

“Yiddish Art Song as a Musical-Poetic Hybrid Genre: The Influence of American Yiddish Poets on Jewish Composer, Lazar Weiner, and Weiner’s Musical Impact on Yiddish Poetry”

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**Beyond the Poetry: Musical Interpretation of Poetic Texts
An Exercise in Mindfulness**

Reminders: Some things to think about when listening to and analyzing Yiddish Art Songs

- a) Musical Elements: - Extra-Textual Parameters that can impart meaning
- b) Composers such as Lazar Weiner have many musical variables at their disposal
- c) Always remember: even if a piece is a solo art song, there are always at least two voices, i.e. the vocal part and the piano part

Musical Elements – the Composer’s Toolbox - to think about:

1) Melody

- How does the vocal melodic line move? In what direction? Higher or lower? By step? Arpeggiated? By leaps? Are pitches repeated? If words are repeated, are they repeated musically in the same way?
- Where is the climax of the music? Does it conform to the climax of the poem?

2) Rhythm

- Does the rhythm of the vocal melody follow the meter of the poetry? How does Weiner utilize the poem’s structure to shape his musical form?

3) Range and Tessitura

- What is the range of the vocal pitches overall? Does the ambit of range, i.e. tessitura, shift during the song? Where? What’s happening in the text then?

4) Dynamics

-How do the composer's indicators of sound volume influence the text's meaning? Where is 'f' or 'ff' indicated? Where is 'p' or 'pp' indicated? Where are there *crescendos*, *decrescendos*, or *sforzandos*?

5) Piano Accompaniment and Texture

-Is there a piano introduction? Does it mimic the opening vocal melody? If not, how is it shaped? What feeling is the accompaniment creating musically to prepare the listener for the text that's coming?

-How does the piano accompaniment interact with the vocal part? Is it call and response, is it simply harmonization, or is there a particular 'other voice' that is speaking through the accompaniment, e.g. alter ego, another person, a group?

6) Piano Accompaniment and Harmony

-Is the accompaniment homophonic (chordal) or polyphonic (multiple melodies within the accompaniment moving at different times and in different directions? What in the text might account for that choice?

-Is the harmony tonal or atonal?

7) Word Painting in Music

-Are there shapes to the melodic line or accompaniment in conjunction with rhythm, dynamics and tessitura that, working together, signal the world outside of the perceiver, the vocalist?

The Big Question: And finally, how does the composer capture the mood and intention of the poet's text and how does the composer move beyond it to perhaps his/her own interpretation, i.e. 'the multi-layered complication'?

IKH HOB FAR DIR A SOD

(I Have a Secret for You)

Poet: Nahum Baruch Minkoff (1893–1958)

*ikh hob far dir a sod a zisn
a vort, an eyn un eyntsik vort.*

*in virvar trogstu zikh farrisn
un ikh vayt fartrogn fun dayn ort.*

*ikh her nit oyf khaloymes tsu dir shpinen,
geheyne labirintn durkh mayn troym;*

*bay tog vert alts tserunen,
vu zol ikh dikh gefinen?*

*ot bist du do
un shoyn farshvundn in dem tifn thom.*

*ikh hob far dir a sod a zisn
a vort, an eyn un eyntsik vort.*

*loykhst uf, es haltn dayne oygn zikh in shlisn.
un ikh, ikh zukh nokh alts um dayn geheylikt ort.*

I have a sweet secret for you,
A word, a one and only word.

In the chaos you carry yourself haughtily
And I am carried off far from your place.

I do not cease to spin dreams for you,
Secret labyrinths through my dream;

When the day arrives, it all vanishes.
Where shall I find you?

Now you're here,
And suddenly you've vanished into the deep abyss.

I have a sweet secret for you,
A word, a one and only word.

You light up, your eyes are closing.
And I, I still seek Your hallowed place.

To Naomi-Sarah 316 A

ICH HOB FAR DIR A SOD

(I HAVE THE SWEETEST SECRET FOR YOU)

B. MINKOFF

English Adaptation by
OLGA PAUL

LAZAR WEINER

Moderato

pp

Espressivo

Ich hob far dir a sod a ri - sn.
I have the sweet-est se - cret for you.

A vort, an ein un ein - tzik vort, In vir-
A word, a one and on - ly word; But you

var Trog - stu zich fa - ri - sn,
toil strange-ly in con - fu - sion,

mf

Un ich vait far-tro-gn fun dain ort.
 And I, from my dis-tance, can't be heard.

Ich her nit oif cha-loi-mes tzu dir
 The dreams I weave a-bout you nev-er

mf

shpi-nen, Ge-hel-me la-bi-rin-tu durch main troim;
 van-ish From se-cret lab-y-rinths which I cre-ate;

sta.....

Ge hay m

Bai tog vert altz tze-ru-nen, vu zol ich dich ge-
 By day, though, they are mist-y; I won-der if I'll

8.....

cresc. poco a poco

Jv 3 2/6C

fi - nen? Ot biz tu do
find you, You seem to fade

un shoin far - - - shvun-dn in dem ti-fn thom.
 in - to the depths to which I go and wait.

L.H. (poco rit.)

a tempo

PPP

Ich
I

hob far dir a sod a zi - sn, A vort, an ein un
 have the sweet-est se - cret for you: A word, a one and

ein - tzik vort. Loichst
 on - ly word! You

The first system of music consists of a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves. The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'ein - tzik vort. Loichst' and 'on - ly word! You'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

oif cs hal - tn dai - ne
 come, but now I see your

mf

The second system continues the musical piece. The vocal line has the lyrics 'oif come, but now I see your'. The piano accompaniment is marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The right hand plays a rhythmic eighth-note accompaniment, while the left hand provides harmonic support.

oi - gn zich in shli - sn. Un ich, Ich zuch noch altz um.
 eyes are still un - o - pened; And I, - I seek the hal - lowed.

pp

The third system features the lyrics 'oi - gn zich in shli - sn. Un ich, Ich zuch noch altz um.' and 'eyes are still un - o - pened; And I, - I seek the hal - lowed.'. The piano accompaniment is marked piano (*pp*) and includes triplet markings (indicated by '3' and a bracket) in both the vocal and piano parts.

Dain ge - hel) likt ort.
 spot from which you stirred.

The fourth system concludes the page with the lyrics 'Dain ge - hel) likt ort.' and 'spot from which you stirred.'. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar rhythmic and harmonic texture as the previous systems.

SHTILE TENER (1893–1958)

(Hushed Tones)

Poet: Nahum Baruch Minkoff

*shtile tener,
khumrne himl,
feygl raysn tsu di volkns zikh,
es vet regenen, mayn kroyn.
feygl veln ergets vu farflien
mit farbenkte fligl.*

*mate tener,
mayn farvolknt harts—
un du, mayn benkshaft, rayst zikh tsu di volkns hoykh.
es vet regenen, mayn kroyn,
un du, mayn benkshaft, vest farflien ergets vu
mit farnetste fligl.*

Hushed tones,
Gloomy sky.
Birds ascend toward the clouds.
It will rain, my precious one.
Birds will fly off somewhere
With longing wings.

Dull tones,
My overcast heart—
And you, my longing, aspire to the clouds above.
It will rain, my precious one.
And you, my longing, will fly off somewhere
With soaked wings.

To Sarah-Naomi

Shtile Tener

From the Yiddish of
N.B. MINKOFF
English Version by
CHASYE COOPERMAN

Hushed, Still Accents

LAZAR WEINER

Sostenuto

Shtile te-ner, Hushed, still ac-cents. C'hmur-rer hi-mi. Dar-kened hea-vens.

Piano *pp*

a tempo

Foj - gl raj - sn zu di vol - kn's sich. Es vet re - ge - nen, majn krojn.
Birds pur - sue their flight now toward the clouds. It will rain, my precious one.

accel. *ff precipitato*

Fol - gl ve - in er - gez vu far - fil - hen Mit far ben - kte fil - gl.
Birds will fly un - til they'll reach some - where; Lone - some, yearn - ing wings.

mf

p

Ma - te te - ner. Majn far vol - knsharz Un du majn benk-shaft,
Faint-est ac-cents. My be-cloud - ed heart, And thou my pi - ning,

pp

rajst sich zu di vol-knshojch. Es vet re - ge-nen majn krojn, Un du, majn
wouldst pur-sue the clouds on high. It will rain, my prec-lous one. And thou my

f

benk-shaft, vest far - fii-hen er gez vu Mit far nez - te fii-gl.
pi - ning, thou wilt fly and reach some-where, Wings all plucked and torn.

a tempo

dim. *rit.* *pp*

L.H.

pp

YIDISH

Poet: Yakov-Yitskhak Segal (1896–1954)

*yidish mayn goldene brunem,
fun dir hot der balshemtov getrunken,
der mezsheritser magid hakodesh,
der bratslaver, barditshever
un azoy fil prost, poshete, orime yidn,
in vogl durkh vegn un lender,
in eybikn velt unte vegns
vu s'tsindt zikh di vor un legende.
yidish mayn likhtiker brunem!*

Yiddish, my golden well,
From you did the Ba'al Shem Tov drink,
The holy Mezhirecher Maggid,
The Bratslaver and Berditchever rebbes,
And so have many plain, simple, poor Jews
In their wandering through different lands and territories.
Forever in a world of journeying
Where truth and legends are fused.
Yiddish, my bright source!

J. L. SEGAL
English Adaptation by
OLGA PAUL

To my Parents
YIDISH
(YIDDISH)

317-

Opener?

EI = EYE

LAZAR WEINF

Moderato Molto espressivo MEIN

Yi - dish main
Yid - dish, dear

gol - de - ner bru - nem, from you the Paal
well of my tree - sure, Fun dir hot der Bal -
The Bal - Shem - Too - ha

Shem-Tov has drank, FROM MEIR the rich man
quaffed of your wis - dom, Der Me - je - ri - tser ma - gid ha -
The sanc - ti - fi - ed preach - ers from

holy man

from Bratclav Bard + new³

koi - desh
Bratz - lav,

Der Bratz - la-ver,
From Mez - er-ifs,

Bar-dit - she-ver
Bar-dit - she-er,

and so many

plain and

un a zoi
And so man

fil prost
y poor,

simple

poor Jews

In wandering through
VAW-GL

po - she - te o - ri - me yi - dn
sim - ple and hard work - ing peo - ple, - While In vo - gl durch ve - gn
jour - ney - ing on - ward through

and ^{over the world's} ~~land~~ ^{countless} ~~roadways~~ ^{highways}

len-der In ei - bi - kn velt un - ter - ve - gns Vu
 coun-tries And o - ver the world's count-less road-ways, Where

whose truth and legend are twin

s'tzint zich di vor un le - gen - de.
 truth and leg - end are mol - ten to - geth - er. //
legend

(p) Yidish my bright well!

Yi dish main lich - ti - ker bru - nem!
 Yid dish, dear well of my wis - dom!