

Where Is Our Homeland?

SONGS FROM TESTIMONIES IN THE FORTUNOFF VIDEO ARCHIVE

VOLUME 1



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Zisl Slepovitch Ensemble & Sasha Lurje

Introduction

By Stephen Naron, Director of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies

In 1979, the Holocaust Survivors Film Project—the predecessor of the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies—began taping testimony of Holocaust survivors, witnesses, and bystanders in New Haven, Connecticut. The project was founded by Dr. Dori Laub, a psychiatrist and analyst who was himself a child survivor from Czernowitz, Romania (now Ukraine), and Laurel Vlock, a television journalist at Channel 8. They had the support of the New Haven survivor community, particularly of William Rosenberg, who would later become the president of the project, as well as many other members of the Jewish community.

In 1981, the video collection came to Yale thanks to the work of Professor Geoffrey Hartman, who gave it a permanent home within the Manuscripts and Archives Department at Sterling Memorial Library. Under Hartman's watch as faculty advisor, it grew to become an internationally renowned collection that over the years has influenced the way the history of the Holocaust is written, studied, and taught.

There are more than 4,400 testimonies in the Fortunoff Video Archive—12,000 hours of material in over a dozen languages, recorded over the last 40 years in over a dozen different countries. That's 4,400 life stories. I call them life stories because our interview methodology asks survivors to recount their entire history—from their earliest childhood memories to the present. We consider it essential to know what life was like before the Holocaust in order to understand the scope of the loss it wrought, as well as the complexity of each individual's attempt to recover—to the extent possible—and build a life after the war.

The songs and poems on this recording were sung or recited in a number of testimonies in the Fortunoff Video Archive and reflect the richness of these documents. They are songs from the interwar period, songs from the ghettos, songs from the camps. Originally, these songs were often sung collectively, but in our survivors' testimonies they are recounted or performed by individuals. They thus remind us that the person singing them represents all those who did not survive to sing again, and remind us of the absence of the songs' original audience.

The Fortunoff Video Archive's faculty advisor, Professor Timothy Snyder, notes that testimonies, like works of art, have a special ability to cross the membrane between life and death, between past and present. The songs embedded in these testimonies are especially evocative in this respect, but to fully appreciate their power they must be heard, not read. That's what inspired us to produce this recording.

The recording you are about to hear is a reading of testimony as a source—perhaps an unconventional reading, but a reading nonetheless. Some of the songs are about dying and death, written and sung in the camps. This effort to recall them—part anthropological, part ethnomusicological, part historical—also recreates them. It is my hope that this recreation will form a link between those who are no longer with us and the living, all of us listening to these indelible songs.

It Began with Liubov

By Sarah Garibova

Fifty years after the liberation of central Ukraine, in the summer of 1994, researchers from the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, including Pinchas Agmon and Z.M. Zabarko, conducted dozens of interviews with Holocaust survivors across Ukraine. Among the interviewees was Liubov K. Born in 1921 in Zvenigorodka, Ukraine, she returned to her hometown after the war and remained there until the mid-1990s, when she immigrated to Haifa, Israel. In her charming and understated way, Liubov provided a biting tragic testimony of astounding detail regarding prewar Jewish life in Zvenigorodka and the horrors of the Nazi occupation of the city from July 1941 to January 1944. In addressing the period of the Holocaust, Liubov did not shy away from the complexities of that time. She immortalized both local collaborators and rescuers in her testimony—highlighting how neighbors could become executioners and strangers could become unlikely saviors.

On May 5, 1942, after spending eight months in the Zvenigorodka ghetto, Liubov and approximately 300 other able-bodied Jews were transferred to a series of labor camps north of the city. While in the labor camps, Liubov and her fellow prisoners performed road repairs for the infamous Transit Highway IV project. These experiences of family separation and backbreaking labor inspired the prisoners to write four of the songs that you can hear on this recording. As Liubov recalled, “Everyone [wrote the songs], all together. This one would give a word, that one would give two. This one a line, and the next would add another. That’s how it came together for us.”

The words of “Farewell, Our Native City” recount the prisoners’ tearful separation from family members who were left behind in the Zvenigorodka ghetto. Once in the camps, Liubov and her fellow prisoners lived in unheated barns and relied on the generosity of local Ukrainian villagers to supplement their meager food rations. The details of these experiences are described in the songs “In the Little Village Smilchyntsi” and “The Clouds Gathered over Budyshche.” While in the Budyshche camp, Liubov and several other inmates ran afoul of Stepan—a self-important overseer in the camp. His brutality is immortalized in the song “Stepan the Blond.” While the lyrics describe an instance of his cruelty in unflinchingly factual terms, in a way, the song allowed its authors to have the last laugh. Stepan tried to break their will, yet they could still compose a song about their tormentor.

Songs like these were not committed to paper, but they could be easily memorized; if even one of the camp inmates survived, their collective history was guaranteed to survive as well. Liubov’s recollection of these songs in her testimony was the fulfillment of this hope.

All projects have a starting point, a moment of genesis. This recording—as well as the ongoing musical project, *Where Is Our Homeland?*—were directly inspired by Liubov K. Her testimony and her music galvanized a team of archivists, musicians, and researchers to bring the prewar and wartime songs of survivors out of the archive and back to life. My hope is that this recording will allow Liubov’s memory and the memory of those who perished during the Holocaust to reach a new generation.



The Songs

By D. Zisl Slepovitch

*All songs transcribed, scored, arranged, and produced by D. Zisl Slepovitch.
Translations by Daniel Kahn & Yeva Lapsker.*

The songs on this recording provide insight into Holocaust survivors' experiences both during World War II and in the period preceding the war, which were documented by the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University. The widely diverse compositions presented here form a timeline that helps to recreate a multidimensional image of people's lives and the multiple identities they carried: as Jews by faith and roots, and as European citizens—Poles, Germans, Russians—by culture. These identities were shaped during the vibrant and dynamic interwar period, which is represented by several songs on this recording. The core of this collection, however, conveys the ways people managed to survive during the Holocaust, not least thanks to the support they gained through the songs they wrote and sang in ghettos and concentration camps all across Central and Eastern Europe.

SIDE ONE

Introduction to Songs 1-3

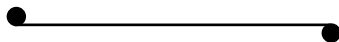
Jack M. (HVT-1555), b. 1913, a survivor of the Szydlowiec ghetto in Poland, remembered and beautifully performed a wealth of traditional repertoire, including musical and theatrical pieces. His testimony includes traditional Yiddish songs of various genres: *badkhones* (wedding jester's rhymes), Hassidic *niggunim* (paraliturgical tunes without words), and Biblical plays—specifically, *Mekhiras Yoysef* (*The Trade of Joseph*), which was quite popular in Eastern and Central Europe for a few centuries as part of the folk theater and Purimshpil tradition dating back to the 1400s. Jack also shared Polish songs he remembered from the street and the army, including some anti-Semitic and frivolous rhymes presumably made up by his senior officer, and many other rare pieces. For some of these, his testimony likely provides the only recording (or one of a very few) in existence. In addition to being a talented singer, Jack was also a gifted storyteller. Choosing just a few of his songs for this recording was not an easy task.



1. Doina — Badkhns Lid (Doina — Badkhen's Song). This composition opens with a *doina*—a free-time improvisatory piece, traditional to the southern East European (primarily Moldovan and Romanian) klezmer repertoire. This particular piece was recorded and notated by Moisey Beregovskiy, a notable Soviet ethnomusicologist who—simultaneously with Sofia Magid of St. Petersburg—completed work of critical importance collecting and researching traditional Eastern European Jewish music from the 1920s to the 1940s. The song that follows the *doina* was sung by Jack M. as he remembered it from a wedding in Szydłowiec, where it was originally performed by a Hassidic *badkhen* (wedding jester). The lyrics indicate that it must be a fragment of a larger composition, in which the central moral was, “a Jew must not be alone, a Jew must have a wife.” The song is followed by a melodic *freylekhs* based on the mocking street song “Vos bistu ketsele baroygez?” (“Why Are You So Angry, Honey?”).

Tsi Shmelken zugt der tate:
 “Zay nisht azoy tamevate!
 Du host dayn foter Yankl der Melupn.
 In ti dayn kas oyf im aynhaltn.”
 Er ken nisht esn,
 Er ken nisht shlufn,
 Vayl es shteyt geshribn in der Toyre,
 Azoy zugt im der Boyre:
 “A yidl tur nisht zayn alayn.
 A vayb miz men hubn,
 Zol im kenen shpeter bagrubn,
 A yidele zol nisht zayn alayn.”

Papa says to Shmelke:
 “Don't be such a numbskull!
 You have your father, Yankl der Milquetoast.
 Restrain your anger with him.”
 He can't eat,
 He can't sleep,
 For it's written in the Torah,
 Thus speaketh the creator:
 “A Jew mustn't be alone.
 He must have a wife,
 Who can later bury him.
 A Jew mustn't be alone.”



2. Polish Army Songs — (a) A Jew in the Barrel, (b) They Drafted a Poor Jew, (c) Rzeszów Polka, (d) A Gray Dove. Before World War II, Jack M. served in the Polish Army. The two songs he remembered from that time were popular in his regiment (and were probably composed by his fellow soldiers and officers). The suite opens with “A Jew in the Barrel,” a prewar piece that was popular both in villages and urban areas in Poland. “They Drafted a Poor Jew” consists of a couple of mocking anti-Semitic verses. It is followed by a lively interlude—a traditional instrumental piece, “Polka Rzeszówka” (“Rzeszów Polka”)—which leads into the second military song Jack performed during his testimony: “A Gray Dove,” a rather foolish love song based on a repetitive short motif in the rhythm of a mazurka.

(a)
Instrumental
 (b)
 Zabrali do wojska biednego żydziaka.
 Nie dali mu bułki z masłem, tylko kapuśniaka.
 Dali mu karabin, cebulą nabity.
 Kazali mu strzelać do swojej kobity.

(c)
Instrumental
 (d)
 Siwy gołąbeczek na kamieniu siedział,
 Dałabym ci buzi, żebyś nie powiedział.
 A jakbyś powiedział, to bym się wstydziła
 Żeś mnie pocałował, jam się nie broniła.

(a)
Instrumental
 (b)
 A poor little Yid got drafted.
 He got no bread with butter, just cabbage soup.
 They gave him a gun, loaded with onions,
 And told him to shoot his wife.

(c)
Instrumental
 (d)
 On a stone sat a gray pigeon,
 I'd give you a kiss, but don't tell anyone.
 If you were to tell, I wouldn't feel ashamed
 That you kissed me. I wouldn't mind that.

Jedzie wóz na przewóz, malowane uśnie,
Dałabym ci buzi jak matula uśnie.
Matula usnęła, na kominku zgasło.
Dziewcze buzi dało, aż łóżeczko trzasło.

There's a wagon going, all painted,
I will give you a kiss, when Mother falls asleep.
Mother has fallen asleep, the fireplace is dark.
The girl gives a kiss, and the bed shakes.

3. Trayb di khvalyes, tifer taykh (Drive Your Waves, Deep River). This is a love song that Jack M. remembered from his childhood in the prewar Polish town of Szydłowiec. Sung from the point of view of a young abandoned woman, it expresses her grief and longing for her lover who has left for a land far away. This is a beautiful example of an old-time personal lyrical song.

Trayb di khvalyes, tifer taykh,
Trayb zay iber barg in tul.
Mayn gelibtn fundervaytn,
Gris ikh toyznte mul.
Di ertsayl im, tifer taykh,
Fun mayn bitern shikzal,
Az mayn leybn iz vi ayn triber tul,
On a zin un on shtral.

Drive your waves, deep river,
Drive them over mountains and valleys.
From afar, I send my beloved,
A thousand greetings.
Tell him, deep river,
Of my bitter fate,
For my life is like a dismal valley,
Without a ray of sunlight.

Introduction to Songs 4-5

Peretz H. (HVT-3569), b. 1927, was a child in his native Warsaw, Poland, when the war broke out. He used to sing in the streets of his hometown to earn a living, and shared several songs in his 1993 Fortunoff Video Archive testimony.

4. Walc François (Waltz François), composed in 1905 by Adam Józef Karasiński to lyrics by Andrzej Włast, is a salon waltz that enjoyed enormous popularity in Poland in the first half of the 20th century. It was one of the many songs that Peretz H. used to sing for his livelihood.

W starych nutach babuni
Walc przechował się ten
Pomnę wieczorek u niej
Widzę go jak przez sen
Grajek przy fortepianie
Goście snują się w krąg
W białych bufach, tiurniurach są panie
W kłapach panów chryzantem tkwi pąk

Refrain:

Dawnych wspomnień czar
Wdzięk stylowych par
Muślin sukien jak mgła
I najnowszy ten walc François
Gdyby jeszcze raz
Wrócił piękny czas
Gdyby zbudził w sercach złych ludzi
Czar modnego walca François

In my grandma's old music
This waltz has survived.
I remember an evening at her place,
I see it as in a dream.
A player at the piano,
Guests are gathering in a circle.
Ladies wear white puffs and bustles,
A chrysanthemum in each gentleman's lapel.

Refrain:

The magic of yesteryear's memories,
The grace of elegant couples,
Muslin dresses flying like fog,
To the latest Waltz François.
If only, once again,
That beautiful time would return,
If only it would evoke in these hearts of evil
The magic of that French waltz.

5. W pociągu jest tłok (Crowded Train) is one of at least two Polish renditions of the popular Mexican *copla* song “Cielito Lindo.” Just like “Walc François,” this is a song Peretz H. sang in the courtyards of Warsaw, along with many other children like himself, as well as local street bands. The song was originally popularized by Mexican author Quirino Mendoza y Cortés (c. 1862–1957). It became popular in Poland thanks to Rosita Serrano, known as the Chilean Nightingale, who started performing in Berlin in 1936 and recorded there in German for Telefunken. The first Polish text, which would have been lost to history if not for the testimony of Peretz H., refers to the depression and smuggling of groceries in prewar Warsaw. In postwar Poland, the song gained newfound popularity, thanks in part to Leonard Buczkowski’s 1946 movie *Zakazane piosenki* (*Forbidden Songs*). The new version, although similar to the prewar version sung by Peretz H., referred to the war: “Teraz jest wojna, kto handluje, ten żyje” (“It is war now; those who sell live”). Decades later, on February 4, 1982, the Polish “Cielito Lindo” became popular again in the wake of the imposition of martial law by then Prime Minister Jaruzelski.

W pociągu jest tłok,
Przytulnie o zmrok
Zaczyna się więc sielanka
W ramionach kto splótł
A jajka kto gniótł
Pod ławką jest coś—rąbanka
Podała mu ust.
On podniósł jej biust
A pod nim dwa balerony,
Rąbanka i schab,
Spod serca kap-kap,
A pociąg mknie jak szalony.

Refrain:

O, Zosiu ma,
Warszawa jest już blisko
Więc każdy to przyzna,
W Warszawie drożyzna,
Dla ciebie ja wiozę wszystko.
Ciocia Adela i córka jej Fela
Zawsze się w drodze kłóćą
Napięte są nerwy i myślą bez przerwy,
Że dzisiaj do domu wrócą.

Refrain:

O Zosiu ma, zapraszam Cię na kolację
Będzie wódzka i wino i wszystko co chcesz,
A reszta to już jak wiesz.

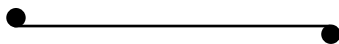
It’s crowded on the train
The darkness is cozy,
So the fun begins:
Someone gets their arms entangled,
Someone is crushing the eggs,
The meat carcasses are under the bench.
She gives him a kiss,
He lifts up her bosom,
And finds two pieces of ham.
Meat carcasses and pork chops,
Dripping from beneath the heart,
And the train is racing like crazy.

Refrain:

Oh, Zosha, dear,
Warsaw is so near,
Everyone will admit,
Living in Warsaw is expensive.
For you I am bringing it all.
Aunt Adela and her daughter, Fela
Always quarrel on the road.
They get on each other’s nerves,
Thinking they will return home today.

Refrain:

Oh, Zosha, dear, please join me for dinner.
There will be vodka, wine—whatever you want,
The rest is up to you.



Introduction to Song 6

Itzhak S. (HVT-3489) was born in 1915 in Berlin, Germany. He was an active participant in Jewish and Zionist youth groups and even established one himself. In his 1992 testimony, conducted in Hebrew, he shared several Zionist songs.

6. Kadima—Vorwärts (Forward). Itzhak S. recalled this song, allegedly written and composed by Akiva Lewinsky (1918–2000), a prominent Zionist leader. “Kadima—Vorwärts” is written in the style of a solemn (probably military) march, typical for anthems and other official songs in Europe and the Soviet Union at the time. It is not surprising that the musical idiom of the song is devoid of any audible Jewish reference.

Kadima—Vorwärts,
Vorwärts, im Schritt,
Wir haben keine Zeit zu verlieren.
Wir wissen, wir tragen die Zukunft mit,
D’rum müssen wir vorwärts marschieren.
Wir kämpfen für Freiheit, Gleichkeit und Recht,
Wir kämpfen für Israels Ehre.
Wir wollen ein neues starkes Geschlecht.
Wir fordern die Jüdische Ehre.

Kadima—Forward
Forward, march,
We have no time to lose.
We know, we carry the future with us,
So we know we must march on.
We fight for freedom, equality, and justice,
We fight for the honor of Israel.
We want a new, strong breed.
We demand Jewish honor.

SIDE TWO

Introduction to Songs 7–10

Liubov K. (HVT-3280) was born in 1921 in Zvenigorodka, Ukraine. The four pieces—two songs and two poems—she performed during her 1994 testimony about her experiences in the labor camps surrounding her hometown are unique historical documents telling the story of the camp prisoners’ everyday struggle for survival. The camps themselves, the nearby villages where the inmates used to escape to get food, and Stepan, a Ukrainian collaborator and camp guard, are named in two of the four texts.

Three of the four texts are in Russian, albeit with some errors, both grammatical and stylistic. While Liubov and many of her fellow prisoners were multilingual, this suggests that the lyrics may have been composed by non-native speakers.



7. In dem kleinem Dorf, in Smiltschenzi (In the Little Village Smilchyntsi). This is a fascinating attempt by native Yiddish speakers to compose a song in German. The result is a mixed, almost macaronic text—largely German but with a few Yiddishisms mixed in. The song conveys the suffering of Jewish mothers who were separated from their children and longed for their homes.

The style and form of the song are reminiscent of interwar (Weimar Republic) cabaret and theater songs in the spirit of Kurt Weill. One or more of these may have provided the basis for the song and its language. Another indirect clue that the song may not have been originally composed by the labor camp inmates is the widespread use of popular songs with new texts during World War II.

In den kleinem Dorf, in Smiltschenzi
Wohnen Juden in dem Lager unglücklich.

Und die Frauen weinen,
Weinen ohn' ein Grund:

"Wo ist unser Heimat?
Wann seinen wir zuhaus'?"

In der Stall wie Schweinen leben wir
Und wie Hunden hungrig seinen wir.

Das Kind hat keine Mutter
Die Mutter hat kein Kind

Wo ist unser Heimat?
Wann seinen wir zuhaus'?"

Juden, Juden leidest uns
Was von denen wusst kein Mann

Von die Tränen unsere
Keinen Flüßen sein

Von dem Blut von unserem
Kann sein ein Okean."

In the little village Smilchyntsi
In the camp the Jews are living miserably.

Hear the women crying,
Crying without end:

"Where is our homeland?
When will we return?"

In the stall we live like pigs
Hungry as dogs are we.

A child without a mother
A mother without child

Where is our homeland?
When will we return?"

Jews, o Jews, o how we suffer
Nothing like it was ever known

The tears we've wept
Could be rivers

The blood we've spilled
Could be an ocean."

8. Tuchi nad Budishchem vstali (The Clouds Gathered over Budyshche) is a re-texting and melodic adaptation (folklorization) of Pavel Armand's music and lyrics for the song "Tuchi nad gorodom vstali" ("The Clouds Gathered over the City"), performed by Mark Bernes in Sergey Yutkevich's 1938 film *Chelovek s ruzhyom* (*The Man with a Gun*). The song quickly gained popularity in the Soviet Union. Armand's text conveys the heartbreak of a young man who is going to war and is bidding farewell to the girl he loves. The labor camp version Liubov K. shared depicts the horrific realities of slave labor, hunger, cold, the lack of basic living facilities, and the cruelty of the Ukrainian guard Stepan. The song has the time and feel of a waltz, one of the most popular genres in 1930s Soviet urban culture.

Тучи над Будищем стали,
В лагере пахнет бурдой.
Люди за кости дерутся,
А Хайка бежит с кочергой.

The clouds gathered over Budyshche
In the camp it stinks of weak broth.
People fight over bones
And Chaika runs around with a fire poker.

Refrain:

Прекратите шум ребята,
Суп идите получать.
А потом в неотопленном клубе
На солому ложитесь спать.
Кормёжка у нас неплохая—
Похлёбка с пшена и воды.
Пшенину и с часик искавши,
Можно в похлёбке найти.
Но, друзья, не унывайте,
Слепую шкапу нам привезут.
А про хлеб уже не вспоминайте,
Раз в неделю по крошке дадут.
Ночка так быстро проходит,
Утром к работе вставать.
Весь день на морозе трескучем
Приходится нам пропадать.
Ох, тяжёл ты, путь к работе.
Выйдет немец нас встречать.
Даст нам норму, что только держися,
И заставит её выполнять.
Домой мы все мчимся стрелою,
У каждого мысли одни:
Чтоб в лагере бросить лопаты,
Скорее в село нам уйти.
Тяжела в село дорога,
А назад ещё трудней.
Не споймал бы Степан у порога
И не дал бы горячих взашей.
Но удар нам приклада не страшен,
И шомпол совсем не болит.
Всё это терпеть мы согласны,
Но лишь бы к другому дожить.
Тяжело дожить к другому,
Небывалые муки терпеть,
Но не хочется в землю сырую,
Молодым таким девушкам лечь.
Но надежда всё время крепит нас,
Надеждой всё время живём.
Отрубает орлу его крылья—
Тогда на путь счастья взойдём.

Refrain:

Stop all the noise, you people!
Go stand in line for the soup.
And then go get some rest
On the hay in the unheated club house.
The slop here isn't so bad—
This thin broth of millet and water.
It could take you an hour
To find one bit of millet in there.
But friends, don't despair.
They'll bring in a blind nag,
And you can forget about any bread.
They'll feed us a crumb once a week.
The nights fly by quickly.
It's morning, time for work.
All day long we waste away,
Freezing in the bitter frost.
It's hard to go to work—
The German comes out to meet us.
He gives us our tasks—better be strong—
He'll see to their completion.
Like an arrow we fly home,
One thought on everyone's mind:
To reach camp, toss the shovels
And quickly run off to the village.
It's hard to run to the village,
But returning is harder.
God forbid Stepan should catch you at the door,
And give you red stripes.
But we aren't afraid of the lashing,
And the ramrod doesn't hurt at all.
We're ready to endure it all,
Only to make it to another day.
It's hard to make it to another day,
Unheard-of torments to endure.
But in such damp filth
Young girls would rather not lay.
But hope is what ever sustains us,
Hope keeps us ever alive.
Once they slash the wings of the eagle—
We will ascend, on the path of joy.

9. Stepan-blondin (Stepan the Blond). This is a ballad that tells the story of inmates escaping their labor camp to a nearby village to get food and their cruel guard Stepan. Liubov K. recited it as a poem in her testimony, without melody. D. Zisl Slepovitch set it to a melody that evokes Argentine tangos, popular Soviet songs, and military marches.

Степан-блондин и шуцман очень строгий.

Он день и ночь с винтовкою сидит.

Свою он службу выполняет честно,

И за порядком верно он следит.

Наши ребята очень непослушны,

Своего Блондина слушать не хотят.

Лишь только он успеет отвернуться,

В село, как зайцы, быстро все летят.

И вот однажды храбрая десятка

В село в день отдыха себе ушла.

Узнав об этом на дневной проверке,

Блондин решил их проучить слегка.

Пришли они, Блондин их подзывает:

«Где были вы, кто разрешил идти?».

«Вы нам простите, больше мы не будем».

«Прощу»—ответил, но мыслил: «Погоди».

На второй день, собрав свою десятку,

он на расправу к немцу их повёл.

«Пропали мы, нам больше не вернуться—

за кусок хлеба нам конец пришёл».

Но, к сожалению, все домой вернулись,

Там угощение ждало их на ять.

Блондин готовил вкусный сладкий завтрак

Своей десятке—крепких двадцать пять.

Шомпол свистел, и стоны раздавались,

И по ребятам плач и страх ходил.

А в стороне сидел Блондин довольный,

Что непослушных так ловко проучил.

Stepan "the Blond," a guard so strict.

Day in, day out, with his rifle he sits.

Dutifully doing his duties,

Law and Order are his domain.

But this gang of ours is very naughty.

They don't want to listen to their Blond.

He only has to turn his back,

Off to town (to beg for food) they run like rabbits.

So once, on their day off, these brave Ten

Went running to the village.

When the Blond learned of it at the inspection

He decided to teach them a little lesson.

When they returned, the Blond was waiting:

"Where have you been, who gave you permission?"

We beg: "Forgive us, it won't happen again."

"I shall forgive," he said, but thought: "Just you wait."

The next day he got his Ten together,

And brought them to the German to be judged.

"We are lost, doomed, never to return!

For a piece of bread we'll meet our end."

But, alas, every one of them returned,

And a delightful treat awaited them.

The Blond prepared a tasty breakfast

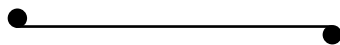
For each of his Ten—twenty-five hard ones.

The ramrod whipped, and the moans wheezed.

And our gang went down in tears and terror.

To the side the Blond was sitting, smiling, satisfied,

Having taught these naughty Ten such a tidy lesson.



10. Proschai, gorod nash rodimyi (Farewell, Our Native City). Liubov K. recited this heartfelt farewell as a poem in her testimony; D. Zisl Slepovitch set it to his own original music. In this case, the urban romance genre seemed most appropriate to the composer. The song was arranged and recorded in two instrumentations: one with clarinet, accordion, and bass; the other with flute, piano, and bass.

Прощай, город наш родимый,
Прощай, любимая семья.
Прощайте, матери родные.
Прощайте, все хорошие друзья.

Идем в дорогу мы слепую,
Не знаем, что ожидает впрредь.
Но думу думаем сумную,
Что нас там ожидает смерть.

С горы в долине показались
Дома Неморожа-села,
И сильно сердце застучалось,
И покатилась слеза.

Жилищем нашим оказалась
Свинарня без окон и дверей.
Там сильно ветер продувал нас,
И мы там зябли до костей.

Сначала мы были непривыкши,
Нам дико показалось всё,
Тяжелым потом землю рыли,
И обливались слезой.

Farewell, our native city.
Farewell, family so dear.
Farewell, precious mothers.
Farewell, to all our friends.

Blindly, we walk down the road,
Not knowing what lies ahead.
The ominous thought is growing,
That awaiting us is death.

From the distant mountains,
Nemorozh's houses peer out.
Heavily the heart begins to pound
And tears begin to fall.

What a home we were given,
A pig stall without a window or a door.
A heavy wind blew right through us,
And chilled us down to the bones.

At first we were not used to it,
Such savagery, brutality.
With sweat we toiled to till the earth
And watered it with tears.

Introduction to Song 11

Ruth C. (HVT-3793) was born in Kraków, Poland, in 1920. During the Holocaust, she survived several labor camps and concentration camps in both her native country and Germany.

11. Płaszów Inmates' Song. In her 1995 testimony, Ruth C. remembered singing this song in the Polish concentration camp of Płaszów, but she was unable to recall the melody. D. Zisl Slepovitch set her words to music in the bard song style. The lyrics describe the dreadful experience of the Płaszów prisoners intertwined with their undying hope for escape and survival.

Co dzień o piątej rano
Głos trąbki budzi nas,
Melodią dobrze znaną
Woła na Appelplatz.
Stajemy równo w rzędzie,
By ręką machnąć w dal,
By uciec jak najprędzej
Od tych cmentarnych bram.

Every morning at five,
The trumpet wakes us up
With its familiar call
To the Appelplatz.
We stand straight in rows,
Looking into the distance,
Looking to escape
This cemetery gate.

Nad dachami ciemna noc.
Całe miasto śpi.
Tylko my—jeszcze jeden krok
By serce z bólu umiera.

Dark night hovers over the roofs,
The city is sound asleep.
Only we—just one more step,
And the heart will die in pain.

Introduction to Songs 12-13

Irene S. (HVT-98) was born in 1925 in Brzezany/Berezhany, Ukraine, and raised in Grudziądz, Poland. She was a survivor of the Treblinka concentration camp as well as a singer-songwriter. In her testimony, she remembered singing existing songs and composing new ones at the camp in order to boost the morale of other young people from Poland and the Soviet Union.

12. Treblinka Survival Song. Irene S.'s native languages were Polish and Yiddish; her Russian was somewhat limited. Nonetheless, she chose the latter for her song-manifesto of the enslaved children at Treblinka in order to allow a Russian-speaking fellow inmate to sing it in his own language.

Военные грозы весь мир обнимают,
И льётся рабочая кровь.
Вчерашние дети свободного края,
Сегодня мы—племя рабов.
Закреты мы в гетто, оторваны от мира
И биты нацистским кнутом.
Но если сегодня жить тяжело и плохо,
Сегодня мы завтра ждём.
Но если сегодня жить тяжело и плохо,
Мы лучшего завтра подождём.

Thunderstorms of war embrace the world,
And the workers' blood is flowing.
We, yesterday's children of freedom,
Are today's tribe of slaves.
Locked up in the ghetto, torn from the world,
Lashed with the Nazi whip.
But if today is hard and miserable,
We will wait for tomorrow;
If today is hard and miserable,
We will wait for a better tomorrow.

13. Ani Ma'amin (I Believe). Among the songs that the young prisoners in Treblinka, including Irene S., sang to support their faith and hope for survival and liberation were Hebrew songs they had learned in Poland before the war—presumably as part of Tarbut ("Culture"), the interwar Polish Zionist educational system. After the State of Israel came into existence, "Ani Ma'amin," also known as "Sakhki, Sakhki," became a popular staple song.

The lyrics were composed by Shaul Tchernichovsky as a poem in 1894 in Odessa. This performance presents an abridged version of Tchernichovsky's poem, in keeping with Irene's performance, with one exception: in her testimony, Irene started singing the song on the second verse; here we perform it from the beginning.

Sakhki sakhki al hakhalomot
zu ani hakholem sach
Sakhki ki b'adam a'amin
ki odeni ma'amin bakh

Laugh, laugh at these dreams—
This is me, the dreamer, speaking—
Laugh because I still believe in humanity,
Because I still believe in you.

Ki od nafshi dror sho'efet
lo makhartiah l'egel paz
Ki od amin gam be'adam
gam berukho ruakh az
Rukho yashlikh kavlei-hevel
yeromemeynu bomatay-al
Lo bara'av yamut oved
dror la'nefesh pat ladal.

Because my soul still longs for freedom,
I have not sold it for a golden calf.
Because I still believe in humanity
And in its spirit, a strong spirit.
This spirit will cast off the shackles of falsehood,
And will be uplifted.
No worker shall die of hunger;
Freedom for the soul, bread for the poor.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ABOUT THE SURVIVORS WHOSE TESTIMONIES WERE THE BASIS FOR THIS RECORDING

The summaries below were taken from the original catalog records of the Fortunoff Video Archive and include links to each survivor's testimony in the archive's access system, Aviary.

Irene S. (HVT-98)

Irene S. was born in 1925 in the Galician town of Brzezany (Berezhany) and grew up in Grudziadz, Poland. In her testimony, she describes her life as the daughter of a prominent local musician; her family's move to Bialystok in 1938; and their life there under Russian and German occupation. She speaks of the ghettoization of Bialystok; ghetto life; her underground activities there; and her capture and transport to Majdanek by way of Treblinka. She tells of her experiences in Majdanek; in a small nearby labor camp; in Auschwitz; and as a slave laborer in Germany where she was liberated by the Americans in Kaunitz. Mrs. S. notes the fates of family members; postwar experiences working as a translator; and her immigration to the United States. She also makes reference to Jewish self-deception during the Holocaust; sings songs sung by Jews during the war, including some of her own composition; and asserts her belief in the possibility of a more humane world.

Her testimony is available here:

https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/collections/5/collection_resources/171.

Itzhak S. (HVT-3489)

Itzhak S. was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1915. In his testimony, he recounts his father's military service in World War I; attending public and Jewish schools; bar mitzvah; participating in Jewish and Zionist youth groups; anti-Semitic harassment; traveling to Amsterdam; his mother joining him; founding a Zionist youth group; returning to Berlin to obtain a certificate to emigrate to Palestine (his mother remained); establishing a Youth Aliyah center in Cologne; improvements during the 1936 Olympics; teaching at a Jewish school in Herrlingen; returning to Berlin; obtaining false papers as a non-Jew; working at a Youth Aliyah school with Recha Freier, its founder; vain attempts to convince his parents to leave; hiding during Kristallnacht; organizing clandestine meetings and religious services; his mother's disappearance from the Netherlands and his father's deportation (he never saw them again); living on the streets and with many non-Jews for short periods; a brief trip to Nordhausen; obtaining new false papers from a German officer when his were compromised; being warned to leave; traveling to Singen, then Radolfzell; illegally entering Switzerland; traveling to Schaffhausen; arrest; release with assistance from the Jewish community; living in a refugee camp in Zurich; and immigration to Israel in 1953. Mr. S. discusses visiting Berlin with a fellow underground member in 1979; a reunion of hidden Jews from Berlin; and speaking to students in Germany.

His testimony is available here:

https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/collections/5/collection_resources/3537.

Jack M. (HVT-1555)

Jack M. was born in Szydłowiec, Poland, in 1913. In his testimony, Jack recalls attending cheder, then public school; visiting his grandmother in Chlewiska; apprenticeship as a tailor at age fourteen; working in Warsaw; military service in Skierniewice from 1937 to 1939; German invasion; one brother fleeing to the Soviet zone (he perished); slave labor in Jósefów; ghettoization; hiding during round-ups; his family's deportation; incarceration in Wolanów, Skarżysko-Kamienna, Sulejów, Laura, Dachau, Buchenwald, and Allach; slave labor in HASAG factories; liberation from an evacuation train; living in Feldafing displaced persons camp; hearing from his uncle through the Red Cross; and emigration to the United States. Mr. M. discusses details of prewar life; some guards who helped him; the deaths of his entire family; and a 1980 trip to Poland.

His testimony is available here:

https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/collections/5/collection_resources/1620.

Liubov K. (HVT-3280)

Liubov K. was born in Zvenigorodka, Ukraine, in 1921. In her testimony, she recalls her family's poverty; attending a teacher's course in Tul'chin; teaching Russian and German in Zvenigorodka; German invasion in June 1941; ghettoization in September; forced labor; her father's shooting; witnessing her mother's brutal murder by a Ukrainian with German sanction; transfer to a concentration camp; slave labor building roads; learning of mass killings from escapees and local Ukrainians; having to sort the victims' clothing; local villagers providing them with food, without which they would not have survived; escaping with four others; working for peasants in the forest; one peasant woman hiding them in spite of knowing they were Jews (she recently had her recognized as a "Righteous Person"); and liberation. Ms. K. discusses many details of ghetto and camp life and mass killings; her postwar life; having monuments erected at mass graves; testifying against her mother's murderer; writing her memoir; and identifying herself as Ukrainian, not Jewish, in her documents, but feeling Jewish in her heart.

Her testimony is available here:

https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/collections/5/collection_resources/3328.

Peretz H. (HVT-3569)

Peretz H. was born in Warsaw, Poland, in 1927, the fifth of six children. In his testimony, Peretz recounts harassment as the only Jew in his public school class; his oldest brother's military draft in 1938; German invasion; learning his brother was taken as a Soviet prisoner of war; another brother leaving to find him; anti-Jewish abuse and restrictions; ghettoization; his father's death from starvation; his older two brothers escaping; smuggling food into the ghetto with his younger brother Zalman; escaping to live as non-Jews; singing Polish songs for food and money; several escapes from Poles who suspected they were Jews; receiving assistance from Poles (some knew they were Jews, others did not); Zalman re-entering the ghetto to obtain goods to sell, and being caught in the uprising; Zalman escaping and rejoining him; brief employment as a night watchman, which provided a place to stay; taking food to a hidden Jew; selling cigarettes with other street children; obtaining false papers through the Jewish underground; registering as Poles; arrest for making an anti-German joke; and release the next day. Mr. H. recalls participating with Zalman in the Polish uprising with Armia Krajowa; surrender; transport to Ożarów; transfer to Stalag VIII B (Lamsdorf), then IV B (Mühlberg); receiving Red Cross parcels; forced labor in an airplane factory; anti-Semitic harassment by non-Jewish Polish prisoners; assistance from their German supervisor; liberation by Soviet troops from an evacuation march; separation from Zalman; traveling with a Soviet unit, then returning to Warsaw; reunion with an older brother; joining Zalman in Kraków; living on a kibbutz; protection from anti-Jewish violence by Soviet troops; traveling to Czechoslovakia, then Biberach displaced persons camp; assistance from UNRRA; illegal emigration by ship from Marseille to Palestine; interdiction by the British; brief incarceration; training with the Palmah; serving in the Arab-Israeli War; being wounded; marriage; and the births of three sons. Mr. H. discusses nightmares resulting from his experiences, and sharing his experiences in schools and military training.

His testimony is available here:

https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/collections/5/collection_resources/3617.

Ruth C. (HVT-3793)

Ruth C. was born in Kraków, Poland, in 1920, the elder of two children. She recounts her family's affluence; her sheltered childhood; German invasion; anti-Jewish restrictions; confiscation of family valuables; learning to be a seamstress; eviction from their home; slave labor cleaning streets; ghettoization in March 1941; their Ukrainian maid trading their valuables for money and food; forced factory labor; her parents hiding her and her brother during a round-up; her parents' deportation in October 1942; deportation to Płaszów; visiting her brother; public executions; pervasive fear of being killed by the Kommandant, Amon Goeth; fasting on Yom Kippur; transfer to Skarżysko-Kamienna; slave labor in Werk C of a HASAG munitions factory, then a privileged office position; transfer to Częstochowa; slave labor in another HASAG factory; train transfer to Buchenwald, then Bergen-Belsen; starvation and sickness resulting in many deaths; a fellow prisoner throwing her bread; transfer two months later to Burgau; caring for a sick prisoner; transfer to Türkheim; escaping on advice from a German guard; assistance from a villager; liberation by United States troops; reunion with her brother; illegal immigration to Palestine in 1946; brief incarceration by the British; and attending university. Ms. C. notes continuing contact with her family's Ukrainian maid; not sharing her experiences until a trip to Poland; and a recurring nightmare that stopped after her trip. She shows photographs and sings a song from Płaszów.

Her testimony is available here:

https://fortunoff.aviaryplatform.com/collections/5/collection_resources/3840.

To learn more about the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, or to find out how you can watch and listen to the unedited testimonies of the survivors above—or thousands of other testimonies—please visit the archive's website at fortunoff.library.yale.edu.

PERFORMERS

Joshua Camp (accordion, piano), a founding member of the bands One Ring Zero, C.A.M.P.O.S., Locobeach, and Chicha Libre, has composed for and played in projects of various genres over the years, including country, folk, Irish, klezmer, merengue, and experimental music. He has also composed music for film, dance, theater, and multimedia installations. As an accordionist, Joshua has been in the Broadway productions of *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Threepenny Opera*, and the Tony Award-winning play *Indecent*, and on the soundtrack to the Lincoln Center production of *The Coast of Utopia* by Tom Stoppard.

Dmitry Ishenko (contrabass) is a versatile and highly sought-after New York City bass player. He has performed and recorded with such jazz greats as Steve Lacy, John Tchicai, Eric Harland, Dave Liebman, and many others. A graduate of Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory, Dmitry is a busy session player and arranger, having worked in the studio and on the road with Paul Banks of Interpol, among others. Dmitry has toured all over Northern America, Western Europe, Russia, and Japan, and has appeared at the CareFusion Jazz Festival, Vision Festival, Blue Note Jazz Festival, Toronto Jazz Festival, Boston Beantown Jazz Festival, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, and the Blue Note, as well as countless other venues around the world. Dmitry has also performed in a number of theater productions in the US and Europe, including the award-winning production of *Fiddler on the Roof* in Yiddish (off-Broadway).

Craig Judelman (5-string violin) grew up in Seattle, where he studied classical violin. He soon branched out into jazz, folk, and klezmer music, which he first studied with the early klezmer revival fiddler Wendy Marcus. Craig went on to study composition with Joan Tower, as well as classical and jazz violin at Bard College. Craig made a name for himself in New York playing traditional American music with his band, The Dust Busters, eventually recording an album with John Cohen for the Smithsonian Folkways. Brooklyn life also brought Craig to the band Litvakus, notable for its revival of North Eastern European Jewish music. Craig has been a music educator for over a decade, teaching Yiddish and American folk music. He helps produce the Seattle Yiddish Fest and Shtetl Neukölln in Berlin, where he currently lives.

Sasha Lurje (vocals). A native of Riga, Latvia, Sasha has been singing since the age of three. She has performed with a wide variety of groups in various styles, ranging from classical to folk, jazz, rock, and pop. Sasha has also been involved in several theater groups, where she focused on musical and improvisational theater. She has performed and taught Yiddish singing in Russia, Europe, and North America, and has been a longtime artist and faculty member at Yiddish Summer Weimar. Among her projects and bands are Forshpil, *STRANGELOVESONGS* with Daniel Kahn, Semer Ensemble, You Shouldn't Know from It, and Litvakus.

D. Zisl Slepovitch (composer, arranger, producer, artistic director; clarinet, alto saxophone, flute) is a native of Minsk, Belarus, who has resided in the United States since 2008. He is a doctor of musicology; a multi-instrumental klezmer, classical, and improvisational musician; a composer and poet; and a music and Yiddish educator. He is a founding member of the critically acclaimed bands Litvakus, Minsker Kapelye, and Zisl Slepovitch Trio. He has served as assistant music director and music director in many productions by the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene and is now musician-in-residence at the Fortunoff Video Archive at Yale University. Zisl is currently the clarinetist and associate conductor in the off-Broadway production of *Fiddler on the Roof* in Yiddish (2018–20). He serves as a Yiddish language and culture instructor at the New School, an educator and artist-in-residence at BIMA at Brandeis University, and a guest artist and lecturer at many US and international universities, cultural organizations, and festivals. Zisl's theater, film, and TV contributions include consulting on and acting in the film *Defiance*, *Eternal Echoes* (Sony Classical), and *Rejoice with Itzhak Perlman and Cantor Yitzhak Meir Helfgot* (PBS), and composing a number of original scores.

Recorded at Mighty Frog Studios, Brooklyn, New York, USA.
Recording engineer: **Craig Dreyer**.

ALBUM ART

Yulia Ruditskaya created the illustrations for this album; see more of her work at www.yuliaruditskaya.com.

Jeff Mueller at Dexterity Press designed this booklet and letterpress printed the covers for this recording; see more of his work at [instagram.com/dexterityletterpress](https://www.instagram.com/dexterityletterpress).

THANK-YOU NOTE FROM D. ZISL SLEPOVITCH

Thank you to Annette Ezekiel Kogan, who introduced me to Stephen Naron, director of the Fortunoff Video Archive, which effectively led to this project's creation.

I would like to pay a special homage and dedicate this work to my ethnomusicology and music history professors at the Belarusian State Academy of Music (BSAM) and National Music College at BSAM: Inna Nazina, Volha Dadziomava, Tamara Yakimenka, and my composition teacher, Valeriy Karetnikov. With the deepest gratitude, I dedicate this and upcoming volumes of *Where Is Our Homeland?* to Professor Nina Stepankaya (1954–2007), my Ph.D. advisor, teacher (in the highest sense of the word), and research partner. She instilled in me a deep love for Jewish music coupled with human curiosity and a sense of responsibility as both a scholar and a musician.



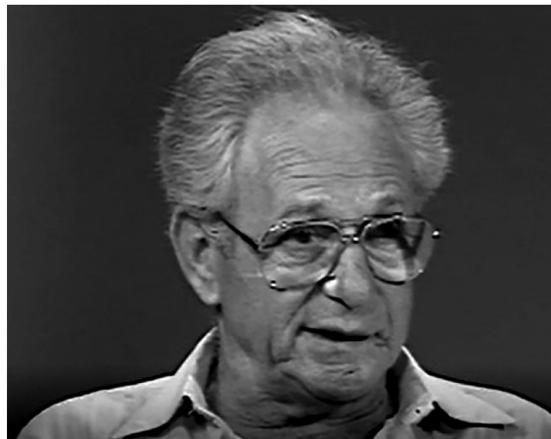
Ruth C. (HVT-3793)



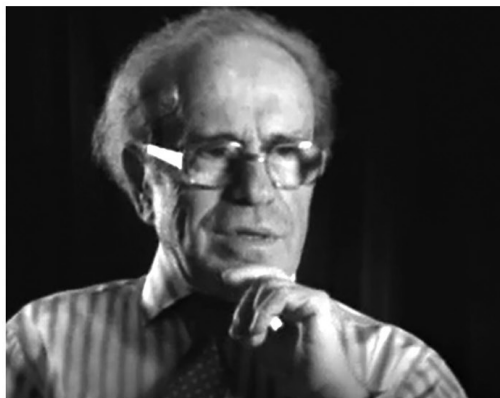
Irene S. (HVT-98)



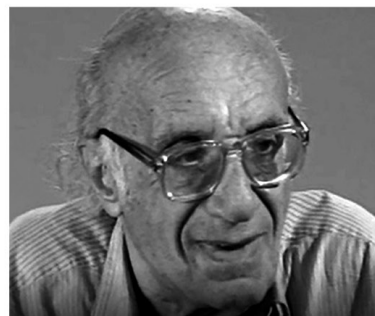
Liubov K. (HVT-3280)



Peretz H. (HVT-3569)



Jack M. (HVT-1555)



Itzchak S. (HVT-3489)

Where Is Our Homeland?

SONGS FROM TESTIMONIES IN THE FORTUNOFF VIDEO ARCHIVE

VOLUME 1

ZISL SLEPOVITCH ENSEMBLE & SASHA LURJE

SIDE ONE

1. DOINA - BADKHEN'S SONG
2. POLISH ARMY SONGS
3. TRAYB DI KHVALYES (DRIVE YOUR WAVES)
4. WALC FRANÇOIS
5. W POCIĄGU JEST TŁOK (CROWDED TRAIN)
6. KADIMA (FORWARD)

SIDE TWO

7. IN DEM KLEINEM DORF, IN SMILTSCHENZI (IN THE TINY TOWN OF SMILTSCHENZI)
8. TUCHI NAD BUDYSHCHEM (THE CLOUDS GATHERED OVER BUDYSHCHE)
9. STEPAN BLONDIN (STEPAN THE BLOND)
10. PROSCHAI, GOROD NASH RODIMYI (FAREWELL, OUR NATIVE CITY)
11. PŁASZÓW INMATES' SONG
12. TREBLINKA SONG OF HOPE
13. ANI MA'AMIN (I BELIEVE)

