

A Besere Velt Yiddish Chorus of Boston Workers Circle Derek David, Music Director

A Besere Velt – A Better World – is proud to be a voice for justice. This vibrant 80-member intergenerational community chorus weaves the heartache and irrepressible idealism of Yiddish music into a vision of justice and humanity for the 21st century.

Sing with us! Come check us out at our open rehearsals on October 1 and 15. Visit <https://circleboston.org/> for more information and contact abv@circleboston.org if you are interested in attending an open rehearsal.

Lyrics and translations for our concert at Raising Voices on September 23, 2023

LOMIR ZINGEN DOS NAYE LID (Let's Sing a New Song)

(Music: William Byrd; Yiddish lyrics and choral arrangement by Derek David)

Yiddish Lyrics

Lomir zingen dos naye lid
A naye lid fun sholem
A naye lid fun yoysher

English Translation

Let's sing a new song
A new song of peace
A new song of justice

VAKHT OYF (Wake Up)

(Music: Unknown; Lyrics: Dovid Edelstadt; Choral arrangement: Zalmen Mlotek, adapted by Lisa Gallatin)

Yiddish Lyrics

Vi lang, o vi lang vet ir blaybn nokh shklafn
Un trogn di shendleke keyt?
Vi lang vet ir glentsnde raykhtimer shafn
Far dem vos baroybt ayer broyt?

Vi lang vet ir shteyn ayer rukn geboygn,
Derniderikt, heymloz, farshmakht?
Es togt shoyn, vakht oyf, un tse'efnt di oygn,
Derfilt ayer ayzerne makht!

Un ales vet leb'n, un libn, un blien,
In frayen, in goldenem may.
Khevre, genug far tiranen tsu knien,
Shvert az ir muzt vern fray!

Mir muzn vern fray!

English Translation

How long will you remain slaves
and wear degrading chains?
How long will you produce riches
for those who rob you of your bread?

How long will you stand with backs bent,
Humiliated, homeless, and weak?
It's daybreak, awake, open your eyes,
feel your iron strength!

And all will live, and love and bloom
In freedom's golden May.
Comrades, enough of kneeling to tyrants,
Swear you must be free!

We must be free!

BELLA CIAO (Farewell, Beautiful)

*(Music and English/Italian lyrics: unknown; Yiddish lyrics: Linda Gritz;
Choral arrangement: Lisa Gallatin)*

Lyrics (English, Italian, Yiddish)

English Translation

Oh we are women and we are marching
Bella ciao....
We are marching for liberation
We want a revolution now!

È questo il fiore del partigiano
Bella ciao....
È questo il fiore del partigiano
Morto per la libertà.

This is the flower of the partisan

This is the flower of the partisan
Who died for freedom.

Mir zaynen froyen, mir zaynen mener,
Bella ciao....
Un mir boyen a tsayt fun yoysher
Frayhayt un sholem oyf der velt.

We are women, we are men,

And we are creating a time of justice,
freedom, and peace in the world.

Better Times Will Come

(Janis Ian; Yiddish lyrics: Linda Gritz; Choral arrangement: Derek David)

Lyrics (English and Yiddish)

Better times, better times will come.
When this world learns to live as one,
Oh, better times will come.

When we greet each dawn without fear
Knowing loved ones soon will be near,
When the winds of war
Shall not blow any more,
Oh, better times will come.

Though we live each day as our last,
We know someday soon it will pass.
We will dance, we will sing
In that never-ending spring,
Oh, better times will come

Kumen vet, kumen vet di tsayt,
Kumen vet, kumen vet di tsayt,
Ven di velt vet fareynikt zayn,
O, kumen vet di tsayt.

Lomir shafn a velt on a shrek
Ful mit freyd un libshaft on an ek
Harmony un haskome,
Nito mer keyn milkhome,
O, kumen vet di tsayt.

Kumen vet, kumen vet di tsayt,
Kumen vet, kumen vet di tsayt,
Ven di velt vet fareynikt zayn,
O, kumen vet di tsayt.

Af undz're teg vet kumen a sof
Naye doyres vaksn, blien uf
Tantsn un zingen
In an eybikn friling
O, kumen vet di tsayt.

Better times, better times will come.
Better times, better times will come.
When this world learns to live as one,
Oh, better times will come.

English Translation

The time will come,
The time will come,
When the world will be as one,
Oh, the time will come.

Let's create a world without fear,
Full of joy and love without end,
Harmony and accord,
No more war,
Oh, the time will come.

The time will come,
The time will come,
When the world will be as one,
Oh, the time will come.

An end will come to our days,
New generations grow and bloom,
Dancing and singing
In a never-ending spring,
Oh, the time will come.

Di Arbuzn (The Watermelons)

*(Music: Ben Yomen; Lyrics: Mendl Abarbanel; Choral arrangement: Ethel Raim;
Additional arrangement: Derek David)*

Yiddish Lyrics

S'iz der step shoyn opgeshorn,
Un shoyn alts tsunoyfgenumen.
Libster mayner, kum tsu forn,
Ikh vel vartn oyf dayn kumen, hey!

Di arbuzn zaynen tsaytik,
S'geyt di zaft fun zey ariber,
Ful mit ziskayt ongegoshn,
Vi mayn harts iz ful mit libe.

English translation

The steppes have been mowed,
And everything has been gathered.
My dearest, come visit me
I await your arrival.

The watermelons are ripe,
Their juice is overflowing,
They're full of sweetness,
As my heart is full of love.

Un di karshn, libster mayner,
Zaynen shvarts vi dayne oygn.
Ongeshotn oyf di beymer
Un di tsvaygn zikh azh boygn.

And the cherries, my dearest,
Are black like your eyes.
The trees are loaded
And the branches are bending.

Kum tsu forn, libster mayner,
Un genug shoyen undz tsu troyemen,
Rayf un tsaytik iz mayn libe,
Vi s'iz tsaytik mayne floyemen!

Come visit me, my dearest,
And enough of this dreaming.
My love is ripe and ready,
Ready as my plums are!

ZOG NIT KEYNMOL (Never Say)

(Music: Dmitri Pokrass; Lyrics: Hirsh Glik; Choral arrangement: unknown)

Yiddish Lyrics

Zog nit keynmol az du geyst dem letstn veg
Ven himlen blayene farshteln bloye teg
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte sho
S'vet a poyk ton undzer trot mir zaynen do.

Fun grinem palmen land biz vaytn land fun shney
Mir zaynen do mit unzer payn mit undzer vey
Un vu gefaln s'iz a shpritz fun undzer blut
Vet nokh a shprotz ton undzer gvure unzer mut.

Geshribn iz dos lid mit blut un nit rnit blay
S'iz nit kayn lidl fun a foygl oyf der fray
S'hot a folk tsvishn falndike vent
Dos lid gezungen mit naganes in di hent.

Derfar zog keynmol az du geyst dem letstn veg
Ven himlen blayene farshteln bloye teg
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte sho
S'vet a poyk ton undzer trot mir zaynen do.

English Translation

Never say that there is only death for you
Though leaden skies may be concealing days of blue
Because the hour we have hungered for is near
Beneath our tread the earth shall thunder, we are here.

From land of palm trees to the far off land of snow
We shall be coming with our torment and our woe
And everywhere our blood has sunk into the earth
Shall our bravery, our vigor blossom forth.

This song was written with our blood and not with lead
It's not a song that summer birds sing overhead
It was a people among toppling barricades
That sang this song of ours with pistols and grenades.

Therefore never say that there is only death for you
Though leaden skies may be concealing days of blue
Because the hour we have hungered for is near
Beneath our tread the earth shall thunder, we are here.

May Lid (Song of May)

*(Music: M. Posner; Lyrics: M. Sorerives; Choral arrangement: unknown;
Additional arrangement: Derek David)*

Yiddish Lyrics

Vemes shtime her ikh klingen?
Naye lider zol men zingen.
Al dos beyze iz farbay,
Mit dem vinter, kaltn, langn.
Raykh in farbn, raykh in klangen
Kumt tsu geyn der ershter may.

Vemes shtime her ikh klingen?
Fraye lider zol men zingen.
S'nemt a sof tsu shklaferay.
Loyz di klangen, loyz di keytn.
Hel baputst mit frische kveytn
Kumt tsu geyn der ershter may.

Vemes shtime her ikh klingen?
Hoykht un munter zol men zingen.
Zol zikh trogn frank un fray
Undzer lid fun ale ekn.
Tsu a nayem lebn vekn
Kumt tsu geyn der ershter may.

English Translation

Whose voice do I hear ringing?
Let us sing new songs.
All our troubles have passed
With the long, cold winter.
Rich in colors, rich in sounds.
The first of May arrives.

Whose voice do I hear ringing?
Let us sing songs of freedom.
Slavery will end.
Sounds will lighten, chains will loosen.
Brightly adorned with fresh blossoms,
The first of May arrives.

Whose voice do I hear ringing?
Let us sing loudly and strongly.
Let our song carry openly and
Freely from all corners.
Awakening us to a new life,
The first of May arrives.

Yugnt Himen (Hymn of Youth)

*(music by Basye Rubin, lyrics: Shmerke Kaczerginski for the Vilna Ghetto Youth Club;
Choral arrangement: Zalmen Mlotek, adapted by Lisa Gallatin)*

Yiddish Lyrics

Yugnt geyt foroys!

Undzer lid iz ful mit troyer,
Dreyst iz undzer muntergang,
Khotsh der soyne vakht baym toyer,
Shturemt yugnt mit gezang.

Yung iz yeder, yeder, yeder ver es vil nor,
Yorn hobn kayn batayt,
Alte kenen, kenen, kenen oykh zayn kinder
Fun a nayer, frayer tsayt.

English Translation

Youth marches forward!

Our song is full of sorrow,
But bold is our hearty step,
Though the enemy looms at the gate,
Youth storms forth with their song.

Young is everyone who wants to be,
Years have no meaning,
The old can also be children
Of a new, free time.

Yugnt geyt forays!

Ver es voglt um oyf vegn,
Ver mit dreystkayt shtelt zayn fus,
Brengt di yugnt zey antkegn
Funem geto a gerus.

Yung iz yeder....

Mir gedenken ale sonim,
Mir dermonen ale fraynt,
Eybik veln mir farbindn,
Undzer nekhtn mitn haynt.

Yung iz yeder....

Youth marches forward!

Those who wander the roads,
Those who set forth with a bold step,
Youth goes out to meet them
With a greeting from the ghetto.

Young is everyone....

We remember all of our enemies,
We recall all of our friends,
We will forever connect
Our yesterday with today.

Young is everyone....

RAISING VOICES SING-ALONG WITH A BESERE VELT

STEP BY STEP

(Union lyrics; Music: Pete Seeger)

Step by step the longest march can be won, can be won
Many stones can form an arch, singly none, singly none
And by union what we will, can be accomplished still
Drops of water turn a mill, singly none, singly none

IF I HAD A HAMMER

(Pete Seeger & Lee Hays)

If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the morning,
I'd hammer in the evening, all over this land.
I'd hammer out danger, I'd hammer out a warning,
I'd hammer out love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.

If I had a bell, I'd ring it in the morning,
I'd ring it in the evening, all over this land;
I'd ring out danger, I'd ring out warning,
I'd ring out love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.

If I had a song, I'd sing it in the morning,
I'd sing it in the evening, all over this land;
I'd sing out danger, I'd sing out warning,
I'd sing out love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.

Well, I got a hammer, and I got a bell,
And I got a song to sing, all over this land;
It's the hammer of justice, it's the bell of freedom,
It's the song about love between my brothers and my sisters,
All over this land.

ALE BRIDER, ALE SHVESTER (All Brothers, All Sisters)
(based on a poem by Morris Winchevsky, with a long tradition of creating new verses)

Yiddish Lyrics

English Translation

Day day day....

Un mir zaynen ale brider
Oy, oy, ale brider
Un mir zingen freylekhe lider,
oy, oy, oy.

And we are all brothers,
And we sing happy songs...

Un mir zaynen ale shvester;
Oy, oy, ale shvester
Vi Sore, Rivka, Rut un Esther,
oy, oy, oy.

And we are all sisters,
Like Sarah, Rivke, Ruth, Esther.

Day day day....

Un mir zaynen ale freylekh
Oy, oy, ale freylekh
Vi yoynosh un dovid hamelekh,
oy, oy, oy.

And we are all gay,
Like Jonathan and King David.

Un mir zaynen ale pleytim
Oy, oy, ale pleytim
Tseraysn lomir ale keytn,
oy, oy, oy.

And we are all refugees,
Let's break all the chains.

Day day day....

KEEP ON MOVING FORWARD
(Pat Humphries; third verse by Roger Rosen)

We're gonna keep on moving forward,
Keep on moving forward (2x)
Never turning back, never turning back.

We're gonna light the way together...

We're gonna teach our children courage...

We're gonna stand for love and justice....