.

**Goyrti**

Never maynd! Tsu ire zakhen hot zi gezund seykhl. Oh may oh may! Bat enihau nenter vi vayter. Ha, direst? [umarmt im]

**Gertie**

Never mind! When it suits her she's got plenty of brains. Oh my oh my! But anyway, we're almost there, ha dearest? [embraces him]

**Sidney**

Lomir hofn es vet lang nit doyern.

**Sidney**

Let's hope it won't take long.

**Goyrti**

Bald nokh mayn vakeyshon hostu dan gezogt? Didn’t yu diri?

**Gertie**

Right after my vacation you said then? Didn't you dearie?

**Sidney**

Es hot zikh epes fardreyt dort in mayne biznes bat ikh hof es vet zikh opdreyen tsurik.

**Sidney**

There's something that got messed up in my business, but I hope it will right itself.

**Goyrti**

Oh may! Host farloyren gelt, darling?

**Gertie**

Oh my! Did you lose money darling?

**Sidney**


**Sidney**

Lost several thousand dollars. But that's all right. Business is business. Sometimes it's up, sometimes it's down.

**Goyrti**

Aroyf iz olrayt. Ober arop toyg nit. Yu no ikh bin an oremans a tokhter. Ikh hob dem orimans kheyshek: a sheyne heym, sheyne zakhen ...

**Gertie**

Up is all right. But down is not useful. You know I am a poor man's daughter. I have a poor man's desires: a nice house, nice things ....

**Sidney**

Nu un libe?

**Sidney**

Well, and love?
Of course love is the main thing. But all the other things are not bad either. Love without all these other things is like a good meal without salt or pepper.

Of course not. If I didn't love you I wouldn't go out with you even if you were Browning himself.

Well, as fast as I can we'll get married. In other words, if you're not comfortable here, I can fix you up somewhere else where you'll be very comfortable.

In New York there are very pretty furnished apartments, you know, what people call 'love nests.' Just for the time being, until the wedding.

Oh no Sidney dear. I am surprised that you would make such a suggestion. Until the wedding I must stay here at home. When are you going to speak to my Pa?

We'll see how it works out. The day before or perhaps rather the day after. As it's done nowadays: you send a telegraph: 'married', that's all.

That's for people who elope. We don't need to elope. My Pa will be more than glad.

Yes? All right. We'll see. First go on your vacation. Fix yourself up. I want a pretty wife. I'm going to see to it that you have everything for your vacation and will be back soon. [exits]
No. 9: Farsheydene Libe

Flute

Clarinet in B♭

Trumpet in B♭

Trombone

Percussion

Piano

Gertie

Sidney

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass
romantisch halt mein unz in eyn der-mann. Un a-le po-e-tn ba-zin-gen unz in gle-tn

in di shen-s-te
Andante

Fl.

Bb-Cl.

Bb-Tpt.

Tbn.

Andante

Perc.

Pno.

Ger.

Sid.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

Di shen du li-be iz nor bay unz

Ich ge-denk, Ich ge-

Zing mir fun li-be vi men zogt bay unz

Andante
Khaye enters with laundry

Khaye

I come into the house, and at the table lots of men are seated. Only the one I love, him I don't find there. Heat, heat who can bear you. If you burn yourself with hot, you blow at the cold.

Benny


Khaye

At the cleaners it would cost you a dollar and it would actually look like something.

Benny

I've always said that you are all right, if only you had $300 you would give it to me then to buy a taxi, unlike Selma.

Khaye

What's this about driving a taxi all of a sudden? You really want this heart of mine to just fall out wondering if heaven forbid there was an accident, may God protect and guard us.

Benny

So give me already another idea as to how to make a living. I can't go so long without a job.

Khaye

You had so many good friends. Why aren't they helping you?

Benny

Good friends are good when you have a good job.

Khaye

My word! Take your feet off the table. Stop breaking the chairs. It's new furniture. I understand you don't have a penny to your name.

Benny

You guessed it. And tomorrow is Sunday, we need to go out.

Khaye [counts money] Tomorrow I have to pay the rent, woe is me. Tomorrow is Sunday and I still need $12 to make rent. Well, so be it, here you a have a couple dollars in the meantime. I'm short so much, I'll be short another couple dollars.

Benny Kid mather, yu ar di kets galoshes. [nemt zi af kni]

Benny Kid mother, you are the cat's galoshes. [sits her on his knee]

Khaye Vos zol ikh ton mit dir az du bist bay mir nit keyn geratener. Itst her dikh tsu tsu mayn norishen seykhel. Loyft dokh arum mit gute brider mit meydekh, bist dokh a bom un istz az du bist gebrokhn viln zey nit visn fun dir. A yo? Itst kenstu makhen a probe un oysgefinen ver s'iz dos rikhtike meydel. Itst az du host nit keyn dzshab un nit keyn gelt, az a meydel vet veln mit dir geyn vestu hobn a simen az zi iz di rikhtike.

Khaye What shall I do with you, you just don't take after me. Now you listen to my foolish logic. Hanging out with good friends, with girls, you are just a bum and now that you are broke they don't want to know you. Am I right? Now you can hold auditions and find out who is the right girl. Now that you don't have a job and don't have any money, if a girl will want to go out with you, you'll have proof that she's the right one.

Benny A betshe du meynst Boyrnis.

Benny I betcha you mean Bernice.

Khaye Yo yo zol ikh hobn aza mazl vos far a meydl zi iz un mayne soynim zoln hobn aza vetshere tsu du bist zi vert. Aza voyl kind fun azelkhe tayere eltern. Nit vi dayne oysgetsvogene lyalkes mit velkhe du shlepst dikh arum vos men veyst nit ver der tate iz ver di mame iz. Do veysn mir dokh di shtal fun vanen di beheyme kumt. Un haynt ir bruder loui. Er iz ...

Khaye Yes yes, I should have such luck, what kind of girl she is, and my enemies should have such a dinner, if you deserve her. Such a good child of such dear parents. Not like your wrung-out dolls that you drag around that you can't tell who their parents are. Here you know exactly which stall the animal comes from. And today her brother Louie. He is ...

Benny Kid mather, bist a vanderful shadkhen.

Benny Kid mother, you are a wonderful matchmaker.

Khaye Yo ikh bin zeyr a guter shadkhen nur keyn shidekh ken ikh nit oysfim.

Khaye Yes, I am a very good matchmaker only I can't actually close any matches.

Benny Dem shidekh vestu yo hobn oysgefirt. Ikh gey shoyn tsu boynis un a betshe ikh kum tsurik mit a kale un mit a teksi.

Benny This match you will have closed. I'm going to go to Bernice and I betcha I come back with a bride and with a taxi.

Khazn's wife
Khaye

Khazn
Simon
Kum arayn khaznte vet ir trinken a glezele tey.

Khazn's wife
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Kum arayn khaznte vet ir trinken a glezele tey.

Khazn's wife

Simon

Kum arayn khaznte vet ir trinken a glezele tey.
Khazn: Oy hert mikh uf tsu firn in bod arayn. A kharpe haynt a kharpe morgn. S’iz dokh ober nit nor a kharpe s’iz dokh a veytik oykh.

Khazn: Oh, stop yanking my chain. A shame today, a shame tomorrow. But it's not just a shame it's also a pain.

Khazn's wife: Bist meshuge gevorn?

Khazn's wife: Have you gone crazy?

Khazn: Me ken, me ken meshuge vern. Opgelebt knape 25 yor, gebleybn ayn khoyresh tsu der zilberer khasuneh, keyn ayin hara kinder tsu der khupe tsu firn, hostu a’f der elter dikh ongehybn arum shlepn mit fremde mener. Lyubov zukhstu dir a’f der elter.

Khazn: You can, you can go crazy. Lived through a good 25 years, one month short of the silver anniversary, no evil eye, children to walk down the aisle, so you started at your age to hang out with other men. Looking for a boyfriend at your age.

Khazn's wife: Menshen! Mayn man iz gerirt fun di gedanken.

Khazn's wife: Men! My husband is off his rocker.


Khazn: Not me. You! You are having affairs, not me. I think of the household, the children, the money, and you found yourself an old loafer who doesn't need no house, no money, no children. He needs a wife. So what does he want from me? Find yourself some widow or an old maid and get married? There's a shortage of old maids in Brownsville?

Simon: Mr. Levita, baruikt aykh un lomir redn gelasn.

Simon: Mr. Levitan, calm yourself and let's speak civilly.

Khazn's wife: Mendel, meshugener, shrayst dokh keseyder az ikh gefel dir nit az ikh toyg nit az on mir volstu geven a gliklikher.

Khazn's wife: Mendl, crazy person, you're always yelling that you don't like me, that I'm useless, that without me you would be happy.


Khazn: True, true. All true. But it's not your business. My mouth, my tongue, so I can say what I want. And you need to know who you are. You are a mother of children.
Listen here Mendele, you don't even deserve that I should look at your foolish face anymore, but like you say: One month til our silver anniversary, children to walk down the aisle, so I will simply tell you that you are an old fool and to come home.

Khazn

And what will be afterward?

Khazn

Afterward, if you will be a mensh and not be jealous it will be all right and if not I will teach you a lesson as the Women's Bible says, and I will indeed run away from you. But if I'm already running I would run off with someone younger than Mr. Kravtshik. [exit]

Khazn

I will watch her. A wife and a dog are not to be trusted.

Khaye

Aha! The cantor is already angry. I betcha I know why. [to Simon] Because our Benny is having an affair with his daughter. Believe me you shouldn't be angry at all.

Khazn

What do you mean I shouldn't be angry? What, it doesn't concern me at all?

Khaye

Of course it concerns you. But with such things it's better if you don't get involved.

Khazn

What do you mean I shouldn't get involved? Who then should get involved? What is this, the wild west?

Khazn

That's even worse. Then they are certainly not allowed to do it.
Khaye: Zey hobn zikh dakh ober lib? A yo tate? [geyt arum shimen]

Khazn: Is that so! They're in love now too!

Khaye: Avade. Az nit volt zey dakh nit gegangen tsuzamen.

Khazn: Of course. If not they wouldn't be going out.

Khazn: Heyst es az du veyst fun der gantser mayse

Khazn: You mean you know the whole story.

Khaye: Tsi ikh vays? Ikh hob dakh es aleyn ongestrayet.

Khaye: If I know? I'm the one who orchestrated it.

Khazn: Aza bokherte bistu? Du host es ayngestrayet?

Khazn: So you're that kind of young girl? You orchestrated all this?

Khazn: Vos zogt men nit tsu der kleyn? Zi hot es nokh ongetrayet

Khazn: What do you say to the little one? She orchestrated it yet.

Khazn: Un vegn vemen hot er gemeyn?

Khazn: About who?

Simon: Ir hert dakh. Vegn mayn zun mit ayer tokhter.

Simon: You heard. About my son and your daughter.


Khaye: What do you mean about who? About my Benny and his Bernice.

Khazn: Vegn vemen?

Khazn: About who?

Simon: Der khazn hot gemeyn vegn mir mit der khaznte

Simon: The cantor thought we were talking about me and his wife.


Khazn: She's a total homemaker, your Khaye Feygl. Cooks by herself.
Simon: She's something else, my Khaye Feygl. What a homemaker. What am I saying, a homemaker! A mother! Everything by herself.

Khaye: Try a piece of noodle kugel not from macaroni but from homemade noodles. [offers kugel] So how do you like my kugel? My mother, of blessed memory, used to say that the kugel takes after the guests (i.e. the better the guests, the better the kugel).

Khazn's wife: And the Women's bible says that the kugel takes after the Shabbat songs.

Khaye: Well by all means, cantor. Let's hear a few Shabbat songs.

Khazn: What do I know!

Khazn's wife: Who can convince him?

Khazn: Go sing Shabbat songs in America where the elevator bangs overhead, the neighbors' hoarse gramophone scratches, and in the house a Catholic priest on the radio serenades the head of the family.

Khaye: The cantor will sing some shabbat songs for my benefit. I will close the door so you won't hear the elevator or the neighbor's gramophone, and we'll plug up the mouth of the priest on the radio. And it will be "this day is honored from among all days".
No. 10: Zmires
ale op khuts khaye  
everyone off except Khaye
10A: Dialogue

**enter Benny**

Benny Kid mather! Shoyn. Ikh hob mikh ibergebetn mit boyrnis.


Benny Kid mather, vos du vest mikheysn vel ikh dikh folgn.

Khaye Boyrnis iz a meydl far dir. Un haynt ir bruder lui, er iz dokh aza tayerer, aza shtiler ruiker mentsh, aza eydler, aza gelasener, aza liber.

Benny Kid mather, mir dakht zikh bist gor farlibt in lui.


Benny Dshi! Yu ar a greyt kid! Nor du host unz in zinen un keyn mol nit dikh.


**enter Benny**

Benny Kid mother! Already. I made up with Bernice.

Khaye Fortunate is the mother, good is her lot. The youngest son married off. Now you see that a mother should be obeyed.

Benny Kid Mother, whatever you tell me to do I'll obey.

Khaye Bernice is good for you. Now her brother Louie, he's such a dear, such a quiet and calm person, so refined, so polite, so lovely.

Benny Kid mother, I think you're actually in love with Louie.

Khaye Do you think so? I think so too. But don't tell anyone about it. I still have two older sisters. Let me first get rid of them.

Benny Gee! You are a great kid! But you only think of us and you never think of yourself.

Khaye God will provide for me. I will tell you the truth, I'm not very worried for Gertie either. How did Mama, of blessed memory, say it? ... Men chase after precisely those girls who aren't worth being chased. But for Selma you see I am worried. She is already becoming, knock on wood, an eligible bachelorette and nobody's after her. Believe me, if only I could have persuaded Louie, that he should marry Selma, I would have most certainly done so.
Benny: Du zogtst dokh az du host lib Lui-en?


Benny: But you say that you love Louie?

Khaye: Do I love Louie? [hugs Benny] But she is the older sister. How can I embarrass her so? What do you think? Where one puts one's loved one, he must get a hunchback.

Benny: Veyst khotsh Louie az du libst im?

Khaye: Fun vanen zol er visn.

Benny: Host nokh keyn mol nit geredt mit im vegn dem?

Khaye: Vi ken ikh redn tsu im vegn azazakh. Az ikh red tsu im red ikh im ayn er zol khasene hobn mit selma.

Benny: Does Louie even know that you love him?

Khaye: How should he know.

Benny: Have you never spoken with him about it?

Khaye: How can I talk to him about such a thing. If I talk to him then it'll be to persuade him that he should marry Selma.

Benny: Gee whiz you're a real mother. To give away the one you love and to a sister like Selma, too. Gee you are wonderful.

Khaye: Vos volt ikh nit avek gegebn far aykh ven got helft mir un ikh hob dos vos ikh hob nisht volstu gezen vi gliklekh mir voitla geven.

Benny: What I wouldn't give up for you if God helps and I have what I lack, you would see how happy we would all be.


Benny: He just doesn't want to help.

Khaye: You be quiet!

Benny: I hate to hope.

Khaye: Therefore you really have nothing. As our mother, of blessed memory used to say ... If you hope, God helps. Just last night Mama, of blessed memory, said to me in a dream: "Child of mine, don't give up hope. You'll still have it good." And Mama never steered me wrong. She told me before she died that I would have endless heartache from you, and so I have.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benny</th>
<th>Ikh gleyb nit in khaloymes.</th>
<th>Benny</th>
<th>I don't believe in dreams.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Er gleybt nit! Odem a mensh un kaptsn a teksi drayver.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>He doesn't believe! Adam a man and a pauper a taxi driver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Ikh hob shtendik shlekhte khaloymes.</td>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>I always have bad dreams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Gute menshen hobn gute khaloymes. Un shtoys dikh on dos iberike. Ikh bin tsufridn khotsh gut tsu kholemen.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Good people have good dreams. And figure out the rest. I'm glad at least to have good dreams.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No. 11: Mary-Charlie Duet
Un milt a kulte virte shli me zing si an ariye.
11A: Dialogue

**men klapt**

Khaye
Kom in.

Khaye

**someone knocks**

Khaye
Come in.

**enter Louie**

Khaye
Un ot iz take Mr. Louie. Aza gast.

Khaye

**enter Louie**

Khaye
And here is Mr. Louie. What a guest.

Louie
Gud efternun.

Louie
Good afternoon.

Khaye

Khaye
Good afternoon, to you too. Sit. [wipes all the chairs] Have some sense and hop on over to Bernice and be a man.

Benny
Helo Louie un gud bay. Ikh bin zeyr bi zi. Ikh halt in koyfn a teksi a turing kar. Iz boyrnis in der heym?

Benny
Hello Louie and goodbye. I am very busy. I'm about to buy a taxi, a touring car. Is Bernice at home?

Louie
Ya.

Louie
Yes.

Benny
Olrayt. Al si yu leyter. Gud bay. [op]

Benny
All right. I'll see you later. Goodbye. [exits]

Khaye
Nu vos makht ir epes? Shoyn a shtok mit yorn aykh nit gezен. [putst zikh]

Khaye
So how are you doing? I haven't seen you in ages. [pretties herself]

Louie
Ir veyst dokh. A Khazn far di yomim noyroim iz men abisl farnumen.

Louie
Oh, you know how it is. A cantor is a bit busy before the Days of Awe .

Khaye
Dos iz nit keyn teyrets. Mayn mame o"h fleg zogtn kta khatse ten zekhstse. Vi farnumen men zol nit zayn hot men alts tsayt tsu gisn. [brit zikh op]

Khaye
That's no excuse. My mother, of blessed memory, used to say .... No matter how busy you are there's always time to pour (tea?). [burns her fingers]

Louie
Un vider dem emes gezogt hob ikh gedenkt efsher vil men ikh zol arayn kumen.

Louie
On the other hand, truth be told, I figured perhaps you didn't want me to come in.

Khaye
Ven men vil nit ir zolt arayn kumen volt ikh nit gelozt di tir ofn. [makht tsu di tir. Er shokelt zikh oyfn benkel, zi shokelt zikh oykh] Ir vet trinkel a glezl tey mit varenye?

Khaye
If I didn't want people to come in I wouldn't have left the door open. [walks to the door. He rocks on a chair, she rocks too] Will you have a glass of tea with some preserves?
Louie: A dank

Khaye: Zet nor ayer hemd lekhert zikh. Ikh hob moyre ir darft hobn a baleboste.

Louie: Vos kunt aroys vos ikh darf az di vos ikh vil vil mikh nit

Khaye: Un di vos vil aykh vilt ir nit. Azoy vi ale menner.

Louie: Ver vil mikh den?


Louie: Dos vendt zikh vi der got fun libe vet bashtimen.

Khaye: Der got fun libe! Veysikh vos! Nito aza khaye.


Khaye: Oy! Es felt aykh a knepl.

Louie: Es makht nit. Es feln mir asakh zakhn.

Khaye: Just look, your shirt is torn. I'm afraid you need a wife.

Louie: What matters what I need when those I want don't want me.

Khaye: And those who want you you don't want. Just like all men.

Louie: But who wants me?


Louie: It depends on what the God of Love decides.

Khaye: The God of Love! What nonsense! There's no such creature.

Louie: It's like with all gods. If you believe in them they exist, if you don't, they don't. The difference between the God of Love and other gods is that with other gods you believe in them and keep believing in them until you stop believing, and with the God of Love you don't believe and keep not believing until suddenly you start believing.

Khaye: Oh! You're missing a button.

Louie: It doesn't matter. I'm missing a lot of things.

Louie: Bay unz zogt men az men kayt nit farneyt men dem seykhel.

Khaye: Yo di mame o"h fleg es shtendik zogtn.

Louie: Yo di mame ayere aykh tsu lange yor.

Khaye: Aykh oykh tsu lange yor.

Louie: Oy ir hot shoyn eynmol gehat a mame.


Khaye: So what do you think? That you deserve a pat on the back? That's only because you don't have someone to think of you. A person like you, such a good person as you, such a swell person as you should not have a ... button. It's a disgrace. If you allow me, I'll sew one on for you. Here, chew a piece of thread, because they say that if you sew on someone and he doesn't chew that's a sign that he's not American because Americans are always chewing.

We say that if you don't chew, you sew up your brains.

Louie: Yes, Mama may she rest in peace, used to say it constantly.

Yes that mother of yours, may you live a long life.

Louie: Oh you did you have a mother!

Khaye: Oh yes, was she a good mother? You know, you are the first person to talk to me about Mama, may she rest in peace. With my siblings, if I want to talk about Mama, may she rest in peace, they are too busy. Oh, if only God helped me and my children were like you, I would want nothing. I would be the happiest mother in the world. Although I can't complain. They're not bad, just a bit wild. Also, not all of them. You see, Selma is a good kid. She's quiet and good and has money in the bank. Talk to her a little. She'll be delighted and you'll enjoy it too. Selma! Selma! Louie wants to see you.

It's all right. I also want to see you.
Khaye
Yes... Zi iz elter... Mayn kheylek
vizit vet ir mir opgebhn shpeter.
Selma! Selma! [op, brengt arayn]

enter Selma
Khaye
Gey tsu red tsu im. Ober red tsu
im vi a mensh nit vi du redst. Helf
mir gotenyu gib dikh a mish
arayn un kem mir arop a harb fun
di pleytse.

Selma [beyzlekh] Zitst.
Louie A dank.
Selma Ir fardint epes?
Louie Tsubislekh.
Selma Tsu bislekh toyg nit.
Louie Ikh baklog mikh nit.
Selma Vo-den ir vet aykh yo baklogn?
Un az mayn shvester goyrti hot
aykh opgebloft hot ir aykh den
baklogt.

Louie Vel az men iz farlibt iz epes
andersh.

enter Goyrti
Selma Nu yo farlibt. Ir veyst den afile in
vemen zikh tsu farliben? A
pleperke fardreyt aykh bald dem
kop un a fayn meydl a shtil meydl
vet ir aykh nit farlibn. Nur in a
tumerke. Aza vi mayn shvester
goyrti iz. Aza gefelt aykh.

Louie Ir farshteyt ven a mensh iz farlibt
iz men shoyn nit mer in shtand
zikh tsu griblen in khesroynes. Di
oygn zenen dan farshelt mit di
mayles, vayl eygentlikh in di
mayles farlibt men zikh dokh.

Selma Oder ir zent zeyr klug oder ikh
bin zeyr narish. Ot hot ir aykh
farlibt in mayn shvester goyrti.

Gertie Ha!
Khaye Vuhin krikht zi mit di krume fis?
Selma  Let's hear her virtues? I am her sister and I don't see her virtues. [Gertie wants to run in, Khaye doesn't let her] What? Beautiful? Are you a greenhorn? Don't you know the tricks? Spend enough money in beauty parlors. What else? Successful? She can't tie the tail of a cat. [Khaye coughs] What else? Smart? For me it goes without saying, but I swear even the little Khaye Feygl is smarter than her.

Khaye  Phooey! How could you! [to Gertie] Shut up. You're smarter than her, aren't you? Shut up.

Selma  The fish is done and God help me now.

Gertie  Now listen here you dirty good-for-nothing old maid. You don't dare speak about me that way again.

Selma  I was talking about Louie, not about Sidney. What do you care about Louie?

Gertie  Not your damn business. And keep your mouth shut, do you hear me?

Selma  It's your fault, you little worm. You sent her to eavesdrop.

Gertie  [to Khaye] Leave me alone! Sneak! That old grouch! Is it someone else's fault that she can't get a fella.
Selma  Ikh hob dikh in der erd mit ale
dayne fellas. Ale boms ...
Gertie  Ver iz a bom? Mayn Sidney iz a
bom? Ikh vel dir di hor fun kop
aroysraysen.
Khaye  Vey iz mir Lui tayerer, helft mir,
lozt nit.
Louie  Um gots viln. Ir zent dokh
shvester ir zent dokh elter fun ir.
Selma  Oh ir nemt aykh on far ir? Vos
den far mir vet ir aykh onnemen?
Zi lakht fun aykh un ir nemt aykh
on far ir.
Selma  To hell with you and all of your
fellas. All bums ... Tramps....
Gertie  Who's a bum? My Sidney is a
bum? I'll tear the hair out of your
head.
Khaye  Woe is me, Louie dear, help me,
don't let them.
Louie  With God's will. You are sisters,
and you're older than her yet.
Selma  Oh, so you're defending her? What
then, you should defend me? She's
laughing at you and you're
defending her.
Gertie  It's a lie! You're the one I'm
laughing at. You're the one I'm
making fun of. You old maid.
Selma  You won't live to grow old.
Gertie  You're just angry that I have a
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don't want to know them. I don't
need them. Phooey on all of you.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>Di 2 meyden veln mikh traybn in der erd arayn yungeheyt. Eyne iz vild vos zi hot khasanim vi di hint un di tsveytn iz vild vos hot nit a shtikl khosn af a refuah.</th>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>The two girls will drive me into the ground at a young age. One is mad because she has boyfriends like dogs and the second is mad because she can't get a boyfriend if her life depended on it.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Gud bay.</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Goodbye.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Vos far a gudbay iz es af dir? Pitshetshe mayne vi loyfstu shoyn vayter?</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>What kind of a goodbye is that? My spoiled brat, where are you running off to again?</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Ikh hob an apoyntment mit sidney. Ikh gey mit im itsts in kort khasune hohn un mir fam af vakeyshan.</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>I have an appointment with Sidney. We're going to get married in court and then we're going on vacation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Khasune hobn?</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Get married?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Vo-zshe du kenst nit bashteyen? Ikh darf dikh fregn tsi du vest mir heysn?</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Whatsamatta, you begrudge me? Do I need to ask you for your orders?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Yo. Du darfst mikh fregn tsi ikh vel dir heysn. Un ikh heys dir nit krikhn mit a gezunten kop in a krank bet arayn.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Yes. You need to ask me for my orders. And I'm ordering you not to climb into a sick bed with a healthy head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Vel al du es ay pliz.</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Well I'll do as I please.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Azoy! Ikh vel ton vi khaye feygl vet mir heysn. Dont meyk me lef.</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>What! I'll do what Khaye Feygel tells me to! Don't make me laugh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Her uf tsu hirzhen. Ikh heys dir nit geyn.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Stop whining. I'm telling you not to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Vo-zshe? Es gefelt dir nit khaye feygl!? Ot di Khaye Feygl zet mit ayn eygel az oyb du vest geyn in dayn vegel vestu lign in der erd un baken beygl.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Watsamatta? You don't like it, Khaye Feygl!? This very Khaye Feygl sees with one eye, that if you were to go down that path, you would be lying in the ground baking bagels.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gertie: Oh dont meyk mi lef mit dayn muser. Yur fani inaf. Hahaha!

Khaye: Her oyf lakhn hob ikh dir gezogt! Her oyf lakhn.


Khaye: Let her stop laughing! [with tears] Oh Louie. Don't worry. She isn't getting married just yet. … Nullifying ownership. She still has a father, may he live til 120, and I'm also not yet on my sickbed.

Louie: Ikh vel aykh zogt n dem emes. Ikh kum arayn tsu aykh nit dos ershte mol ober mayn blik iz shtendik geven gevendet in eyn rikhtung. Ikh bin mikh moyde az ikh hob aykh kimat nit gezten vi es darf tsu zayn, vi men darf aykh zen. Ir zent in hoyz di kleyne un azoy hob ikh aykh gezten als di kleyne ober itst... ist... ze ikh ...


Louie: I will tell you the truth. This isn't the first time I've come over to you but my gaze was always directed in one direction. I confess that I almost didn't see you like I should've, how you should be seen. You are "the little one" in the house and so I saw you as the little one too, but now … I see. ..

Gertie: Oh don't make me laugh with your lectures. You're funny enough. Hahahahaha!

Khaye: Stop laughing, I said! Stop laughing!

Gertie: Say, say, don't yell at me. See to it rather that my dresses are ready. Because I'm about to go on my vacation. Gee! You're funny! Oh isn't she a scream! [exits]

When all children would go to play after school I had to go help my sick mother, poor thing, who couldn't get out of bed. Even my lessons I couldn't make. So this was my school. My mother's troubles, my teacher. Oh Louie, listen to me, I must, I really must pour my heart out to someone. My father, my brother, my sisters, they think that I don't see and don't know what the lives of other girls my age are like. I know, I see, only I pretend not to see. I know I can get up and cast off the heavy burden. I don't have anything to lose. But they would lose a home. Perhaps they don't feel it, but I feel that they need, they must have the home. I promised Mama on her deathbed and I keep my word. My little brother Archie was drifting in the streets in the heat and filth, so I looked after him. Thank God. He is in the fresh air. He's looked after. So good, I am pleased. My older brother lost his job. Who worries for him? Mamele. His table is set, his bed made ...the older one poor thing doesn't have luck nor sense, on whose head does it all go? Always on mine. My father ... only once did he remember that I'm a child so he grabbed his strap for me. Only one bit of happiness did I create for myself: I adopted as my own a beautiful little kitten. I fell in love with it and once in a while I smuggled him some milk. So they tossed him out. But that's nothing. I endured all that. But today my sister laughed at me and you saw it. And it hurts. This hurt so much, friend Louie, that I can't endure it. Tell me, look at me and tell me why was she laughing? What is
Ober dos iz alts gornit. Dos hob
ikh alts aribergetrogn. Haynt ober
hot mayn shvester gelakht fun mir
un ir hot es gezem. Un dos tut mir
vey. Dos tut azoy vey, fraynd
Louie, dos ken ikh nit ariber
trogn. Zogt mir, kuk mikh on un
zogt mir vos hot zi gelakht? Vos
iz do fun mir tsu lakhn? Vu iz a
shpigl? Lomikh mikh onkuken.

there about me to laugh at? Where
is the mirror? Let me look at
myself. I don't want they should
laught at me. I don't want, I can't.
[cries]

Khaye

Ikh vil nit men zol lakhn fun mir.  Ikh vil nit ikh ken nit kikh ken nit
Khaye [vaynt]

I don't want to be laughed at. I don't
want I can't, I can't [cries].
Baruikt aykh, Ayda. Ssshhh! Laughing at you is a crime. It's the people who laugh at you who ought to be laughed at. Ida, I'm seeing you today—now, for the first time. You are not my equal you say, compared to me you are a child, but I say to you that I feel smaller than you. I haven't experienced, haven't survived that which you have. You are not a child, you are a person, a genuine person to whom life owes her childhood years. You didn't finish public school because life threw you into a different school. The school of life. One too big, too difficult for your age. You took it like a good student. What about a reward? It's rare that you get one. Don't be down on yourself, Ida. There is often great pride in being laughed at. The greatest ideas, the greatest people were all once laughed at by those who didn't understand. Happiness is in the hands of fate. About that, I can't tell you anything other than to wish you well from the bottom of my heart, but you will never be alone again. I will be your friend and proudly so, if you want.

If I want? If I want? God in heaven, Mama in heaven...

If so then come with me. I can't see a greater goal in life, a more sacred mission than making you happy. I can't give you such a ritzy vacation like Sidney promised your sister, but I will therefore give you my heart and my soul to make you happy. Come with me. [both exit]
**penciled in: Farhang**

**enter Sidney, Shimen**

Simon Ot iz dakh goyrti. Nu vi gefelt aykh a tokhter oysgehodevet?

Simon Here is Gertie. So how do you like the daughter I raised?

Sidney Fayn. Poyrfekt.

Sidney Fine. Perfect.

Simon Ver es vet zi nemen vet mir muzn a sakh aroystsoyn. Dets olayt s'iz vert.

Simon He who takes her will have to pay a lot. That's all right, it's worth it.

Gertie Nit tsufil papa. Vos mer du vest tsunemen alts veyniker vet blaybn far mir.

Gertie Not too much, Papa. The more you take the less that leaves for me.


Simon Do you see what world this is? Every man for himself. Such is the world these days.

**enter Benny, Bernice**

Benny Helo, Mr. Kets.

Benny Hello, Mr. Katz.

Sidney Ha du yu du ben.

Sidney How do you do, Ben.

Benny Ikh vil aykh forshteln mayn turing kar ... Ay min may leydi frend mis levitan.

Benny I want to introduce to you my touring car ... I mean my lady friend, Miss Levitan.

Sidney Dilayted ay eshur yu.

Sidney Delighted I assure you.

Bernice Layk vayz.

Bernice Likewise.


Simon Well? Hmm? Yes? All right. In good health, children. So I have my home and so I will have many homes. For every child a home. But wait! Wherever is the little one? Let her serve a little something to eat.

Gertie Ikh veys nit. Ikh kum tsu geyn di tir iz ofn, keyner nito. Men hot gekent dos gantse hoyz aroysganvenen.

Gertie I don't know. I come and find the door is open, nobody here. Someone could have made off with the whole house.

Simon Take! Vu iz zi?

Simon Really! Where is she?

Gertie Fregt mikh?

Gertie You're asking me?
Simon: Di groyse oykh nito? Vos iz dos far a mishegas lozn ofn a tir un avek geyn. Selma! Selma!

Simon: The older one is also gone? What kind of insanity is this to leave the door open and just leave. Selma! Selma!

-enter Selma, ongeblozn

Selma: Vos iz? Vos vilstu?

Selma: What is it? What do you want?

Simon: Vu iz khaye feygl?

Simon: Where is Khaye Feygl?

Selma: Ikh veys nit.

Selma: I don't know.

Simon: Vu bistu geven?

Simon: Where were you?

Selma: Vu ikh hob gedarft.

Selma: Where I needed to be.

Simon: Me fregt dikh vi a mensh enfer vi a mensh! Dos hostu gelozt ofn di tir un avek?

Simon: You're asked politely, answer politely! Was it you that left the door open and went out?

Selma: Ikh veys nit. Ikh hob gelozt a shtub mit menshn.

Selma: I don't know. I left a house full of people.

Bernice: Efsher iz a yda bay unz. [op]

Bernice: Maybe Ida is at our house. [exits]


Simon: She should just come in here, the little one. She will get it from me.

Gertie: Zi iz iberhoypht gevorn azoy fresh az es iz nit oystsuhaltn fun ir.

Gertie: She especially became so fresh that it's just unbearable.

Simon: Vos hart dikh? Loz zi iber tsu mir. Ikh vel ir vayzn az ikh bin a tate.

Simon: What do you care? Leave her to me. I will show her that I am the father.

-enter Bernice

Bernice: Mamelekh mayne. Zet vi zi zet oys. Ikh hob zi dokh gornit derkent. Oy zet zi oys!

Bernice: Little mothers of mine. Look how she looks. I didn't recognize her at all. Oh how she looks!

Everyone: Ver?

Everyone: Who?

Bernice: Vos heyst ver? Khaye Feygl!

Bernice: What do you mean who? Khaye Feygl!

-enter Khaye, geshmak gekleydet, ale ershtoynt

Khaye: Vel? Vos azoy farvundert?

Khaye: Well? Why so surprised?

Benny: Kid mather, yu ar di kets viskers.

Benny: Kid Mother, you are the cat's whiskers.

Simon: Vos iz dos?

Simon: What is this?
Khaye: Vos doz iz? A dres, a het, shikh zoken ...
Khaye: What this is? A dress, a hat, shoes, stockings…
Simon: Ikh meyn vos iz di gedule?
Simon: I mean, what's the occasion?
Khaye: Di gedule iz vos anshtat ir for ikh af vakeyshon.
Khaye: The occasion is that instead of her, I am going on vacation.
Simon: Vos?
Simon: What?
Khaye: Dos vos ir hert. Ikh nem a por vokhn vakeyshon.
Khaye: You heard me. I am taking a few weeks' vacation.
Simon: Zi nemt! Host emtsef gefregt?
Simon: She's taking! Did you ask anyone?
Khaye: I don't need to ask. I am the mistress of this house. I'm traveling to the country for a few weeks. See that everything is in order. Goodbye.
Gertie: Papa, di kleyne is meshuge gevorn.
Gertie: Papa, the little one has gone crazy.
Khaye: Meshuge? To lakh! Vos lakh stu nisht? Ikh bin dokh azoy komish!
Khaye: Crazy? So laugh! Why aren't you laughing? I'm so funny!
Sidney: Komish? Vhay? Yur dzhost a litl dall. [Goyrti kukt im on beyz]
Sidney: Funny? Why? You're just a little doll. [Gertie stares at him angrily]
Khaye: Thenks, mister kets. Zorg nit shvester, biz dayn khasene vel ikh zayn tsurik.
Khaye: Thanks, Mr. Katz. Don't worry sister, I'll be back in time for your wedding.
Simon: Red nor tsu mir. Ershtens, zogt mir nor, vu hot es a meydele genumen gelt?
Simon: Just talk to me. First of all, tell me please, where does a little girl get the money?
Selma: Er fregt vu! Veynik hobn mir zi ongeshtopt di gantse tsayt—mir hobn epes bay ir gefodert a rekhenung?
Selma: "Where" he asks! Didn't we stuff her pockets with money the whole time—did we ever demand an accounting from her?
Khaye: Ikh foder yo rekhenung fun aykh ale. Tzvey yor far di mames toyt un dray yor nokh ir toyt. Finef yor bin ikh geven bay aykh a dist a shklaf un hob fardint, erlekh fardint a shtikl vakeyshn, nor ikh bet es nisht bay aykh, ikh foder es nit fun aykh, ikh nem es mir. Gud bay.
Khaye: I am demanding an accounting. Two years before mother's death and three years since her death. For five years I was a maid, a slave for you, and earned, honestly earned, a little vacation, but I'm not asking you for one, I'm not demanding it from you, I'm taking it. Goodbye.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simon</th>
<th>Shtey! Du… du… vos heyst du geyst? Vuhin geyt es epes a kleyn meydele eyne aleyn?</th>
<th>Simon</th>
<th>Stand! You're… you're… what do you mean you're going? Wherever does a little girl go all by herself?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>azoy! A kleyn meydl plutsem gevorn. Zorg nit pape, dayn kleyn meydele iz nit aleyn. Dayn kleyn meydele iz untern shuts fun a groyzn dzshentlmen. Kom rayt in, may frend!</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Really! I'm a little girl all of a sudden! Don't worry Papa, your little girl is not alone. Your little girl is under the protection of a great gentleman. Come right in, my friend!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enter Louie [mit peklekh]</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Vel, ist bistu ruik papa dir?</td>
<td>Well, are you more at ease now?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selma</td>
<td>Aha! Aza khevremen zent ir! Minderyerike kinder vilt ir far…?</td>
<td>Oh! So you're that kind of a rascal! You want underaged children for…?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Shvaygt! Beygt ale di kep far der minderyeriker un vintshir a gliklekhe rayze—oyb ir hot nokh epes menshlekhes in zikh.</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Quiet! All of you bow your heads for this underaged child and wish her bon voyage—if there's a shred of decency left in you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>[tisert] Oyb vekeyshn… iz grade haynt? Zol zi vartn biz ikh vel tsurikkumen. Me ken dokh niht lozn di heym af hefker?</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>[trembling] And if vacation… must it be today? Let her wait until I get back. We can't just abandon the house unattended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Take, take, s'iz dokh dayn heym.</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>True, true, it's your home! My home? I give you my home. Let it be from now on your home. I pardon you, pardon you. [throws keys to Gertie] Here, sister of mine, here are the keys, here is the home. And laugh! Laugh! Laugh! [goes to the door, position]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farhang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DRITER AKT [ACT THREE]

Two weeks later. Near a hotel

No. 13: In der kontri
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bernice</th>
<th>Boyrnis-Louie; enter Louie</th>
<th>Louie</th>
<th>Bernice-Louie; enter Louie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Aleyn gor? Vu iz dos mamele?</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>You're alone? Where is the Mamele?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Ikh veys nit. Loyft arum ergets.</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>I don't know. Running around somewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Zol zi loyfn zol zi zikh shpiln. Ir tsayt iz oykh gekumen. Vi sheyn do iz! A shod vos beni iz nito. Ven klaybt ir aykh aheym?</td>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Let her run, let her play. Her time has come too. How nice it is! A pity that Benny isn't here. When are you going home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Vos hob ikh mikh tsu aylen. Veyst dokh geforn aher bin ikh dokh nur tsulib ir.</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>What's the hurry? You know that I came here just because of her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Tsulib der kleyner veys ikh dokh.</td>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Because of the little one, I know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Yo. Dos kind heybt ersht on tsu zikh tsi kumen. Zol zi zikh a bisl fiksn. Zol ir aroys der tshad fun kop.</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Yes. The child is first starting to recover. So she should mend a little. Let her clear her head of the carbon monoxide fumes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>S'iz afile nit mayne biznes. Vos denkstu vet zayn vayter?</td>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>It's not even my business. What do you think will be afterward?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Vos vet zayn ken ikh nit zogtn. Ikh bin nit keyn novi. Eyns ken ikh dir zogtn: Azoy vi s'iz geven vet mer nit zayn. Dos kind iz dort gelegen in goles azoy lang vi keyner hot zikh nit umgekukt af ir. Itst iz a gants andre geshikhte.</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>What will be I can't say. I'm not a prophet. One thing I can tell you: only that what was will no longer be. The girl languished there in exile as long as no one paid attention to her. Now it's a completely different story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Di mame shraybt mir az bay zey in der heym iz groyser tsores. Di meydn vern geharget i mitn altn i eyne mit der anderer. Der alter vert oysgedart. Beni iz kimat in gantsn bay unz.</td>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Mother wrote to me that there is big trouble at home. The girls are getting killed both by the old man and by each other. The old man is getting emaciated. Benny practically lives there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Dertseylt es nit Ayden. Ikh vil zol in gantsn fargesn di heym mit ale tsores. Veynikstens dervayl.</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Don't mention it to Ida. I want her to completely forget that home with all its troubles. At least for the time being.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bernice: Not tell her? Oh please let me tell her about it. You know a woman can't stop herself.

Sidney: Nito do ergets ayda? [op]

Sidney: Isn't Ida here somewhere?

Bernice: Vos iz er gekumen? Vos hot er zikh do avekgezetst?

Bernice: Why did he come? Why did he sit down here?

Louie: Gekumen iz er ahem nemen aydn. Azoy yedenfals heyst es. Vos er hot zikh do avek gezest dos veys ikh nit.

Louie: He came to take Ida home. So it seems anyway. Why he sat down here I don't know.


Bernice: I don't like that appearance of his, that unkosher portion, as Khaye Feygl says. She's got a sharp eye, the little one. She knows a man by his nose. About you she would always tell me: "Louie ... A gentleman."

Khaye and Archie can be heard laughing as they toss a ball around. Archie runs after it, Khaye Feygl runs after him in knickers both roll together on the ground.

Khaye: Ikh hob im! Ikh hob im!

Khaye: I got it! I got it!

Archie: A khakhome! Hast dokh im bay mir oysgekhapt.

Archie: A clever woman! You grabbed it away from me!

Khaye: Hastu gedarft bay mir oyskhapn.

Khaye: You should've grabbed it from me.


Archie: I wouldn't push you. You are big sister.

Khaye: [umarmt im] May svit litl darling beybi broder.

Khaye: [embraces him] My sweet little darling baby brother.

Bernice elbows Louie that he should see and be proud.
Louie  Ayda, rir zikh nit. Ikh loyf aroysbrengen mayn kamera. [op]


Khaye  [shlept im tsurik] Ot azoy zits biz men vet snapn.

Louie  Ida, don't move. I'll run in and get my camera. [exits]

Archie  [jumps up] Ah yes. I'll snap some pictures.

Khaye  [pulls him back] Sit like this until we snap (the pictures).

Bernice  Take avek shikn aza piktshur ahem. Zoln zey zen. Veyst ikh hob gekrign a bri' fun der heym.

Khaye  Take? Vos shraybt men dir?

Bernice  We should really send such a picture back home. They should see. You know I got a letter from home.

Really? What did they write to you?

Bernice  Louie ordered me not to tell you, but are they ever in trouble!

Khaye  Really? What else did they write to you?

Bernice  Louie ordered me not to tell you, only they are tearing each other's heads off. Your father gets thinner from day to day.

Archie  Vel Louie! Hori op! [crossed out in Rumshinsky]

Khaye  You shut up! What's this, Louie! Did you graze pigs together? Can't you say "Mister Levitan"?

Archie  You call him Louie, don't you?

Khaye  You shut up! What's this, Louie! Did you graze pigs together? Can't you say "Mister Levitan"?

Archies  Are you comparing yourself to me? You little worm! I am a grownup.

Archie  You see, you little shrimp you.

Bernice  Louie hot mir nit geheysn dir oyszogtn, nor zenen zey af tsores!

Khaye  Take? Vos nokh shraybn zey dir?

Bernice  Louie ordered me not to tell you,

Khaye  Really? What did they write to you?

Bernice  only they are tearing each other's heads off. Your father gets thinner from day to day.

Archie  Du rufst im Louie, dontshu?

Khaye  He is.

Archie  You call him Louie, don't you?

Khaye  Are you comparing yourself to me? You little worm! I am a grownup.

Archie  You see, you little shrimp you.

Bernice  Louie hot mir nit geheysn oyszogtn nor zey raysn zikh arum bay di kep. Dayn tate vert derer fun tog tsu tog.

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Archie  You see, you little shrimp you.

Archies  Are you comparing yourself to me? You little worm! I am a grownup.

Archie  You see, you little shrimp you.

Archie  You see, you little shrimp you.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Sit daun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Vu iz ergets di zun?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>In himl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Ot azoy. Stedi stedi. Smayl smayl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>[kitselt im] Smayl Artshi, smayl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Ay kent smayl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Dermon dikh in Selma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Ruik! Ruik! Ot azoy. [snept]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>[tickles him] Smayl Archie, smile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>I can't smile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Ruik! Ruik! Ot azoy. [snept]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Wait! Wait! My nose itches. Another one! Another one! Stand up Ida. [kisses her] Like this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Dermon dikh in Selma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Artshi!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Excuse me, Mister Levitan! Please. Let me snap a picture. I know how. I learned at camp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Atsind vel ikh snepen. Luie...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Archie!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Archie!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>We can take another one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>One, two, three, ready.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Now I'll go to the drug store to drop off the pictures. Oh I really didn't put in any film.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Boyrnis geyt durkh*

| Archie  | Atsind vel ikh snepen. Luie... |
| Khaye   | Archie! |
| Archie  | One, two, three, ready. |
| Louie   | We can take another one. |

*Bernice walks through*

| Louie   | Steady, steady. All right. [snaps] There I ruined a film. |
| Archie  | Now I will take a picture. Louie... |
| Khaye   | Archie! |
| Archie  | Excuse me, Mister Levitan! Please. Let me snap a picture. I know how. I learned at camp. |
| Archie  | One, two, three, ready. |
| Louie   | Now I'll go to the drug store to drop off the pictures. Oh I really didn't put in any film. |
Khaye: Oy iz er a khosn (khazn?).
Archie: Meg ikh mitgeyn Ayde? Ikh vil an ayz krim kon.
Bernice: Geyst in drog stor? Ikh gey oykh. Ikh darf stemps. [ale op]
Khaye: Lyube lyube lyube du host tsu mir getaynet host azoy geplapelt biz ikh bin gevorn farvyanet.

Archie: What a groom (cantor?).
Louie: All right. Come along.
Bernice: Going to the drug store? I'll go too. I need stamps. [everyone exits]
Khaye: Darling, darling, darling, you complained to me, you babbled so much until I wilted.

enter Sidney

Sidney: Ayda! Ayda!
Khaye: Vos vilt ir fun mir?
Sidney: Ikh zukh arum shoyn a par sha Ikh muz mit aykh redn. Ikh veys es iz shoyn keyn sod nit far keynem az ikh bin aher gekumen nor tsulib aykh.
Khaye: Ikh veys ikh veys. Mayn shvester goyrti hat aykh geshikt mikh tsu betn ikh zol tsurik aheym kumen.

Sidney: I've been looking around for a few hours now. I must speak to you. I know it isn't a secret anymore to anyone that I came here just because of you.
Khaye: Ir meynt take az goyrti hot mikh geshikt? Dos hob ikh aleyn ayngeredt mikh tsu shikn vayl ikh vil aykh zen ober tsurend vil ikh aykh nit vayl es iz virklekh a shod fun denen avek tsu form. Do zenen do azoy fil sheyne zakhn blument feygelek, tshikendlek ... [nemt zi arum]
Khaye: I know, I know. My sister Gertie sent you to ask me to come back home.

Sidney: Do you really think that Gertie sent me? I convinced myself to come because I want to see you, but I don't want to persuade you because it is really a shame to go away from here. There are so many nice things, flowers, birds, chiclets [embraces her]
Khaye: Yo un khazeyrim. [a patsh iber di hend]
Khaye: Yes, and pigs. [swats his hand away]

Sidney: Ikh hob gemeynr ir zent shoyn a bisl andersh gevorn. Nokh alts a branzviler tsig.
Khaye: Yo nor a berdl felt mir.
Sidney: I thought you would be a bit different. Still a Brownsville goat.
Khaye: Tsu a tsig redn ernst? Zent ir dokh a bok.
Sidney: I want to talk to you seriously.
Khaye: To a goat you want to talk seriously? That makes you a buck.
Sidney: For gads seyk zay a minit ernst. Ikh bet aykh.
Khaye: Nu az ir bet mikh vel ikh aykh tsulib ton. Ernst zol zayn ernst. Hertshe, azoy vi ir zent arayn tsum ershtn mol tsu unz in hoyz arayn...

Sidney: Yes yes?
Khaye: Zent ir mir bald nit gefeln gevorn. Ikh hob a nyukh.

Sidney: A vos?
Khaye: A nyukh. Azoy fleg zogt n mame o"h. Dos heyst a shmeker. Ikh dershmek bald ver s'iz a mensh un ver a dover-akher.

Sidney: Vos far a shprakh redt ir? Redt prost yidish.

Sidney: Ikh hob foroys gevust az ir vet mikh baleydikn ober mikh shreken nit op azelkhe zakhn.

Khaye: Er iz shoyn gevoynt tsu dem.
Sidney: Ikh bin fest antshlosn aykh tsu ibertsaygn vi heys vi shtark ikh lib aykh, nit ayer shvester Goyrti. Vayl nokh alemen az men derzet aykh vos far a vert hobn 10, 20 hundert azelkhe vi ayer shvester.

Khaye: Ot hot er mikh ersht derzen.
Sidney: Ayda, ikh vel dikh batsirn mit di tayerste kleyder mit di shenste daymonds, brilanten. Ikh vel dikh nemen yede nakht tsu andere partis, raykhe kabareyen, ikh vel dikh batsirn vi a printsesin, vi a kenigen.

Sidney: For God's sake be serious a minute. I beg you.
Khaye: Oh, well, since you begged me I shall oblige. Serious is serious. Listen here, as soon as you came over that first time to our house...

Sidney: Yes yes?
Khaye: I took an immediate dislike to you. I have a sense.

Sidney: A what?
Khaye: A sense, as my mother, of blessed memory, would say. Intuition, that is. I can quickly detect who is a gentleman and who is a swine.

Sidney: What kind of language are you speaking? Speak plain Yiddish.
Khaye: Speak plain Yiddish? A swine is a pig. Simply a pig.

Sidney: I know in advance that you would offend me but I'm not scared off by such things.

Sidney: He is already used to it.
Khaye: He is already used to it.

Sidney: I am firmly determined to prove to you how ardently, how strongly I love you, not your sister Gertie. Because when all is said and done, upon seeing you, what's 10, 20 or even a hundred like your sister worth?

Khaye: And so he finally saw me.

Sidney: Ida, I will adorn you with the most expensive gowns with the most beautiful diamonds and gems. Every night I will take you to different parties, rich cabarets, I will bejewel you like a princess, like a queen.
Khaye  Es klingt azoy sheyn, s'iz azoy gut tsu hern ... Oy ven dos volt nokh emes geven!  Khaye  It sounds so nice, it is so good to hear... Oh if only it were true!

Sidney  S'iz emes. Ikh shver es dir.  Sidney  It is true. I swear it to you.

Khaye  Un mit a shvue gleyb ikh aykh den?  Khaye  And with an oath I do believe you?

Sidney  Ayda, ikh hob dikh lib. [kisht zi]  Sidney  Ida, I love you. [kisses her]

Khaye  Sharlatan! Ver hot es aykh erloybt?  Khaye  Charlatan! Who gave you permission?

Sidney  Mayn libe tsu dir.  Sidney  My love for you.

enter Louie  

Khaye  Oh Louie! [loyft tsu im, Sidney op]  Khaye  Oh Louie! [runs to him, Sidney exits]

Louie  Vos iz? Vos tsiterstu azoy?  Louie  What is it? Why are you trembling so much?

Khaye  S'iz mir kalt tsiter ikh.  Khaye  It's because I'm cold that I'm shivering.

Louie  Kalt! Mir iz azoy heys ikh ver tsushmoltsen. Un dir iz kalt? Efsher bistu nit gezunt?  Louie  Cold! I am so hot I'm melting. And you're cold? Are you perhaps not feeling well?

Khaye  Ikh bin gezunt. Nor s'iz mir epes kalamutne afn hartsn. Zogt mir epes, Louie.  Khaye  I'm well. It's just something in my heart is heavy. Tell me something, Louie.

Louie  Vos?  Louie  What?

Khaye  Epes sheyns epes guts. Ikh vil azoy hern epes sheyns.  Khaye  Something nice, something good. I really want to hear something nice.

Louie  Yo? Gut. Bald nokh soper veln mir in parlor zikh avek zetsen onshteln dem reydio, vest hern sheyne muzik sheyne lektshurs...  Louie  Yes? Good. Right after supper we'll sit in the parlor and turn on the radio, and you'll hear some nice music, nice lectures ...

Khaye  Ikh hob faynt tsu hern dos vos ale kenen hern. Ir aleyn kent gornit epes sheyne zakhen?  Khaye  I hate to listen to what everyone can hear. You yourself don't know some nice things?

Louie  Vos epes plutsem?  Louie  Why all of a sudden?

Khaye  Ze nor vi er ken nit bashteyn. Ven goyrti iz af mayn plats volt zi  Khaye  Just look how he can't handle it. If Gertie were in my place she
aykh nit gedarft shlepn bay der tsung.

Louie  Ikh farshtey nit.  
Khaye  Reboyne sheloylem! Vos zent ir?  

Khaye  A khan.  
Louie  Ober khuts a khan?  

Louie  Un akhuts a fraynd? Zent ir den nit a man. Veyst ir den nit vos a man redt tsu a meydl in der kontri?  

Louie  Vos zshe du kleyn meydele du. Vilst dafke hern fun libe?  

Khaye  Ir zet! Az ir vilt farshteyt ir an eysek.  

Louie  Farshteyn farshtey ikh di gants tsayt.  

Khaye  Vozshe kvetsht ir aykh? (x'ed out: Vos tsit ir mir aroys di atsomes?) Ir fargint mir nit?  

Louie  Vos vestu aleyn denken fun mir ven ikh vel mikh avek shteln redn fun libe tsu a yung unshuldik kind.  

Khaye  Oy Loui! Shoyn. Ikh bin nit mer umshuldik.  

Louie  Vos?  
Khaye  Mit gevalt. Af mayn vort mit gevalt. Ikh hob mir nit gekent helfn.  

Louie  Ayde! Vos redstu? Vos iz geshen?  

Khaye  Er!  
Louie  Ver?  
Khaye  Der khazer.  
Louie  Ver? A khan?  
Khaye  Neyn. Goyrtis khazer.  

wouldn't have to pull your teeth out.

Louie  I don't understand.  
Khaye  Master of the universe! What are you?  

Louie  A cantor.  
Khaye  But besides a cantor?  

Louie  Your friend.  
Khaye  And besides a friend? Aren't you a man? Don't you know how a man talks to a girl in the country?  

Louie  What, you little girl, you. Do you really want to hear about love?  
Khaye  You see! If you want you understand.  

Louie  I understood all along.  

Khaye  So then why are you beating around the bush? (Why keep me in suspense?) You begrudge me?  

Louie  What you would think of me if I were to start speaking of love to a young, innocent child.  

Khaye  Oh Louie! Enough. I am not innocent anymore.  

Louie  What?  
Khaye  By force. On my word by force. I couldn't help myself.  

Louie  Ida! What are you saying? What happened?  

Khaye  He!  
Louie  Who?  
Khaye  The pig.  
Louie  Who? A cantor?  
Khaye  No. Gertie's pig.
Louie  Sidney? Vi hot er gevagt? Ven iz dos geshen?
Khaye  Friy eyder du bist arayn gekumen hot er mikh gekusht.
Louie  Gekusht? Dos ales?
Khaye  Neyn. Nokh epes.
Louie  Vos nokh?
Louie  Un ikh hob gemeyn az men tor nokh tsu dir nit redn fun libe. Nor eyder an anderer zol redn vel ikh shoyn take redn.
Khaye  Nu red.
Louie  Nokh soper.
Khaye  Kumtshe esn soper.
Louie  Vart a minut. Ven di zun vet fargeyn un di levone vet oysgeyn veln mir redn vegn libe.
Louie  Sidney? How dare he? When did it happen?
Khaye  Earlier, before you came in he kissed me.
Louie  Kissed you? That's all?
Khaye  No, there's something else.
Louie  What else?
Khaye  He talked and talked. .. I should know so much from his hand and foot. But he carried on like he was praying. Ida, he said, I'll take you, show you diamonds and gems, I'll drag you at night to a princess who has cars and jewelry and dress. Of course! If someone else would've said those words it would've landed better.
Louie  And I thought that it wasn't allowed yet to speak to you of love. But before anyone else does, I'll do it myself.
Louie  So speak.
Khaye  After supper.
Louie  So let's go eat supper.
Khaye  Wait a minute. When the sun goes down and the moon comes out we will talk about love.
Louie  Why wait until so late? What does the sun and moon have to do with us? The sun is created for the day, the moon for the night, and you were created for me.
No. 14: Du bist bashafn far mir
Gemäßigt het er färtsch genützret a singen baa~
Fl.

B♭ Cl.

B♭ Tpt.

Tbn.

Perc.

Pno.

Kh.F.

Lou.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

D.B.

Second time 8va
**14A: Dialogue**

**enter Archie**

Archie  
Luk hu iz hir. [op]

Archie  
Look who's here. [exits]

**enter Shimen, Selma, Gertie, Khazn, Khaznte**

Simon  
Efshe hot ir epes tsu nemen in moyl arayn.

Simon  
Perhaps you have a bite to eat.

Louie  
Vi kumt ir plutsim aber?

Louie  
Why have you come here all of a sudden?

Benny  
Ikh hob zey gegebn a rayd.

Benny  
I gave them a ride.

Simon  
Der hunger hot mikh getribn aher. Vi iz dos mamele?

Simon  
Hunger drove me here. Where is Mamele?

Archie  
Ayde kumt bald aroys. Zi hot gezogt ir zolt varn.

Archie  
Ida will come out soon. She said that you should wait.

Gertie  
Gey gefin Mr. Ketz un zogt im az ikh bin do.

Gertie  
Go find Mr. Katz and tell him that I'm here.

Archie  
Er veyst. Ikh hob im gezogt.

Archie  
He knows. I told him.

Gertie  
Er veyst un kumt nit aroys? Vos tut er dort?

Gertie  
He knows and isn't coming out? What is he doing in there?

Archie  
Er shokelt zikh in raking tshe.

Archie  
He's rocking in a rocking chair.

Gertie  
Bist zikher az dos iz mayn Sidney?

Gertie  
Are you sure that that's my Sidney.

Archie  
Shur. Ay no det sonevvegon.

Archie  
Sure. I know that son of a gun.

Khazn  
Tsipe! Nor lebn im shtey zi. Nor tsu fremde mener tsit es zi.

Khazn  
Tsipe! She only stands next to him. Only to strange men is she drawn.

Khazn's wife  

Khazn's wife  
Why else does one go to the mountains? You think for the mountains? What an old fool you are. In the mountains a lady is a lady, and the more men she has, the more lady she is.

Shimen lakht  
Simon laughs

Selma  
Vos shteystu un kvelst? Di kleyne lozt unz vortn un er kvelt.

Selma  
Why do you stand and beam? The little one lets us wait and he's beaming.
Simon Bist take gerekht. Vos heyst zi lozt unz vartn? Zol zi nor aroyukmen vet ir zen. [ale redn]

Simon You are right indeed. What do you mean she lets us wait? She should just come out, and you'll see. [everyone talks]

**enter Khaye**

Everyone Helo Ayda!

Simon Vos makhstu? Host nit gebenk nokhn tatn.

Khaye [x'ed out: Tsu ikh hob gebenk?] Nokhn strap zikher nit. Helo khazn, helo khaznte. Der khazn iz nokh alts beyz?

Khazn's wife Alts heyst beyz! 'Siz nit oystshuhaft fun im. Vest zen ikh vel mikh nokh mit im... Eltern biz 120 yor. Vu iz Boyrnis?

Khaye In viledzsh.

Gertie [shtif Selma] Nu!


Simon Farloz dikh af mir. Vest zen vi ikh vel tsu ir redn. Khaye Feygl!...

Khaye Vos iz?

Simon [farlirt zikh] Eh ... Dos voybl vos zist dor. Di shvarts kheynedike? Ver iz zi?

Khaye An almone.

Simon [freyt zikh] An almone?

Khaye Yo. Der man iz a beker.

Simon Zogtst dokh zi iz an almone.

Khaye Ya. Zi hot ir man in der erd.

**enter Louie**

Selma: Just look what he came all the way from New York to ask her. I see already that I must speak. So listen Khaye Feygl, this can't go on like this. The house is hell without you. Since you left, we've all been going around with stomach aches. You must come back home.

Simon: Du aleyn darfst dokh oykh hobn a heyem.

Simon: You yourself also need a home.

Khaye: Dos veln mir hern vos Louie vet zogtn. Vos zogt ir, Louie, ikh darf a heyem?

Khaye: Now we will listen to what Louie says. What say you Louie, do I need a home?

Louie: Aza heyem vi du host biz atsind gehat darfstu zikher nit.

Louie: Such a home as you had til now you sure don't need.

Selma: Pliz! Mir viln nit az fremde zoln zikh arayn mishn.

Selma: Please! We don't need strangers to meddle.

Khaye: Louie iz nit keyn fremder. Er iz mayn... Prayvet sekreter.

Khaye: Louie is no stranger. He is my ... Private secretary.

Louie: Kum arayn. Ikh hob genumen a rum far aykh.

Louie: Come in. I took a room for you.

Khazn's wife: Mr. Kravtshik, ir geyt oykh?

Khazn's wife: Mr. Kravtshik, are you going too?

Khazn: Kum shoyn. [ale 3 op]

Khazn: Come already. [the three exit]

Selma: Azoy heyst es. Dos hot er dikh oysgelernt di ale shtik.

Selma: So that's how it is. He's the one who taught you all your tricks.

Gertie: Ver veyst vos nokh er hot zi do oysgelernt.

Gertie: Who knows what else he taught her here.


Khaye: The rest, sister, another gentleman taught me. That one taught me a lot of new things. You will be surprised. But why should I talk so much. He'll already talk for me. [calls out] Sidney dear!

Gertie: Vemen ruft zi azoy? Mayn sidni?

Gertie: Who is she calling like that? My Sidney?
Khaye  Host a toes. S'iz shoyn nit dayn Sidni. S'iz shoyn mayn Sidni. 

Khaye  You're wrong. He's no longer your Sidney, he's now my Sidney.

enter Sidney

Sidney  Vos ... O Goyrti!
Gertie  Hau du yu du, Sidni? Ir zent gornisht neygerik mikh tsu zen?
Sidney  No... Vay... Yes ... Shur... [kukt fartsveyft af kh.f., zi khapt flign]
Khaye  Mayn shvester iz zeyr a neygerike un zi vil visn vos es hot aykh do farhaltn azoy lang, hob ikh gezogt az ir vet ir shoyn erklern.
Sidney  (fregt in mimik tsi er zol zogtn, zi entfert az yo) Vel, ikh vel aykh nisht shtern kinderlekh, zogt aykh eyns dos andere vos ir darft, ober krigt aykh nisht. Setelt ales af a shtiln faynem afn. Ikh vel dervayle geyn epes esn. Akh s'iz azoy gut tsu zitsn baym tish vi a pritsete un men derlangt dir alts fartik, beser vi aley zikh badern baym top. A yo, Goyrti? Vel, ta ta! Si yu sam mor kids [op in hoyz]

Khaye  My sister is very curious and she wants to know what it was that kept you here so long, so I said that you would explain it to her.

Sidney  (mouts to ask Khaye Feygl if he should speak, she nods yes), Well, I won't disturb you kids, tell each other what you n need, but don't fight. Settle everything quietly and nicely. Meanwhile I'm going to get something to eat. Oh it's so good to sit at the table like a lady and be served everything all prepared, better than just bothering at the pot on your own. Right, Gertie? Well, ta ta! See you some more kids. [exits in house]

Gertie  Vel, ay her yu, Mr. Kets.
Khaye  Yu si Goyrti, du bist nisht keyn nar, du farshteyst dokh az der mensh iz nisht shtendik bay zikh in di hent, es kumt a mol a gefil...

Gertie  Well, I hear you, Mr. Katz
Khaye  You see Gertie, you're no fool, you understand that a man is not always in control of himself, sometimes a feeling comes over him…

---

60 Rumshinsky’s script ends here.
Gertie: Dets enof, ikh vel mer nisht hern. Es iz ongekumen a nayer gefil ... Hm... (broyzt oyf) Tsu vemen? Tsu vemen a gefil? Tsu der mamele? Tsu ayda? Tsu a kind?

Gertie: That's enough, I won't hear any more. A new feeling came over ... Hm... (loses her temper) For whom? For whom a feeling? For Mamele? For Ida? For a child?

Sidney: Ay dont si eni kid. Hostu zi am behandelt vi a kind?

Sidney: I don't see any kid. Did you ever treat her like one?

Gertie: O, du vist shoyn gevorn ir bashitser? Vel, ven es iz nisht mayn shvester, volt ikh gegebna shpey af dir mit ir tsuzamen. Bat shi iz may sister end ikh vel nisht derlozn az a sharlatan zol zi farfirn!

Gertie: Oh, are you her protector now? Well, if it weren't my sister, I would spit on both of you together. But she is my sister and I won't allow a charlatan to seduce her!

Sidney: Nau lisen hir! Ikh vel nisht stenden azelkhe reyd!

Sidney: Now listen here! I won't stand for that kind of talk!

Gertie: Un ikh vel nisht stenden far azelkhe handlungen. Ikh vel dertesyln tate.

Gertie: And I won't stand for such actions. I'm going to tell my Papa.

Sidney: Vos es vets zayn tsu dertseyln vet men aleyn dertseyln.

Sidney: Whatever there is to tell, I'll tell him myself.

Gertie: Vestu oykh dertseyln vi mit a por vokhn hostu mikh gelibt, mikh ... Hm... Ay em asheymd ov mayself... Ay em esheymd ov yu yu gud for nothing.

Gertie: Will you also tell him how a few weeks ago you loved me, me... Hm... I am ashamed of myself... I am ashamed of you, you good for nothing.

Sidney: Nau Goyrti, Goyrti, tsu vos? Du bist dokh a madern goyrl, du darfst dokh farshfteyn, past es far dir zikh avek shteln do shrayen, liarenem vu es zaynen do azoy fil fremde menshn? Kum avek in a korner veln mir redn, alts derkler, zikh aynfarshfteyn, vi moderne, tsivilizirte menshen, kom dir!

Sidney: Now Gerti, Gerti, what for? You are a modern girl, you need to understand, is it appropriate for you to stand here and scream, and rant where there are so many strangers? Come to a corner and we'll talk, explain everything, come to an understanding, like modern, civilized people, come dear!

Gertie: Dont dir mi! Dontshu der dir mi. Ay dont vant yu tu dir mi. [loyft op in a zayt]

Gertie: Don't "dear" me! Don't you dare "dear" me. I don't want you to "dear" me. [runs off to a side]

Sidney: Bot goyrti, goyrti, dont get eksayedt. [op nohk ir]

Sidney: But Gerti, Gerti, don't get excited. [exits after her]
Khazn, Khaznte

Ven got helft mir, halt ikh dikh
do a gantsn zumer. S'iz dokh
take a gan edn.

Khazn

If God would help me, I would
keep you here a whole summer.
It's really paradise.

Khazn's wife

Shtey du oykh a vokh. Meyle
alts eyns kaptsonim. Ha
Mendele, vest shteyn?

Khazn's wife

Stay here for a week. They're all
the same anyway, the beggars.
Huh Mendele, will you stay?

Khazn

Neyn, neyn, Tsipenyu, men tor
nisht, men darf arbetn, fardinen
parnose. Di kinderlekh darf
keyn ayin hara. Ot ersht dem
bokher aroysgeholfn mit etlekhe
hundert dolar, er zol zikh koyfn
a mashin, makhn a lebn, ist
tsipenyu mamele, darf men zen
epes makhn, a noim tsu vos, zol
er visn az dos iz dos.

Khazn's wife

Well if you like it, it's agreeable
to me.

Khazn

Mir afle nisht azoy. Iberhoypt
der mekhutn, der mekhutn hot
gemegt zayn a shenerer. Ober
gornisht, s'iz dokh a kind. Libe
shmibe, az ikh vel shtern vet
epes helfn? Darf men makhn a
sof un poter.

Khazn's wife

Me not even so much. Mainly
the father-in-law, the father-in-
law could have been nicer. But
no matter, it's a child. Love,
shmive, if I were to interfere
would it help anything? We need
to just get it over with and be
done with it.

Khazn's wife

Host shoyn geredt mitn
mekhutn?

Khazn's wife

Have you already spoken with
the father-in-law?

Khazn

Vos iz do mit im ts uredn? Mir
zaynen gekumen redn mit ir, mit
der kleyner.

Khazn

What's there to talk about with
him? We came to speak to her,
with the little one.

Khazn's wife

Gerekht af mayn vort. Zi iz di
eyntsike mit vemen me ken redn
a vort.

Khazn's wife

You're right, on my word. She's
the only one with whom you can
have a word with.

Khazn's wife

Ober gey, az bay zey aleyn iz af
tish un af benk. Me vert
geharget. Dos iz men dokh
gekumen zi zol zey farglaykhn.

Khazn's wife

But go already, the whole place
is upside down by them. They're
killing each other. They came so
that she should straighten them
out.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Di mil vaz delishas. Un itst...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Itst veln mir geyn batrakhtn a bisl di gegnt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khazn's wife</td>
<td>O Boyrnis! Vos makhstu beni? Makhst a lebn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>O got zay dank. Vet zayn genug dervayle far tsvey, biz s'vet zayn dray.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>O dont tok tu matsh. Kom on. [shlept im op]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khazn's wife</td>
<td>Zi shaynt on ayin hare far nakhes. Nu shoyn meyle, zol zayn mit mazl. Itsts darf men redn mit Khaye Feygl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shimen-Khaye</td>
<td>(halt zi arumgenumen) Fayn, fayn, me git do gants nishkoshedik esn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Zey megn gebn nishkoshedik esn, zey nemen gants nishkoshedik batsolt. Far dem gelt vos men tsolt do far eyn men(sh?), korme ikh in der heym on mayn gantse kazarme. (Mendl git a vink tsipen un farshvindt mit ir).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selma</td>
<td>Far vos men tsolt do gelt. Keyn zakh in moyl nisht tsunemen. Vel papa, vos hert zikh, host shoyn geredt mit ir?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Mir veln nokh redn, vos hobn mir keyn tsayt nisht?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>The meal was delicious. And now...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Now we'll go look around the neighborhood a little.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khazn's wife</td>
<td>Oh Bernice! How are you doing, Benny? Making a living?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Oh thank God. It'll be enough for two in the meantime, until there'll be three.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Oh, don't talk too much. Come on. [pulls him off]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khazn's wife</td>
<td>She's beaming (no Evil Eye) from pride. Well, no matter, may fortune be with her. Now we need to speak with Khaye Feygl.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>(holds her in his arms) Good, good, they give quite a lot to eat here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>They ought to to give quite a lot of food, they charge quite a lot of money. For the price that you pay here for one person(?), I feed an entire barracks at home. (Mendl winks at Tsipe and disappears with her)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selma</td>
<td>What do people pay for here. Well Papa, what's new, did you already speak to her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>We will speak soon, what, we don't have time?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selma  Did you come here for a sabbatical? I didn't. So listen, Khaye Feygl, this can't go on any longer, the house isn't a house and life isn't a life. During the two weeks when Gertie was the mistress of the house, we all went around with a stomachache.

Simon  We can't say, it may even be true, but was the week that you took over the leadership was better?

Selma  Well, I'm not going to take upon myself to be the mistress, that's all. The shop is enough for me. Khaye Feygl, you must come back home and let everything be how it was and that's it.

Khaye  How it was? Who decided that?

Selma  All of us. There's just no other choice.

Khaye  Why isn't there? You go to a procurer and you tell them to send a good maid.

Selma  Oh yeah? Who will pay? Papa isn't contributing anything at home.

Simon  Listen, kids, if I'm already supporting someone, I'd sooner support a wife, not a maid.

Selma  For my few dollars I can board wherever I want.

Khaye  All right. You go board somewhere, you get married, Benny will get married, Gertie also, and there we are. All settled.

Simon  And what about you?

Khaye  Oh don't worry about me, I'll take care of myself.

Khaye: Ikh bin dokh a kind, vos veys ikh? Vos farshtey ikh vos s'iz gut far mir un vos nisht? Ikh darf zikh tsuhern tsu eltere.

Simon: O, o, ikh hob ale mol gezogt, khaye feygl iz mayn best kind.

Khaye: Louie, vos zogt ir? Ikh darf take a heym tsi nisht?

Louie: Aza heym vi du host biz itst gehat, zikher nisht. Hert...

Selma: Mir viln aykh nisht hern, s'iz a familyen ongelegenhayt un mir viln nisht az fremde zoln zikh araynmishn.

Khaye: Ay beg yur pardn Selma, Loui iz nisht keyn fremder, er iz mayn prayvet sekreteri. Red iber mit zey loui, ikh vel derayvl khapn a driml. (Leygt zikh in hemak)

Selma: [energish tsu lui] Hert, s'iz nisht keyn eysek far mir zikh raysn mit mayn shvester, zikh raysn mitn tatn...

Simon: (fun der andere zayt) Shtendik tuml, shtendik gevaldn, dos esn hot keyn tam nisht, in shtub iz nisht arayntsugeyn...

Selma: Du gibst nisht, er git nisht, yener git nisht, men farlozt zikh ingantsn af mir. Ikh eyne ken oyshaltn a hoyz?

Selma: [energetically to Louie] Listen, I've got better things to do than fight with my sister, fight with my father...

Simon: (from the other side) Always a commotion, always screaming, the food is tasteless, you can't step foot in the house...

Selma: You give nothing, he gives nothing, the other gives nothing, everyone relies entirely on me. Can I support a house by myself?
Simon: Ikh arbet nisht, ikh hob nisht. Nu iz vos? Az a tate hot nisht, darf er nisht esn?

Simon: I don't work, so I don't have. So what? If a father doesn't have, does he not need to eat?

Selma: Ay em a bizi goyrnl, ikh darf arbetn. Ikh darf farzorgn a takhles. Ikh ken nisht, ikh ken nisht un shoyn.

Selma: I am a busy girl, I have to work. I have to provide means. I can't, I can't and that's it.

Simon: Ikh bin a lebediker mensh, ikh darf a geleger, ikh darf a frishn moltsayt, ikh darf a hemd in tsayt...

Simon: I'm a living person, I need a bed, I need a fresh meal, I need a shirt on time...

Selma: Ikh kum aheym bin ikh mid, ikh darf zikh opruen, nisht hobn tsu ton mit goyrdin.

Selma: When I come home, I'm tired, I need to rest, not have to deal with Gertie.

Khaye: Sha! Vos redt ir azoy fil? Loz khapn a dreml, noh saper hob ikh lib tsu khapn a driml.

Khaye: Sha! Why are you talking so much? Let me nap, after supper I like to take a nap.

Louie: Ir halt in eyn oys rekhenen, vos ir darft... keyner trakht gornisht, vos zi darf. Zi darf a bisl tsertlekhkayt, a bisele libe.... (Khaye feygl nist)

Louie: You keep listing in detail what you need ... But nobody thinks about what she needs. She needs a little tenderness, a little love... (Khaye Feygl goes)

Selma: Vi kumt zi tsu libe der shnek? Ikh bin mit tsen yor elter fun ir... Mit 8... Mit 8...

Selma: How does she come to love, the little snail? I am ten years older than her... eight... eight...


Khazn's wife: Khaye Feygl, Khaye Feygl. So, how are things with you? For us it's as good as agreed that the kids want to get married for real. What do you say, Khaye Feygl?


Simon: What do you mean what does Khaye Feygl say? And me? The father? I say he doesn't need to get married. He needs to be in the house. Helping to keep up the house.
Benny
O never maynd papa, bist nokh tsu yung tsu ritayren. Vhat du yu sey kid mather?

Benny
Oh never mind, Papa, you're still too young to retire. What do you say, Kid Mother?

Khaye

Khaye
What do you want from me? I came to the country for some peace and quiet, and they found one another. It's something for my feeble head? You do whatever you want. Let me rest.

Simon
Gut gut. Mikh art nisht. Morgn gants fri bin ikh bay a shadkhen un heys zikh gebn a kale un hob khasune, un aykh vel ikh oykh der shvel nisht aroyflozn.

Simon
Good, good. Doesn't bother me. Very early tomorrow I'm going to a matchmaker and tell him to give me a bride and get married, and you I won't even let through the door.

Selma
A behole af zey mit khasune hobn. Bald vet zi oykh veln khasune hobn.

Selma
Stuff them and their getting married. Soon she will also get married.

Khaye
Ver ikh? Du nar du, ikh vil shoy fun a por sho.

Khaye
Who me? You fool, you, I already wanted a few hours ago.

Selma
(to Louie) Dos hot ir zi oysgelernt. Zer sheyn.

Selma
(to Louie) This you taught her. Very nice.

Khaye
Host davke nisht getrofn. Oysgelernt hot mikh...sha, vu iz ergets goyrdi?

Khaye
You didn't guess right. I was taught by.... Sha, wherever is Gertie?

Selma
Goyrdele! Ir geyt epes on? Hot zikh a khap geton iren un avek.

Selma
Oh Gertie! What do you care? She grabbed hers and left.

Khaye
Iren? Ir vet zikh bald dervisn nayes kinderlekh, s'iz shoyn nisht irer. S'iz shoyn mayner.

Khaye
Hers? You will soon discover news children, he's no longer hers. He's already mine.

Selma
Vos? Tate, vos tut zikh do? Vos redt zi di kleyne?

Selma
What? Papa, what's going on here? What's she saying, the little one?

Khaye
Di kleyne redt vi a groyse. Sha, ot iz er, freg im.

Khaye
The little one talks like a big one. Sha, here he is, ask him.

Simon
Yungerman, epes gefelt mir nisht vos ikh her do. Vos iz do vos?

Simon
Young man, I don't like very much what I'm hearing. What's going on here?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sidney</th>
<th>E yu si... Its layk dis... Ir farshteyt...</th>
<th>Sidney</th>
<th>Uh you see...It's like this...You understand...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Ikh vel aykh zogtn. Unzer kleyne iz a vunder, zi ken nokh epes vos mir hobn nisht gevust. Zi ken vempen oykh.</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>I'll tell you. Our little one is a wonder, she even knows something that we didn't know. She can vamp too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Vel men darf dos oykh kenen. Kurts papa, Mr. Kets hot zikh farlibt in mir un vayter vet ir shoyn aleyn kenen redn.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Well, one needs to know that, too. In short, Papa, Mr. Katz fell in love with me, and the rest you can talk to him about yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Goyrti, vos heyst dos? Host dokh gezogt az ot ot geyt ir khasune hobn?</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Gertie, what's this? You said that you're getting married very soon?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Azoy hot es geheysn.</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>We were meant to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Ay beg yur pardn, bay dir hot es geheysn, ikh hob dir nisht tsugezogt bashtim. Bay mir iz shtendik geven a tsvayfl...</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>I beg your pardon, you were meant to, but I didn't promise you anything definite. For me there was always a doubt...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Ir shrekt aykh far a britsh of pramis keys? Shrekt aykh nit. Ikh vil aykh nisht far keyn man, ober far keyn shvoger oykh nisht.</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>You're afraid of a breach of promise lawsuit? Don't be afraid. I don't want you as a husband, nor as brother-in-law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Pliz, pliz, dos hostu nisht keyn rekht zikh arayntsumishn. Sidni libt mikh, ikh bin zayn blum, zayn printsesn.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Please, please, you have no right to mix in. Sidney loves me, I am his flower, his princess.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>Vos?</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>What?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Azoy hot er mikh gezogt. Didn’t yu sidni dir?</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>He really said this to me. Didn't you Sidney dear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>E...yes...</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Ah...yes...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Er vet mikh nemen tsu zikh, er vet mir vayzn di velt, shayne kleyder, daymonds, oytamobiln... (tsu goyrti) Mir veln dir oykh a mol gebn a rayd.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>He will take me for himself, he will show me the world, beautiful dresses, diamonds, cars... (to Gertie) We will give you a ride sometimes, too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>(sarcastic) Kha kha kha, di zelbe verter vi tsu mir.</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>(sarcastic) Ha ha ha, the same words he said to me.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Khaye

Papa dir, vos art dikh, di tokhter, yene tokhter, abi im far an eydem. A dzshentelmen mit a mashin, mit ril esteyt a glik. Papa...dir, erloyb unz khasune hobn yes? Er iz dokh raykh. Vel ikh makhn a groyse heym un aykh ale araynnemen tsu zikh. Yes sidni dir?

Khaye

Papa dear, what do you care, the daughter, that daughter, as long as he's a son-in-law. A gentleman with a car, with a fortune in real estate. Papa... Dear, let us get married, yes? He is really great. I will make a great big house and will take all of you in. Yes Sidney dear?

Sidney

Du...du..farshyteyst nisht. Es heyst.. Es muz nokh doyern... Ikh muz nokh tsuforn friyer in shtat...mayne biznes...

Sidney

You...you...don't understand. I mean... It will take a while yet… first I have to drive back to the city… my business..

Khaye

Olrayt, so for mayn tayerer in shtot arayn un eyder du vest kumen tsurik tsu unz… zolst friyer brekhn hent un fis un leyb un lebn. Kom un get aut ov hir, yu doyrti dog!

Khaye

All right, so my dear drive back to the city and before you'll come back to us… break every damn bone in your body. Come and get out of here, you dirty dog!

Gertie

Yes, yes, dhets vhat yu ar...

Gertie

Yes, yes, that's what you are..

Sidney

Ikh vil bloyz...

Sidney

I only want....

Khaye

Vos? Ir vilt nokh epes? Beni, er vil nokh epes...

Khaye

What? You want something else? Benny, he wants something else...

Benny

End hi shel get it. [git im a patsh, sidni loyft op, goyrdi falt oyf khaye feygl un tsuveynt zikh]

Benny

And he shall get it. (punches him, Sidney runs out, Gertie slaps Khaye-Feygl and cries)

Khaye

Vel Goyrdi, ayo ikh hob a nyukh?

Khaye

Well Gertie, do I have a sense?

Simon

Ikh zogt epes redt zi mir fun khasune hobn. Mir iz bald arayn epes in der noz (shpotish). Khaye-Feygl redt fun khasune hobn. Mayn khaye feygl iz dokh nisht keyn nar, s'iz dokh a mensh polner mensh, a bar-das. Itst vet zi kumen aheym un mir veln vider hobn a heym un di meydn veln shoyn itst hobn derekh erets far ir.

Simon

I say something so she talks to me about marriage. I immediately got a funny feeling (mocking). Khaye Feygl talking about marriage. My Khaye Feygl is no fool, she's really a complete person, a person with sense. Now she will come home and we will again have a home and the girls will respect her now.
Khaye

Vos itst syaht zayn hert mikh oys. Beni un boyrnis veln khasune hobn, ayo?

What'll be now… listen to me. Benny and Bernice will get married, right?

Bernice

(farshemt) Ayd layk tu.

(embarrassed) I'd like to...

Khaye


I get the picture. One down. And next to get married will probably be be one of your daughters.

Selma


Not me. I won't, I don't want to. Thank God I make a living. I have ten fingers.

Gertie


I won't get married either. Never, never, they are all no good. None of them.

Khaye

Host a toes, Goyrti. S'iz do ayner a guter un vayl er iz eyner hob ikh im take oysegkhapt far zikh. Loui, dos iberike redt shoyn aleyn.

You're mistaken, Gertie. There is one good one and because he is one I grabbed him for myself. Louie, tell her the rest yourself.

Louie

Yes Mr. Kravtshik. Emes Ayda iz loyt ire yorn a kind, ober nisht keyn geveynlekh kind. Un ikh volt zikh gliklekh geshetst ven ikh zoliken hobn dos glik...

Yes, Mr. Kravtshik. It's true Ida is a child in years, but she's an unusual child. And I would consider myself fortunate if I could have the good fortune…

Gertie

Zi, di yungste, ven s'iz do tsvey eltere shvester. Vhay, dis iz autreydzshos.

She, the youngest, when there are two older sisters. Why, this is outrageous.

Khaye

Az ir vet zayn gute meydlekh veln mir tsuvartn af aykh, az ir vet zayn menshen un mikh bahandlen vi menshen vel ikh zen ir zolt hobn a heym. Keyn Mrs. ayere, keyn kekhne, keyn dinst vil ikh nisht zayn, ober a shvester, a fraynd, a mame ale mol. (Zey geyen tsu farshemt) Az ir vet zikh nor lozn vel ikh aykh mit gots helf makhn far shitklekh menshen. Un du tate, du hast tsvey breyres, oder zayn mit mikh un hobn nakhes, oder

If you would be good girls we'll wait a bit for you, if you'll be decent and treat me like a human being I will see to it that you have a home. I don't want to be no Mrs. of yours, or cook, or maid, but a sister, a friend, a mother anytime. (They look embarrassed) If you will just let me, I will, with God's help, I will turn you into decent people. And you, father, you have two choices, either be with me and beam with pride, or take a wife and suffer.
zikh nemen a vayb un hobn tsores.

Simon (to Mendl) S'iz nisht keyn kind, s'iz an oytser, a brilyant, a kapore tsen vaybr far aza kind. Simon (to Mendl) She's no child, she's a treasure, a gem, I'd give ten women for such a child.

Khazn (falt ir afn halz) Mekhutenste! Zol zayn mit mazl. Khazn (grabs his throat) In-law! Congratulations.

Benny (klapt Loui in pleytse) Gud lok broder in lo. (Selma visht bigneyve a trer, Goyrti oykh azoy in der tsveyter zayt) Benny (pats Louie on the back) Good luck brother in law. (Selma secretly sheds a tear, Gertie too, on the other side)

Khaye Itsts geyt, shpatsirt, rut aykh oys. Mikoyekh 18 un draytsn veln mir shoyn redn morgn. Khaye Now go, take a walk, get some rest. We'll discuss the birds and the bees tomorrow

Benny Kam kid mather, ikh vel dir gebn a rayd in mayn teksi. Benny Come kid mother, I'll give you a ride in my taxi.

Khaye (nemt im on a zayt un zogt im shtil) Nem zey alemen far a rayd, for mit zey avek vayt, vayt, vos vayter. Khaye (takes him aside and speaks to him quietly) Take them all for a ride, drive them far far away, the farther the better.


Simon Du vilst nisht mamele? Simon Don't you want to come, Mamele?

Khaye Neyn. Ikh bin nokh mid fun bronzvil. (ale oyser zi un loui op. zi zitst in hemak vigt zikh un shmeykhelt) Khaye No. I'm still tired from Brownsville. (everyone except her and Louie leave. She sits on the hammock rocking and smiling)

Louie (loyft tsu) Ayde.. Du bist... Du bist...ikh hob nisht keyn verter... Louie (runs to her) Ida..you are.. I don't even have words..

Khaye Ikh veys mayne tsores az du bist shtumpik afn bisl loshn. Derfar hob ikh dir farshport di gantse arbet. Nu bistu tsufridn? Khaye I know from my own experience how tongue-twisted you can get sometimes. So I spared you the all the trouble. Well, are you pleased?

Louie Neyn nisht tsufridn, nor gliklekh, iber gliklekh. Louie Not pleased, but happy, overjoyed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>Fun dest vegn a rakhmones afn goyrdin.</th>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>Nonetheless, it's a pity about Gertie.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Far vos? Zi hot keynmol nisht gekert far mir.</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Why? She never cared for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Ober du far ir?</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>But you for her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>Emes, geven a tsayt. Ober az men derzeyt dikh, vos far a vert hobn tsen hundert azelkhe goyrdis.</td>
<td>Louie</td>
<td>True, there was a time.. But after seeing you, what's even 1000 Gerties worth?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Vos zshe, du oykh? Ze nor vi zey davenen ale fun eyn sidur, haklal, red shoyn wayniker, zing shoyn beser epes. (Er zing zi khapt unter)</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>What, you too? It's like they're all reading from the same playbook, let's just say, talk less, better sing something already. (he sings, she sings along)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Curtain**

| Curtain         | Ven der forhang geyt vider oyf iz nakht, beyde vign zikh in hemak un zingen, iber zey shvimt aroys in himl a lakhndike levone, un afn roud forn ahin un tsurik a sakh oytomobiln. | Curtain         | When the curtain goes back up it's night, both swing in the hammock and sing, over them floats out a laughing moon and on the road a lot of automobiles are driving back and forth) |
### Appendix C: Song Texts and Translations

#### Mames fun der velt [Mothers of the world]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chor unter der bine</th>
<th>Chorus under the stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorus</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chorus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mames fun der velt oy mames fun der velt</td>
<td>Mothers of the World oh mothers of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bist a malekh fun dem himl af der erd geshtelt(^{61})</td>
<td>You're an angel of heaven put on this earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oy mame oy mame oy mame oy mame</td>
<td>Oh mama, oh mama, oh mama, oh mama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In freydn un in noyt(^{62})</td>
<td>In good times and bad,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun geboyrn biz tsum toyt</td>
<td>From birth until death,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bentsht yeder zayn mamenuy</td>
<td>Everyone blesses his dear mama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oy mamenuy oy mamenuy mamenuy</td>
<td>Oh dear mama, oh dear mama, dear mama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The cry that woke up the earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dos geshrey vos hot ufgevikt di erd</td>
<td>Is “Mama, oh Mama!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iz mame, oy mame.</td>
<td>The cry that every woman hears</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dos geshrey vos a ye-de froy nor hert</td>
<td>Is “Mama, oh Mama!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iz mame, oy mame.</td>
<td>In all corners of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Af ale ekn fun der velt</td>
<td>Where the sun appears,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vu di zun ershaynt</td>
<td>Small children cry &quot;Mama!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shreyen kleyne kinder Mame</td>
<td>In the open, the cry appears that which woke up the earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In di fray ershaynt dos geshrey vos hot afgevikt di erd</td>
<td>Is “Mama”, oh Mama.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iz Mame, oy mame.</td>
<td>You see her everywhere always established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ir zet zi iberal shtendik festgestelt</td>
<td>We will show you the mother(s) of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mir veln aykh vayzn di mame fun der velt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Indiyen</strong></th>
<th><strong>Indian</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indian skva lebt in feld</td>
<td>[I am an] Indian squaw living in the woods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mit ir man</td>
<td>With her husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayn kind af di pleytsses</td>
<td>My child on my shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Er shloft ruyik ayn</td>
<td>He calmly falls asleep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{61}\) Ir zent malokhim fun dem himl af der erd geshtelt. [They are angels sent from heaven to the earth.]

\(^{62}\) Oy mames! Oy mames! in freydn un in noyt. [Oh mamas! Oh mamas! In good times and in bad...]
A big tshif fayn, vet er zayn⁶³
Ikh bin a mame fun indian skva-
a⁶⁴

Shpanyen

Shlof ayn markita mayn kleyn senyorita,
Di oygn di shvartse makh tsu
Es zingt dir dayn mame, a shpanishe dame,
a lidele shlof ayn un ru
Tra-la-la-la kind mayn,
Tra-la-la-la shlof ayn
Tra-la-la-la kind mayn,
Tra-la-la-la shlof ayn.
Shlof ayn markita mayn kleyn senyorita
Di oygn di shvartse makh tsu⁶⁵

Khinezish

Ikh bin a khinezerin
Kum fun khineland,
Leb zikh vi a kayzerin, dos iz
gut bekant
Ven a yungel vert geboyn mir

Demalt bin ikh fun mayn man
gelibt gor on a shyer
A mame zayn a ye-der vil nor

Yinglekh habn iz mayn tsil.

Italyen

Mayn bambine es rut di shekhine
Du bis shayn gor on a shyier
Serenade vet avade zingen shpeter a man tsu dir
Dayne oygn veln brenen vi di zun

A big fine chief, he will be
I am a mother from an Indian squaw

Sleep, Markita, my little senorita,
Close your little dark eyes,
Your mother sings to you, a Spanish lady
A melody, sleep and rest
Tra la la la, my child,
Tra la la la, go to sleep,
Tra la la la, my child,
Tra la la la, go to sleep,
Sleep, Markita, my little senorita,
Close your little dark eyes.

I am a Chinese woman
Who comes from China
I live like a queen, it is well known
That when a little boy is born to me
Then I am loved by my husband without limit
Being a mother is everyone’s wish,
Having boys is my goal.

My Bambina, God's presence rests (on you)
You are beautiful, without end
A man will surely sing a serenade to you one day
Your eyes will burn like the sun

⁶³ A big tshif fayn, mayn kind vet zeyn. [A big fine chief, my child will be.]
⁶⁴ Ikh bin a mame an indian skva-a-a. [I am a mother, an Indian squaw.]
⁶⁵ Shlof ruyik fayn, kind mayns shpanyen vet zayn, af imer dayn heym shlof ayn. [Sleep peacefully, my child, Spain will forever be your home, sleep].
Un du vest zayn sheyn pikant\textsuperscript{66} 
Un dayn mame vet dan kveln 
Ven di mener veln betn dayn hand 
Mayn bambine es rut di shekhine 
Bist italyens shenst blum.

And you will be beautiful and sharp
And your mother will kvell
When the men all ask for your hand
My Bambina, God's presence rests (on you)
You are Italy's most beautiful flower.

Rusish
Ruslands vunder, Ruslands kinder
Zaynen sheyn gezunt
Nor der shenster fun zey ale
Dos bistu mayn kind
Biz bay nakht dayn papeshe iz in feld
In oyvn kokht a kashe, ven er kumt aheym
Fun dir er kvelt punkt vi di Mameshe
Ruslands vunder Ruslands kinder
Zaynen sheyn gezunt
Nor der shenster fun zay ale
Dos bistu mayn kind.

Russia’s wonder, Russia’s children
Are beautiful and healthy
But the most beautiful of all is you, my child
Until night your Daddy is in the fields
In the oven cooks a kasha, when he comes home
He is proud of you just like your Mama
Russia’s wonder, Russia’s children
Are beautiful and healthy
But the most beautiful of all is you, my child

Shvartse
Slip beybe slip kloz yor big ayes
Mamis litl pikanini slip lulabay.

Sleep, baby sleep, close your big eyes
Mammy’s little pickaninny, sleep, lullaby.

Yidish
A Yidishe mame kent ir minhastame
Far ire kinder vet zi shtendik
Shtrebn ir lebn tsu gebn.\textsuperscript{67}
A Yidishe mame kent ir minhastame
Mir hobn forgeshtelt

A Jewish mama, you probably know her
For her children she will always strive to give her life
A Jewish mama, you probably know her
We have introduced

\textsuperscript{66} Dayn oygn veln brenen un di zonen farshemen. [Your eyes will burn and embarrass the senses.]
\textsuperscript{67} In the Rumshinsky manuscript, a set of alternate lines: Zi vet keyn mol ruen alts vet zit tuen. / Ire kinder vet zi shendik benshn. / Zey makhn far menshn. [she will never rest, but will do everything/ her children, she will always bless/ she will raise them properly.]
Di mames fun der velt di
Mames fun der velt oy mames fun der velt
Bist a malekh fun dem himl af der erd geshtelt
Oy mame oy mame oy mame oy mame
In freydn un in noyt
Fun geboyrn biz tsum toyt
Bentsht yeder zayn mamenyu
Oy mamenyu oy mamenyu mamenyu.

The mothers of the world, the...
Mothers of the World oh mothers of the world
You're an angel of heaven put on this earth
Oh mama, oh mama, oh mama, oh mama
In good times and bad,
From birth until death
Everyone blesses his dear mama
Oh dear mama, oh dear mama, dear mama.

Melodrama

Ikh bin der geyst fun a mame
Vos iz fritsaytik fun der velt avek
Mayn plats farnem itst mayn kind,
Mayn yungst meydele ... a mame.

I am the ghost of a mother
Taken away from the world prematurely
My place is now taken by my child,
My youngest girl ... a mother.

Farsheydene mames zaynen geven
Itst vet ir a naye sort mame zen

Different mothers have existed
Now you will see a new kind of mother.

Bargens [Bargains]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gertie</th>
<th>Bernice</th>
<th>Gertie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ven du herst a tuml a geruder ungeheyer</td>
<td>Loyfstu shneler tsu du meynst kholile s'iz a fayr</td>
<td>When you hear a racket, an enormous commotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Bernice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyf avek</td>
<td>Vayber shtipn zikh un oyb dayn lebn iz dir tayer</td>
<td>You run over fast, you believe God forbid it's a fire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S'iz a shrek</td>
<td>Run away</td>
<td>Women push and if you value your life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernice</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What a horror!
Bernice  Loyfzshe shnel  Bernice  Run quickly
Gertie  Verst a tel  Gertie  You'll be ruined
Both  Vayl dort iz a bargen seyl. Okh!  Both  Because there is a bargain sale. Oh!
Chorus  Bargns bargns metsie,  Chorus  Bargains, bargains, lucky finds
Bargns bargns briye  Bargains, bargains, what a creation
Bargns bargns far shiye piye68  Bargains, bargains for a shoestring budget
Khotsh s’iz tsurisn un es felt dir a knop  Even though it’s torn and missing a button
Ober derfar lozt men aykh tsvey sent arop. Oy.  But then you can have it for two cents less. Oy.
Bargns bargns vil yeder  Bargains, bargains, everyone wants them
Bargns bargns keseyder  Bargains, bargains, constantly
Zukhn mir vayber on an ek  Us wives search for them endlessly
A mol iz unz a glik bashert un a mol punkt farkert69  Sometimes luck is meant for us and sometimes just the opposite
Az men zukht gefint men, un a mol gevint men a metsie a groys glik.  If you seek, you shall find, and sometimes you win a bargain, a great catch.

Gertie  Haynt zaynen di vayber gor a glik far zeyere mener70  Gertie  Today the women are a catch for their husbands.
Bernice  Zey esn nit un vern vos a tog kleyner un kleyner  Bernice  They eat nothing and get smaller and smaller each day.
Gertie  Di kleyder biz der kni me zogt vos kertser dos iz shener  Gertie  The dresses reach the knee, they say, the shorter the prettier
Bernice  Mit aza vayb  Bernice  With such a wife
Gertie  Ken men gleykh  Gertie  Someone could just
Bernice  Vern dokh  Bernice  Actually become
Gertie  Zeyr reykh  Gertie  Very rich

68 According to Michael Wex, “shiye piye” is an acronym found in the Talmud. It stands for shabes hayom, peysakh hayom (today is Shabbat, today is Passover), and connotes holidays that Jews commonly use to get out of work. See Wex, Born to Kvetch: Yiddish Culture in All of Its Moods, New York: Harper Perennial, 2006, 153-4.
69 A mol iz a glik bashert un a mol finkt farkert. [Sometimes luck is wonderful and sometimes just the opposite.]
70 Haynt zaynen di vayber gor a glik far zeyr mener [Today men are lucky to have wives.]
Both \( S'iz \) a glik far aykh, Akh! Both \( \) It is lucky for us, Ach!

**Korus**

**Chorus**

**Shvester/bruder [Sister/brother]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archie</th>
<th>Shvester mayn</th>
<th>Archie</th>
<th>Sister of mine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Bruder mayn, her vos ikh zogt dir</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Brother of mine, listen to what I say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Zogt nor nit shlog mir</td>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Say you won’t hit me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Zolst zayn gut</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Then you oughta behave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Ken ikh ni es iz nit in mayn blut(^{72})</td>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>I cannot, it is not in my nature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Du veyst dokh az es brent unter mir di erd
- Ikh denk az es iz mir bashert tsu zayn alrayt
- Vayl ikh bin geshayt

**Refrayn**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Mamele mayn Mamele fayn kleynike sheynike Mamele</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Mamele mine, Mamele fine, pretty little Mamele</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Bruderl guter vest zayn mayn hiter</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Good little brother, you will be my chaperone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Ven ikh vel vern a damele</td>
<td></td>
<td>When I become a little dame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Ven ikh vel a groyse vern her dikh tsu tsu mir</td>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>When I grow up, listen to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Vel ikh zikh in libe erklern nor tsu dir tsu dir, ya</td>
<td></td>
<td>I will declare my love only for you, for you, yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Vest zayn mayn vaybl mayn eyntsik taybl</td>
<td></td>
<td>You will be my wife, my only dove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Un ikh dayn manele</td>
<td></td>
<td>And I will be your little man.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>Her mir oys</th>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>Hear me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>Ikh vart bloyz</td>
<td>Archie</td>
<td>I am only waiting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{71}\) \( S'iz, \) s’iz a glik far aykh, akh! [It is, it is lucky for us, oh!]

\(^{72}\) Dos ken ikh nit, vayl es iz nit in mayn blut [This I cannot do because it is not in my nature].
Khaye

Khaye I am upset with you

Archie

Archie It’s probably silly

Khaye

Khaye I want one thing

Archie

Archie Just keep quiet, oh you women talk too much

Ikh bin a balebos in hoyz kokhn
un vashn bloyz darf di froy yu si ay no

I am the master of the house, only the woman has to cook and wash, you see I know

Oyb s’iz geven gut far mayn mame iz es gut far mir [If it’s good enough for my mother, it’s good enough for me]

A yeder eyner zogt, A yeder eyner klogt, Everybody says, everybody complains,
s’iz naye tsaytn s’iz naye tsaytn It’s a new age, it’s a new age
Af’ales vos ir fregt For every question asked,
zogt men aykh ufgeregt You’re told excitedly,
S’iz naye tsaytn S’iz naye tsaytn It’s a new age, it’s a new age.
Fun altn tut men lakhn afile khoyzek makhn
S’iz altmodish zogt men s’iz pasey The old style, people say it’s passe
Un ikh zogt aykh s’iz nit riktig73 And I say to you: it’s not right

zyeyer meynung iz nit vikhtig
un derfar trakht ikh tsu mir azoy Their opinion is not important

Refreyn

Oyb s’iz geven gut far mayn mame, iz es gut far mir And so here is what I think:
Ire shayles ire mayles iz geven betamt on shir Refrain
Keyn khokhmes iz nit geven faran If it was good for my Mama, then
yeder iz geven tsufridn dan74 it’s good for me

73 Un ikh denk az s’iz nit rikhtik [And I think it’s not right]
74 Yeder hot gelebt tsufridn dan [Everyone lived so happily then]
Ot di ale vos zogtn far di alt voyrl ay dont keyr
Fargin ikh zey dem naye mir gefelt di alte mehr.
Oyb s'iz geven gut far mayn mame, iz es gut far mir\(^\text{75}\)

All those who say “for the old world, I don’t care”
I don't begrudge them the new, I like the old much more
If it was good for Mama, it’s good for me ... 

S’iz komish haynt tsu zen
In gas di vayber geyn\(^\text{76}\)
S'iz naye tsaytn s'iz naye tsaytn
Fun takhlis nit zi trakht, z'iz bizi tog un nakht
S'iz naye tsaytn, s'iz naye tsaytn
Zi hot a pudel a kaneri un a buldog vos heyst Mary\(^\text{77}\)
Nor a kind hobn hot zi keyn tsayt
Un mayn mame on shum vunder hot geboyrn elf kinder
Un zi iz geven alrayt.

It’s funny now to see
Wives walking down the street
It’s a new age, it’s a new age
They don’t think of serious things, they are busy day and night
It’s new times
She has a poodle, a canary, and a bulldog named Mary
But to have a child she's got no time
And my mama, with no miracles gave birth to 11 children
And she was all right

Refreyn

A maydl yen er tsayt geven vi iz nit haynt [A young girl in those days was not like now]
S’iz naye tsaytn, s’iz naye tsaytn [It’s a new age, it’s a new age]
Farshemt iz zi geven az zi hot men derzeyn [If a man noticed her, she was embarrassed]
Di alte tsaytn, di alte tsaytn [In olden days, in olden days]
Zi hot gehert am tsugehert ven di mame hot derklert [She listened closely when her mother explained]
Vi a froy darf umgeyn mit ihr man [What happens between a man and wife]
Nor di maydlekh fun haynt, zey farshteyn mer, mir shaynt [Only the girls these days understand more, it seems]
Vi di mames un di bobes dan. [Than the mothers and bubbies did then.]

In der gas vayblech geyn [In the street little wives walk]

Khaye Oy ikh gedenk atsind ven ikh bin geven a kind
Vi ikh fleg klern a groyse vern
Un itst az ikh bin groys, dos
Khayes geyt mir oys tsu zayn a kale vi meydlekhe ale

Khaye Oh I remember now when I was just a child
How I would think of growing up
And now that I am grown, I go crazy to be a bride like all girls

Refrain

510
Un nokh der khupe meybi vet mir
got shenken a beybi
Oy mame du vest tsuzen oykh
Ikhl vel zingen vider ot di zelbe
lider vos du flegst mir zingen
nokh.

And after the wedding canopy
maybe God will give me a baby
Oh Mama you will see it too
I will sing again just the same
songs that you would sing to me.

**Mutsu kutsu**

Ven ir zet a porl geyn bay nakht in park
Blaybn bay a beyml shteyn s’iz finster shtark
Vos er tut iz shver tsu zen vayl es iz dark
Nor ir hert vi er zogt kutsu mutsu
mutsu butsu utsu
Ir farshyeyt dokh nit keyn vort
Nor freg bay im
Vet farentfern zofort az ir zent grin
Zukhn in a bukh farshport
S’iz nit derin
S’iz a loshn far farlibte m’hert es umetum. Akh!

Chorus:
Kutsu kutsu kutsu mutsu mutsu
mutsu mayne
Dos zogtn kluge es klingt
meshuge
Kutsu kutsu kutsu mutsu mutsu
mutsu kleyne

When you see a couple walking at
night in the park
Standing by a tree, it's pitch dark
What he’s doing is hard to see because
it is so dark
But you’ll hear him say “lovey dovey
movey bovey ovey”
You won’t understand a single word
But if you were to ask him
He would explain right away that you
are green
Don’t bother looking in a book
The answer is not therein
It’s a language for lovers heard
everywhere. Oh!

Chorus:
My kutsu kutsu kutsu mutsu mutsu
mutsu mutsu
Smart people say it sounds crazy
Little kutsu kutsu kutsu mutsu mutsu
mutsu

---

78 “Mutsu kutsu” are nonsense words. In the first verse, “mutsu kutsu ...” is translated as “lovey dovey ...” During the chorus “mutsu kutsu...” plays with alliteration, and it did not make sense to continue translating these words as “lovey dovey.”
Dos meynt gelibte a kish vil ikh vil
That means, "beloved, I want a kiss"

Zey shipln zikh vi kleyne kinder avade
They surely play like little children

Dos gantse lebn biz zey vern zayde bobe
Their whole lives until they become grandparents

Kutsu kutsu kutsu mutsu mutsu mutsu sheyne
Pretty kutsu kutsu kutsu mutsu mutsu mutsu

Di libe makht unz meshuge ril
Love makes us real crazy

Ven got hot Odem gemakht dem ershtn man
When God made Adam, the first man

Un dernokh zikh betrakht a vayb muz zayn
And then realized there must be a wife

Ven Odem hot dernokh ervakht khaven derzen
When Adam awakened and saw Eve

Hot er dan gezogt min-hastam
He probably said to her

Kutsu mutsu tsu tsu tsutsu butsu butsu utsu
Kutsu mutsu tsu tsu tsutsu butsu butsu

Khave hot af im gekukt geshmeykhlt zis
Eve looked at him and smiled sweetly

Vayl zi hot zikh bald derkvikt gezon gevis
Because she was delighted, saw discretely

Az der yold er iz anttsikt, er ligt bay ire fis
That the fool is enraptured, and was laying at her feet

Zi hot shnel gemakht a tel fun dem shtarken riz
And out of the powerful giant, she quickly made mincemeat

Chorus

Beyde op

Chorus

both exit
### Farsheydene Libe [Different Love]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gertie</th>
<th>Men drukt oys libe in ale fakhn ot azoy ot azoy</th>
<th>Gertie</th>
<th>People express love in every song like this, like this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Men zogt fun libe in ale shprakhn ot azoy ot azoy</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>People talk of love in every tongue like this, like this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>In di sheynste romanen halt men unz in eyn dermanen</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>In the loveliest novels they keep reminding us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un ale poen bazingen unz in gletn</td>
<td></td>
<td>And all the poets praise and touch us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In di shenste gezangen hert men nor fun libe klangn</td>
<td></td>
<td>In the prettiest melodies we only hear only the sounds of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ales vos nor lebt di libe libe shrebt</td>
<td></td>
<td>All that lives, to love love strives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Men drukt oys libe in ale fakhn ot azoy ot azoy</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>People express love in every song like this, like this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Men zogt fun libe in ale shprakhn ot azoy ot azoy</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>People talk of love in every tongue like this, like this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Ikh vil dir zingn vi Violete zingt fun libe in Traviata</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>I want to sing to you like Violeta sings of love in La Traviata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Libe akh libe, libe akh libe O-ho</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Love, oh love, love, oh love O-ho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karmen zi hot farfirerish geliht</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carmen, she loved seductively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>In Amerike zingt men fun libe ot azoy*</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>In America people sing of love like this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Zing mir fun libe vi men zogt bay unz</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Sing to me of love as they say by us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>Di shenste libe iz nor bay unz</td>
<td>Gertie</td>
<td>The most beautiful love is only by us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>Ikh gedenk, Ikh gedenk fun amol Lyuba mayn ikh ken on dir nit zayn un dir on mir oy Kenen mir beyde nit zayn</td>
<td>Sidney</td>
<td>I remember, I remember once My love, I can’t be without you nor you without me oh, Neither of us can</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*In the Rumshinsky script, the next two lines are Yinglish, reading as follows: “I love you, I love you, that’s all that I can say/ I love you, I love you, the same old story in the same old-fashioned way.”*
Gedenkstu gedenkstu bay dem toyer
Do you remember, do you remember, at the gate
Hob ikh dir gezogt a sod in oyer oy vey
I whispered a secret in your ear, oh woe
Lyubina gib zshe mir dayn piskenyu
My love, give me your little mouth

Gertie
Yasha mayn ikh ken on dir nit zayn
My darling, I cannot be without you
Vayl ikh on dir un du on mir kenen mir beyde nit zayn
Because I without you and you without me, neither of us can be
[Gedenkstu] baym bulvar
[Do you remember] on the boulevard
Hastu zikh gegeben tsu mir a shar oy vey
You nudged closer to me oh woe

Gertie
Yashane gib zshe mir dayn piskenyu
My darling give me your little mouth

---

**Zmires**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Everyone</th>
<th>No. 7: Zmires</th>
<th>Everyone</th>
<th>No. 7: Shabbat songs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoym zemekhubed mikol yomim ki voy shovas tsur oylomim. Oy</td>
<td>This day is honored from among all days, for on it rested He Who fashioned the universe, Oy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheyshe yomim tanse melakhtekho veyoym hashvi-ileylohekha</td>
<td>For six days you may do your work, but the seventh day is your God’s.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shabes loy sase voy melokhe ki khoyl oso sheyshe yomim.</td>
<td>On the Sabbath, do no work, for He completed all in six days.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rishen hu lemikroey koydesh yoym shabosen yoym shabes koydesh</td>
<td>It is the first of the holy convocations, a day of rest, the holy Sabbath Day.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al keyn kol ish beyeynoy yekadeyshe leykhey lekhem yivtseu tmimim. Oy.</td>
<td>Therefore let every man recite Kiddush with his wine, and over two loaves let him slice. Oy.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

80 Zmires is one of the more difficult songs to reconcile. The fourth stanza does not appear in the Rumshinsky script. While Shimon’s stanza does appear in the Rumshinsky script, it seems to have been a later addition to the vocal and piano parts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Everyone</th>
<th>Yoym ze mekhudeb ....</th>
<th>Everyone</th>
<th>This day is honored ...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khazn</td>
<td>Ekhoyl mashним shsey mamтакim ki el yiten kol boy deveykim beged lilboysh lekhem khukim boser vedogim vekhol matamim. Oy.</td>
<td>Khazn</td>
<td>Eat rich foods, drink sweet drinks, for God will give to all who cleave to Him clothes to wear and allotted bread, meat and fish and all the dainties. Oy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>Yoym ze mekhudeb ....</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>This day is honored ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Fun montik in der fri biz fraytik bay nakht Hot mayn Khaye Feygl dem kugl gemakht Un ven s’iz gekumen shabes tsum esn Hot zi gor dem kugl in oyvn fargesn. Oy.</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>From Monday morning til Friday night Did my Khaye Feygl make the kugel And when it came time to eat it on the Sabbath She forgot to take the kugel out of the oven. Oy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>Yoym ze mekhudeb ....</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>This day is honored ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>Un unz vayber lernt men shoyn in dem vigl vi tsu makhn a shabes kugl Un men leygt arayn in kugel tatemamen Un s’hot toyznt tamim.</td>
<td>Khaye</td>
<td>And us women are taught from the cradle how to make a Sabbath kugel And in it we put the love of our parents And it tastes like heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khazn’s wife</td>
<td>Un koyletsh darf a vaybl kenen baken Un a tsholent a geshmakn Un ver ken zikh glaykhn tsu dem yidens ashires Ven er zingt freylykh dem zmires</td>
<td>Khazn’s wife</td>
<td>And a khale a wife should know how to bake And a tasty cholent too. And who can compare to the Jew’s wealth When he joyfully sings the Sabbath songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>Yoym ze mekhudeb ....</td>
<td>Everyone</td>
<td>This day is honored ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Mary-Charlie Duet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>Benny</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mary</strong></td>
<td>Mir kholemt zikh ikh vel nokh vern raykh</td>
<td>I dream that someday I’ll be rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un gelt vel ikh hobn nokh a sakh</td>
<td>And I’ll have a lot of money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Charlie</strong></td>
<td>Oy kholem nit mayn shvester</td>
<td>Oh please don’t dream, my sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gants andersh volt geven ot vet ir bald zen</td>
<td>Everything would be different you will soon see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mary</strong></td>
<td>Ikh shtel mikh for ikh bin a raykhe madmozel</td>
<td>I imagine I’m a rich mademoiselle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un file mener vi di hint shteyn af mayn shvel(^81)</td>
<td>And men would crowd my door like dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un yeder vil mayn hant</td>
<td>And each one wants my hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ikh her zey vi di veynt mit di shenste kavalyirn tants ikh galant</td>
<td>I can hear their cries, with the handsomest beau I will dance gallantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Charlie</strong></td>
<td>Oy kholem nit mayn shvester</td>
<td>Oh please don’t dream, my sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S’iz dokh nor tsum lakhn</td>
<td>It is just ridiculous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oy kholem nit mayn shvester</td>
<td>Oh please don’t dream, my sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vest dokh bald oyfvakhn</td>
<td>For you will soon wake up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mary</strong></td>
<td>Ikh shtel mir for ikh bin an ektres in di movis</td>
<td>I imagine I’m an actress in the movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ikh shtel mir for az ikh makh gelt gants grobes</td>
<td>I imagine I make money in fat stacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ikh bin Meri pickford un du Tsharli Tshaplin</td>
<td>I am Mary Pickford and you are Charlie Chaplin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Charlie</strong></td>
<td>Gloyb mir es volt geven sheyn</td>
<td>Believe me it would be nice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oy shvester kh’volt es veln zen</td>
<td>Oh sister I would love to see it with my eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meri Pickford du, Tsharli Tshaplin mi(^82)</td>
<td>You as Mary Pickford, and Charlie Chaplin me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsharli Meri</td>
<td>Charlie! Mary!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Du bist a sheyne doli Meri</td>
<td>You are a pretty dolly Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tsharli du bist a komedyant</td>
<td>Charlie you are a comedian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^81\) Un file mener shteyn bay mayn shvel/ A yeder bet mayn hand [And lots of men stay at my door/ And each one asks for my hand]

\(^82\) Oy shvester ikh valt es veln zayn Meri Pikford mi, tsharli tsheplin di [Oh sister, I would want it to be Mary Pickford me, Charlie Chaplin you].
Yeder hot dikh lib bist batamt on a shir
Bist a komedyant aza yor nor af mir

Everyone loves you, you are endlessly cute
You are a comedian, I should be so lucky!

Khaye Tsharli!
Benny Meri!
Both Mir zenen gut bakant

Khaye Charlie!
Benny Mary!
Both We are really famous

Benny Ikh shtel mikh for az zi iz a primadone in der opera
Un mit a kultevirte shtime zingt zi an arye
Der groyser oylem vert dan fun ir zingen bald gerirt
Ven men derzet zi af der stsene ales aplodirt akh

Benny I imagine that she is a primadonna in the opera
And with a cultivated voice she sings an aria
The large audience is soon moved by her singing
When she is spotted in the scene everyone applauds, oh

Benny Az du bist Pavlova shtel ikh mir for
Az du tantst balet un makhtst groys furor
A balerina in der medine
Ale veysn az in tantsn bistu nit keyn grine

Benny That you are Pavlova, I imagine
When you dance ballet, you cause a commotion
A ballerina in the country
Everyone knows that in dancing you are no novice

Meri!
Tsharli!
Du bist a sheyne doli Meri
Tsharli du bist a komedyant
Yeder hot dikh lib bist batamt on a shir
Bist a komedyant aza yor nor af mir

Charlie!
Mary!
You are a pretty dolly Mary
Charlie you are a comedian
Everyone loves you, you are endlessly cute
You are a comedian, I should be so lucky!

Khaye Tsharli!
Benny Meri!
Both Mir zenen gut bakant

Khaye Charlie!
Benny Mary!
Both We are really famous
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>Mir kholemt zikh ikh vel nokh vern raykh</th>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>I dream I will yet become rich</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Un gelt vel ikh hobn nokh a sakh</td>
<td></td>
<td>And money I will have a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Oy kholem nit mayn shvester</td>
<td>Benny</td>
<td>Oh please don’t dream, my sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**In der kontri [In the country]**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khor(^{83})</th>
<th>Chorus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akh sheyner zumer, akh zumer tsayt, host nit keyn kumer, du bist olrayt</td>
<td>Oh beautiful summer, oh summertime, you don’t have a care and you're alright</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Di beymer tsvaygn kukn un shvaygn</td>
<td>The tree branches watch in silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porlekh vi toybn kishn zikh dey und nayt</td>
<td>Young lovers like doves kissing day and night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dos beste fargenign iz zumer tsu lign nor in der kontri, in der kontri</td>
<td>The greatest delight is to lie in the summer, only in the country, in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un oyfn hemok lign a khosn kent ir krign in der kontri, in der kontri</td>
<td>And lying in a hammock, you can find a groom in the country, in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libe vakst do nor vi af heyvn</td>
<td>Love grows here like on steroids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vayl af sheynkayt iz dokh yeder a meyvn</td>
<td>Because on beauty, everyone is an expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men tantst nor un men hopket men vert do shnel farkhlyopket in der kontri</td>
<td>You dance and you hop, and it's quickly wild in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akh libe zikh oyfzukhn, oy darft ir meydlekh krikhn in der kontri, in der kontri</td>
<td>Oh to find love, oh you gotta go after girls in the country, in the country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{83}\) The Rumshinsky script places the chorus after the first verse.
Du bist bashafn far mir [You were meant for me]

No. 10: Du bist bashafn far mir

Khaye
Got hot bashafn di erd un dem himl
Di zun di levone un shtern
Khayes un feygelekh hot er bashafn
Freyd un gelekhter un t SCM
Gemakht hot er porlekh getsilt mit a zinen
Bashafn an er far a zi
Es iz amol shver zayn ziveg gefinen
Me muz zikh nor gebn di mi

Refreyn

Both
Di zun iz bashafn di velt tsu bashaynen
Nor du bist bashafn far mir
Di levone iz bashafn dem tog tsu antveynen

You can find it in the grass, you can find it by the roses in the country, in the country
Boys, we need to know how to approach their heart
So that they're best buddies with you from the start
Doctors and collectors, cantors and even actors in the country, in the country

No. 10: You were created for me

Khaye
God created the earth and the heavens
The sun, the moon, and the stars
Critters and birds, He created those, too.
Happiness and laughter and tears
He made couples with a purpose in mind
Creating a he for a she
Sometimes it is hard a match to find
You just have to proactive be

Refrain

The sun was made to light up the world
But you were created for me
The moon was made to guide the day

In der kontri ...
In the country ...

Khor op
Chorus exits
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nor di bist bashafn far mir</th>
<th>But you were created for me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Got hot tsuersht gemakht ki shof un rinder</td>
<td>At first God made cows, sheep, and cattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un ven es hot im oysgefelt nokh a vinder(^{84})</td>
<td>And when he still was missing a wonder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot er dan bashafn di kleynitshke kinder</td>
<td>He then made the little children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nor du bist bashafn far mir</td>
<td>But you were created for me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Louis</th>
<th>Man hot bashafn di shtot un di derfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gasn elektrishe banen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hoykhe gebeyden mashinen vos royshn shifn un oykh erooplanen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Khaye</th>
<th>Man hot bashafn muzik zis vi tsuker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simfonishe verk on a shir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mensh hot gemakht reydiex mit laud spikers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nor du bist bashafn far mir.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{84}\) Un vayl es hot im oysgefelt nokh a vinder [And because he still was missing a wonder].
APPENDIX D: Omitted Numbers

A. Untitled
B. Yizkor

I. Score

Andante $\frac{d}{4} = 120$

Flute

Clarinet in Bb

Trumpet in Bb

Trombone

Piano

Voice

Voice

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Double Bass

Ye - kor e-lo-him - nish-mas

Ye - kor e-lo-him - nish-mas
Yizkor di got zog ge-den-len di ne-sho-ma fun mayn...
II. **Song text and translation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebreo</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yizkor elohim nishmas imi morasi</td>
<td>May God remember the soul of my mother, my teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheholkho leolamo</td>
<td>Who has passed to her world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yizkor tsu got zogt</td>
<td>Say Yizkor to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gedenken di neshome fun mayn muter</td>
<td>Remembering the soul of my mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yizkor tsu got zogt</td>
<td>Say Yizkor to God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gedenkin di neshoma fun ir muter</td>
<td>Remembering the soul of your mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oy mamenyu, mamenyu</td>
<td>Oh mommy, mommy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On dir iz vey un biter</td>
<td>Without you it is terrible and bitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On dir mayn muter iz vey un biter</td>
<td>Without you my mother it is terrible and bitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mame dikh baveynt dayn kind</td>
<td>Mama, your child mourns you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vayl du bist in grub atsind</td>
<td>Because you are now in the grave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Di oygnt sugemakht</td>
<td>Your eyes are closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vi di shvartse nakht</td>
<td>Like the darkest night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dayn neshome bentshen mir</td>
<td>We bless your soul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oy felst unz on a shir</td>
<td>Oh we miss you without end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Got mir betn du</td>
<td>So we ask you, God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du zolst shenkn ru in der mamenyu</td>
<td>To grant rest to my dear mother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION

Ideas for Future Research: A Few Final Vignettes of Yiddish Theater Music

The case studies presented in this dissertation have expanded upon and continued the work of earlier scholars like Mark Slobin and Michael Ochs, but they constitute only a handful of possible avenues of inquiry within the field of Yiddish theater music studies. First and foremost, more critical editions and reconstructions of entire shows are needed in order to enable broader survey and analysis, and to begin to write the history of Yiddish theater music. Bret Werb had hoped to reconstruct some of Rumshinsky’s shows for his Master’s thesis, but the extent of the work proved to be beyond the constraints of his project.¹ Similarly, my reconstruction of Mamele came at the expense of being able to conduct further, broader research into other areas of Yiddish theater music. For instance, despite considering the stage and film versions of Mamele, I did not examine the radio adaptation that aired in November 1950. The radio version returns the show, in an abbreviated way, to the staged original from 1926. Analyzing the radio version, and Mamele’s evolution from stage to film to radio, would contribute to the larger narrative of both the later history of Yiddish theater and how Yiddish-language entertainment continued to adapt to its audience.

I would also like to note that while I understand and frame Yiddish theater’s musical development as a primarily American phenomenon, this view is not necessarily shared by theater scholars whose background and research interests include Soviet Yiddish theater.² The use of music in the Soviet State Yiddish Theaters in the early twentieth century would undoubtedly add

² This feedback has been shared with me by scholars such as Faina Burko and Inna Naroditskaya.
an important dimension to the history of Yiddish theater music outside America, especially given the ideological and political restrictions placed on subject matter.

My final remarks concentrate on Yiddish theater music in America, but the implications of further study extend well beyond the fields of Yiddish and American studies. The vignettes I offer below are, in a sense, outgrowths and loose ends of the research I conducted for this dissertation. But they are also a result of the ways that my academic research has intersected with my professional work at YIVO. My examination of Rumshinsky’s legacy began to take shape as a result of a discussion with colleague Alex Weiser, and also draws upon earlier research notes from reading Werb’s thesis and Slobin’s Tenement Songs. Similarly, I first learned about Yasha Kreitzberg as a volunteer archivist. While Kreitzberg’s papers have not been regarded as particularly significant in an institution that houses much larger collections of theater music manuscripts, they nonetheless shed light on a lesser-known contemporary of Rumshinsky and the connections between Kreitzberg and the Big Four Second Avenue composers. Collectively, the vignettes point to new avenues of study that will yield new insights into Yiddish theater’s musical world.

**Rumshinsky’s Musical Legacy**

In 1930, the year before Joseph Rumshinsky’s fiftieth birthday, an article on the composer appeared in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. The author, Jo Ranson, began by anointing Rumshinsky as the musical ruler of Yiddish theater: “Foremost in the world of Jewish music today stands Joseph Rumshinsky. To compare him with any other Yiddish composer would be a futile task. He stands alone, a mighty monarch whose radical ideas of stagedom and music have
revolutionized the spirit of the Jewish stage.” Before Rumshinsky came on the scene, according to Ranson, Yiddish theater was in a sad state:

As far as the musical comedy stage was concerned, it lacked compelling sparkle. Synagogue music filled the theaters at that time. Slow chants rang throughout the many music halls. Such tunes as ‘Be Good to Your Mother’ . . . predominated. Every bit of pantomime, every gesture and action was meant to bring out the tears in those days. A Yiddish show was not a success unless the audience wallowed in salty flowing tears.

Rumshinsky opted for faster tempos, foregrounded love songs and younger chorus girls, and shortened the length of operettas to something more closely resembling a Broadway show, a combination which revolutionized the Yiddish stage.

Rumshinsky would receive similar accolades the following year when, in honor of his fiftieth birthday, a committee of actors, directors, critics, cantors, and publishers collaborated to publish a jubilee volume, *Dos rumshinski bukh* [The Rumshinsky Book]. The 128-page volume contains well wishes from a veritable who’s who of Yiddish cultural giants: literary and theatrical critics Abe Cahan and Alexander Mukdoyni; lexicographers of Yiddish literature and theater Zalmen Reyzen and Zalmen Zylbercweig; director-actors Boris Thomashefsky and Maurice Schwartz; composer Sholom Secunda; cantor Meyer Osherowitch; and Yiddish theater historian Jacob Shatsky, among countless others. Collectively they laud Rumshinsky’s contributions to Yiddish music, calling him both the dean of Yiddish composers and the Victor Herbert of the Yiddish stage. Furthermore, they credit him as the first true professional musician of Yiddish theater and for increasing the quality of Yiddish operetta, placing it on par with European light opera.

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4 Ibid.
Rumshinsky was recognized for his musical innovations during his lifetime, but the discussion of his legacy warrants a critical context that has been absent from Yiddish theater music scholarship. It would be difficult to evaluate the claim above about the novelty of Rumshinsky’s professional training because so little is known about his predecessors. As the only composer to have published an autobiography, and with over one hundred operetta scores to his name, Rumshinsky’s presence in the archives and in the scholarship is relatively outsized.\(^5\)

It is Rumshinsky’s voice—his memoirs, his compositions—that Mark Slobin relied upon to contextualize popular Jewish immigrant music in *Tenement Songs*, one of the earliest scholarly forays into Yiddish theater music. Drawing on RG 112, YIVO’s sprawling collection of commercially published Yiddish sheet music, *Tenement Songs* is a large-scale attempt to categorize and contextualize different kinds of songs and their appeal to Yiddish-speaking immigrants. Slobin is unequivocal in demonstrating that Yiddish theater music was an important tool in the process by which immigrant audiences acclimated and assimilated, but due to the broad nature of the work, he is unable to discuss specific songs and shows in very great detail. Further, in part because of the large scope, and in part because there are so few alternatives, Rumshinsky’s memoir disproportionately shapes Slobin’s own conclusions about Yiddish theater music. It is true that Rumshinsky likely played a significant role in the world of popular Yiddish theater, but it is also true that among the most readily available sources for this assertion is Rumshinsky himself.

Further, the claims about Rumshinsky and the extent to which he reformed Yiddish theater music call for clarification. Rumshinsky’s 1916 operetta *Tsibrokhene fidele* was acclaimed for musical innovations like integrating the dialogue and music; using harp and double

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\(^5\) Sholom Secunda’s biography, *Bei Mir Bist Du Schon: The Life of Sholom Secunda* (Weston, CT: Magic Circle Press, 1982), was written by his daughter-in-law, Victoria Secunda.
reeds in the orchestration; and doubling the size of the theater orchestra. Slobin also credits Rumshinsky as being the first composer to write romantic love songs for the Yiddish stage in *Shir Hashirim* (1911). However, it is worth examining the extent to which Rumshinsky’s influence was truly innovative. Goldfaden’s Biblical operettas, for instance, used larger ensembles and integrated the dialogue and musical numbers, suggesting the need for broader musical study to determine what the existing musical conventions were and how, exactly, Rumshinsky changed them.

Alternatively, Sholom Secunda’s biography casts a different light on Rumshinsky’s legacy. Victoria Secunda, Sholom Secunda’s daughter-in-law and biographer, cites several actresses who recalled Rumshinsky’s brutish personality. One chorus girl recalled him belittling Regina Prager, one of the most distinguished actresses of the Yiddish American stage: “Once, Madame . . . Prager, a distinguished prima donna in the European style, was saying a prayer before going onstage. She was very religious and very dignified. Rumshinsky went over to her and growled, ‘Get moving, you old hag,’ because he wanted her to hurry. She didn’t say a word.” According to Secunda’s biography, Rumshinsky and other members of the Musicians’ Union used their power and influence to keep younger composers, including Secunda, from gaining a foothold in the Manhattan theaters, relegating them instead to Philadelphia, Boston, and Brooklyn. Despite the animosity between the two composers, Secunda readily acknowledged Rumshinsky’s considerable influence on the Yiddish stage, including increasing the size of the orchestras on Second Avenue and hiring choreographers from Broadway.

Nonetheless, Secunda’s biography offers an important perspective on Rumshinsky’s personality. While the personalities of Yiddish actors like Jacob Adler, Boris Thomashefsky, and Maurice

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7 Ibid., 64.
Schwartz have been foregrounded in the historical narrative of Yiddish theater, musical scholarship has focused almost exclusively on the music itself. Neither Werb nor Slobin mention Rumshinsky’s volatile temperament or Secunda’s biography, details that both enrich and trouble Rumshinsky’s legacy as the great musical reformer and innovator of the Yiddish stage.

**Beyond the Big Four**

Rumshinsky and Secunda, along with Abe Ellstein and Alexander Olshanetsky, collectively known as “The Big Four of Second Avenue,” dominated the musical scene in the Yiddish theater of the 1920s through 1950s. Together they inaugurated a phase of American Yiddish theater that popularized lighter musical comedies instead of the heavy, emotion-laden melodramas of the early 1900s. They co-founded the Society for Jewish Composers, Arrangers, and Publishers in the mid-1930s, and they were also active in other musical worlds: Olshanetsky recruited dance bands for events, Rumshinsky and Secunda wrote music for and directed cantorial choirs, Ellstein and Secunda wrote classical art music, and Rumshinsky even wrote an opera in Hebrew, *Ruth*, that was never staged.\(^8\) While all four composers are known foremost for their contributions to the Yiddish stage, their presence within and contributions to the realms of cantorial and classical music represents an opportunity to analyze the intersections between these genres on American soil. Their compositions for the Yiddish stage reflect not only their formal compositional training, but also the ways that those techniques could incorporate the diverse cultural influences of immigrant New York. Yet Ellstein and Secunda became

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\(^8\) A full orchestral score and a piano-vocal reduction can be found among Rumshinsky’s papers at UCLA. See *Ruth*, Boxes 41-2, Joseph Rumshinsky Papers (Collection PASC-M 27). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
increasingly involved with writing classical music by the 1940s, and it is equally important to consider how the sounds from the Yiddish stage influenced cantorial, classical, and mainstream American music.

The Big Four are the most frequently mentioned in Yiddish theater histories, and are well-represented among the published sheet music and manuscript collections of the archives. But their prominence in the limited scholarship on Yiddish theater music is due mainly to the fact that their extant materials remain the most readily accessible to scholars and the public. The attention these composers have received has resulted in a skewed and incomplete picture of the vibrant musical world of Yiddish theater in New York, a picture that can only be reframed with sustained archival work in archives of Yiddish theater music. Lesser-known musical figures need to be written into the history of Yiddish theater music in order to fully understand its landscape and the many coterminous spheres of musical activity in New York at the time.

Consider, for instance, the case of Yasha Kreitzberg (1885-1978), a composer, bandleader, and arranger who donated a substantial collection of musical materials to YIVO in the 1980s. Kreitzberg, née Saxonsky, was born in Odessa. After studying in a local conservatory, he played various instruments in orchestras across Europe. When he came to the United States in 1922, he shortened his family name to “Saxon”; after marrying, he adopted the last name “Kreitzberg”, and often signed his music as either “Yasha Kreitzberg (Saxon)” or “Jack Saxon.”

Kreitzberg composed music for dozens of Yiddish operettas, including *Seventh Avenue*, *The Bride of Suffolk Street*, *A Guest in Town*, *Let’s Be Happy*, *A Night in the Country*, *The Lost Honeymoon*, *The Galician Shlemiel*, *A Child for Sale*, *Tough to Be A Girl*, *Apartment 7*, and *The Merry Paupers*. He worked with some of the greatest stars of the Yiddish stage in the mid-
twentieth century, including Samuel Goldberg, Molly Picon, Leo Fuchs, and Jacob Jacobs. In the 1930s, Kreitzberg worked as musical director and composer for the Bronx Prospect Theater and Brooklyn’s Parkway Theater, and moved on to other theaters.⁹

Kreitzberg’s collection includes instrumental parts for over two dozen shows, most likely written between 1930 and 1960, the vast majority of which can be attributed to Kreitzberg himself. There is also a great deal of published classical music and several handwritten fakebooks for the dance ensembles he led. Kreitzberg also appears to have orchestrated some of Olshanetsky’s operettas. Equally important, Kreitzberg was a contemporary of the Big Four, even though he has not been mentioned in any of the existing scholarship on Yiddish theater music. The finale of a show called *A Night in Romania* among Kreitzberg’s papers, for instance, is signed “A. Olshanetsky, 1933-4 season, McKinley Square Theater.” Similarly, some of Rumshinsky’s cantorial manuscripts at UCLA are stamped with Yasha Kreitzberg’s seal.¹⁰

Light also needs to be shed on people like Giacomo Minkowski, whose operetta *Aleksander: Oder, der kroyn prinz fun Yerushalayim* [Alexander: Or the Crown Prince of Jerusalem] was recently partially reconstructed by Ron Robboy for The Thomashefsky Project. In his essay in *Inventing the Modern Yiddish Stage*, Robboy writes about the process of reconstructing the work, and of researching the elusive Minkowski.¹¹ While the extant oeuvres of lesser-known composers may vary considerably in terms of size and scope, they should be studied within the larger context of the Big Four, which will add depth and nuance to our understanding of Yiddish theater music.

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¹⁰ In 2015, I began to process Kreitzberg’s papers, RG 878, as a volunteer archivist at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. The information about Kreitzberg’s life and works comes from his entry in Zylbercweig’s *Leksikon* and from my notes about the materials in the collection.
Tracing Yiddish Theater Musicians

Figure 20 Annotation inside the front cover of the flute part for *Dos pintele yid*. Kaminska Music Collection, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

Many of the music manuscripts in Rumshinsky’s archive at UCLA and in the Kaminska collection at YIVO contain annotations by the musicians who performed in the shows. On one hand, this marginalia is often taken for granted by musicians and archivists, who are often primarily concerned with the music itself. The annotations include everything from names, dates, and places of performance to commentary on the show and doodles. In the era of digital humanities projects, the names, dates, and locations documented in Goldfaden’s operetta manuscripts in RG 7, for instance, could be used to map out the performances and migration of these works across Europe and America in the early twentieth century. Furthermore,
investigating some of the names scribbled into the manuscripts has led to some interesting discoveries.

Figure 20 shows an inscription inside the front cover of the flute part for *Dos pintele yid* in RG 7, dated April 9, 1913. The note, written in Polish, translates into a scathing review of the conductor, Shmuel Weinberg (talented but lazy) and the orchestra (howled like a pack of wolves), with a parting remark to the effect of “Heaven help whomever has the misfortune of playing this show, but hopefully it’s a proper Pole, for I despise Litvaks.”

While the annotation is interesting for the glimpse it offers into the skill level of the musicians, it also offers one additional connection outside the world of Yiddish theater. Weinberg’s son, Mieczysław Weinberg, grew up playing in his father’s theater orchestras in Warsaw, where he absorbed the sounds of Yiddish music. Mieczysław fled to the Soviet Union in 1939, where he became a well-known composer who was closely connected to Dmitri Shostakovich. Bret Werb’s current research project traces the influences of the Yiddish stage and the senior Weinberg’s musicianship on Mieczysław’s compositions, and no doubt other musicians who are represented on the pages of Yiddish theater music manuscripts have equally compelling stories for researchers to piece together.\(^\text{12}\)

Similarly, the signature of Boris Malina appears repeatedly in the trombone parts of Rumshinsky’s manuscripts at UCLA. Malina was the trombonist for *Di goldene kale* in 1923, and for *Mamele* in 1926–7. In the 1940s, Malina contracted musicians to play at The Concord Resort in the Catskills, where Sholom Secunda was the music director. According to Secunda’s biography, “if [Malina’s musicians] screwed up, Sholom would yell up at Boris, who was six feet six inches and weighed nine thousand pounds. ‘You rotten dogs with disease’ is the most

\(^{12}\) Email correspondence with Bret Werb, January 2019.
polite way I can translate his Russian description of bad musicianship. . .”13 Malina, too, had a reputation as a loudmouth, according to recollections by members of the Local 802, the musician’s union in New York, and despite his apparently limited musical talent, his career extended well beyond the confines of the Yiddish pit orchestras to vaudeville and jazz ensembles.14

It remains the work of some future researcher to discover the identity of flautist A. Sigal, who doodled prodigiously on manuscripts for several Rumshinsky shows from the 1920s and 1930s, and his clarinetist neighbor, David Karpilovsky, who sometimes jotted notes on the former’s parts, and vice versa. The stories of these musicians—their personalities, their musical talents, and the traces they have left behind in the theater music manuscripts—not only color the story of Yiddish theater music in America, they also connect this history to the larger world of New York’s music scene in the early decades of the twentieth century. Finally, it is my hope that the case studies and fragments in the preceding pages will ultimately open Yiddish theater music to the possibility of being considered in tandem with dramatic and visual elements of the shows in which they appeared in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the Yiddish theater experience for Jewish immigrants in the early twentieth century.

13 Secunda, Bei Mir Bist Du Schon, 195.
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