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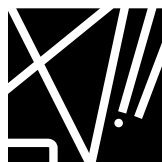


A Selection of Musical Numbers
from the Yiddish Operetta in a
New Piano-Vocal Reconstruction
Created by YIVO

Performed by
Bard Conservatory Graduate
Vocal Arts Program



YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH



Khantshe in Amerike

AN OPERETTA BY JOSEPH RUMSHINSKY

MAY 18, 2026

Sidney Krum Young Artists Concert Series

This event forms part of Carnegie Hall's festival
United in Sound: America at 250

CO-SPONSORED BY

American Society for Jewish Music's Jewish Music Forum

This performance is dedicated to Michael Tilson Thomas z"l and Joshua Robison z"l.

The Sidney Krum Young Artists Concert Series is made possible by a generous gift from the Estate of Sidney Krum.

Performance materials reconstructed by
Ronald Robboy, Max Friedman, and Alex Weiser

Performance materials edited by Ronald Robboy

Performance materials transcribed from archival manuscripts by Max Friedman

Song texts translated and edited by Ronald Robboy, with revisions and co-editing by Dovid Braun

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Program notes by Ronald Robboy

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CONTENTS

PROGRAM NOTES	1
DEDICATION	6
ABOUT THE CREATORS	7
NOTES ON THE RECONSTRUCTION	15
SYNOPSIS	18
LYRICS	21
ABOUT THE RECONSTRUCTION TEAM	40
ABOUT THE PERFORMERS	41
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	44

PROGRAM NOTES

Khantshe in Amerike—the play as well as its songs and their lyrics—were all created in 1912 in time for it to open on December 31 of that year. There is something metaphorical about that, about premiering on New Year’s Eve. Being a show about automobiles, class conflict, women’s rights, and gender fluidity, it was all looking forward, albeit in a comedic way, to how elements of the turbulent twentieth century would play out. The script was written by N. Rakov (1866–1927), a very smart and often very funny playwright. Composer Joseph Rumshinsky (1881–1956) had, the year before, broken through with a series of groundbreaking Yiddish operettas that included *Shir-hashirim* (Song of Songs)—which our same team reconstructed for YIVO in 2023—and he was on his way to utterly dominating American Yiddish musical theater for the remainder of that decade and the next. Lyrics to *Khantshe* were written by Isidore Lillian (1882–1960), a successful yet under-appreciated poet of the Yiddish theater whose supple wit was every bit a match for Rumshinsky’s music.

The show was produced by its star, the actress Bessie Thomashefsky (1873–1962), who more or less reinvented her career with its success. As a teenager, she had married the actor and impresario Boris Thomashefsky (1868–1939). She would remain with him for about twenty-five years, bearing his children and performing in his theaters’ productions as he rose to become a titan of the Yiddish stage. Though she mostly remained in his shadow, she, too, garnered considerable success. She was especially known to her public for her trouser roles and as a comedienne; but within the profession, she was also highly respected by her peers for her skill as a dramatic actress. Through it all, though, she had endured her husband’s compulsive womanizing, to say nothing of his outsized ego. But when he fell seriously in love with a much younger actress—it was no mere fling—Bessie had enough, and in 1911 she left Boris.

After withdrawing from the theater scene for close to a year, she came upon *Khantshe in Amerike*. Though it is not known who first approached whom about it, it made complete sense. Bessie had never worked with Rumshinsky before, but in 1905 she had starred in Rakov’s *Der griner bokher* (The Greenhorn Boy), in which she played a young newsboy. It became a signature role for her, and its signature song—by another under-appreciated pioneer, composer, and conductor Louis Friedsel (c.1863–1923)—was “Ikh blayb a bokher” (I’ll Remain a Boy), for which Isidore Lillian had written the lyrics. So in a sense, *Khantshe* was a sort of sequel to that creative team’s big success of the previous decade. Bessie mounted *Khantshe* at Sarah Adler’s Novelty Theatre, which was not in the heart of the Yiddish theater district on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, but in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Sara Adler (1858–1953)—sometimes her name was written as Sara and sometimes as Sarah, but don’t look for orthographic consistency in this milieu!—was herself a regal actress, who, like Bessie Thomashefsky, had also recently separated from her husband. He was Jacob P. Adler (1855–1926), a superb tragedian, one of the very few Yiddish actors whose stature Boris Thomashefsky unhesitatingly acknowledged as being on a par with his own, and he was Sara Adler’s second husband. She was his third wife. (Among their five children, who all went into theater, was Stella Adler, the storied acting teacher whose studio would come to include Hollywood and Broadway legends such as Marlon Brando, Elaine Stritch, and Robert De Niro, among many others.)

Unlike Bessie Thomashefsky, though, Sara Adler would reconcile with her husband soon enough, but at this point in our story she was separated from him. Bessie and Sara, it should be emphasized, were both highly regarded, even headliners, but each had been in the shadow of the men to whom they were married and in whose theaters they worked.

Now, as middle-aged women who had overnight lost their high-visibility professional homes, both were seemingly on the brink of irrelevance when, suddenly, they had a runaway hit on their hands with *Khantshe*. Bessie was starring in the title role, and Sarah was improbably presiding over a successful theater, which, though on a less-than-glitzy side street across the river in Brooklyn, nonetheless *had her name on it*. Theater ads actually called it that: *Sarah Adler's Novelty Theatre*. (Not to diminish Sara here, but there had actually already been a Lower East Side theater run by a woman, the intense tragedienne Keni Liptzin; and following the success of *Khantshe*, Bessie Thomashefsky, too, would run a theater with her name on it.) All that gossip about marriages and separations may sound like melodrama itself, but it is exquisitely relevant to understanding *Khantshe*, because none of the foregoing was news to the Yiddish theater public, much less to a majority of those attending the show. Certainly a critical mass of them knew these details only too well, and it might well have seemed to them as though Bessie had herself transformed before their very eyes into her angry, wily, rebellious, and militantly feminist protagonist Khantshe, who in turn was exacting revenge for the real-life humiliations the middle-aged actresses Bessie and Sara had suffered.

Khantshe is a working-class young woman whose immigrant parents open the show bickering and criticizing each other in their song "A man, a vayb" (A Husband, a Wife). Their daughter is frustrated by her factory job, not just because of the pay and conditions and limited opportunities, but because she is being harassed by its foreman. She quits and re-invents herself, dressing as a man and hiring herself out to a nouveau-riche immigrant family as their chauffeur. Quickly, gender roles become ambiguous as Khantshe, dressed as a man, flirts with and romances the women—mother and daughter alike—for whom she is now working. She also establishes solidarity with her working-class peers Suzy and Sammy. Suzy is a maidservant at the home of Khantshe's new employer, and Sammy is an elevator boy. By theatrical convention, the

audience understands Suzy and Sammy will become lovers, but in the meantime they share a complicated and erotically charged friendship with Khantshe. Suzy is attracted to the "male" chauffeur, while Sammy is jealous but has figured out that the "chauffeur" is actually a female, and he's attracted to *her!* The third act is taken up by the depiction of a rally for women's rights at which Khantshe, as her female self and not dressed as a chauffeur, is a principal speaker. It is an oversized musical number, consuming an oversized fraction of the score's one hundred-plus pages.

The final number is "Khantshe," in which the show's star sings her own praises. It is a remarkable song, unlike anything else in the operetta or, indeed, anything that had come before in Yiddish theater. In his extraordinary *Lexicon of Yiddish Theater*—six magisterial volumes produced between 1931–1969, printed variously in New York, Warsaw, and Mexico City across the decades, with a seventh volume languishing in galleys at the time of his death—Zalmen Zylbercweig, the twentieth century's foremost chronicler of the Yiddish stage, described *Khantshe in Amerike* as incorporating "American rhythm," as he called it, for the first time in Yiddish music. By "American rhythm," of course, it should be clear that Zylbercweig was referring to the array of American (and now international) musics influenced by Black, that is to say, *African American* musics. That influence can be heard in *Khantshe* not only in the distinctive shuffle of its infectious title song, near the close of the last act, but also in the ebullient choral number "Automobile," whose syncopations are reminiscent of—even if inevitably simpler than—piano rags by Scott Joplin (1868–1917) and other turn-of-the-century Black American composer-performers.

Here, it would be less than honest not to acknowledge the extent to which musics and musical cultures of Black Americans were, not just borrowed, but appropriated by the American commercial popular-music industry. That industry was largely concentrated in New York—though there were certainly other centers, mostly associated with regional

subcultures. The appropriation was historically done in a way that, over and over again, baldly denied Black artists and creators both recognition and compensation. In the years before the First World War, sound recording was still in its infancy—and the word *jazz* had not even appeared on a record yet, not until four years after *Khantshe* debuted—but sheet music was big business, as were white (and some Black) entertainers performing in blackface, caricaturing Black people at the same time that they trivialized and distorted the musics that Black Americans had created. Whether Rumshinsky had seen blackface acts is unknown, though it is worth noting that Bessie Thomashefsky, who came to America at about age ten, did confirm in her memoirs that, growing up in Baltimore, her “greatest pleasure” was to spend every Saturday at a nearby dime museum watching Punch and Judy shows and, in her words, “hearing how Negroes sang” (for which she used a Yiddishized version of the N-word). Nor is there any way of knowing whether Rumshinsky was actually familiar with, for example, any of Scott Joplin’s music. But he well could have, because Joplin’s biggest commercial success, “Maple Leaf Rag,” had already been in print five years when Rumshinsky came to America in 1904, and it would sell more than a million copies. On the strength of that piece, Joplin moved to New York in 1907, five years before *Khantshe* was composed there. That said, it is nearly inconceivable that Rumshinsky could have known Joplin’s *Treemonisha*. It was his second opera, completed the year after Rumshinsky immigrated and then, though still not performed, self-published by Joplin in 1911, the year before Rumshinsky began work on *Khantshe*.

Besides sheet music and vaudeville-style blackface minstrelsy, there were also Broadway shows written by Blacks and with all-Black casts, such as *In Dahomey*, which had music by Will Marion Cook (1869–1944)—who had studied for a time with Antonín Dvořák—and lyrics by the pioneering Black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906). Whether Rumshinsky saw any of those Broadway shows is unknown, though as it happened, *In Dahomey* went on an extended tour in England

in 1903, the year Rumshinsky was there studying before his immigration to America. Whatever the case, it is clear from the music in *Khantshe* that Rumshinsky had, at the very least, been exposed, and *listened*, to commercial popular music whose white (and often Jewish) songwriters had absorbed elements of Black commercial, vernacular, and art musical cultures. It is hard to imagine Rumshinsky being unaware, for instance, of “Alexander’s Ragtime Band,” the song that made Irving Berlin (1888–1989) into a celebrity in 1911. The next year, 1912—when Rumshinsky was composing the music for *Khantshe*—sheet music for “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” sold a million copies. Its ubiquity in mainstream American culture is a given, but we also know from the Yiddish press that the song was well known in at least parts of Yiddish-speaking America. For example, just two weeks before *Khantshe*’s premiere, in a review of violinist Efrem Zimbalist at Carnegie Hall, the editor of a major New York Yiddish daily—his name was George (Getsl) Zelikovitsh and was himself not a musician, though he evidently felt qualified to pass all manner of musical judgments—found reason to rail about how “crude coon garbage” like “Alexander’s Ragtime Band” was entrancing Jewish youth and luring them away, Pied Piper-like, from what he considered good Jewish music.

Whether by “coon” Zelikovitsh was thinking not of Black Americans but of the racist caricature of them by whites in blackface—or whether he could even distinguish between the two—is anybody’s guess. But the ugly history of “coon songs” is in fact the history of America’s racist caricature, appropriation, and degradation of Black music; and there it was, in the Yiddish press, precisely contemporary with *Khantshe in Amerike*.

As one listens to some of the music from *Khantshe*—the title song, as mentioned, and the choral number “Automobile”—it should be clear that, when historian Zylbercweig referred to its “American rhythm,” he was certainly describing that decisive African diasporic influence on American music, writ large, even if he was himself unaware of that implication. (Zylbercweig’s labor in service to Yiddish theater was

heroic, but his understanding of its music left something to be desired.) None of this is to impute any racist intent to Rumshinsky or his music. Nor do we know if he was much more aware than Zylbercweig of how *Khantshe* might have been heard by Black Americans, had they ever had reason or desire, much less the means, to see the show. But neither should we kid ourselves: some of Rumshinsky's music for *Khantshe*, wonderful as it is, made use not only of certain elements of Black American music, but also of caricatures of that music by racist white culture.

The impact of Black music on popular music in the United States was (and remains) profound. At the same time, it is important to remember that Yiddish popular music, evolving principally in the crucible of New York City, was not only deeply influenced by what was around it, but was in turn influencing *its* surroundings. As much as any other of the many strands to be found in American musical life, Yiddish commercial and popular music, beautifully exemplified by *Khantshe in Amerike*, occupied a significant niche on the continuum of subcultural musics that comprised the glorious mosaic—ah, yes, a cliché, but a necessary and uplifting one—that is American musical culture.

“A man, a vayb” (A husband, a wife; or, a man, a woman) is a duet for Khantshe's parents. In Yiddish, *man* can equally mean either “man” or “husband,” and *vayb* can mean either “woman” or “wife.” In this song, the husband and wife are tossing insults back and forth every other beat. But the back and forth—a man, a woman—also foreshadows (1) not only the romantic sparring between the couple Suzy and Sammy on the one hand, and Khantshe and her fiancé Isidore (a non-singing role, hence not appearing in our concert performance) on the other, but also (2) the gender ambiguity of Khantshe, who, installing herself in a male-dominated occupation as a chauffeur, will dress as a man and romance the women she works for.

“Vu iz Khantshe?” (Where is Khantshe?) offers the first musical introduction of Khantshe's personality and character, as she, singing with the show's women's chorus, recounts in bracing minor-key rhythms how she quit her job and told the foreman to go to hell.

“Kishef” (Bewitchment) is a trio in which Khantshe, Sammy, and Suzy, who will themselves become entangled in an unresolved triangle before sorting it all out, sing about the helplessness of those afflicted with love. Its tunes figure prominently in the overture Rumshinsky later confected.

“Oytomobil” (Automobile) is a choral number whose title is self-explanatory and whose energetic syncopations are its most salient feature. In the extant Eastern European version of the score, it is a septet for Khantshe, Sammy, Suzy, and the family who employs them. In the New York score, though, it is just for mixed chorus, which makes more sense as the men and women begin singing in an antiphonal way.

“Ikh hob” (I Have) is Sammy’s big solo turn. It revolves around its punning on the verb *hobn* (to have). Sammy’s boasts feint at meaning possession, but over and over their punchline is that, just as in English, “to have” can also be used to create a past tense. In English, it’s too strained to really work, but Yiddish syntax ripens the pun and makes it much easier to manipulate. Sammy repeatedly begins by claiming he is in possession of material objects, e.g., money, or real estate, or a watch and chain. But the switch comes a line or two later when the main verb appears: that is, he has seen the money (he didn’t *have* it), etc. At the conclusion of each verse, Sammy launches into a sort of faux-cantorial recitative, which would in any event be funny being sung by an elevator boy. But it is made all the more so because of the ironic tension between its severely devotional tone and its mundane lyric.

“Sofrazhet-parad” (Suffragette Parade) is a remarkable tour de force that opens with a Policeman singing, “Make way for the march of the suffragettes!” It shows off Rumshinsky’s considerable choral technique as the mixed chorus sings about the injustices women have faced. But there is also a section where Khantshe takes the rostrum before the chorus returns with an actual march tune whose melody is inflected with the signature augmented second of a liturgical mode as they implore Jewish women to join the movement.

“Akh, vi sheyn!” (O, How Beautiful!) opens the show’s fourth act in an entirely different mood, both musical and political. In a deliberate adoption of German pronunciation, they sing of the beauty of summer and how it is for lovers. A bow to classical music and High Art, the middle section is a waltz with echt Viennese *schwung*.

“Shvim!” (Swim!) is a duet for Suzy and Sammy, in which Suzy, who is afraid of the water, asks him to teach her how to swim. Sammy was played by the actor Sam Kasten, who was a skilled dancer and also the operetta’s choreographer. In the middle of the number, after telling Suzy to watch him and do as he does, he begins dancing a waltz. She accuses him of making fun of her, but by the end, they are singing together like old drinking buddies.

“Khantshe” is one of those creations that makes one wonder, “Where did that come from?” With its cheeky American shuffle and audacious lyric, it became Bessie Thomashefsky’s theme song for this second phase of her career that *Khantshe* opened, in which she would go on to play a series of brassy working-class firebrands for the next fifteen years or so. Although the shuffle is not actually written into the vocal line of the song’s refrain the way it is in the verse, it still seems impossible to avoid. That’s Khantshe for you!

DEDICATION

This performance is dedicated to Michael Tilson Thomas z"l and Joshua Robison z"l.

Khantshe in Amerike and its music occupied a semi-mythical place for Michael Tilson Thomas z"l. His grandmother Bessie Thomashefsky had originated the role of Khantshe, and the show's title song "became Bessie's signature tune," as MTT explained in *The Thomashefskys*, his homage to his grandparents and their Yiddish theater legacy. It was played, he continued, "as she walked into restaurants and benefits, and later by me as she made her triumphant entrance into our living room." It is no surprise, then, that its reconstruction became a high priority for MTT as his Thomashefsky Project got underway at the end of the 1990s, not so long after he'd settled into what would become his exceptional tenure at the San Francisco Symphony.

It was YIVO's longtime music archivist, Chana Mlotek z"l, who located the *Khantshe* material—the scores and orchestra parts—gathered in a box that was mysteriously labeled "Supplement" and set aside on a shelf in the Archives as though it had been waiting precisely for MTT after so many years. Chana, dear Chana, was very excited—no, actually triumphant but disarmingly so—when she called that morning in 1999 to tell me she'd found the box and what was in it. I was the Thomashefsky Project's researcher, and at that point—we'd begun the research almost exactly a year earlier—was still scoping out what would be feasible, that is: what could be reconstructed in a convincing way?

The overture, simply put, is a potpourri of the tunes to the songs from the show, and the first thing I did was take the overture's orchestra parts and assemble them into a full score to send to MTT. It wasn't long before I received an excited phone call from him. (Though we had been meeting in person periodically, he only otherwise communicated with me, if at all, routed through his layers of assistants, so this tells you

something extraordinary had happened.) He sounded like a schoolboy, and no wonder. This new find must have taken him back to his childhood, to memories of his grandmother and their music-making together. For the Project, we also went on to reconstruct the title song, which, along with the overture, became centerpieces in the eventual video production of *The Thomashefskys*. "Khantshe," the title song, may have been a signature for Bessie, but it was clearly not the only song from the show that MTT had internalized as a child. It was completely clear to me, as I watched him conducting the overture, that he was somehow on intimate terms with, for example, the strains of the Suffragettes' march. But most interesting were the marginalia in MTT's personal copy—which I had never seen until recently, once he'd gifted YIVO his papers from the Thomashefsky Project—of the translation the Project had commissioned of a *Khantshe* script. The script had been published in Poland early on, but without the knowledge or authorization of playwright Rakov or lyricist Isidore Lillian. For the song "Ikh hob," it included only the words to the first verse. Alongside it, though, in his copy of the translation, MTT had penciled in the words, in Yiddish—which he did not really speak—of another verse, which had evidently been floating around in his subconscious for decades, now unleashed by the flood of memories of his grandmother Bessie and her singing, all unlocked by *Khantshe in Amerike*.

— Ron Robboy

ABOUT THE CREATORS

Joseph M. Rumshinsky (1881–1956) came to be called, during his lifetime, the dean of Yiddish theater composers. Born in Vilna, as a young boy he became a *meshoyrer*, a synagogue choirboy, where he was known as Yoshke the *notn-freser*, that is, he devoured the scores. Soon enough, he was conducting choirs, and before he was twenty had already begun conducting music for theaters on the road. In 1899, he helped found Hazomir, the Jewish choral society in Łódź, Poland, which he conducted for over three years, studying and performing the classic oratorio literature of Handel, Haydn, and Mendelssohn. To avoid military conscription, though, he fled the Russian Empire in 1903 and went to London. There, he has recounted, he took private lessons from Ebenezer Prout, an esteemed figure in later Victorian musical culture and an authority on oratorios, which were held in particularly lofty regard in Victorian- and Edwardian-era Britain.

Rumshinsky arrived in New York in July of 1904 and promptly began building a career. He taught piano lessons; made sheet music arrangements of Yiddish songs, which included some of his own; and found work as a conductor of theater orchestras, where he occasionally wrote some of the music as needed. Within a few months, he was conducting in the pit for a Yiddish troupe in Boston, where he fell in love with the leading lady, Sabina Lakser (1871–1927). She was a decade or more older than he and had been a child actor in Romania at the dawn of professional Yiddish theater. Rumshinsky married her there at the theater in Boston before the year was out. “At the close of the play, the audience was invited to stay and witness the ceremony,” ran a notice in the *Boston Globe*.

In New York again, he resumed teaching piano and arranging sheet music until he finally broke into the theater scene, conducting and composing. In the 1908–1909 season, he became what we might call music director, conducting and

writing music, at one of the large houses on the Bowery that had been presenting Yiddish theater for a generation. One of its managers that season was the distinguished actor Jacob P. Adler (1855–1926), who took a liking to Rumshinsky, and the next season took him along as his music director on an extended tour. Returning to New York, Adler took over the Thalia Theatre for two seasons, and it was there that Rumshinsky truly came into his own as a composer, writing three operettas in quick succession with librettist Anshel Shor (1871–1942) over the course of 1911. The first, in the spring, was the comedy *Dos meyd fun der vest* (*The Girl from the West*), which in his memoirs Rumshinsky declared—at least in retrospect—to have been Yiddish theater’s “first modern musical comedy.” The title of the show baldly capitalized on the media fanfare that three months earlier had surrounded the world premiere, at New York’s Metropolitan Opera, of Puccini’s *La fanciulla del West* (*The Girl of the West*). Puccini had in turn based his opera on *The Girl of the Golden West*, a successful Broadway stage play of 1905 by writer-producer-director David Belasco (1853–1931), the San Francisco-born Sephardic Jew whose turn-of-the-century play *Madame Butterfly* had served as an earlier inspiration for Puccini.

Rumshinsky and Shor had taken on *Dos meyd fun der vest* as a sort of guerrilla operation—though staged in Jacob P. Adler’s theater, it was not one of Adler’s projects, and he was not directly involved—but after its windfall success, the pair created the romantic *Shir-hashirim* (*The Song of Songs*) for the opening of the coming fall season. Rumshinsky declared it to have been the first modern operetta on the Yiddish stage. If *Dos meyd fun der vest* was an American musical comedy through and through—a Jewish widow from Texas goes to New York to find a groom, but the daughter she brings along creates complications—*Shir-hashirim* was European in conception, requiring voices suitable to a plot centering around

a (fictional) composer's new opera. On the heels of its great success, and as winter and 1912 approached, the same team wrote another well-received comedy, *Vayber* (Women). The three back-to-back hits, all in the space of less than a year, established Rumshinsky as a leading composer.

Rumshinsky now began working on his own, writing shows playing in various theaters, and it was not long before *Khantshe in Amerike*, written for Bessie Thomashefsky (1873–1962), became his biggest hit yet. In 1916, her estranged husband, Boris Thomashefsky (1868–1939), lured Rumshinsky to his theater by agreeing to expand the orchestra, enlarging the string section and adding oboe, bassoon, French horns, harp, and timpani to what had until then been Yiddish theater's routinely meager pit ensemble. Rumshinsky remained with Thomashefsky for three seasons, writing landmark Yiddish operettas such as *Dos tsebrokhene fidele* (The Broken Violin) and *Di khaznte* (The Cantor's Wife), works in which timbre and orchestral color became new compositional elements.

In the 1919–1920 season, Rumshinsky collaborated with the writer and editor Gershom Bader, himself a learned descendant of rabbis, on *Dem rebns nign* (The Rabbi's Melody), a sympathetic and multi-dimensional portrait of Hasidic life and its encounter with modernity. It was a sensation, making it possible for Rumshinsky, a "mere" composer, to become a marquee attraction, his name on a par with the celebrity actors appearing in shows. He wrote a string of thoroughly competent and ingratiating operettas, felicitously exemplified by *Di goldene kale* (The Golden Bride) of 1923, an operetta that was superbly reconstructed by Michael Ochs, a former Harvard music librarian, and mounted in New York a decade ago by the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene.

It is true enough that, by 1923, Rumshinsky was doing extremely well. But at the end of that year, a young singer-actress-comedienne named Molly Picon (1898–1992) appeared in New York as a newcomer. She had just returned from Europe, where she had spent three years polishing her Yiddish, which, many might be surprised to know, had not been her

first language. Nonetheless, her husband-manager Jacob Kalich persuaded one of Second Avenue's biggest houses into presenting *Yankele*, a show Picon and Kalich been doing in Austria and Poland. Rumshinsky wrote new music for it, and, as they say, a star was born—Picon, yes, but also a new, supercharged Rumshinsky.

The two promptly collaborated on another musical, this time with Picon writing all the lyrics. From that moment, it seemed, they could do no wrong. With Kalich, the three formed a partnership and sailed through the remainder of the 1920s with Rumshinsky writing the music, Picon starring (and writing lyrics), and Kalich producing and directing one uncontested triumph after another. Some of their many shows included *Dos tsigayner meyd* (The Gypsy Girl) in the 1924–25 season; *Molly Dolly* and *Katinka* in 1925–26; *Dos mamele* (The Little Mother) in 1926–27; *Reyzele* and *Oy, iz dos a meyd* (Oh, What a Girl!) in 1927–28; *Dos tsirkus meyd* (The Circus Girl) and *Hello Molly* in 1928–29; and *Dos meyd fun amol* (The Girl of Yesterday) in 1930–31, their last season together.

The Depression years hit Yiddish theater hard in New York, not only because audiences had less money to spend, but also because in the 1920s, with America's turn to isolationism and xenophobia in the wake of the First World War and the Russian Revolution, a sudden halt had been imposed on immigration. With no stream of Yiddish-speaking immigrants replenishing the audience pool, the public for Yiddish theater began contracting markedly. Added to that was a move, not just to the outer boroughs of New York City, but to the suburbs and beyond, all at the same time that a new generation was abandoning Yiddish altogether in favor of English. The Lower East Side of Manhattan had been one of the most densely populated urban centers in the world, but it now began losing its constituency for Yiddish theater. Gone were the enlarged orchestras, and gone was the alchemy between Rumshinsky and Picon. In the fall of 1935, though, Rumshinsky teamed up with the wonderful comic actor Menasha Skulnik (1892–1970), opening with the comedy *Fishl der gerotener* (Fishl

the Success). Rumshinsky, now well into his fifties, was at the height of his expressive powers. And New York Yiddish theater music, that is to say, the style so influenced by American popular music—but at the same time more self-consciously and, perhaps surprisingly, more skillfully *Jewish* in its deployment of modal and melodic elements—was also in its mature phase. Now with younger composers added to the mix, epitomized by Alexander Olshanetsky (1892–1946), Sholom Secunda (1894–1974), and Abraham Ellstein (1907–1963), Yiddish theater composers were cross-fertilizing each other’s work, and the 1930s became a kind of zenith in the development of that mature New York Yiddish style. In 1938, Rumshinsky was still writing for Menasha Skulnik, and it was for a Skulnik show called *Der kluger nar* (The Wise Fool) that he created perhaps his most enduring song, “Sheyn vi di levone” (Beautiful as the Moon). It had a particularly beautiful lyric by the versatile Chaim Tauber (1901–1972), a singer and actor who was also a playwright and one of Yiddish theater’s most skillful lyricists.

<i>Sheyn vi di levone,</i>	Beautiful as the moon,
<i>likhtik vi di shtern,</i>	luminous as the stars,
<i>fun himl a matone</i>	as a gift from heaven
<i>bistu mir tsugeshiht.</i>	you were sent to me.

Rumshinsky continued writing operettas through the 1940s and even into the early 1950s, though audiences continued shrinking and opportunities for performances were dwindling. Besides the theater, though, throughout his career Rumshinsky also wrote liturgical music in Hebrew as well as stand-alone Yiddish songs inspired by religious tradition. In 1949, he completed a full-length Hebrew-libretto opera, *Ruth*, but his efforts to have it performed were never successful.

In 1927 his wife, Sabina, died of cancer, but Rumshinsky did not remain a widower for long. Within two months, he married Sabina’s niece, Frieda, who had been living with her aunt and uncle ever since they brought her to America. Early in his first marriage, though, Joseph and Sabina had a son,

Murray Rumshinsky (1907–1998), who became a composer and arranger with a career not only in what remained of Yiddish theater, but also in the broader American musical scene as well, where he used the name Murray Rumsey. In 1974, it was Murray who presented his father’s extensive papers—including a great many manuscript scores—to UCLA, where they continue to offer an invaluable resource that complements the extensive Rumshinsky material held by the YIVO Institute.

Isidore Lillian (1882–1960) was born to a poor family in Rzeszów, an old Polish city midway between Cracow (now Kraków, Poland) and Lemberg (now Lviv, Ukraine) that, by the time of Lillian’s birth, lay on the east-west rail line that had opened across the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s remote northeastern province of Galicia. When Lillian was ten, though, his parents made their way with him to America, to New York City, where he spent the rest of his life and built a career as a character actor, playwright, and songwriter.

Having immigrated at only ten, of course, his adult command of English would become thorough, and as can be heard in *Khantshe in Amerike*, his lyrics would be filled with witty multilingualisms. This is perhaps epitomized by the hook in “Dir a nikl, mir a nikl,” a song he would write with Rumshinsky for the 1935 comedy *Fishl der gerotener* (Fishl the Success), in which the beloved comedy star Menasha Skulnik (1892–1970) played a streetcar conductor who decides to split the fares he takes in fifty-fifty with the trolley company.

<i>Dir a nikl, oy, oy, oy,</i>	A nickel for you, oy, oy, oy,
<i>Mir a nikl, oy, oy, oy,</i>	A nickel for me, oy, oy, oy,
<i>Khotse sheli khotse shelokh.</i>	Half is mine, half is yours.

Mir and *dir* and *oy, oy, oy* are all real Yiddish—especially *oy, oy, oy*—but *nikl* is just plain American English, while the final

phrase, *khotse sheli khotse shelokh*, is an expression Yiddish speakers use that is taken from pure Hebrew and sounds borrowed from a Talmudic discussion.

By sixteen, Lillian was already active in Yiddish dramatic clubs, and soon after he was working—both as an actor and as a writer, not only of the sketches and one-act plays he appeared in, but also of original songs for them, both words and music—in the many vaudeville houses and music halls scattered across the Lower East Side, Brooklyn’s Brownsville, and the Bronx. The bigger houses, especially in the growing Second Avenue theater district, were the ones playing what was considered real theater—four- and five-act works—and it took some years before Lillian broke through writing plays for those stages. By 1920, though, his *Dos shtif-kind fun der velt* (The World’s Stepchild) was playing with an impressive cast in the one of the largest houses on Second Avenue. It became his most successful play, described in publicity variously as a “mirror of Jewish exilic wandering” that was both a “symbolic play” and an “allegorical operetta.” With twenty musical numbers by Rumshinsky, it remained a New York repertoire item through the 1920s and into the ‘30s.

Meanwhile in the ‘20s, Lillian took over direction of the Lyric Theatre, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. But he never quit turning out his own creative work, and in 1934 the Yiddish theater’s preeminent chronicler, Zalmen Zylbercweig (1894–1972), could spend four oversize columns of his magisterial *Lexicon of the Yiddish Theater* (6 vols., 1931–69) listing, in granular detail, one production after another of plays written by Lillian, dozens of them, but only to conclude with the deflating observation that *not one of them* had ever been published! From today’s perspective, it would seem at least as appropriate to list—if not in lieu of all those plays, then maybe at least in *addition* to them—as many of the song lyrics Isidore Lillian wrote as can be established. It would be a large number, certainly in the thousands, and identifying them all would be daunting, to say the least. Many that he wrote were for songs in his own plays, as mentioned, but a

large number—of which we have probably only scratched the surface—were for songs written by others, and for shows other than Lillian’s.

As early as 1918, what appears to be the first significant article about Lillian appeared, “*A liriker fun yidishn teater*” (A lyricist of the Yiddish theater). It appeared in *Der tog*, the most literary of the dailies. Though unsigned, it was probably by the *Tog*’s editor, William Edlin (1878–1947), who before he became that paper’s editor, and in addition to having been a founder of the Arbeter Ring (or Workmen’s Circle, now called the Workers Circle), had been well known for his writing on music and theater. At more than 1,500 words, the piece placed Lillian in the company of, and on a par with, the three other leading Yiddish popular song lyricists of those first two decades of twentieth-century Yiddish America: the prolific Solomon Smulewitz (1868–1943), whose “*A brivele der mamen*” (A Little Letter to Mother)—for which he also wrote the music—became almost a theme song for the immigrant experience; Louis Gilrod (1879–1930), whose lyrics, such as those for “*Dos pintele yid*” (The Essential Spark of Jewishness) were ubiquitous in New York Yiddish theaters; and David Meyerowitz (1867–1943), who also wrote his own music—his songs, such as “*Vos iz geven iz geven un nito*” (What Used to Be, Used to Be, and Is Gone), remain beautifully sentimental in the best sense—and he was also known for his many collaborations with Gilrod. Edlin’s long article concluded by printing extensive Lillian lyrics to three different songs, including all three complicated verses of “*Ikh hob*” from *Khantshe in Amerike*.

Across some three decades or more, Lillian wrote the words for many additional well-known Rumshinsky songs. In 1916, for example, for the composer’s innovative score to *Dos tsebrokhene fidele* (The Broken Violin) at Boris Thomashefsky’s theater, Lillian’s words to the song-and-dance number “*Ikh bin an aktyor*” (I Am an Actor) are filled with witty rhymes—e.g., *yidische harts* (Jewish heart) rhymes with *pinokl-kards* (pinochle cards)—and with humorous references to roles the song’s fictitious actor had played in actual stage

works the audience was familiar with. But the Oscar for best rhyme-inside-an-allusion in a song goes to this gem!

Ikh shpil Otela I play Othello
mit an ombrela with an umbrella

A very abbreviated list of other Lillian-Rumshinsky collaborations could include:

“In a kleyn shtibele” (In a Small Cottage; from *Der rebe hot heysn freylekh zayn* [1921], in which Paul Muni, though not its star, had a role in this show before leaving the Yiddish stage for Broadway and Hollywood)

“Hot Dogs” (from *Der kleyner mazek* [1926], starring Molly Picon)

“Es tsit, es brit” (It Tugs, It Burns; from *The Radio Girl* [1929], also starring Picon)

“Shloymele Malkele” (from *Dos galitsyaner rebele* [1937], starring Menasha Skulnik)

Lillian’s collaborations were by no means limited to those with Rumshinsky, though. Early on, before Rumshinsky had established any kind of name for himself, Lillian was already writing lyrics for others (and for his own songs). In 1905, for example, he wrote the words to “Ikh blayb a bokher” (I’ll Remain a Boy), a foundational song in American Yiddish theater by the now under-appreciated composer Louis Friedsel (c.1863–1923). It was written for N. Rakov’s play *Der griner bokher* (The Greenhorn Boy), starring Bessie Thomashefsky in one of her most famous trouser roles, all of which, not incidentally, anticipates her work in Rakov’s *Khantshe in Amerike* by nearly a decade. (And musically speaking, it should be said, Friedsel’s raggy syncopations in “Ikh blayb a bokher” also appear to have anticipated those of Rumshinsky’s “Ikh bin an

aktyor,” to say nothing of the American rhythms in *Khantshe*.) Later in his career, Lillian went on to collaborate with some next-generation composers, including Alexander Olshanetsky (1892–1946) and Ilia Trilling (1895–1945). And though so much of his songwriting work is filled with wit and humor, Lillian’s late-1940s collaboration with Abraham Ellstein (1907–1963) on the tour de force “Vos iz gevorn fun mayn shtetele” (What’s Become of My Little Shtetl), which is ostensibly written as an individual’s lament, but clearly represents a collective *cri de cœur* in the wake of the Holocaust and is anything but funny.

After Lillian’s death, in two appreciations written not by critics but by theater professionals who had worked with him—one by Menasha Skulnik and the other by playwright Israel Rosenberg (1895–1963)—what both chose to focus upon was Lillian’s talent as a lyricist *non-pareil*, just as Edlin had years before. Skulnik, whose remarks about Lillian appeared midway through an installment of his serialized memoirs, said that rather than talking about Lillian’s many plays, he wanted to speak of “Lillian the poet” whose lyrics graced the Yiddish stage. Skulnik fondly recalled that, at a small Catskills hotel operated at one time by the writer Moyshe Nadir (1885–1943), writers such as the poets Moyshe-Leyb Halpern (1886–1932) and Zishe Weinper (c.1893–1957) would gather, along with poet-critic Noyekh Shteynberg (1889–1957) and, among others, poet Yosel Cutler (1896–1935) and artist Zuni Maud (1891–1956) with their antic and left-wing expressionist marionette theater—these were all heavy hitters among the Yiddish literary intelligentsia—and they would marvel at Lillian’s lyrics that Skulnik would sing to them. And in particular, poet Avrom Reyzen (1876–1953)—an *éminence gris* even among this gifted circle—loved the “rhythm and sound,” Skulnik said, of a Lillian rhyme about a landlord:

Punkt vi afn oyg a gershtn, Just like a stye (*gershtn*) on the eye,
vakst er oys yedn ershtn. he looms up every first (*ershtn*).

The simile, and its rhyme, are beyond inspired, the “first” being

the first of every month, of course, when rent is due. Well, there is nothing like explaining a joke to kill it. But it should be evident that Lillian's economy and eye for the bon mot were superb.

Skulnik's remarks about Lillian comprised only a couple of paragraphs within a longer piece, and it appeared several years after Lillian was gone. But Rosenberg's appeared only a few days after Lillian's death and offered very much the eulogy that was needed. In the course of the piece, Rosenberg had reason to speak quite a bit about Skulnik, and how close the two had been when Lillian was writing lyrics for a string of Skulnik's hit shows. When Skulnik abandoned Yiddish theater, however, at the end of the 1940s in favor of the English-language stage and television, it left Lillian cast adrift and without work, though Skulnik did remain an important friend, sending Lillian the occasional check or managing to set him up writing a song or two for Borscht Circuit comics. Rosenberg also spoke about Jacob Jacobs (1890–1977), another lyricist, who was a bit younger than Lillian but in terms of endless wit and invention, to say nothing of sheer output, was Lillian's only real peer in the late Second Avenue style. (Two of the most famous songs in the Yiddish theater canon, "Belz, mayn shtetele Belz" and "Bay mir bistu sheyn," came from Jacobs's pen.) He was also similar to Lillian in having been an actor and playwright. However constant a friend Menasha Skulnik may have been—notwithstanding having abandoned Yiddish theater, that is—it was Jacob Jacobs who remained closest and most loyal to Lillian. For, to make matters worse, the latter was losing his eyesight during this painful descent through the 1950s, and the time came when, living in penury, he went blind altogether. It was only through the combined efforts of the Yiddish Theatrical Alliance and the Hebrew Actors' Union that Lillian was placed in the Jewish Home for the Blind, in Yonkers, New York, where it was his dear friend Jacob Jacobs who came often to visit.

In 1906, Lillian had married an actress, Annie Block (or Blak, c.1889–1975), who continued working as Annie Lillian

even after they separated. The 1920 Census showed them living in her parents' apartment. But by that of 1930, Isidore was living alone, as he would seemingly do for the rest of his life. In the 1910 Census, he gave his profession as Actor; and in 1920 he called it Performer. In 1930, evidently still basking in the acclaim for his *Shtif-kind fun der velt*, he was an Actor & Playwright; but in 1940, working for the W.P.A., he was back to being only an Actor. It was not until the 1950 Census, which appears to be the last he responded to, that Isidore Lillian would declare his profession, for the first and only time, as solely that of Lyric Writer.

N. Rakov (1866–1927) used only his first initial professionally. His birth name was actually Nekhemye (Nehemiah), but on English-language legal documents from his adult years his name appears as Nahum, and he was Nokhem to those who knew him. He was born near Vilna, where his father was the head bookkeeper for a printing and publishing house. It was not just any publisher, though, but the Press of the Widow and Brothers Romm. The twenty-five-volume Romm edition of the Babylonian Talmud—fastidious, elegant, and a typographic wonder with its generations of commentaries orbiting the received text—was the most celebrated of its time and, still today, remains a standard in many quarters. For all that, Nokhem's education became secular. He attended a Russian school and then a technical institute, though after finding that too difficult he enrolled in a gymnasium. By 1885, however, with the political situation in the Russian Empire becoming ever more tenuous, he abandoned school and left for Germany, then Copenhagen, and in 1887 settled in London, where he married in 1894 and, as Nahum Rackow, became naturalized in 1898.

With the Tsar's 1883 prohibition of Yiddish theater in Russia, London had quickly formed as a new center for the banned

actors—becoming a transitional destination for Jacob P. Adler (1855–1926) and many others before they came to America—and Rakov found a niche there as a prompter. With repertoire lacking, though, he turned increasingly to playwriting to fill the void. One of his early efforts, remarkably, was a Yiddish translation of *Halka*, the opera by Stanisław Moniuszko (1819–1872) that, since its first Warsaw performance of 1858, had quickly become universally recognized as *the* Polish national opera. For Rakov’s translation, though, most of the music was written anew by the conductor Ferdinand Shtoyb (1862–1932), who had been a fixture in London Yiddish theater from its earliest days. (Shtoyb remained a valuable source for much of what we now know about that early scene in London.) In the 1890s, we are told, after the appearance of Zola’s famous “J’Accuse” during the Dreyfus trial, Rakov’s play *Kapitan Dreyfus, oder, Emil Zola* reportedly helped reinvigorate Yiddish theater in London.

It was around 1902 that Rakov then came to America, where he set his sights upon becoming a playwright, though he apparently also worked as a prompter when he had to. (One source says that for a time he was working in that capacity for Anshel Shor at the Arch Street Theatre in Philadelphia.) But after a false start or two as a playwright, he achieved success in 1903 with his operetta treatment of *Romeo and Juliet*—which Boris Thomashefsky would subsequently stage, re-titled with typical Thomashefskian grandiosity as *The Oath on the Torah; or, the Jewish Romeo and Juliet*—and *Der batlen* (The Idler), which proved an unqualified success, becoming what historian Zylbercweig called “one of the most popular plays in the Yiddish theater repertory, performed internationally by every popular [professional] actor as well as by amateur groups.”

In 1904, Rakov wrote *Di grine moyd* (The Green Maiden), with “green” meaning recently arrived in America and thus inexperienced and naive. Based on an English-language melodrama, *Rachel Goldstein*—whose author’s name is now evidently lost to history—*Di grine moyd* touched off a cascade of similarly named plays by Rakov, almost all produced by

Boris Thomashefsky, for what Bessie Thomashefsky called their Green Season: *The Green Boy* (*Der griner bokher*), of course, but also *The Green Actor*, *The Green Children*; and *The Green Young Wife, or, the Jewish Yankee Doodle*, whose story was borrowed from *Yekl the Yankee*, an English-language novella by the longtime editor of the Yiddish daily *Forward*, Abraham Cahan (1860–1951). (Many will remember that Cahan’s *Yekl* would also inspire Joan Micklin Silver’s 1975 evocative film *Hester Street*.)

Rakov had more or less arrived now, writing for some of Yiddish theater’s biggest stars, including not only the Thomashefskys, but Jacob P. Adler and the intense tragedienne Keni Liptzin (c.1856–1918). *Khantshe in Amerike* premiered on the evening of December 31, 1912, becoming an enormous hit, and 1913 saw a succession of plays from Rakov that would be interesting if for nothing else than their titles: *Di yidishe melukhe* (The Jewish State); *Der bigamist* (The Bigamist); *Shprintse in kuni ayland* (Shprintze in Coney Island); *Der politishn, oder, a bisele glik* (The Politician; or, a Little Luck); and *Der filantrop* (The Philanthropist), among others. To open the 1914–1915 season, Rakov wrote the comedy *Di vaybershe melukhe* (The Women’s Kingdom), again with music by Rumshinsky and again starring Bessie Thomashefsky, who was again dressed as a man and behaving provocatively. At least one paper, the *Varhayt*, remarked that it was cut from the same cloth as *Khantshe*. But no matter, audiences still came to see it. In 1916, Rakov wrote again for Bessie Thomashefsky, *Farbotene frukht* (Forbidden Fruit); and then he wrote *Hello Nyu-York* for Boris Thomashefsky. But more and more it appears he was writing for somewhat lesser producers and stars, and often in Brooklyn or Harlem rather than the busy Lower East Side...though not always. In 1921, his *Hot khasene* (Get Married) did appear on Second Avenue, with music by Rumshinsky again; and so did his *Mendel in Japan* in 1924, with Aaron Lebedev and music by Peretz Sandler. The following year his *A milyoner af tsores* (A Millionaire on Hard Times) was staged by the wonderful Ludwig Satz, who also wrote the songs

for it. Nonetheless, Rakov's career was clearly winding down.

While he wrote some very clever comedies, he also wrote many melodramas. Some commentators thought of Rakov's work, if not necessarily as outright *shund* (trash)—the lightweight fare held in contempt by intellectuals—then at least as adjacent to it. The astute Vilna literary historian Zalmen Reyzen (1887–c.1940), who was a brother of poet Avrom Reyzen (1876–1953), considered Rakov to occupy a sort of middle ground between the *shund* of writers like Joseph Lateiner (1853–1935) on the one hand—with plots abounding in implausible coincidences, with depthless characterizations and unmotivated musical numbers that did nothing to advance those plots or illuminate the characters—and on the other, the serious repertory advocated by Jacob Gordin (1853–1909). Gordin was the great reformer of Yiddish theater—his ideas and works were the subject of vigorous polemics—whose problem plays dealt with psychological and sexual conflicts, among other things. Neither here nor there, Rakov somehow remained above the fray.

While still in London before coming to America, Rakov had, as mentioned, gotten married. It was to a British woman who, various sources say, was not Jewish. Perhaps it is true she was not—perhaps her mother had not been, or perhaps the daughter had converted—but her name was Esther Lippman, which sounds distinctly Jewish. So the circumstances appear to have been more nuanced, shall we say, than those of a straightforward intermarriage, but Nokhem and Esther were nevertheless said to have been socially set apart from the Yiddish theater community. Nonetheless, Rakov's nimble intelligence was widely recognized, and he commanded an undeniable respect despite some inevitable weaknesses. He was described by Zalmen Reyzen, for instance, as "a quiet and unassuming man, but an awful drunkard." Near the end of his life, Rakov and his wife, who had been living together in America for a quarter century, returned to England to visit. Their youngest child, Walter, had been born in America; but they had two older sons, Stanley and Alexander, who were

born there in England and, now as adults, were serving in the Royal Air Force. That was a data point you probably had not expected to read just then. Having two sons in the RAF was one more way, perhaps, in which Rakov was indeed set apart from what we may think of as the typical New York Yiddish playwright, whatever that might have possibly been. Or at least a typical one occupying a middle ground between the high-brow intelligentsia and the wildly successful writers of trash.

NOTES ON THE RECONSTRUCTION

This reconstruction mainly relied on two sets of musical manuscripts, one from America and the other from Eastern Europe, that are all held by the YIVO Archives. The American group consisted of two so-called Direction scores as well as a piano reduction, the latter being a score in which all the notes sung by the vocalists and all those played by the orchestra are compressed together into an arrangement that a single pianist can play. A reduction cannot convey the colors of the orchestration—or the singers' lyrics, of course—but it does provide an outline of the melodies and their accompaniments along with, crucially, the bass lines and harmonizations. Direction scores, on the other hand, which were the norm in a Yiddish theater orchestra pit, were for a conductor's use. They mostly only have the melodic lines along with the lyrics—all the lyrics when we are lucky, most when a little less so, but sometimes only a part of them—along with the melodic lines. Most Direction scores also had mostly complete choral cues, along with some occasional cues for harmonizations, orchestrations, and some dialog, though the dialog, if present at all, tended to be minimal. One of the American Direction scores for *Khantshe* is a messy manuscript that originated in New York, prepared possibly by Rumshinsky himself, or if not, very likely under his direct supervision. It was seemingly created not long after the show opened, with cues naming cast members rather than the characters they played. It is held in the Sholem Perlmutter Collection of the YIVO Archives. (Sholem Perlmutter [1884–1954] was a playwright, prompter, historian, and commentator on Yiddish theater

whose collection of related materials occupy an astonishing 114 linear feet on YIVO's shelves.) The other appears to have been copied directly from the messy one, but in a meticulous hand by David Hirsch (1870–1934), a Yiddish theater composer and conductor who came to America in 1904 and ended up operating a music store in Chicago. (YIVO's David Hirsch Collection includes a large number of his immaculately copied scores.) We relied on these two mutually corroborating Direction scores as the main source for the vocal lines in this reconstruction. The piano reduction was created by Rumshinsky himself in 1916, and our reconstruction's piano part is taken almost entirely from that. Additionally, along with the messy New York Direction score and associated piano reduction are a set of pit orchestra parts that correspond very closely to the Direction score. They allowed us to better understand the character of the music, and also helped to confirm harmonizations and to correct occasional obvious errors or inconsistencies in the piano reduction. Though the piano reduction's writing is very simple and bare-bones, we opted not to expand on it except in a limited way, such as for the very few times we felt it missed something crucial from the orchestration, such as the occasional instrumental fills that typically punctuated the vocal phrases.

The second group of materials originated in Eastern Europe, where *Khantshe* had almost immediately become a big hit just before the First World War.¹ (The actress Clara Young [d.1952] had enormous success touring Eastern Europe with the show; a printed program for *Khantshe* found in YIVO's Vilna Archive

¹ This material is now in the music collection of YIVO's Vilna Archive, comprising items collected by the Esther-Rachel Kaminska Museum, which had been devoted to Yiddish theater. In 1927, that collection was given to the YIVO Institute at its then headquarters in Vilna (then in Poland, now Vilnius, Lithuania). YIVO was to be seized by the Nazis, who destroyed much of what they confiscated, but a part of their plunder was warehoused and, in 1947, miraculously rescued from oblivion when occupying U.S. forces discovered the large Vilna archival cache at the Offenbach Depot—the collection site in West Germany for a vast quantity of looted books and archival material that had been recovered—and it was ultimately shipped to YIVO's new headquarters in New York.

shows she was already doing so as early as May 1913, only months after Bessie Thomashefsky had originated the role in New York.) The Eastern European scores are centered around an arrangement by Yitskhok Shlosberg (1877–1930), who, in addition to being that era’s preeminent Yiddish theater conductor in Warsaw, was also what we might call the music director at the Tłomackie Street Great Synagogue, where the great Gershon Sirota (1874–1943) was the cantor. (Shlosberg composed the famous *Retsei* that Sirota recorded a number of times.) In an appreciation after Shlosberg died, Rumshinsky, who had known him when both were choirboys in Vilna, wrote that Shlosberg spent “more time *arranging* an operetta than a composer in America would *composing* it.” There are several Direction scores for the Shlosberg arrangement, one of which was copied particularly well; and there are several sets of orchestra parts. Shlosberg’s arrangement was very useful, but it often differs from the New York score, omitting some numbers and including others that were probably not by Rumshinsky. Even in the numbers written by Rumshinsky, his harmonies were often replaced with European sonorities, and the many Americanisms with which Isidore Lillian salted the lyrics were replaced with Yiddish that would be understood in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, the European scores provided invaluable corroboration of many details, helped us triangulate a multitude of ambiguities we encountered, and built our confidence in the choices we did make.

As for Lillian’s lyrics, the most reliable source for corroborating and augmenting what was in the American Direction scores was the sheet music published in New York in 1913, though, alas, it included only four of the numbers.² A complete libretto of Rakov’s play, which printed many of Lillian’s lyrics, was published in Warsaw in the Hebrew year 5674 (i.e., as early

as late 1913, but more likely in 1914). It has many of the lyrics but, like the Shlosberg arrangement, alters all the Americanisms and makes many other changes—it was published without the authors’ knowledge or permission—changes that do not always correspond to what is found in the American Direction scores. There is also a hectograph (an early duplication process) of an undated typewritten complete script that, though of unknown origin, ultimately belonged to the celebrated performer and writer Molly Picon and is found among her papers held by the American Jewish Historical Society. (Like YIVO, it is based at the Center for Jewish History in New York City.) While the typescript’s dialog is filled with English, its song lyrics correspond much more closely to those in the New York Direction score than did those in the Warsaw script. YIVO also holds a manuscript of the complete libretto created, by mid-1913, by or for Nahum Lipovski (1874–1928), an altogether interesting playwright, director, impresario, and theater founder in Vilna. Remarkably, it too has a great deal of English in it, suggesting that whoever prepared it must have had access to an American script. It has indications for exactly where the various musical numbers occur in the play’s action, but unfortunately does not then include the lyrics themselves.

2 One of those four selections, “Weh dir kind fin Armuth” [*Vey dir kind fun armut*; Woe to You, Child of Poverty], does not appear in any of the archival musical scores. Though one of the scripts (Lipovski) establishes that, at least at some early stage, it was sung by Khantshe soon after the “Kishef” trio in Act II, we have not included it in this reconstruction, since it was not represented in any of the musical scores that we know were used in productions even in Eastern Europe, much less in New York.

FOR FURTHER REFERENCE

Musical Manuscripts

“Principale: Chansé” (direction score), “Chantshe” (piano reduction), and a set of parts are all held by YIVO Archives, Sholem Perlmutter Collection, RG 289, Music Supplement, box 117, folder 2.

“Chantshe in America” (direction score), copied by D. Hirsch, YIVO Archives, David Hirsch Collection, RG 1225, folder 115.

“Chantsche in America” (direction score and a set of parts), arr. Yitskhok Shlosberg (Szlosberg, Schlossberg), YIVO Archives, Vilna Music Collection, RG 7, folder 85. Other direction scores with sets of parts, all from Shlosberg arrangement, are found in folders 150, 269, and 291.

Published Scripts

Rakov, N. [Nahum, Nehemiah], *Hantshe in Amerika : operete in 4 akten [Khantshe in amerike: operete in 4 aktn]* (Warsaw: Teater-bibliotek, 1914). (in Yiddish)

Rakov, Nahum, “Khantshe in America,” a short scene from Act I, trans. by Nahma Sandrow, in Sandrow, ed. and trans., *Yiddish Plays for Reading and Performance* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021).

Unpublished Scripts

Lebel [sic], trans. [sic] by N. S. Lipowsky [Nahum Lipovski], *Di amerikaner sufrazhistke / Chance in America*, manuscript, YIVO Archives, Esther-Rachel Kaminska Theater Museum Archive, RG 8.1, folder 4194. (in Yiddish)

Rokoff [sic], *Chantze in America*, hectograph of typescript, American Jewish Historical Society, Papers of Molly Picon, P-38, Box 9, folder 127. (in Yiddish)

N. Rakov, *Khantshe in America: An Operetta in Four Acts*, trans. Kenneth Moss, ed. Vera Szabo, marginalia by Michael Tilson Thomas, commissioned by the Thomashefsky Project (San Francisco, 2000), YIVO Archives, Thomashefsky Family Papers, RG 2379.

Sheet Music

Lillian, Isidore (lyricist) and Joseph Rumshinsky (composer), *Chantshe in America* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1914), Library of Congress, Irene Heskes Collection, <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023797146>.

Recorded Music

“Ich Hob,” Benny Zeidman, baritone, with orch. accomp., Part I recorded Dec. 4, 1914, and Part II recorded Dec. 11, 1914, in New York, Columbia E2273, 78 rpm.

“Khantshe,” by Joseph Rumshinsky (music) and Isidore Lillian (words), arr. and cond. Michael Tilson Thomas, sung by Judy Blazer, New World Symphony, on *The Thomashefskys: Music and Memories of a Life in the Yiddish Theater*, dir. Gary Halvorson, written by Michael Tilson Thomas ([New York]: Docurama Films / New Video Group, 2012), DVD.

Overture from *Khantshe in Amerike*, by Joseph Rumshinsky, arr. and cond. Michael Tilson Thomas, New World Symphony, on *The Thomashefskys: Music and Memories of a Life in the Yiddish Theater*.

SYNOPSIS

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Motl Motlson	<i>Khantshe's father</i>
Zelda-Zlate	<i>his wife</i>
Khantshe	<i>their daughter</i>
Isidore	<i>her fiancé</i>
Rubin Goldhendler	<i>a rich banker</i>
Florence	<i>his wife</i>
Eddy	<i>their son</i>
Frances	<i>their daughter</i>
Louisa	<i>their niece</i>
Suzy	<i>their maid</i>
Sammy	<i>an elevator boy</i>
Negress	<i>[otherwise nameless, she is the Goldhendlers' maid]</i>

Policeman, people, suffragettes

Acts 1–3 take place in New York City.

Act 4 takes place in Long Branch, New Jersey.

This synopsis of Rakov's *Khantshe in Amerike* was adapted by Ronald Robboy from one that Eli Katz (1928–2006) wrote for the Thomashefsky Project in 1999. A retired Bay Area professor of German and Yiddish, Katz summarized the script that had been published in Warsaw, without Rakov's knowledge, in the Hebrew year 5674 (= 1913–1914). Katz's typescript is now held by the YIVO Archives, Thomashefsky Family Papers, RG 2379.

ACT I

Khantshe's parents open the first scene. Motl, who lives off his daughter's earnings, bickers with Zelda-Zlate about the relative worth of men and women ("**A man, a vayb**"). Khantshe works in a paper box factory owned by Goldhendler, who had known her father in the Old Country where both were poor Jews. Khantshe rebels against demeaning treatment by the factory foreman. She quits her job, dumps a pot of glue on the foreman's head, and leads a group of young women out on strike with the slogan "Long live women's rights" ("**Vu iz Khantshe?**"). She sends the women back to picket, but decides that she doesn't want to work anymore and will marry her fiancé Isidore, instead.

Isidore has just been promoted from bookkeeper in the box factory to being Goldhendler's private secretary. He now spends a lot of time in the Goldhendler home and has become the object of the romantic attentions of Frances, a capricious and inconstant young woman. His head having been turned by Frances (and by her father's wealth), Isidore tells Khantshe that it would not be fair for him, a poor man, to marry her because he has nothing to offer her. He breaks the engagement. The women from the factory, meanwhile, come to announce the success of their strike, but Khantshe is intent upon revenge.

ACT II

Sammy the elevator boy has been advanced (like Isidore) from the box factory to the Goldhendler residence. He had previously declined the promotion because he wanted to remain at the factory with Khantshe, with whom he was in love. But now that she has left, he has no reason to remain there. At the Goldhendler home, Rubin is chasing after the maid Suzy.

A new chauffeur has been hired. It is Khantshe, cross-dressing as a man. Only Sammy penetrates her disguise, but he does not expose her. All of the Goldhendler women fall in love with “the chauffeur” (he has no other name) as Sammy, Suzy, and the chauffeur all get to know each other better (“*Kishef*”). This a problem for Eddy, who is in love with Louisa, and for Isidore, who thinks he is involved with Frances. It is a relief for Rubin, who thinks he has more latitude to pursue Suzy (who is also in love with the chauffeur). But to Rubin’s chagrin, Florence, while scheming to get time alone with the chauffeur, is also still keeping an eye on her husband, and she hires an African American maid (nameless in the script, identified only as “Negress”) to attend to him, removing Suzy from his orbit. The chauffeur lets each of the women believe that she is the one preferred by “him.”

ACT III

The Goldhendler family goes shopping and riding in their car, driven by the chauffeur (“*Oytomobil*”). Sammy thinks that he has lost Suzy, but that maybe he has a chance with Khantshe (“*Ikh hob*”). A women’s suffrage rally has been scheduled. Florence is vice-president of the suffragist organization. Khantshe, back in women’s clothes, is the main speaker at the rally. She explains her adherence to the women’s movement by pretending to be a deserted wife. Florence moves that, for the next twenty years, women only give birth to female children. LOUISA: “Then we will have the upper hand. More votes for women!” KHANTSHE: “Good idea. Let’s appeal to the girls to stop having...” WOMEN AT THE RALLY: “No, no!” KHANTSHE: “Whoops, I made a mistake. Let’s appeal to the women!” Suzy then moves that the women stop cooking for the men (“*Sofrazhet-parad*”). The demonstrators, all dressed as suffragettes, march off stage, down the aisle, and out of the theater.

ACT IV

The act opens with the chorus singing about the spring (“*Akh, vi sheyn!*”). Khantshe, who has resumed her chauffeur disguise, talks with Frances. Sammy and Suzy have a comic duet (“*Shvim!*”). Isidore pleads with the chauffeur not to trifle with Frances’s affections. The chauffeur, in return, lectures Isidore about trifling with the affections of a working girl (i.e., Khantshe herself). Isidore begins to suspect that the “chauffeur” is Khantshe in disguise, but the chauffeur scoffs at the idea. Isidore asks the chauffeur “man to man” to confirm what “he” has reported about Frances’s fickleness. “He” does so using language that is technically true but very carefully misleading.

Isidore bemoans his folly in forsaking Khantshe. ISIDORE: “She must hate me!” CHAUFFEUR (WHO SOMEHOW KNOWS AND IS A CONFIDANTE OF KHANTSHE): “She doesn’t hate you. She is only sorry that you’ve been hurt. Since I have done you wrong by taking your fiancée, I will get your Khantshe back for you.” ISIDORE: “You can do that?” CHAUFFEUR: “Yes, come back here in ten minutes, and she’ll be here!”

Still dressed as the chauffeur, Khantshe sings her title song (“*Khantshe*”). She leaves to change clothes, and Suzy comes upon an “unknown woman” in the chauffeur’s room. Khantshe reveals herself and is reconciled with Isidore. Khantshe and her parents are reunited. Sammy and Suzy have also become a couple, consistent with the theater convention of the servant-class couple being comical foils for the main protagonists.

אַ מאַן, אַ ווייב

A MAN, A VAYB | A HUSBAND, A WIFE

1.

זי:
ווער געמבלט טאָג און נאַכט?
פֿון שיכורן ווער טראַכט?
וועמעס נאָז איז שטענדיק זייער רויט?

Zi:
Ver gembлт tog un nakht?
Fun shikern ver trakht?
Vemes noz iz shtendik zeyer royт?

ער:
ווער שמירט זיך אויס מיט פיינט?
ווער פעסטעט זיך און וויינט?
ווער שעלט אונדז? ווער מאַכט אונדז דעם טויט?

Er:
Ver shmirt zikh oys mit peynt?
Ver pestet zikh un veynt?
Ver shelt undz? Ver makht undz dem toyt?

זי:
ווער זאָרגט ניט פֿאַר פֿאַרדינסט?
ווער שאַרט זיך צו דער דינסט?
ווער פֿוילט זיך צו דער אַרבעט גיין?

Zi:
Ver zorget nit far fardinst?
Ver shart zikh tsu der dinst?
Ver foylt zikh tsu der arbet geyn?

ער:
ווער פֿרעסט און טרינקט און זויפט?
מיטן באַרדער ווער אַנטלויפט –
און מיט דעם שכנס וואַטש און טשיין?

Er:
Ver frest un trinkt un zoeyft?
Mitn border ver antloyft –
un mit dem shokhns vatsн un tsheyn?

REFRAIN

ער:
אַ ווייב,

Er:
A vayb,

זי:
אַ מאַן,

Zi:
A man,

ער:
אַ ווייב,

Er:
A vayb,

זי:
אַ מאַן,

Zi:
A man,

ביידע:
אוי, דאָס איז אַ שלעכט שטיקל סחורה.

Beyde:
Oy, dos iz a shlekht shtikl skhoyre.

ער:
אַ ווייב,

Er:
A vayb,

זי:
אַ מאַן,

Zi:
A man,

ער:
אַ ווייב,

Er:
A vayb,

זי:
אַ מאַן,

Zi:
A man,

She:
Who gambles day and night?
Who thinks about continual drinking?
Whose nose is always very red?

He:
Who smears herself with paint?
Who pampers herself and weeps?
Who curses us? Who is the death of us?

She:
Who doesn't worry about earning anything?
Who woos the maidservant?
Who is too lazy to go to work?

He:
Who stuffs herself and drinks and guzzles?
Who runs off with the boarder –
and with the neighbor's watch and chain?

He:
A wife,

She:
A husband,

He:
A wife,

She:
A husband,

Both:
Oh, that's a nasty piece of work.

He:
A wife,

She:
A husband,

He:
A wife,

She:
A husband,

(together)

Zi:
עס קען ערגער ניט זיין.
Zi:
Es ken erger nit zayn

Er:
אַ ווייטיק פֿאַרן ליב.
Er:
A veytik farn layb.

Er:
אַרויף,
Er:
Aruf,

Zi:
אַרויף,
Zi:
Aruf,

Er:
אַרויף,
Er:
Aruf,

Zi:
אַרויף,
Zi:
Aruf,

ביידע:
אוי, נעם איר/אים נאָר, טייערער בורא.
Bejde:
Oy, nem ir/im nor, tayerer boyre.

Er:
אַ ווייב,
Er:
A vayb,

Zi:
אַ מאַן,
Zi:
A man,

Er:
אַ ווייב,
Er:
A vayb,

Zi:
אַ מאַן...
Zi:
A man...

She:
It can't get any worse.

He:
A bodily affliction.

He:
Heavenward,

She:
Heavenward,

He:
Heavenward,

She:
Heavenward,

Both:
Oh, just take her/him, dear Creator.¹

He:
A wife,

She:
A husband,

He:
A wife,

She:
A husband...

(together)

Zi:
אַ רוח אין טאַטן אַרײַן!
Zi:
A ruekh in tatn arayn!

Er:
אַ גדולה אין פופיק אַרײַן!
Er:
A gdule in pupik arayn!

She:
Oh, damn you!²

He:
Oh, damn you!³

2.⁴

Zi:
אַ מאַן, איך שווער אַצינד,
איז ערגער ווי אַ הונט.
אַ לעמען איז דאָס, אַ לץ!
Zi:
A man, ikh shver atsind,
iz erger vi a hint.
A lemen iz dos, a lets!

Er:
אַ פֿרוי האָט לאַנגע האָר,
קיין ברעקל שבל גאַר.
אַלע וויבער זענען פשוט קעץ.
Er:
A froy hot lange hor,
Keyn brekl seykh! gor.
Ale vayber zenen poshet kets.

She:
A man, I swear now,
is worse than a dog.
What he is is a lemon, a jackass!

He:
A lady has long hair,⁵
but no trace of brains.
All women are simply cats.

Zi:
 אוי, דאָס וואָס רופֿט זיך מאַן
 איז אַ פֿייגלינג, אַ טיראַן.
 שלמה-המלך האָט געאורטיילט שלעכט.

Er:
 אַ פֿרוי איז, איף יו פליז,
 אַ חיה אויף צוויי פֿיס.
 צווישן טויזנט איז ניט איינע רעכט.

[REFRAIN]

3.⁷

Zi:
 ווער מאַכט אַ ווייב דעם טויט,
 ווער פֿגרט פֿאַר אַ סקוירט,
 ווער איז אַ בלאַף און בלאַפֿט די וועלט?

Er:
 שפּעט ביי נאַכט ווער קריכט
 צום מאַנס הויזן און זוכט
 אין די פֿאַקעטס און לאַטכנט געלט?

Zi:
 אַ מאַן איז ווערי טשיפּ
 ווייל פֿון אַ מאַנס אַ ריפּ
 האָט גאַט געמאַכט אַ פֿרוי פֿאַר שפּאַס.

Er:
 וועמענס צונג איז לאַנג,
 ביי וועמען האָט אַ שלאַנג
 אַ ביס געטאַן פֿון עץ-הדעת?

[REFRAIN]

She:
 Oh, that which is called *husband*
 is a coward, a tyrant.
 King Solomon judged poorly.⁶

He:
 A lady is, if you please,
 a beast on two feet.
 Not one in a thousand is decent.

She:
 Who is the death of a wife,
 who dies for a skirt,⁸
 who is a bluff that bluffs everyone?⁹

He:
 Late at night who creeps
 to her husband's trousers and searches
 through the pockets, stealing money?

She:
 A husband is very cheap
 because a man gave only a mere rib
 for God to make a woman for amusement.

He:
 By whom had a snake,
 whose tongue is long,
 taken a bite from the Tree of Knowledge.

- 1 Here, he sings "her" while she sings "him."
- 2 This Yiddish curse is literally "[may] a demon enter [your] father!"
- 3 Ironic Yiddish curse, literally "[May] a grand honor enter [your] belly button!"
- 4 This is the second of two verses in the manuscript leader's score that was used in performances. In the commercial sheet music sold to the public, it is the third of three verses.
- 5 Like *vayb*, the word *froy* can mean either wife or woman. Since the lyric substitutes this word choice here, the translation uses "lady" to reflect that variation. Note that just as "lady" can reflect some elevation in class status (though it may not), so may *froy* to a degree, and both *froy* and "lady" can serve as titles, though when *froy* does, it simply means Mrs., never implying the full-blown aristocratic connotation that the title Lady carries.
- 6 King Solomon, renowned for his wisdom as well as for his many wives, is traditionally understood to have authored the Song of Songs—that quintessential paean to romantic and explicitly sexual love—as well as the books Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, scattered throughout which one encounters his praise and cautionary dicta concerning the merits and conditions of marriage, e.g., Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord (Proverbs 18:22).
- 7 This is the second verse in the sheet music. It does not appear in the leader score.
- 8 The verb *peygern* (to die) is said of animals, not humans.
- 9 Literally, "...that bluffs the world."

וּוּ אִיז חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע?

VU IZ KHANTSHE? | WHERE IS KHANTSHE?

פֿרויען:

וּוּ אִיז חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע, וּוּ אִיז חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע?
אוּנְדוּזער שאַפּ האָט זי פֿריער פֿאַרלאָזן.
ס'האַט געטראָפֿן, זי אִיז אַנטלאָפֿן
פֿון דעם פֿאַרמאַן מיט קללות אַ דאָזן.

יינגלעך, אוי, אַ צרה!

וואָס אִיז דאָרטן געשען מיט מיין חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע?
וואָס זשע עקסט זיך, וואָס זשע שרעקסט זיך?
זי וועט קומען אַהיים אַ גאַנצע.

האַט ניט מורא, אַזאַ סחורה
ווי מיין חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע אִיז גאָר ניט קיין לעמען.
נעווער מיין, הערט זיך אַיין, חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע אִיז גוט און פֿיין.
דער רוח וועט חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע ניט נעמען.

חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע גייט, חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע גייט,
חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע אִיז שוין דאָ.
גייט זי, קומט גוט געשטימט.
אין אַ גוטער שעה, חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע!

חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע:

יא, איך בין חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע,
דאָס מעג אַיעדער וויסן.
כ'לאָז מיך ניט טרעטן
ווי אַ שמאַטע מיט די פֿיס.

ס'מעג זיך זיין ווער:
אַ באָס, אַ פֿאַרמאַן, צו אַלדע רוחות!
איך האָב קיין מורא,
פֿאַר חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע, בערעגיס!

פֿרויען:

יא, זי אִיז חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע,
דאָס מעג אַיעדער וויסן.
לאָזט זיך ניט טרעטן
ווי אַ שמאַטע מיט די פֿיס.

ס'מעג זיך זיין ווער:
אַ באָס, אַ פֿאַרמאַן, צו אַלדע רוחות!
זי האָט קיין מורא,
פֿאַר חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע, בערעגיס!

חֲנֵהטְשֶׁע:

אַ חוצפה פֿון אַ פֿאַרמאַן,
אַזאַ לץ.
ווען איר האַלט מיך ניט אַפּ, מיידלעך,
כאַפט ער פֿון מיר פעטש.

Froyen:

*Vu iz Khantshe, vu iz Khantshe?
Undzer shap hot zi frier farlozn.
S'hot getrofn, zi iz antlofn
fun dem forman mit kloles a dozn.*

Yinglekh, oy, a tsore!

*Vos iz dortn geshen mit mayn Khantshe?
Vos zhe ekst zikh, vos zhe shrekst zikh?
Zi vet kumen aheym a gantse.*

*Hot nit moyre, aza skhoyre
vi mayn Khantshe iz gor nit keyn lemen.
Never mayn, hert zikh ayn, Khantshe iz gut un fayn.
Der ruekh vet Khantshe nit nemen.*

*Khantshe geyt, Khantshe geyt,
Khantshe iz shoyn do.
Geyt zi, kumt gut geshtimt.
In a guter sho, Khantshe!*

Khantshe:

*Yo, ikh bin Khantshe,
dos meg ayeder visn.
Kh'loz mikh nit tretn
vi a shmate mit di fis.*

*S'meg zikh zayn ver:
a bos, a forman, tsu alde rukhes!
Ikh hob keyn moyre,
Far Khantshe, beregis!*

Froyen:

*Yo, zi iz Khantshe,
dos meg ayeder visn.
Lozt zikh nit tretn
vi a shmate mit di fis.*

*S'meg zayn zikh ver:
a bos, a forman, tsu alde rukhes!
Zi hot keyn moyre,
far Khantshe, beregis!*

Khantshe:

*A khutspe fun a forman,
aza lets.
Ven ir halt mikh nit oy, meydlekh,
khapt er fun mir petsch.*

Women:

Where is Khantshe, where is Khantshe?
She left our shop earlier.
What's happened is she's fled
from the foreman with a dozen curses.

Boys, oh, a calamity!

What happened there to my Khantshe?
Why are you so impatient, why are you so afraid?
She'll come home safe and sound.

Fear not, such merchandise
as my Khantshe is certainly no lemon.
Never mind, listen up, Khantshe is fine and good.
The demon will never seize Khantshe.

Khantshe's coming, Khantshe's coming,
Khantshe is now here.
She's arriving in a good mood.
Hurray for Khantshe!

Khantshe:

Yes, I am Khantshe,
that's something everyone may know.
I don't let myself get trampled
underfoot like a rag.

It can be whoever: a boss, a foreman,
to the devil with them!
I'm not afraid,
beware of Khantshe!

Women:

Yes, she is Khantshe,
that's something everyone may know.
She doesn't let herself get trampled
underfoot like a rag.

It can be whoever: a boss, a foreman,
to the devil with them!
She is not afraid,
of Khantshe, beware!

Khantshe:

The nerve of that foreman,
what a buffoon.
If you didn't hold me back, girls,
I'd slap him around.

איך בין צו שפעט געקומען –
ס'קען אַ מאָל פּאַסירן.
זאָלט איר אַזוי דערלעבן
צו דער חופּה מיך צו פֿירן.

פֿרויען:

כאַ-כאַ-כאַ-כאַ, כאַ-כאַ-כאַ,
דו ביסט אַלרײַט!
כאַ-כאַ-כאַ-כאַ, כאַ-כאַ-כאַ,
דו וואַקסט אַ לײַט!

חנהטשע:

„חנהטשע, חנהטשע“, רופֿט ער מיר,
„אוי, חנהטשע פּיסקעוואַטע!“
אוי, זאָג איר, אַ רוח זאָל
אַרײַנגיין אין זײַן טאַטן!

פֿרויען:

כאַ-כאַ-כאַ-כאַ, כאַ-כאַ-כאַ,
דו ביסט אַלרײַט!
כאַ כאַ כאַ כאַ, כאַ כאַ כאַ,
דו וואַקסט אַ לײַט!
חנהטשע, ביסט אַ קלוגע!
מאַכסט יעדן משוגע!

חנהטשע, חנהטשע,
פֿאַר חנהטשע בערעגיס.
חנהטשע!

*Ikh bin tsu shpet gekumen –
s'ken a mol pasirn.
Zolt ir azoy derlebn
tsu der khupe mikh tsu firn.*

Froyen:

*Kha-kha-kha-kha, kha-kha-kha,
du bist olrayt!
Kha-kha-kha-kha, kha-kha-kha,
du vakst a layt!*

Khantshe:

*“Khantshe, Khantshe,” ruft er mir,
“oy, Khantshe piskevate!”
Oy, zog ikh, a ruekh zol
arayngeyn in zayn tatn!*

Froyen:

*Kha-kha-kha-kha, kha-kha-kha,
du bist olrayt!
Kha kha kha kha, kha kha kha,
du vakst a layt!
Khantshe, bist a kluge!
Makhst yedn meshuge!*

CODA

*Khantshe, Khantshe,
far Khantshe beregis.
Khantshe!*

I came too late –
it can happen.
And just as that can happen, may you live
to marry me off.

Women:

Ha-ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-ha,
you are alright!
Ha-ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-ha,
you're coming into your own!

Khantshe:

“Khantshe, Khantshe,” he calls to me,
“oh, Khantshe loudmouth!”
Oh, say I, to the devil
with him.

Women:

Ha-ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-ha,
you are alright!
Ha-ha-ha-ha, ha-ha-ha,
you're coming into your own!
Khantshe, you're a clever one!
You drive everyone crazy!

Khantshe, Khantshe,
of Khantshe, beware!
Khantshe!

כישוף

KISHEF | BEWITCHMENT

אלע:

ליבע איז אַזאַ מין כישוף
וואָס כאַפּט יעדן אָן.
ליבע איז נאָך מערער ווייטיק
ווי אַ שלעכטער צאָן.

היט זיך, ליבע איז אַ ביטער מאכל
ווען די ליבע קריכט אַרײַן אין ביכל.
אוי, ס'איז פאַסקודנע, הערצעלעך בידנע,
ס'איז אַ שלעכטער קאָן.

סוזי:

אוי, זיטער בחורל,
ביסט אַ חנעוודיקער טייערער זכרל.

חנהטשע:

אוי, כ'פיל דיין ווייטיק
אַ בַּחור דאַרפֿסטו האָבן זייער נייטיק.

סוזי:

מיר פֿאַר דיין אייגעלע.
אַ כפרה ער פֿאַר דיין מינדסטן נעגעלע.

סעמי:

אוי, אַזאַ יאָר צו מיר
ווי איך קען זי מער מחיה זײַן פֿון דיר.

אלע:

ליבע איז אַזאַ מין כישוף,
וואָס כאַפּט יעדן אָן.
ליבע איז נאָך מערער ווייטיק
ווי אַ שלעכטער צאָן.

היט זיך, ליבע איז אַ ביטער מאכל
ווען די ליבע קריכט אַרײַן אין ביכל.
אוי, ס'איז פאַסקודנע, הערצעלעך בידנע,
ס'איז אַ שלעכטער קאָן.

אַ פאַראַדיז – ליבע איז!

סוזי:

נעמט באַטראַכט דעם אַלטן הונט
ווי ער לויפֿט מיר נאָך אַצינד.
אין אַ נויט, פֿאַרן טויט,
האַט ער חשק צו אַ מויד.

חנהטשע:

דאַרף אַ מויד קיין יאָלד ניט זײַן,

Ale:

*Libe iz aza min kishef
vos khapt yedn on.
Libe iz nokh merer veytik
vi a shlekhter tson.*

*Hit zikh, libe iz a biter maykhl,
ven di libe krikht arayn in baykhl.
Oy, s'iz paskidne, hertselekh bidne,
s'iz a shlekhter kon.*

Suzi:

*Oy, ziser bokherl,
bist a kheynevdikey tayerer zokherl.*

Khantshe:

*Oy, kh'fil dayn veytik
az a bokher darfstu hobn zeyer neytik.*

Suzi:

*Mir far dayn eygele.
A kapore er far dayn mindstn neygele.*

Semi:

*Oy, aza yor tsu mir
vi ikh ken zi mer mekhaye zayn fun dir.*

Ale:

*Libe iz aza min kishef,
vos khapt yedn on.
Libe iz nokh merer veytik
vi a shlekhter tson.*

*Hit zikh, libe iz a biter maykhl
ven di libe krikht arayn in baykhl.
Oy, s'iz paskidne, hertselekh bidne,
s'iz a shlekhter kon.*

A paradiz – libe iz!

Suzi:

*Nemt batrakht dem altn hint
vi er loyft mir nokh atsind.
In a noyt, farn toyt,
hot er kheyshek tsu a moyd.*

Khantshe:

Darf a moyd keyn yold nit zan,

All:

Love is a kind of bewitchment
that seizes everyone.
Love is yet more painful
than a bad tooth.

Watch yourself, love is a bitter treat
when it creeps into your belly.
Oh, it's terrible, poor dear hearts,
it's a cruel lottery.

Suzy:

Oh, sweet little bachelor boy,
you are a charming, dear little male.

Khantshe:

Oh, I feel your pain
that you're in urgent need of an eligible young man.

Suzy:

I'd do anything for you.
He's not worth your tiniest hangnail.

Sammy:

Take it from me
that I can delight her more than you.

All:

Love is a kind of bewitchment
that seizes everyone.
Love is worse yet
than a bad tooth.

Watch yourself, love is a bitter treat
when it creeps into your belly.
Oh, it's terrible, poor dear hearts,
it's a cruel lottery.

A paradise, that's what love is!

Suzy:

Just have a look at the old dog
how he's chasing after me now.
Needy, soon to die,
he's craving a young woman!

Khantshe:

But a young woman doesn't need to be a chump,

קוים וויל זי אן אַלטן מאַן.
זי קיין גוי. זאָג איך לאַ,
שטעל אַ חופּה מיט אַ בוי.

koyim vil zi an altn man.
Zay keyn goy. Zog ikh loy,
shtel a khupe mit a boy.

she's unlikely to want an old man.
Don't be foolish. I say nay,¹
get married to a boy.

סעמי:
שווער אַז דו וועסט זיין מיין ווייבל,
זאָג מיר צו.
קינדער וועט ניט פֿעלן,
כיגיב אַ גאַראַנטי.

Semi:
Shver az du vest zayn mayn vaybl,
zog mir tsi.
Kinder vet nit feln,
kh'gib a garanti.

Sammy:
Pledge that you will be my young bride,
promise me.
Children will not be lacking,
I give a guarantee.

אַלע:
נעמט באַטראַכט דעם אַלטן הונט
ווי ער לויפט זי/מיר נאָך אַצינד.
אין אַ נויט, פֿאַרן טויט,
האַט ער חשק צו אַ מויד.

Ale:
Nemt batrakht dem altn hint
Vi er loyft zi/mir nokh atsind.
In a noyt, farn toyt,
hot er kheyshek tzu a moyd.

All:
Just have a look at the old dog
chasing after her/me now.
Needy, soon to die,
he's craving a young woman!

אוי, אַז מען
ליבט אין האַרצן
נאָגט, עס ברענט,
עס פֿלאַקערט, עס צופט.

Oy, az men
libt, in hertsn
nogt, es brent,
es flakert, es tsipt.

Oh, when people
love, in their hearts,
it gnaws, it burns,
it blazes, it tugs.

אַזאַ יונג מיידעלע, יינגעלע,
כתובהלע, רינגעלע,

Aza yung meydele, yingele,
ksubele, ringele,

What a young girl, such a young boy,
a little marriage contract, and a little ring,²

1ST ENDING

אַ חופּה אין אַ מזלדיקער שעה,
יאַ, יאַ, יאַ!

a khupe in a mazdik'er sho,
yo, yo, yo!

a wedding canopy and best wishes,³
yes, yes, yes!

2ND ENDING

אַ יאַר פֿאַרגייט,
אַ קליינטשיקס איז שוין דאַ.
יאַ, דאַ!

a yor fargeyt,
a kleyntshiks iz shoy'n do.
yo, do!

a year goes by and,
before you know it, a little one is here,
yes, here!⁴

- 1 A *goy* is a non-Jew. So *zay keyn goy* literally means "don't be a non-Jew." This kind of expression about "being (or not being) a *goy*" is, sad to say, often used in an in-group way, humorously but also derogatorily, to mean "being (or not being) of low intelligence." In the phrase that follows it here, *loy*, which means "no," is from the Hebrew and is comically but also inescapably evoking its iconic place as the negative injunction from the Ten Commandments (and other proscriptions in the Torah): thou shall not do X. So *zog ikh loy* is translated here as "I say nay" (rather than "no") to impart some sense of archaic history. It is also funny in this context to resort to *loy*, as though this is a Commandment with a capital C, rather than to the more modern, European-derived *neyn*. And—let's face it—it's also funny because it rhymes here not only with "don't be a *goy*," but in the next line with "get married to a boy," with "boy" being English. This is made all the funnier because, on one side of Yiddish, from its deep past in the august language of the Torah, the word *loy* is ponied up to rhyme with "boy," a word taken from the other side of Yiddish in, for better or worse, its dubious future, absorbing and being eclipsed by English. Indeed, Khantshe in America!
- 2 A *moyd* is a young woman in Yiddish; with the diminutive suffix *-l* added, it becomes *meydl*, meaning girl. Here in the lyric, *meydl* has become *meydele* (little girl) as it is affectionately intensified with the heightened diminutive ending *-ele*. Similarly, *yung* means a youth, but with the diminutive *-l* added, it becomes *yingl* (boy), and a *yingele* is a little boy. That poetic logic is then extended as *ksube* (wedding contract) becomes *ksubele* and *ring* (ring) becomes *ringele*, in the sense of "darling little wedding contract" and "darling little ring."
- 3 The phrase *in a mazdik'er sho* literally means "in a lucky hour" but is understood as a combination of "congratulations" and "good luck."
- 4 The punchline to all those successive diminutives arrives with *kleyntshiks*, whose humor comes not merely with a knowing wink about the bride and groom's sexual relations, but also on a poetic level: *kleyntshiks* means "little one" and is itself a diminutive. So it is a kind of literal realization of all those affectionate diminutives.

אויטאָמאָביל

OYTOMOBIL | AUTOMOBILE

אַלע:
אַלע פֿאַרט יעצט! אויטאָמאָביל,
ס'איז אַ ריזע מיט פֿלעזשור פֿיל.
מיט אַ שאַפֿער ביי דער זייט,
דיזער רייד איז אַלרײַט, ליבע לייט.
כאַפט אַן אויטאָמאָביל און מוּפֿט,
ס'איז אַ פֿלעזשור מיט פֿרישע לופֿט.
זייט ניט גרין, אַ מאַשין ניט געשפּאַרט.
נעמט קיין בלאַף, כאַפט זיך אויף, שנעלער פֿאַרט.

מענער:
פֿאַרט נאָר מיט יענעמס יידענע.

פֿרויען:
מאַכט אַ שוויג, זייט צופֿרידענע.

מענער:
ווייל אַ מויד זיך מחיה זיין.

פֿרויען:
און עס גייט שוין אַ דייט מיט אַ מאַן.

פֿרויען:
אויטאָמאָביל.

מענער:
ניט קיין געלט צו שפּאַרן,
און אויף דעם צו פֿאַרן. נאָר...

פֿרויען:
נאָר איז אַ פֿראַכט.
דורך דער נאַכט, פֿאַרט און לאַכט.

פֿרויען:
אויטאָמאָביל.

מענער:
ווען דער שאַפֿער פֿירט אייך,
זיצט איר, אַמוזירט אייך. שנעל...

פֿרויען:
שנעל און גיך,
ווי אַ רוח, פֿלייט ער זיך.

אַלע:
פֿאַרן איז אַ חיות, גאַנץ געוויס:
חתונות, לוויית, צו אַ ברייט!

Ale:
*Ale fort yetst! Oytomobil,
s'iz a rayze mit plezhur fil.
Mit a shofer bay der zayt,
dizer rayd iz olrayt, libe layt.
Khapt an oytomobil un muft,
s'iz a plezshur mit frische luft.
Zayt nit grin, a mashin nit geshport.
Nemt keyn blof, khapt zikh of, shneler fort.*

Mener:
Fort nor mit yenems yidene.

Froyen:
Makht a shvayg, zayt tsufridene.

Mener:
Vil a moyd zikh mekhaye zayn.

Froyen:
Un es geyt shoyn a deyt mit a man.

Froyen:
Oytomobil.

Mener:
*Nit keyn gelt tsu shporn,
un af dem tsu forn. Nor...*

Froyen:
*Nor iz a prakht.
Durkh der nakht, fort un lakht.*

Froyen:
Oytomobil.

Mener:
*ven der shofer firt aykh,
zitst ir, amuzirt aykh. Shnel...*

Froyen:
*Shnel un gikh,
vi a rikh, flit er zikh.*

Ale:
*Forn iz a khies, gants gevis:
khasenes, levayes, tsi a bris!*

All:
Everyone, drive now! Automobile,
it's a very pleasurable trip.
With a chauffeur at your side,
this ride is alright, dear people.
Grab a car and move,
it's a pleasure with fresh air.
Don't be green, a car is not the thing to save on.¹
Don't be bluffed, get with it, drive faster.

Men:
Go ride with another's woman.

Women:
Keep quiet, be content.

Men:
So a girl wants to enjoy herself.

Women:
And soon enough a date happens with a man.

Women:
Automobile.

Men:
You won't save money on this,
this is something to ride in. However...

Women:
However, it's just a glorious thing.
Through the night, ride and laugh.

Women:
Automobile.

Men:
when the chauffeur drives you,
you sit there and are having fun. Fast...

Women:
Fast and speedy,
like a demon, it flies along.

All:
Driving is a delight, quite certainly:
to weddings, funerals, or a bris!²

פֿרויען: אויטאָמאָביל.	Froyen: <i>Oytomobil.</i>	Women: Automobile.
מענער: מיט אַ מויד, אַ טייל, אָדער יענעמס ווייבל. שור...	Mener: <i>Mit a moyd, a tayl, oder yenems vaybl. Shur...</i>	Men: With a girl, a devil, or another's young wife. Sure...
פֿרויען: מיט אַ מאַן איז אַ פּלאַן.	Froyen: <i>Mit a man iz a plan.</i>	Women: With a man, that's a plan.
אַלע: פֿאַר!	Ale: <i>For!</i>	All: Drive on!

1 Green, that is, a greenhorn, meaning a newly arrived immigrant who is naïve and inexperienced.

2 A *bris* is the Jewish ceremony in which an eight-day-old male infant is circumcised.

איך האָב

IKH HOB | I HAVE

REFRAIN

איך האָב, איך האָב גאָר קורץ און שאַרף.
איך האָב, כ'האָב אַלעס וואָס מען דאַרף.
איך האָב, איך זאָג קיין ליגן, ניין!
איך האָב שוין אַלעס וואָס איך דאַרף ביי
אַנדערע געזען.

*Ikh hob, ikh hob gor kurts un sharf.
Ikh hob, kh'hob ales vos men darf.
Ikh hob, ikh zog keyn lign, neyn!
Ikh hob shoy'n ales vos ikh darf bay
andere gezeyn.*

I have, I have, to put it short and to the point,
I have, I've everything that one needs.
I have, I say with no lies, no!
That is, I have *seen* everything I need in
others' possession.

1.

אַז איך האָב קיין געלט זאָלט איר ניט קלערן.
כ'האָב פּוֹפּציק טויזנט דאָלער אין די בענק
געזען אַ מאָל, דערויף קען איך
איך שווערן.
דאָס איז אַ גרויסע סומע, ווי איך דענק.

*Az ikh hob keyn gelt zolt ir nit klern.
Kh'hob fuftsik toyznt doler in di benk
gezeyn a mol, deruf ken ikh
aykh shvern.
Dos iz a groysse sume, vi ikh denk.*

You shouldn't think that I have no money.
I have fifty thousand dollars in the bank,
that is, I have *seen* once, I swear to
you on that.
That's a large amount, in my view.

גלייבט מיר, מיר פֿעלט קיין זאך אויף דער וועלט ניט.
כ'האָב אין קלינטן-סטריט אַ פּראָפּערטי
געקענט אָפּקויפֿן, נאָר וויל
כ'האָב קיין געלט ניט,
האָט אן אַנדערער זי אָפּגעקויפֿט.

*Gleybt mir, mir felt keyn zakh af der velt nit.
Kh'hob in Klintn-strit a properti
gekent opkoyfn, nor vayl
kh'hob keyn gelt nit,
Hot an anderer zi opgekoyft.*

Believe me, I lack for nothing in the world.
I have a property on Clinton Street,
that is, I'd have *been able* to buy it, but because
I had no money,
someone else bought it.

RECITATIVE

איך האָב אַ כּלה מיט מזומן,
פּוֹפּציק טויזנט קעש נדון,
קיין מאָל ניט געקענט באַקומען.
דערפֿאַר בין איך יעצט מיין ווייבס מאַן.

*Ikh hob a kale mit mezumen,
Fuftsik toyznt kesh nedan,
Keyn mol nit gekent bakumen.
Derfar bin ikh yetst mayn vaybs man.*

I have a bride with funding,
fifty thousand in a cash dowry,
that is, I have not ever *been able* to obtain that.
That's why I'm now my wife's man.

[REFRAIN]

2.

איך האָב אַ וואַטש און טשיין, ווי אויך אַ לאַקעט,
מיט אַ שיינער דימאָנד אינגעפֿאַסט,
געזען אַ מאָל ביי מיין באָס אין
וועסטפּאַקעט.
אַ דימאָנד רינג טראָגט ער אויך ווען אים פֿאַסט.

*Ikh hob a vatsh un tshey'n, vi oykh a laket
mit a sheyner daymond ayngest,
Gezeyn a mol bay mayn bos in
vestpaket.
A daymond ring trogt er oykh ven im past.*

I have a watch and chain, as well as a locket,
with a beautiful diamond mounting,
that is, I have *seen* it at one time in my boss's
vest pocket.
He also wears a diamond ring when it suits him.

איך האָב אַן אייבערראַק מיט אַ טילק לינינג,
מיט פֿאַר קאַפּס און אַ קאַלער אויך פֿון פֿאַר,
מיט פֿענסי פֿאַקעטס מיט אַ סך דעזינינג,
געזען היינט אין אַ גרויסן קלאַדינגסטאָר.

*Ikh hob an eyberrok mit a silk layning,
mit for kofs un a kaler oykh fun for,
mit fensi pakets mit a sakh dezayning,
gezen haynt in a groysn klodingstor.*

I have an overcoat with a silk lining,
with fur cuffs and a collar also of fur,
with fancy pockets and a bunch of designing,
that is, I have *seen* it today in a clothing store.

RECITATIVE

מיין ווייב האָט צוואַנציק נייע קליידער,
אַ דימאָנד נעקלעס, גאָט זיי דאַנק,
אַ העט מיט אַזאַ גרויסן פֿעדער,
געוואָלט האָבן שוין פֿון לאַנג.

*Mayn vayb hot tsvantsik naye kleyder,
a daymond nekles, got zay dank,
a het mit aza groysn feyder,
gevolt hobn shoy'n fun lang.*

My wife has twenty new dresses,
a diamond necklace, thank God,
a hat with such a big feather,
that is, she has long *wanted* to have it.

[REFRAIN]

3.

איך האָב אַ דינסט וואָס קען די קינדער קעמען,
קאָכן, באַקן, איינס גאַר אין דער וועלט,
געוואָלט פֿון לאַנג אין הויז שוין אַרײַננעמען.
האַט מען מיך אין גאַס אַרויסגעשטעלט.

*Ikh hob a dinst vos ken di kinder kemen,
kokhn, bakn, eyns gor in der velt,
gevolt fun lang in hoyz shoy'n araynnemen.
Hot men mikh in gas aroysgeshtelt.*

I have a maid who can groom the children,
cook, and bake, like nobody in this world,
that is, I *would* have taken her into my house.
But I've been put out on the street.

איך האָב אַ ירושה קעש מוזמן
פֿון אַ פֿעטער וואָס פֿאַרלאָזט די וועלט
קײן מאָל אין מיין לעבן ניט באַקומען
ווייל מיין פֿעטער לעבט און האָט קײן געלט.

*Ikh hob a yerushe kesh mezumen
fun a feter vos farlozt di velt
keyn mol in mayn lebn nit bakumen
vayl mayn feter lebt un hot keyn gelt.*

I have an inheritance of cash money
from an uncle who is on his way out of this world,
that is, I have never received it in my lifetime
because my uncle is alive and has no money.

RECITATIVE

איך האָב אַ סוט געמאַכט צו אַרדער,
פֿײַנע וואָרע, נעט און שײן,
געזען דיניט בײַ מיין שכנס באַרדער.
מקנא בין איך אים געווען.

*Ikh hob a sut gemakht tsu order,
fayne vare, net un sheyn,
gezeyn haynt bay mayn shokhns border.
Mekane bin ikh im geveyn.*

I have a suit made to order,
fine material, elegant and beautiful,
that is, I have *seen* it today on my neighbor's boarder.
I was envious of him.

[REFRAIN]

4.

איך בעט מיין שכן: רעטע מיר דאָס לעבן,
באָרג מיר צען דאָלער צו באַצאָלן רענט.
אומגעטראַכט האָט ער מיר באַלד געגעבן
צו פֿאַרשטיין אַז ער האָט ניט אַ סענט.

*Ikh bet mayn shokhn: rete mir dos lebn,
borg mir tsen doler tsu batsoln rent.
Umgetrakht hot er mir bald gegebn
tsu farshteyn az er hot nit a sent.*

I ask my neighbor: save my life,
lend me ten dollars to pay the rent.
Without thinking twice he gave me
the explanation that he doesn't have a cent.

איך האָב אַ קערידזש וואָס קען אַן פֿערד לויפֿן
זעכציק מייל אַ שטונדע גאַנץ געוויס
ניט געקענט אַפֿאַרדן צו קויפֿן
און דערפֿאַר גײַ איך אימער צו פֿוס.

*Ikh hob a keridzh vos ken on ferd loyfn
zekhtsik mayl a shtunde gants gevis
nit gekent afordn tsu koyfn
un derfar gey ikh imer tsu fis.*

I have a carriage that can run without a horse
at sixty miles per hour, for sure,
that is, I've not *been able* to afford buying it,
and so I always go on foot.

RECITATIVE

קבצנים, הערט, איר דאַרפט ניט זאָרגן,
אַרויסהעלפֿן וועל איך אײַך.
כװעל יעדן טויזנט דאָלער באַרגן
באַלד ווי איך וועל ווערן רײַך.

*Kaptsanim, hert, ir darft nit zorgn,
aroyshelfn vel ikh aykh.
Kh'vel yedn toyznt doler borgn
bald vi ikh vel vern raykh.*

Paupers, listen up, you need not fret,
I will help you out.
I'll lend everyone a thousand dollars
just as soon as I become wealthy.

[REFRAIN]

סאָפּראַזשעט-פאַראַד

SOFRAZHET-PARAD | SUFFRAGETTE PARADE

פּאָליציאַנט:

מאַכט פּלאַץ! מאַכט פּלאַץ!
מאַכט פּלאַץ פאַר דעם מאַרטש פֿון די סאָפּראַזשעטס!

מענער:

הוריי! הוריי!
הוריי, שרייט הוריי!

פּאָליציאַנט:

מאַכט פּלאַץ! מאַכט פּלאַץ!
מאַכט פּלאַץ פאַר דעם מאַרטש פֿון די סאָפּראַזשעטס!

מענער:

הוריי! הוריי!
הוריי, שרייט הוריי!

מענער:

הייבט די העטס,
אַט קומען אָן די סאָפּראַזשעטס,
אַט קומען אָן די ווייבער סאָפּראַזשעטקעס.
עכטע גלייכע רעכטע.
ציטערט, מעכטע! די אַלע
דאַמען קעמפֿן צוזאַמען. שרייט בראַוואַ!

חנהטשע:

מיר קעמפֿן גלייך, אַרעם און רייך,
קיין אונטערשייד ביז אונדז פֿון קריסט ביז ייד.
די פֿרוי האָט מוט און העלדנבלוט.
מיר ווערן קיין מאַל פֿון דעם קאַמף ניט מיד.
באַלד קומט די צייט ווען זיין באַפֿרייט
וועט שוין די פֿרוי פֿון מענערס שווערן יאָך.
איך מאַך אַ וועט, די סאָפּראַזשעט,
זי וועט די גאַנצע גרויסע וועלט רעגירן דאָך.

כאַר:

מיר קעמפֿן גלייך, אַרעם און רייך,
קיין אונטערשייד ביז אונדז פֿון קריסט ביז ייד.
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זי וועט די גאַנצע גרויסע וועלט רעגירן דאָך.

חנהטשע:

זייט פֿאַרבאַרייט, איר קעמפֿערינס.
דער מיטינג וועט גלייך ערעפֿנט זיין.

Politsyant:

Makht plats! Makht plats!
Makht plats far dem martsh fun di sofrazhets!

Mener:

Hurey! Hurey!
Hurey, shrayt hurey!

Politsyant:

Makht plats! Makht plats!
Makht plats far dem martsh fun di sofrazhets!

Mener:

Hurey! Hurey!
Hurey, shrayt hurey!

Mener:

Heybt di hets,
ot kumen on di sofrazhets,
ot kumen on di vayber sofrazhetkes.
Ekhte glaykhe rekhte.
Tsiter, mekhte! Di ale
damen kemfn tsuzamen. Shrayt bravo!

Khantshe:

Mir kemfn glaykh, orem un raykh,
keyn untersheyd bay undz fun krist biz yid.
Di froy hot mut un heldnblut.
Mir vern keyn mol fun dem kamf nit mid.
Bald kumt di tsayt ven zayn bafrayt
vet shoyen di froy fun meners shvern yokh.
Ikh makh a vet, di sofrazhet,
zi vet di gantse groyse velt regirn dokh.

Chor:

Mir kemfn glaykh, orem un raykh,
keyn untersheyd bay undz fun krist biz yid.
Di froy hot mut un heldnblut.
Mir vern keyn mol fun dem kamf nit mid.
Bald kumt di tsayt ven zayn bafrayt
vet shoyen di froy fun meners shvern yokh.
Ikh makh a vet, di sofrazhet,
zi vet di gantse groyse velt regirn dokh.

Khantshe:

Zayt forbareyt, ir kemferns.
Der miting vet glaykh erefnt zayn.

Policeman:

Make way! Make way!
Make way for the march of the suffragettes!

Men:

Hurray! Hurray!
Hurray, shout hurray!

Policeman:

Make way! Make way!
Make way for the march of the suffragettes!

Men:

Hurray! Hurray!
Hurray, shout hurray!

Men:

Raise your hats,
here come the suffragettes,
here come the women suffragettes.
Genuine equal rights.
Tremble, great powers! All these
women are fighting together. Shout bravo!

Khantshe:

We struggle equally, poor and rich,
no difference between us from Christian to Jew.
A woman has courage and a hero's blood.
We shall never tire from our struggle.
The time is nigh when women shall be liberated
at last from beneath men's heavy yoke.
I'll make a bet, the suffragette,
she will yet govern the whole wide world.

Chorus:

We struggle equally, poor and rich,
no difference between us from Christian to Jew.
A woman has courage and a hero's blood.
We shall never tire from our struggle.
The time is nigh when women shall be liberated
at last from beneath men's heavy yoke.
I'll make a bet, the suffragette,
she will yet govern the whole wide world.

Khantshe:

Get ready, you fighters.
The meeting is about to begin.

וועט איר בלעבן טריי? שווערט ביי גאָט!
איך ווייס אז חוץ לאַנגע האָר אויך שכל איר האָט.
איך בין זיכער אז איר פֿרויען וועט קענען האַלטן אַ סוד.
לאַזט זיך מער ניט פֿון די מענער פֿירן אין באַד.

כאָר:

בראַוואַ שרייט יעצט פֿאַר די סאָפֿראַזשעטס.
מענער, הייבט אַצינד פֿאַר אונדז די העטס.
קוקט זיך אום אומעטום,
זעט איר פֿרויען קעמפֿערינס גאַנצע סעטס.

איבעראַל און אין אַיעדן לאַנד
קעמפֿט די פֿרוי יעצט וויל זי האָט
פֿאַרשטאַנד.
ווי דער מאַן, דער טיראַן, ווילן מיר מענטשן זיין.
שוין גענוג, יעצט צום קריג, באַלד איז זיג!

יעצט וועט די פֿרוי שוין זיין פֿון יעדן רעספעקטירט.
זי וויל קיין שקלאַף מער זיין. זי שרייט,
זי פֿראַטעסטירט.
זי איז פֿאַראַייניקט. יעצט די פֿרוי האָט
שוין ערוואַכט.
גענוג געקוועלט, איבערצייגט דער וועלט,
די גרויסע פֿרויענמאַכט. יאָ!

בראַוואַ שרייט יעצט פֿאַר די סאָפֿראַזשעטס.
מענער, הייבט אַצינד פֿאַר אונדז די העטס.
קוקט זיך אום אומעטום,
זעט איר פֿרויען קעמפֿערינס גאַנצע סעטס.

איבעראַל, און אין אַיעדן לאַנד,
קעמפֿט די פֿרוי יעצט וויל זי האָט
פֿאַרשטאַנד
ווי דער מאַן, דער טיראַן, ווילן מיר מענטשן זיין.
שוין גענוג, יעצט צום קריג, באַלד איז זיג!

ייִדישע פֿרוי, ערוואַך!
דו ביסט געווען אַ העלדין אימער.
צייג אַז דו ביסט ניט שוואַך
ווי אַ מאַל ישׂראַליקס פֿרויענציימער.
צייג נאָר אַ ביישפּיל גוט
אַז דו ביסט נאָך אַן אַש-חיל.
ייִדישע וויבלעך, קעמפֿט אויך מיט.

וויבער, ייִדישע וויבער!
געזאָגט האָט שלמה-המלך מיר זענען שלעכטע.
וויבער, דערלאַנגט אַ דבר
אַז אַלע וויבער זענען גוטע און רעכטע.

(spoken)

*Vet ir blaybn tray? Shvert bay Got!
Ikh veys az khuts lange hor oykh seykh! ir hot.
Ikh bin zikher az ir froyen vet kenen haltn a sod.
Lozt zikh mer nit fun di mener firm in bod.*

Khor:

*Bravo shrayt yetst far di sofrazhets.
Mener, heybt atsind far undz di hets.
Kukt zikh um umetum,
zet ir froyen kemferns gantse sets.*

*Iberal un in ayedn land
kemft di froy yetst vayl zi hot
farshtand.
vi der man, der tiran, viln mir mentshn zan.
Shoyn genig, yetst tsum krig, bald iz zig!*

*Yetst vet di froy shoyn zayn fun yedn respektirt.
Zi vil keyn shklaf mer zayn. Zi shrayt,
zi protestirt.
Zi iz fareynikt. Yetst di froy hot
shoyn ervakht.
Genug gekvelt, ibertsaygt der velt,
di groyshe froyenmakht. Yo!*

*Bravo shrayt yetst far di sofrazhets.
Mener, heybt atsind far undz di hets.
Kukt zikh um umetum,
zet ir froyen kemferns gantse sets.*

*Iberal, un in ayedn land,
kemft di froy yetst vayl zi hot
farshtand
vi der man, der tiran, viln mir mentshn zayn.
Shoyn genig, yetst tsum krig, bald iz zig!*

*Yidische froy, ervakh!
Du bist geven a heldn imer.
Tsay az du bist nit shvakh
vi a mol Yisroliks froyentsimer.
Tsay nor a bayshpil git
az du bist nokh an eyshes-khail.
Yidische vayblekh, kemft oykh mit.*

*Vayber, yidische vayber!
Gezogt hot Shloyme-hameylekh mir zenen shlekhte.
Vayber, derlangt a daber
az ale vayber zenen gute un rekhte.*

Will you remain loyal? Swear to God!
I know that, besides long hair, you also have brains.
I am certain you women will be able to keep a secret.
Don't let men dupe us any longer.

Chorus:

Shout bravo now for the suffragettes.
Men, raise your hats for us straight away.
Look around everywhere
and you'll see fighting women, whole bands of them!

Everywhere, in every land,
the woman is fighting now because she's been
enlightened.
Like men, those tyrants, we want our humanity.
So enough, now to war, victory is nearly upon us!

Now women will finally be respected by everyone.
She no longer wishes to be enslaved. She shouts,
she protests.
She stands united. Now women are
finally awakened.
Oppressed enough, go convince the world of
the great power of women. Yes!

Shout bravo now for the suffragettes.
Men, raise your hats for us straight away.
Look around everywhere
and you'll see fighting women, whole bands of them.

Everywhere, in every land,
the woman is fighting now because she's been
enlightened.
Like men, those tyrants, we want our humanity.
So enough, now to war, victory is nearly upon us!

Jewish woman, awake!
You have always been a heroine.
Show that you are not weak
like before as Yisrolik's little woman.¹
Show a good example
that you are still a Woman of Valor.²
Young Jewish wives, you join the fight as well.

Women, Jewish women!
King Solomon said we are evil.³
Women, shout it out:
all women are good and proper.

יענטע-סאָסיע, חנה-דוואַסיע, קומט אַרײַן.
אַלע ווייבער דאַרפֿן יעצט פֿאַראייניקט זײַן.

ידישע פֿרוי, ערוואַך!
דו ביסט געווען אַ העלדין אימער.
צײַג אַז דו ביסט ניט שוואַך
ווי אַ מאַל ישראָליקס פֿרויענצימער.
צײַג נאָר אַ בײַשפּיל גוט,
אַז דו ביסט נאָך אַן אשת-חיל.
ידישע ווייבלעך, קעמפֿט אויך מיט.
יאַ, קעמפֿט! יאַ, קעמפֿט!

*Yente-Sosye, Khane-Dvosye, kumt arayn.
Ale vayber darfn yetst fareynikt zayn.*

*Yidische froy, ervakh!
Du bist geven a heldn imer.
Tsayg az du bist nit shvakh
vi a mol Yisroliks froyentsimer.
Tsayg nor a bayshpil git,
az du bist nokh an eyshes-khail.
Yidische vayblekh, kemft oykh mit.
Yo, kemft! Yo, kemft!*

Yente-Sosye, Khane-Dvosye, come on in.
All women now must be united.

Jewish woman, awake!
You have always been a heroine.
Show that you are not weak
like before as Yisrolik's little woman.
Show a good example
that you are still a Woman of Valor.
Young Jewish wives, you join the fight as well.
Yes, fight! Yes, fight!

-
- 1 Yisrolik is a diminutive for the personal name Israel; and *froyentsimer* is an ironically old-fashioned term—we might charitably call it quaint—that meant woman. Here in the lyric, Yisrolik is clearly intended to mean a hypothetical individual, a powerless Jewish Everyman, named Li'l Israel. But “Yisrolik” simultaneously suggests dear (little) Israel, the stateless and powerless people in the aggregate, whom Li'l Israel allegorically represented. The weakness the lyric is imploring women to rise above, in other words, was the historical condition of a woman weakened by the circumstance of belonging collectively to a powerless people, as well as individually—and more immediately—to a powerless man.
 - 2 *Eyshes-khail* are the first words (in their Yiddish pronunciation) of an acrostic poem that concludes the book of Proverbs, beginning with the famous verse “A woman of valor who can find? For her price is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10). The poem goes on from there to enumerate many qualities prized in a woman as mate, as householder and provider, as ethical and astute mind, and as mother (or prized, in any event, by Proverbs’ patriarchal authors). The Woman of Valor poem has been set to many melodies and has traditionally been sung or recited round the Sabbath table on Friday nights.
 - 3 It is King Solomon who—as mentioned in a footnote to the lyric of “A man, a vayb” (above)—is traditionally regarded as the author of Proverbs. Though that book does extol the virtues of a Woman of Valor in chapter 31, it also warns in chapters 5-7, using strong language, of the allure and dangers of a sexually experienced and seductive, adulterous, or exotic (i.e., non-Jewish) woman who knows and acts upon her own desires. (Though maybe not precisely in those Second Wave Feminist words!)

אַך, ווי שיינ!

AKH, VI SHEYN! | O, HOW BEAUTIFUL!

אַך, ווי שיינ איזט זאָמערצייט.
די פֿייגלען זינגען זאָ קלאַנגפֿאַל און שיינ.
אַך, ווי שיינ איזט זאָמערצייט.
די פֿייגלען זינגען זאָ קלאַנגפֿאַל און שיינ.
אַ, אַ, אַ, אַ...

ווער עס ליבט, דער ווייס עס גאַנץ גוט:
אַז דער זאַמער איזט פֿאַר געליבטע נאַר.
פֿון קיין לייַדן ווייס מען שוין ניט
ווען די ליבע איז הייליק נאַר.

אויך דאָס באַדן זיך,
און דאָס שווימען,
און דאָס קושן זיך –
עס איז באַקומען.

דער פֿרימאָרגן, קיינע זאַרגן,
אוי, די זאַמער... זאָמערצייט!
ווער עס ליבט, דער ווייס עס גאַנץ גוט:
אַז דער זאַמער איזט פֿאַר געליבטע נאַר.

פֿון קיין לייַדן ווייס מען שוין ניט,
אַך, ווען די ליבע איז הייליק נאַר.
אַך, די זיסע צייט,
זי איז שוין ניט ווייט!

*Akh, vi sheyn izt zomertsayt.*¹
Di feyglen zingen zo klangfol un sheyn.
Akh, vi sheyn izt zomertsayt.
Di feyglen zingen zo klangfol un sheyn.
A, a, a, ah...

Ver es libt, der veys es gants git:
az der zomer izt far gelibte nor.
Fun keyn leydn veys men shoyrn nit
ven di libe iz heylik nor.

Oykh dos bodn zikh,
un dos shvimen,
un dos kushn zikh –
es iz bakimen.

Der frimorgn, keyne zorgn,
oy, di zomer... zomertsayt!
Ver es libt, der veys es gants git:
az der zomer izt far gelibte nor.

Fun keyn leydn veys men shoyrn nit,
akh, ven di libe iz heylik nor.
Akh, di zise tsayt,
zi iz shoyrn nit vayt!

O, how beautiful is summertime.
The birds sing so sonorously and beautifully.
O, how beautiful is summertime.
The birds sing so sonorously and beautifully.
Ah, ah, ah, ah...

One who loves knows it very well:
that summer is but for lovers.
People at last know no suffering
when love is but sacred.

Also, bathing,
and swimming,
and kissing –
that is most pleasant.

The morning, no worries,
oh, the summer-, summertime!
One who loves knows it very well:
that summer is but for lovers.

People at last know no misery,
o, when love is but sacred.
O, that sweet time,
it is now not far off!

¹ The words *akh* (instead of *oy*), *izt* (instead of *iz*), and *zomer* (instead of *zumer*) all appear to be deliberate imitations of Modern High German, employing what in Yiddish is referred to as *daytshmerish* (i.e., Germanizing) style. Their singularity here—there is nothing like this elsewhere in *Khantshe*, which as a whole is more prone to flaunting Americanisms—gives this number the sense that it aspires to emulate the High Art and Enlightenment values of which German culture was in the vanguard. (It's fair to say that would have been understood to have been epitomized in the Romantic poetry of Heinrich Heine, who was revered by many liberal-education-seeking Yiddish speakers, almost certainly as much for his being Jewish, and for his being a German-speaking Jew driven to live as exilic expatriate in Paris, as he was for being an undeniably great poet.) The embrace of High Art and its surrounding culture, of course, also suggested an aspiration for material upward mobility together with political and social assimilation. More than of poetry, though, the same could also be said for an apparent Jewish obsession with—and manifest accomplishment in—classical music during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Most conspicuously in that realm, it was opera that exuded a connection to wealth, acceptance, and proximity to the aristocratic ruling classes.

שוויים!

SHVIM! | SWIM!

סעמי: גוואַלד, האָסט מיר די נאַז צעקלאַפּט.	Semi: <i>Gvald, host mir di noz tseklapt.</i>	Sammy: Yikes! You banged my nose.
סוזי: האָסט מיר געמאַכט אַ שאַדן.	Suzi: <i>Host mir gemakht a shodn.</i>	Suzy: Well, you've caused me loss.
סעמי: ווי יאָגסטו זיך, ווי אַיילסטו זיך?	Semi: <i>Vu yogstu zikh, vu aylstu zikh?</i>	Sammy: What's your hurry, where are you running off to?
סוזי: כ'בין זיך געקומען באַדן. טו מיר אַ טוֹבֵה, סעמי, און לערן מיך דאָך שווימען, ווייל קוים נעם איך זיך טרענקען, וועל איך זיכער פֿון דער וועלט אומקומען.	Suzi: <i>Kh'bin zikh gekumen bodn.</i> <i>Tu mir a toyve, Semi, un lern mikh dokh shvimen, vayl koyrn nem ikh zikh trenken, vel ikh zikher fun der velt umkimen.</i>	Suzy: I've come to go bathing. Do me a favor, Sammy, and teach me how to swim, because as soon as I'm in, I begin drowning, and I'm sure I'll die.
סעמי: דאָס איז אַ דזשאַב אַ שווערער, נאָר איך האָב שוין אַן עצה: איך שוויים אַרום אין וואַסער און איך האַלט דיך אויף מיין פלייצע.	Semi: <i>Dos iz a dzhab a shverer, nor ikh hob shoyn an eytse: ikh shvim arum in vaser un ikh halt dikh af mayn pleytse.</i>	Sammy: That would be a hard job, but I have a suggestion: I'll swim around in the water and hold you on my shoulders.
סוזי: ניין, דאָס איז ניט גוט!	Suzi: <i>Neyn, dos iz nit git!</i>	Suzy: No, that's no good!
סעמי: וויילסטו ניט, איז ניט.	Semi: <i>Vilstu nit, iz nit.</i>	Sammy: Since you don't want it, then it's a no.
סוזי: איך וועל דיר קיין מאָל פֿאַרגעסן. זי אַ מאַן, גיב מיר אַ לעסן. איך וועל קענען, איך וועל קענען. שווימען וועל איך קענען דאָך.	Suzi: <i>Ikh vel dir keyn mol fargesen. Zay a man, gib mir a lesn. Ikh vel kenen, ikh vel kenen. Shvimen vel ikh kenen dokh.</i>	Suzy: I'll never forget you. Be a man, give me a lesson. I can do it, I can do it. I'll be able to swim yet.
סעמי: זעסטו וואַסער, גיסטו אַ ציטער. שאַ, אַ ניער פּלאַן אַ גוטער. כ'וועל דיך לערנען, כ'וועל דיך לערנען. קוק זיך צו און טו מיר נאָך.	Sami: <i>Zestu vaser, gistu a tsiter. Sha, a nayer plan a giter. Kh'vel dikh lernen, kh'vel dikh lernen. Kuk zikh tsu un tu mir nokh.</i>	Sammy: You see water and you give a shudder. Hey, here's a better plan. I'll teach you, I'll teach you. Watch and do what I do.
(he dances)		
סוזי: מאַכסט שוין פֿון מיר חוּק ווידער!	Suzi: <i>Makhst shoyn fun mir khoyzek vider!</i>	Suzy: You're making fun of me again now!
סעמי: לייג זיך, לייג זיך דאָ אַנידער.	Semi: <i>Leyg zikh, leyg zikh do anider.</i>	Sammy: Lie flat, stretch out here.

וואַרף מיט די הענט און זיי ניט פֿויל,
וואַרף מיט די פֿיס, האַלט צו דאָס מויל.

סוזי:
אוי, אוי, אוי, אוי, ס'איז פֿיין.

ביידע:
בעסער קען שוין ניט זיין!

שוים, שוים, שוים, ברודער, שוים,
ווי צו שווימען, אוי, איז קיין קונץ ניט, לא!
שוים, שוים, וויסט מן-הסתם אַז
טרינקען דאָרף מען ניט פֿון דעם גרויסן ים.
וואַרף די הענט צו ביסלעך,
דריי זשע מיט די פֿיסלעך.
ווער עס קען גוט שווימען,
דער קען זיך באַרימען.
פֿאַלג מיך, ברודער, שוים, נאָר שוים!

*Varf mit di hent un zay nit foyl,
varf mit di fis, halt tsu dos moyl.*

Suzi:
Oy, oy, oy, oy, s'iz fayn.

Beyde:
Beser ken shoy nix zayn!

*Shvim, shvim, shvim, bruder, shvim,
vi tsu shvimen, oy, iz keyn kunts nit, loy!
Shvim, shvim, veyst minastam az
trinken darf men nit fun dem groysn yam.
Varf di hent tsu bislekh,
drey zhe mit di fislekh.
Ver es ken gut shvimen,
der ken zikh barimen.
Folg mikh, bruder, shvim, nor shvim!*

Paddle with your hands and don't be lazy,
paddle with your feet, and keep your mouth shut.

Suzy:
O-o-o-oh, it's fine.

Both:
It couldn't be better!

Swim, swim, swim, brother, swim,
how to swim, oh, there's no trick to it. Nay!¹
Swim, swim, you probably know that
one should not drink from the wide sea.
Paddle with your hands somewhat,
kick your feet.
Whoever can swim well
has something to brag about.
Follow me, brother, swim, come on and swim!

¹ See the explanation about the word *loy* and its translation as “nay” in the notes to the lyrics of No. 3 (“Kishef”). Here, because it is immediately preceded by the word *nit* (not), which amply expresses what it needs to, the silly redundancy of *loy* reinforces its satirically elevated tone.

חנהטשע

KHANTSHE | KHANTSHE

1.

חנהטשע איז געווען אַ מאָל אַ נאָמען נאָר צום שפּאַס,
מען האָט געלאַכט,
און פֿון איר הווק געמאַכט, אוי, ניט פֿאַר מיר געדאַכט!
חנהטשע איז שוין מער קיין חנהטשע ניט,
דאָס זאָג איר אײַך.
אַ נייע צײַט, זיך פֿון שקלאַפֿערייַ באַפֿרײַט, חנהטשע
איז אַ גאַנצער לײַט.
איבעראַל איז זי אַ קנאַקעריין אַ גאַנצע,
און מען רוקט זיך און מען שאַרט זיך צו דער
חנהטשע.
פֿאַר איר די מענער, הערט, האָבן מער
קיין ווערט
ווייל חנהטשע איז אויפֿן פֿערד.

*Khantshe iz geven a mol a nomen nor tsum shpas,
men hot gelakht,
un fun ir khoyzek gemakht, oy, nit far mir gedakht!
Khantshe iz shoyrn mer keyn Khantshe nit,
dos zog ikh aykh.
A naye tsayt, zikh fun shklaferay bafrayt, Khantshe
iz a gantser layt.
Iberal iz zi a knakern a gantse,
un men rukt zikh un men shart zikh tsu der
Khantshe.
Far ir di mener, hert, hobn mer
keyn vert
vayl Khantshe iz afn ferd.*

Khantshe was once a name that was only joked of,
people laughed
and made fun of her, oh, may it never happen to me!
Khantshe is now no longer merely a Khantshe,
that's what I'm telling you.
It's a new era, freed from slavery, Khantshe is entirely
a respectable person.
She's a big shot everywhere,
and people slide over and cozy up to this very
Khantshe.
Compared to her, men — hear this! — are no longer
worth much
because it's Khantshe in the saddle now.

REFRAIN

חנהטשע איז אַ לײַדי שױן אַ גאַנצע.
אוי, אוי, אוי, חנהטשע, אַ כּוואַט, אַ העלד, ניט געשפּעט,
פּלײַן גערעדט, הײבט דעם העט פֿאַר חנהטשע.
חנהטשע, נאָר ווי אַ פּאָליסמאַן שפּאַנט זי.
אוי, אוי, אוי, חנהטשע, נאָר חנהטשע,
נאָר חנהטשע
באַשײַנט די גאַנצע וועלט.

*Khantshe iz a leydi shoyrn a gantse.
Oy, oy, oy, Khantshe, a khvat, a held, nit geshpet,
pleyn geredt, heybt dem het far Khantshe.
Khantshe, nor vi a polisman shpant zi.
Oy, oy, oy, Khantshe, nor Khantshe,
nor Khantshe
bashaynt di gantse velt.*

Khantshe is a real lady now.
Oh, oh, oh, Khantshe, a bold one, a hero, unmocked —
plainly said, raise your hat for Khantshe.
Khantshe, she strides just like a policeman.
Oh, oh, oh, Khantshe, Khantshe herself,
Khantshe alone
lights up the whole world.

2.

חנהטשע נעמט קיין בלאָף ניט, און זי קעמפּט
פֿאַר פֿרויענרעכט, דאָס איז אַ פּלאַן.
פֿאַר אַ פֿרוי און פֿאַר אַ מאַן זאָל גלײַכע רעכטע זײַן.
„אַרונטער מיט די הויזן, און אַרונטער מיט דעם מאַן,
גיט זי אַ קוויטש ווען זי שטייט און האַלט אַ ספּיטש.
חנהטשע איז אַ רעגעלע פּיטש.
„מײַדל, וויבל, זײַ אַ מאַן,
צעשרײַט זיך חנהטשע.
„ניט דערשרעק זיך פֿאַר אַ בערדל מיט
אַ וואַנצע.
מיר האָבן אויך אַ רעכט צו שפּילן גאַנצע נעכט
פּויקער – עס איז ניט שלעכט!“

*Khantshe nemt keyn blof nit, un zi kemft
far froyenrekht, dos iz a plan.
Far a froy un far a man zol glaykhe rekhte zan.
“Arunter mit di hoyzn, a arunter mit dem man,”
git zi a kvitsh ven zi shteyt un halt a spitsh.
Khantshe iz a regele pitsh.
“Meydl, vaybl, zay a man,”
tshshrayt zikh Khantshe.
“Nit dershrek zikh far a berdl mit
a vontse.
Mir hobn oykh a rekht tsu shpilm gantse nekht
poyker – es iz nit shlekt!”*

Khantshe doesn't fall for any bluff, and she fights
for women's rights, that's the idea.
For women and for men let there be equal rights.
“Down with pants, and down with men,”
she shrieks as she stands and gives a speech.
Khantshe is a regular peach.
“Girls, young ladies, be a man,”
scolds Khantshe.
“Don't be frightened by a little beard and
half a moustache.
We also have the right all night long to play
poker – could be worse!”

[REFRAIN]

3.

ווער גײַט צו אַ פּיקניק, צו אַ באַל? אין דענסײַנגסװל
ווער זוכט אַ טריט?
אויף אַ קאַר, ווי כּײַן אַ ייד, וועמען גיט
מען אַפּ אַ סײַט?
ווער דערטאַפּט אין בוטשערשאַפּ דעם בוטשערס
מאַרכבײַן?
אונטער דעם בריק קויפּט זי אײַן פּיִש,

*Ver gezt tsu a piknik, tsu a bal? In densingskul
ver zukht a trit?
Af a kar, vi kh'bin a yid, vemen git
men op a sit?
Ver dertapt in butshershap dem butshers
markhbeyn?
Unter dem brik koyft zi eyn fish,*

Who goes to a picnic, to a ball. In dancing school,
who looks for a treat?¹
On a streetcar, as sure as I'm a Jew, for whom do
people give up a seat?
In the butcher shop, who finds the butcher's
marrow bone?
Under the bridge, she buys one fish,

הערט אַ טריק:
ליגט אין פֿאַרטעך פינף שטיק.
ווער קען מאַכן גיין אַ וואַטש און טשיין?
נאָר חנהטשע.
אין דעפּאַרטמענט-סטאָר אַ לאַטכנטע אַ גאַנצע.
ווער איז פֿון די טאַפֿס, צונויפֿגעשטעלט פֿון בלאַפֿס,
רעטס, האַנטעכער און פּאָפֿס?

*hert a trik:
ligt in fartekh finf shtik.
Ver ken makhn geyn a vatsh un tsheyn?
Nor Khantshe.
In department-stor a latkhnte a gantse.
Ver iz fun di tofs, tsunoyfgeshtelt fun blofs,
rets, hantekher un pofs?*

but get a load of this trick:
under her apron are hiding five more.
Who can make a watch and chain walk off?
None other than Khantshe.
In the department store she's quite the shoplifter.
Who is, among the toughs, put together from bluffs,
rats, towels, and puffs?²

[REFRAIN]

1 This is a bilingual pun. *Trit* is English(!), being the word "treat." But in Yiddish, *trit* can mean "step," which is what one seeks to learn in dancing school.

2 She sings *pofs*, which is actually English: puffs = cigarettes.

ABOUT THE RECONSTRUCTION TEAM

Musician and writer **Ronald Robboy** was Senior Researcher for Michael Tilson Thomas's Thomashefsky Project, for whom he developed the Yiddish theater musical reconstructions that MTT performed as part of his *Thomashefskys* program. Robboy also led YIVO's reconstruction of Rumshinsky's *Shir-hashirim* in 2023. He was for many years a cellist in both the San Diego Symphony and the San Diego Opera, and at the same time was active in the New Music and Conceptual Art communities as well as in the earliest years of the West Coast klezmer revival. In 1995 the San Diego Jewish Film Festival commissioned his original score to Molly Picon's early silent film *East and West*, and other of his own music has been heard in New York—at MOMA and The Kitchen—as well as in California. A contributor to *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Robboy has held research fellowships at YIVO Institute and University of California—San Diego, and his writing on Yiddish film, literature, and theater music has appeared in arts magazines and academic settings.

Max Friedman is a composer, trumpet player, Yiddishist, translator, and educator based in Memphis, TN. His music and scholarship explore the multitudes of ways Yiddish speakers have and continue to express their identities through music. Friedman holds degrees from Brown University (AB '20) and Brandeis University (MFA '22), and his mentors have included Eric Nathan, Wang Lu, Shawn Jaeger, David Rakowski, Yu-Hui Chang, Erin Gee, Taylor Ackley, and Ellen Kellman. An advanced Yiddish student and translator, Friedman was a 2021 Steiner Program Fellow at the Yiddish Book Center, and in 2022 attended the YIVO-Bard Uriel Weinreich Yiddish Summer Program. He has also presented at conferences hosted at Indiana University, Brandeis University, and the University of Toronto.

Alex Weiser is the Director of Public Programs at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research where he curates and produces programs combining a fascination with and curiosity for historical context, with an eye toward influential Jewish contributions to the culture of today and tomorrow. Born and raised in NYC, Weiser is also an active composer of contemporary classical music. Weiser's debut album, *and all the days were purple*, was named a 2020 Pulitzer Prize Finalist and cited as "a meditative and deeply spiritual work whose unexpected musical language is arresting and directly emotional." Released by Cantaloupe Music in April 2019, the album includes songs in Yiddish and English. An opera composer, Weiser is currently developing *Tevye's Daughters* with librettist Stephanie Fleischmann (American Lyric Theater), and recently premiered *The Great Dictionary of the Yiddish Language* with librettist Ben Kaplan (American Opera Projects).

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Jacob Altrock (*Narrator, ensemble*)

Jacob Altrock is an operatic performer and curator interested in increasing relevancy and experimentalism in opera storytelling. As a singer, he has performed as Betto di Signa (*Gianni Schicchi*), Pandolfe (*Cendrillon*), and Friedrich Bhaer (*Little Women*). In 2024, Jacob received a Fulbright Research Grant to intern at Staatsoper Stuttgart in Germany as part of Junge Oper im Nord, a division focusing on new operatic audiences. He stage managed and assistant directed several productions, including a new, children-focused opera, *Mlarben-Plak*. In collaboration with the opera house, Altrock self-directed and performed in *Pin-Up Doll*—described as "captivating and delighting" by the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*.

Liz Boyle (*Ensemble*)

Elizabeth Boyle is a soprano from the Philadelphia area whose work spans opera and concert repertoire, with a strong foundation in choral singing. She recently appeared as La Ciesca in Bard's production of *Gianni Schicchi* and as a featured soloist with the Bard Baroque Ensemble. As a member of the Philadelphia Symphonic Choir, she has sung with the Philadelphia Orchestra under conductors such as Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Nathalie Stutzmann. Her training includes Westminster CoOPERative, Passaggio in Salzburg, and the Académie Internationale d'Été in Nice. She holds a Bachelor of Music from Westminster Choir College.

Daphne Buan (*Ensemble*)

Daphne Buan is a soprano and Wisconsin native. An alumna of Eastman School of Music, she is currently a member of Bard College Conservatory's master's program where she studies under Lorraine Nubar. This season, she has appeared as a soloist in Kurtág's *In Memory of a Winter Evening*, *Gianni Schicchi* (Nella), and *Hänsel und Gretel* (Gretel). Additional

recent credits include *Ainadamar* (Nuria), *Gianni Schicchi* (Lauretta), *Lilacs and Lilies* (Aneta), *Dido and Aeneas* (Belinda), and *Die Zauberflöte* (Pamina). This summer, she will attend the Seagle Festival as an emerging artist singing *Così Fan Tutte* (Despina) and *Dead Man Walking* (Sister Lilianne).

Louisa Gundeck (*Zelde-Zlate*)

Louisa Gundeck is a soprano from the Hudson Valley, New York. This season at Bard, she sang Il Notaio in *Gianni Schicchi* and in the ensemble of Menotti's *Amelia al ballo*. She is excited to join the Prague Summer Nights Festival this summer to perform as the First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*. Past credits include Suor Osmina in *Suor Angelica* and Spirit of The Boy in *Curlew River*, and scene appearances include Héro in *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Dorinda in *Orlando*. She studies with Michaela Martens and graduated from Boston University with a Bachelor of Music in 2025.

Shane Hall (*Policeman*)

Shane Hall is a baritone originally from New Mexico and now based in upstate New York. While studying classical vocal performance at the University of New Mexico, Hall performed many roles with the UNM Opera Theatre including Prof. Bhaer and Mr. Dashwood in *Adamo's Little Women*, Bartolo in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Mr. Gedge, the Vicar, in *Albert Herring*. Hall has also performed as a soloist in several concert works such as Haydn's *Missa in tempore belli*, Fauré's *Requiem*, and J. C. Bach's *Magnificat*. Earlier this year, Hall performed as Marco in the Bard Vocal Arts Program's production of *Gianni Schicchi*.

Evan Katsefes (*Sammy*)

Having been heard in opera, recital, and concert throughout the United States and Europe, tenor Evan Katsefes has been described as a "gripping" performer with "excellent diction

and intonation,” and “unfailing in communicating both words and music” (*Classical Source*). With a repertoire spanning the baroque era to modern music, he finds himself equally at home on operatic, concert, and recital stages. The summer of 2024 saw Katsefes as a Vocal Arts Fellow at The Tanglewood Music Festival. Subsequently, Katsefes was invited as a fellow at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s Ravinia Festival, in their Steans Institute for singers, led by Kevin Murphy. A recent graduate from Manhattan School of Music, Katsefes studied with Marlena Malas and Mark Schnaible. Continuing his studies at Bard College for his master’s degree, he studies with soprano Lucy Fitz Gibbon.

Gyuri Kim (*Ensemble*)

Gyuri Kim, a Korean soprano, was featured in March 2026 at the Fisher Center at Bard as Lauretta in Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi* and performed in the ensemble of Menotti’s *Amelia al ballo*. She previously sang the role of Königin der Nacht in Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte* and appeared in the chorus of Verdi’s *La Traviata* at Hanyang University in Korea. This summer, she joins the Chicago Summer Opera as La Fée in Massenet’s *Cendrillon*. She earned her Bachelor of Music in Voice at Hanyang University under Robert Lee. She is currently pursuing her Master of Music, studying with Lorraine Nubar.

Stella Luan (*Suzy*)

Chinese mezzo-soprano Stella Luan is building an active performance career across diverse musical traditions. She recently performed as the Chambermaid in *Amelia al ballo* and as Guccio in *Gianni Schicchi* at Bard’s Fisher Center. In China, she has performed in Nanjing, Suzhou, Beijing, and Guangzhou, spanning Chinese vocal works, Western art song, and opera excerpts, and has premiered new works by Chinese composers. She has participated in masterclasses in Italy and South Korea. She is currently pursuing her Master of Music, studying with Lorraine Nubar.

Evan McMahon (*Motl*)

Chinese-American tenor Evan McMahon, from New York City, is seen this season appearing as Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* and in the first act duet from Bizet’s *Carmen*. He holds a Bachelor of Music from the Eastman School of Music, where he studied under Robert Swensen. His roles during previous seasons with Eastman Opera Theater include Tanzmeister (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Torero (*Ainadamar*), Zacarias (*Silent Light*), and Oronte (cover) in *Alcina*. He is a lover of song and an accomplished recitalist, performing Fauré’s *mélodies* and Schubert’s *Die schöne Müllerin*. He has also sung with the Baroque Collegium Ensemble with Paul O’dette.

Evan Nelson (*Ensemble*)

Baritone Evan Nelson was born in Reading, Pennsylvania. He holds a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance with a minor in Historical Performance from the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. His credits include Il Conte in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermaus*, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*. This spring, he appears with Bard’s Graduate Vocal Arts Program as Simone in *Gianni Schicchi* and as a baritone soloist in BWV 82, “Ich habe genug.” He is studying with American mezzo-soprano Michaela Martens.

Gimena Sánchez Rivera (*Ensemble*)

Costa Rican soprano Gimena Sánchez Rivera is a member of the Costa Rican National Lyric Company Opera Studio, with which she has appeared as Marquesa del Bierzo in *El barberillo de Lavapiés*, performed solo recitals at Teatro Nacional de Costa Rica, and made her debut with the National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica (OSN) in a zarzuela gala. This season, she portrayed Amelia in Bard College’s production of Menotti’s *Amelia al ballo* and is preparing Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 with the OSN. A graduate of The Juilliard School, she is pursuing a Master of Music at Bard College Conservatory, studying with Lorraine Nubar.

Hyuna Shin (*Pianist*)

Hyuna Shin, a collaborative pianist originally from South Korea, holds a master's degree in Collaborative Piano from the Cleveland Institute of Music and a DMA in Collaborative Piano from the University of Texas at Austin. She also studied at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, working with Anita Pontremoli and Colette Valentine. She has performed widely in solo and ensemble settings and participated in the Courchevel Fête de la Musique in France and the International Keyboard Institute & Festival in New York. She is currently a Collaborative Piano Fellow at Bard College Conservatory.

Laura Stanell (*Khantshe*)

Laura Stanell is a soprano from Harleysville, Pennsylvania. She recently sang Nella in the Bard Vocal Arts Program production of *Gianni Schicchi* by Puccini. This past summer, Stanell covered Lisa in *La Sonnambula* with Teatro Nuovo and sang in the ensembles of both *La Sonnambula* and *Macbeth* (1847 version). She sang Barbarina in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi* with Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and sang *Suor Genovieffa* in *Bel Canto* in Tuscany's *Suor Angelica*. She is currently pursuing a Master of Music at Bard College Conservatory and is studying with Michaela Martens.

Leonor Vasconcelos (*Ensemble*)

Soprano Leonor Vasconcelos, from Lisbon, Portugal, is a first-year master's student at the Bard Conservatory, studying with Lorraine Nubar, and a 2025–2026 Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation Scholarship recipient. This season, she made her role debut as Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi* at the Fisher Center at Bard and appeared in the Gerda Lissner/WQXR November event in New York City. A Juilliard graduate, her roles include Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Suor Osmina (*Suor Angelica*), and Sister St. Charles (*Dialogues des Carmélites*). She has debuted at Carnegie Hall and performed in Portugal at the National Theatre of São Carlos and D. Maria II.

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