



# *The Songs They Sang*

*A musical narrative  
of the Vilna Ghetto.*

FEATURING ARRANGEMENTS  
AND ORIGINAL MUSIC BY

Joseph Giovinazzo

PERFORMANCES BY

Deborah Kayser

Michael Kieran Harvey

Aaron Barnden

Caerwen Martin

**PRODUCERS**

Michael Hewes and Joseph Giovinazzo

**EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS**

Anna Monca and Amadeo Marquez-Perez

Recorded at *Move Studio*, Eaglemont, Australia by Michael Hewes, Vaughan McAlley and Blake Stickland, except as indicated.

\* Recorded at Lofish Studios, New York, USA  
Sound engineer: Alex Nizich

\*\* Recorded at Oaklands Productions, Nunawading, Australia  
Sound engineer: Jarrad Gilson

\*\*\* Recorded by Kaczerginski, New York, USA, 1948. Archive recording used with permission. Ben Stonchill Collection/  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington

Mixed and mastered by Michael Hewes at  
*Run Stop Sound*, Abbotsford, Australia.

A selection of songs and music on this CD featured in the documentary, *The Songs They Sang*, directed by Rohan Spong. The film tells a story of solace and reflection through music, under the hardship of the Vilna Ghetto, Lithuania, during World War II. [www.songstheysang.com](http://www.songstheysang.com)

Design: Mark Fletcher Design

© 2013 Anna Monca & Amadeo Marquez-Perez

All Rights reserved. Unauthorised duplication is a violation of applicable laws.

## *The Songs They Sang*

1. <i>Springtime/Friling***</i> .....	1:06
2. <i>It's One, Two, Three/Tsu Eyns, Tsvey, Dray</i> .....	4:54
3. <i>Never Say/Zog Nit Keyn Mol</i> .....	3:13
4. <i>Mrs Zuben</i> .....	1:22
5. <i>Never Say Reprise</i> .....	0:47
6. <i>Quiet, Quiet/Shtiler, Shtiler</i> .....	5:01
7. <i>The Expanse</i> .....	1:23
8. <i>Does It Have To Be This Way?/Tsi Darf Es Azoy Zayn?</i> .....	3:24
9. <i>As They Brush Past</i> .....	0:38
10. <i>Song Of An Unknown Partisan/Lid Fun Umbakantn Partizan</i> .....	5:26
11. <i>Mournful Voice</i> .....	1:59
12. <i>Drowsing Birds/Dremlen Feygl Af Di Tsvaygn</i> .....	3:14
13. <i>Motif From Vayser Shtern</i> .....	2:19
14. <i>Ghetto/Geto</i> .....	4:46
15. <i>Why?</i> .....	1:01
16. <i>Hymn Of Youth/Yugnt – Himen</i> .....	5:32
17. <i>The Sorrows Will Melt</i> .....	1:08
18. <i>While We Waltz</i> .....	1:14
19. <i>The Vilna Laments</i> .....	2:37
20. <i>Under Your Starry Heaven/Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern*</i> .....	2:10
21. <i>Vayser Shtern Fantasy</i> .....	3:52
22. <i>The Wake</i> .....	0:48
23. <i>Mother/A Mame**</i> .....	3:40
24. <i>The Ponar Forest</i> .....	2:53
25. <i>Under Your Starry Heaven/Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern</i> .....	4:27
26. <i>I Long For My Home/Ikh Benk Abeyn</i> .....	4:57
27. <i>Springtime/Friling***</i> .....	3:13

### **1. Springtime/Eriling**

Lyrics - Shmerke Kaczerginski Music - Abraham Brudno  
Performed by Shmerke Kaczerginski

### **2. It's One, Two, Three/ Tsu Eyns, Tsvey, Dray**

Lyrics - Leyb Rozental  
Music - Adaptation of a Hans Eisler song  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano,  
Caerwen Martin - cello, Aaron Barnden - violin

### **3. Never Say/Zog Nit Keyn Mol**

Lyrics - Hirsh Glik  
Based on a melody by Dmitry Pokrass  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Aaron Barnden - violin

### **4. Mrs Zuben**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Michael Kieran Harvey - piano, Caerwen Martin - cello

### **5. Never Say Reprise**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Aaron Barnden - violin

### **6. Quiet, Quiet/Shtiler, Shtiler**

Lyrics - Shmerke Kaczerginski  
Music - Alexander Tamir  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano,  
Caerwen Martin - cello, Aaron Barnden - violin

### **7. The Expanse**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Michael Kieran Harvey - piano

### **8. Does It Have To Be This Way?/ Tsi Darf Es Azoy Zayn?**

Lyrics - Kasriel Brodyo  
Music - Composer unknown  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano,  
Caerwen Martin - cello

### **9. As They Brush Past**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Michael Kieran Harvey - piano, Caerwen Martin - cello,  
Aaron Barnden - violin

### **10. Song Of An Unknown Partisan/ Lid Fun Umbakantn Partizan**

Lyrics - Lyricist unknown  
Music - Adaptation of a Yiddish song  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano,  
Caerwen Martin - cello, Aaron Barnden - violin

### **11. Mournful Voice**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Caerwen Martin - cello

### **12. Drowsing Birds/ Dremlen Feygl Af Di Tsvaygn**

Lyrics - Leah Rudnicki  
Based on an early Yiddish song *S'iz keyn broyt in shtub nishto*  
Words by Izi Charik, Music by Leyb Yampolski  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano

### **13. Motif From Vayser Shtern**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Michael Kieran Harvey - piano

### **14. Ghetto/Geto**

Lyrics - Kasriel Brodyo  
Music - Recomposition by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano,  
Caerwen Martin - cello, Aaron Barnden - violin

### **15. Why?**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Caerwen Martin - cello

### **16. Hymn Of Youth/Yugnt – Himen**

Lyrics - Shmerke Kaczerginski Music - Joseph Giovinazzo  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano,  
Caerwen Martin - cello, Aaron Barnden - violin

### **17. The Sorrows Will Melt**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Caerwen Martin - cello,  
Aaron Barnden - violin

### **18. While We Waltz**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano

### **19. The Vilna Laments**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Caerwen Martin - cello,  
Aaron Barnden - violin

### **20. Under Your Starry Heaven/ Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern**

Lyrics - Abraham Sutzkever Music - Abraham Brudno  
Arranged by Larza Viener  
Cantor Robert Abelson - baritone  
Mimi Stern-Wolfe - piano

### **21. Vayser Shtern Fantasy**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano,  
Caerwen Martin - cello, Aaron Barnden - violin

### **22. The Wake**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Caerwen Martin - cello

### **23. Mother/A Mame**

Lyrics and Music - Chayele Posnanski  
Arranged by Gregory Smith  
Pauline Sher - soprano  
Additional performers: Ben Hudson, Zac Johnston,  
Emma Rodda, Nathan Scemi, Adrian Szondy,  
Sophie Anderson, Danielle Tyson, Christopher Wiseman,  
Jane Patterson, Dorothy Yukilis, James Steendam,  
Tim Hennessy, Amy Tcheydjian, Katherine Quirk,  
Adrian Close, Sophia Ang, James Bradley,  
Catherine Buxton, Susan Batten, Jason Xanthoudakis,  
Matt Bailey, Megan Reeves, Matthew Pointer,  
Stuart Brownley.

### **24. The Ponar Forest**

Music by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano,  
Caerwen Martin - cello, Aaron Barnden - violin

### **25. Under Your Starry Heaven/ Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern**

Lyrics - Abraham Sutzkever  
Music - Abraham Brudno  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano

### **26. I Long For My Home/Ikh Benk Abeym**

Lyrics - Leyb Rozental  
Music - Recomposition by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Arranged by Joseph Giovinazzo  
Deborah Kayser - soprano, Michael Kieran Harvey - piano,  
Caerwen Martin - cello, Aaron Barnden - violin

### **27. Springtime/Eriling**

Lyrics - Shmerke Kaczerginski  
Music - Abraham Brudno  
Performed by Shmerke Kaczerginski



Photography: Marcus Thomson [www.marcusthompson.com.au](http://www.marcusthompson.com.au)

*The Vilna Ghetto in Lithuania existed from 1941 to 1943 during World War II. Starvation, disease, execution, and deportation to concentration camps, reduced the Jewish population of the ghetto from an estimated 40,000 to only a few hundred by the time it was liquidated in September 1943.*

*In January 1942, theatre emerged in the Vilna Ghetto as a means of solace and diversion. Productions included Yiddish and European classics, and original plays and revues which reflected the concerns, anxieties and fears of the ghetto residents.*

*Musical performances, poetry readings and seminars also took place. These events gave the audience a few critical hours of “forgetfulness” as a reprieve from their horrific circumstances.*

*All the songs in this collection were written in the Vilna Ghetto. The current arrangements have preserved their original Yiddish dialect.*

## Springtime/Eriling

LYRICS - SHMERKE KACZERGINSKI (1908 - 1954)

MUSIC - ABRAHAM BRUDNO (D. 1943)

Opening comments by Shmerke Kacerginski:

*[I will now sing] the song that I wrote in Vilna ghetto in 1943 after the murder of my wife. The melody was written by Avreml Brudno. Murdered.*

Springtime, dispel my sorrow,  
Bring my beloved,  
My dear one to me.  
Springtime, blue wings for me you'll borrow,  
Oh, take my poor heart,  
And return my joy to me.  
Springtime, blue wings for me you'll borrow,  
Oh, take my poor heart,  
And return my joy to me.\*

\* This is an extract. Please refer to page 14 for the complete song.

With thanks to Bret Werb for translation.

Recording by Kacerginski in New York City, 1948

Ben Stonehill Collection/United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,  
Washington

## It's One, Two, Three/Tsu Eyms, Tsvey, Dray

LYRICS - LEYB ROZENTAL/ROSENTHAL (1916 - 1945)

MUSIC - ADAPTION OF A SONG BY HANS EISLER

ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

In the past it was life that beckoned,  
Life filled with bright sunny days.  
And so one and all, without thought or recall,  
Went gaily their own separate ways.  
It's one, two, three,  
It's one, two, three,  
Walking to work, time would fly,  
Every step ringing strong,  
Every road had its song,  
When you know where you're going and why.

Forbidden for us now this sidewalk,  
Though others go at will, and free,  
And we, you must know,  
On the stone roadway go,  
Under whiplash and brutality.  
It's one, two, three,  
It's one, two, three,  
The roadway is where we pass by.  
The step's far from strong,  
With a difference in song,  
When you're going without knowing why.

The old people and the young ones  
Built lives hoping joy lay ahead,  
When a sharp sword was hurled,  
Wiping dreams from the world  
And like the poor sheep we were led.  
It's one, two, three,  
It's one, two, three,  
Treated like sheep we stood by,  
Where's your child, where's your wife?  
Where's the reason for life?  
No one knows the wherein or the why.

But brother, a new kind of rhythm  
Will bring to your ear a new song,  
And the one, who in fear  
Hid, afraid to come near,  
Will be marching with us  
Right along.  
It's one, two, three,  
It's one, two, three,  
To alleys and gateways good-bye!  
Every step ringing strong  
Brings a far different song.  
When you go and you now know the why.

**Leyb Rozental/Rosenthal** (songwriter, poet, playwright) adapted this song from an early concentration camp song by Hans Eisler. Rozental wrote satirical revues and songs for his ghetto inmates. His sister Chayela, a teenager at the time, performed many of his songs. The Rozental siblings were taken to the Estonian concentration camp, Klooga in 1943. Leyb was forcibly drowned in the Baltic Sea in January 1945. Chayela survived the war and died in 1979.

## Never Say/Zog Nit Keyn Mol

LYRICS - HIRSH GLIK (1922 - 1944)

MUSIC - BASED ON A MELODY BY DMITRY POKRASS (1899 - 1978)

ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

Never say this is the final road for you,  
Though leadened skies may cover over days of blue.  
As the hour that we longed for is so near,  
Our step beats out the message – we are here!

From lands so green with palms to lands all white with snow,  
We shall be coming with our anguish and our woe,  
And where a spurt of our blood fell on the earth,  
There our courage and our spirit have rebirth.

The early morning sun will brighten our day,  
And yesterday with our foe will fade away.  
But if the sun delays and in the east remains –  
This song as password generations must maintain.

This song was written with our blood and not with lead,  
It's not a little tune that birds sing overhead,  
This song a people sang amid collapsing walls,  
With grenades in hands they heeded to the call.\*

Therefore never say the road now ends for you,  
Though leadened skies may cover over days of blue.  
As the hour that we longed for is so near –  
Our step beats out the message – we are here!\*

\* These verses are not included in this recording.

The poet and songwriter, **Hirsh Glik**, wrote *Never Say* in the Vilna Ghetto in 1943, just before his deportation to an Estonian concentration camp that year. He set the words to a melody by the Russian composer Dmitry Pokrass. *Never Say* gained appeal in Vilna and other ghettos, and became the anthem of the Jewish partisan movement. It came to be known as *The Song of the Partisans*. He continued to write songs and poems in the Estonian concentration camp. In July 1944, when the concentration camp was destroyed, Glik fled to a nearby forest. It is thought that he was executed there. He was 22.

## Quiet, Quiet/Shtiler, Shtiler

LYRICS - SHMERKE KACZERGINSKI (1908 - 1954)

MUSIC - ALEXANDER TAMIR (1931 - )

ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

Quiet, quiet, let's be silent.  
Dead are growing here.  
They were planted by the tyrant,  
See their bloom appear.  
All the roads lead to Ponar now,  
There are no roads back,  
And our father too has vanished,  
And with him our luck.  
Still, my child, don't cry, my jewel.  
Tears no help commands,  
Our pain callous people  
Never understand.  
Seas and oceans have their order,  
Prison also has its border,  
But to our plight  
There is no light,  
There is no light.\*

Spring has come, the earth receives her –  
But to us brings fall.  
And the day is filled with flowers, –  
To us darkness calls.  
Autumn leaves with gold are softened, –  
In us grow deep scars,  
And a mother somewhere orphaned –  
Her child – in Ponar.  
Now the river too is prisoner –  
Is enmeshed in pain –  
While the blocks of ice tear through her,  
To the ocean strain.  
Still, things frozen melt, remember,  
And cold winds to warmth surrender –  
Future bring a smile –  
So calls your child,  
So calls your child.

Quiet, quiet, wells grow stronger  
Deep within our hearts,  
Till the gates are there no longer,  
No sound must impart.

Child, rejoice not, it's your smiling  
That is not allowed.  
Let the foe encounter springtime  
As an autumn cloud.  
Let the well flow gently onward,  
Silent be and dream...

Coming freedom brings your father,  
Slumber, child serene.  
As the river liberated,  
Springtime green is celebrated  
Kindle freedom's light,  
It is your right,  
It is your right.

\* This verse is not included in the recording.

**Alexander Wolkovskiy** was eleven when he wrote the music for *Quiet, Quiet*, for a music competition held in Vilna Ghetto in early 1943. It was performed in one of the last concerts staged before the ghetto was liquidated in September 1943. Wolkovskiy and his mother were among the few Vilna Jews to survive the war. After liberation Wolkovskiy moved to Israel and became a professional pianist working under the name, Alexander Tamir.

The poet and writer, **Shmerke Kaczerginski** wrote the lyrics in memory of the mass murder of the Jews in the Ponar Forest on the outskirts of Vilna. Kaczerginski joined the partisan movement following the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto. After the war he compiled several hundred poems and song lyrics. He settled in Argentina in 1950 and was prominent in Jewish circles as an editor and a speaker. Kaczerginski died in a plane crash in 1954. (For more information on Kaczerginski please see the entry for *Hymn Of Youth* and *Springtime*.)

### *Does It Have To Be This Way?/Tsi Darf Es Azoy Zayn?*

LYRICS - KASRIEL BROYDO (1907 - 1945)  
MUSIC - ORIGINAL COMPOSER UNKNOWN  
ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

The same streets and the trolleys running  
Numbers eleven and four.  
The same newsboys – they're rushing, shouting  
To sell their papers – news galore.  
The same blue sky – but not the same now  
Are people under it;  
The sun is shining – I don't know how,  
No thought can make this riddle fit.  
Oh, should it be this way,  
Oh, must it be this way?  
For a few there is life and joy  
And for the others a world destroyed,  
Who was the one to say  
This world should be this way?  
My heart seeks, it wants to know  
Why must it be so?  
Why must it be?

For them the boulevards and plazas,  
For me a pauper's place.  
Forever fooled, my life haphazard –  
For me the lonely depths to face;  
Why should there be a sign declaring:  
No further may you go?  
Oh, why for them my house to live in,  
For me no bed, no warmth to know?  
Oh, should it be this way.....

**Kasriel Broydo** (poet, songwriter, actor, director) wrote the lyrics for *Does It Have To Be This Way?* while interned at the Vilna Ghetto. He was involved, in various capacities, in nearly every play staged in the ghetto. After Vilna, Broydo was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to a Latvian concentration camp where he continued to write. In January, 1945, he was transferred to Germany and, along with hundreds of other Jews, was forcibly drowned in the Baltic Sea near Königsberg. The song's composer is not known.

### *Song Of An Unknown Partisan/Lid Fun Umbakantn Partizan*

LYRICS - LYRICIST UNKNOWN  
MUSIC - ADAPTATION OF A YIDDISH SONG  
ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

Sleep, my child, sleep quietly this time,  
Till the night allows the moon to shine.  
In the sky the stars appear,  
Child, don't look upon my tears,  
Sleep, my child, sleep quietly this time.  
Your dear father is forever lost,  
Taken from us, bitter is the cost.  
On a street was dragged and tied,  
In a gas chamber he died.  
Sleep, my child, sleep quietly this time.

High you'll hold our flag one fine day,  
With conviction you will lead the way,  
Say that people must be free,  
Rouse mankind and let them see  
That there is a better, freer world.  
Sleep, my child, sleep quietly this time,  
Till the night allows the moon to shine.  
In the sky the stars appear,  
Child, don't look upon my tears,  
Sleep, my child, sleep quietly this time.

*Song Of An Unknown Partisan* was sung in the Vilna Ghetto and in the Kaunas and Transnistria Ghettos. The music was an adaptation of a Yiddish song about the Spanish Civil War. The author of the lyrics is not known.

### *Drowsing Birds/Dremlen Feygl Af Di Tsvaygn*

LYRICS - LEAH RUDNICKI/RUDNITSKI (1916 - 1943)  
BASED ON THE YIDDISH SONG *S'IZ KEYN BROTT IN SHTUB NISHTO*, WORDS BY IZI CHARIK AND MUSIC BY LEYB YAMPOLSKI.  
ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

Birds sit drowsing on the branches,  
Sleep, my precious child.  
By your cradle in your little nest  
Sings a stranger by your side:  
Lu-Lu, Lu-Lu, Lu.

Here your cradle had its dwelling  
Laced with happiness in store,  
And your mother, Oh, your mother,  
Will return no more.  
Lu-Lu, Lu-Lu, Lu.

I have seen your father running  
Under hails of stone,  
Flying over fields there echoed  
His desolated moan.  
Lu-Lu, Lu-Lu, Lu.

**Leah Rudnicki/Rudnitski** (teacher, poet, journalist) wrote this lullaby while caring for an orphan in the Vilna Ghetto. She set the words to the melody of the Yiddish song *S'iz keyn broyt in shtub nishto* by Izi Charik and Leyb Yampolski. Rudnicki was a prolific writer who contributed to the artistic and literary life of the ghetto. She had been an active member of the resistance movement when she was captured and deported to Majdanek concentration camp in September 1943. Rudnicki did not survive the camp.

## Ghetto/Geto

LYRICS - KASRIEL BROYDO (1907 - 1945)  
MUSIC - RECOMPOSITION BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO  
(ORIGINAL COMPOSER UNKNOWN)  
ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

We're standing by the walls  
With heartache, lost, defenceless,  
With hands that hang and fall  
Just like the weeping willow branches.  
Into the void eyes stare  
Peering blindly through the denseness  
Only pain is there –  
The infinite.

Hard to view the world through crowded dwellings,  
Tall gates of ghetto walls all light dispelling –  
Yet when you close your eyes,  
Then everything appears like dreaming.  
And you almost surmise  
The great wide world.

Ghetto!  
In my memory you'll never die,  
My dirge –  
Is your heartfelt,  
And your mournful song.  
I see all your weeping,  
Your sadness I see.  
I hear all your pleas,  
What will be, what will be?  
Within your ghetto alleys there's no room,  
Sadness the heart sustains,  
Although I know the hurt –  
The love always remains....  
Ghetto!  
In my memory you'll never die!

**Kasriel Broydo** wrote the words for *Ghetto*. While the original composer of the music is not known, the version on this CD is a recomposition by Joseph Giovinnazzo with occasional references to the original. (For more information on Broydo please see the entry for *Does It Have To Be This Way?*)

## Hymn Of Youth/Yugnt – Himen

LYRICS - SHMERKE KACZERGINSKI (1908 - 1954)  
MUSIC - COMPOSED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO  
(ORIGINAL COMPOSER - BAYSE RUBIN)  
ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

Our song is filled with grieving,  
Bold our step, we mark along.  
Though the foe the gateway's watching,  
Youth comes storming with their song:

Young are they, are they, are they  
Whose age won't bind them,  
Years don't really mean a thing,  
Elders also, also, also, can be children  
In a newer, freer spring.

Those who roam upon the highways,  
Those whose step with hope is strong,  
From the ghetto youth salutes them  
And their greetings send along.

Young are they .....

We remember all our tyrants,  
We remember all our friends,  
And we pledge that in the future  
Our past and present blend.

Young are they.....

So we're girding our muscles,  
In our ranks we're planting steel,  
Where a blacksmith, builder marches,  
We will join them with our zeal!

Young are they.....

**Shmerke Kaczerginski** dedicated *Hymn Of Youth* to a youth club in the Vilna Ghetto. The music composer Bayse Rubin is believed to have survived the war. (For further information on Kaczerginski please see the entry for *Quiet, Quiet and Springtime*.) The music for *Hymn Of Youth*, on this CD, is not composed by Bayse Rubin. This version was composed by Joseph Giovinnazzo.

## Under Your Starry Heaven/Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern

LYRICS - ABRAHAM (AVROM) SUTZKEVER (1913 - 2010)  
MUSIC - ABRAHAM BRUDNO (D: 1943)  
TRACK 20 - ARRANGED BY LARZA VIENER  
TRACK 25 - ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

Under your white starry heaven  
Offer me your pale white hand.  
All my words are flowing teardrops,  
I would place them in your hand.  
Gone the lustre from their brightness,  
Seen through morbid cellar view –  
And I no longer have my own space  
To reflect them back to you.

My devoted God I offer  
Everything that I possess,  
As the fire that I suffer  
Fills each fiery day I pass.  
Only in the holes and cellars  
With deadly rest my days I share.  
I run higher – over spine  
Searching where are you, oh where?

I am chased by phantom beings  
Stairs and courtyards goad me too.  
There I hang a broken bowstring –  
And I sing once more to you:  
Under your white starry heaven  
Offer me your pale white hand.  
All my words are flowing teardrops,  
I would place them in your hand.

*Under Your Starry Heaven* first appeared in the play, *Di Yogenish in Fas* performed in the Vilna Ghetto. **Abraham Brudno** wrote the music. After the liquidation of the ghetto, Brudno was deported to an Estonian concentration camp where he died.

**Abraham (Avrom) Sutzkever**, who wrote the lyrics, was well known before the war, and is recognised as one of the most important contemporary Yiddish poets. On hearing of the impending liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto in 1943, Sutzkever and his wife escaped to the forest outside

Vilna, and, with Yiddish poet Shmerke Kaczerginski, joined the partisan movement to fight occupying forces. Sutzkever and Kaczerginski were members of the Papirbrigade (Paper Brigade). They risked their lives to help hide significant Jewish cultural artefacts and important texts, many of which survived the war. Sutzkever settled in Israel. He died on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, 2010 in Tel Aviv at the age of 96. Sutzkever received the Israel Prize for Yiddish literature. His poems have been translated into 30 languages.

## Mother/A Mame

LYRICS AND MUSIC BY CHAYELE POSNANSKI  
ARRANGED BY GREGORY SMITH

Today I arose at dawn,  
And reminded myself that there was something I wanted.  
Immediately you came to mind,  
And your picture drew itself for me.

Oh how good it is, just to be together,  
I once didn't understand this.  
Oh how bad it is to be without a mother.  
Oh how bitter to live without her!

She would say: "The years they run,  
And everything, dear daughter, you can get for money  
Only a mother – you cannot buy her.  
She is unique in the whole world."

From my loving, dear mother –  
These words, they came from her.  
Oh how good it is, just to be together!  
Oh how bitter it is to live without her.

**Chayele Posnanski** wrote *Mother* when she was fifteen. She did not survive the war and no further information about her could be found.

## *I Long For My Home/Ikh Benk Abeym*

LYRICS - LEYB ROZENTAL/ROSENTHAL (1916 – 1945)

MUSIC - RECOMPOSITION BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO  
(ORIGINAL COMPOSER UNKNOWN)

ARRANGED BY JOSEPH GIOVINAZZO

When you are young,  
Your spirit's strong,  
Then your pursuit is gain,  
Forsake – forget  
Your home, your nest,  
The time is not regained.  
When your old age draws near,  
The past then reappears,  
We question what occurred.  
How little we observed –  
Just yesterday my childish voice was heard.

I want to see my home once more –  
Are things the way they were before,  
The old worn porch, the old gnarled tree,  
The roof from which the walls hung free,  
My poor old home.

Four walls, a table and a bench,  
T'was here my childhood years were spent;  
And here I dreamed my dreams alone,  
My song of youth, my wild oats sown,  
I long for home.

I hear the soulful singing sounds of night.  
The wind like a mother holds me tight.  
Oh, the longing for the charm once known  
Fond in a mother's humble home.  
It may be brick or made of stone,  
It may be straw or built of loam,  
I long for home. \*

With life carefree,  
The hours flee,  
I stand aside and think;  
Man has, I'm sure,  
His place, his fare,  
His warm bed, nothing more.  
My home is marred for me.

My home is barred for me,  
I wander all about  
And I must do without.  
If I now only had my humble home.

\* This verse is not included in the recording.

**Leyb Rozental/Rosenthal**, who wrote the lyrics for *I Long for My Home*, also wrote songs and a number of plays for revue theatres. Please refer to the entry for *It's One, Two, Three* for further information on Rozental. While the original composer of the music is unknown, the version on this CD is a recomposition by Joseph Giovinnazzo with occasional references to the original.

## *Springtime/Eriling*

LYRICS - SHMERKE KACZERGINSKI (1908 - 1954)

MUSIC - ABRAHAM BRUDNO (D. 1943)

Springtime, dispel my sorrow,  
Bring my beloved,  
My dear one to me.  
Springtime, blue wings for me you'll borrow,  
Oh, take my poor heart,  
And return my joy to me.  
Springtime, blue wings for me you'll borrow,  
Oh, take my poor heart,  
And return my joy to me.

I roam through the ghetto  
From alley to alley  
Useless, no haven I find;  
Gone my beloved,  
Oh, how can I bear it? –  
Won't somebody say something kind?  
My house is aglow now,  
The sky so much bluer –  
What does that mean in my life?  
I stand like a beggar,  
I huddle at gateways  
And beg for a handful of light.

Springtime, dispel my sorrow....

I go to my labour,  
I pass by our dwelling,  
Bereaved now – the gate is shut tight:  
The day bathed in sunshine,  
Sad flowers are fading,  
They weep, for them too it is night.  
At night when returning,  
With deep sadness gnawing,  
Right here, love, you waited for me.  
Right here in the shadow  
I still hear your step fall,  
Your arms held me so tenderly.

Springtime, dispel my sorrow....

This year the springtime  
Is with us so early,  
My longing for you burst in bloom,  
I see you as now, dear,  
All covered with flowers,  
With gladness you'll come to me soon.  
The sun has now showered  
The garden with sunshine,  
The earth is all covered in green.  
My darling, my loved one,  
Are you lost for all time?  
My mind cannot bear what that means.

Springtime, dispel my sorrow....

Shmerke Kaczerginski wrote *Eriling* after the death of his wife in April 1943. Abraham Brudno wrote the music. (For further information on Kaczerginski please see the entry for *Quiet, Quiet* and *Hymn Of Youth*. For further information on Brudno please see the entry for *Under Your Starry Heaven*.)

## SOURCE MATERIAL

*We are Here, Songs of the Holocaust*,  
Compiled by Eleanor Mlotek and Malke Gottlieb  
Singable translations by Roslyn Bresnick-Perry  
Published by The Educational Department of  
the Workmen's Circle & Hippocrene Books, Inc,  
New York, N.Y. 10016

Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, New York  
[www.yivoinstitute.org](http://www.yivoinstitute.org)

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum,  
Washington [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)

Yad Vashem, The Holocaust History Museum,  
Israel [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

Music and the Holocaust (website)  
<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org>

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The executive producers would like to acknowledge and thank Professor Silviu Itescu for his support. Thank you also to Pauline Sher, Elisa Gray, George Muchnicki, Bronia Kornhauser, Annette Trevitt and Bret Werb, Music Collection Curator at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington.

The executive producers would especially like to acknowledge and thank Joseph Giovinnazzo and Michael Hewes for their ongoing commitment and generosity. We would also like to thank their respective families for their support.



# *The Songs They Sang*

*A musical narrative  
of the Vilna Ghetto.*

