



The Kadya Choir

The Young Kadyas

Original Motion Picture Sound Track

Song lyrics in original Yiddish

English translations by Alan Bern

All compositions by Alan Bern

based on children's poems by Kadya

Molodovsky except where otherwise noted.

Some text repetitions have been added for
the sake of musical form.

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GEMA

The Kadya Choir

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01

Efnt dem toyer!

Open the Gate!

The original text of this poem has been slightly modified by the composer in order to create a “cumulative song.”

Di goldene keyt (the golden chain) refers to the continuity of Jewish life and culture, an important literary concept and image.

Efnt dem toyer, efnt im breyt!
S'vet do durkhgeyn a goldene keyt:
der tate, di mame,
der bruder, di shvester,
[khosn-kale inmitn,
af a goldenem shlitn.] (2x)

Efnt dem toyer, efnt im breyt!
S'vet do durkhgeyn a goldene keyt:
der zeyde, di bobbe,
der feter, di mume,
der tate, die mame,
der bruder, di shvester,
[di eyniklekh inmitn,
af a goldenem shlitn.] (2x)

Efnt dem toyer, efnt im breyt!
S'vet do durkhgeyn a goldene keyt: a bar
un an epl
un honik a tepl,
der zeyde, di bobbe,
der feter, di mume,
der tate, die mame,
der bruder, di shvester,
[khosn-kale inmitn,
af a goldenem shlitn.] (2x)

Open the gate, open it wide!
A golden chain is coming through:
the father, the mother,
the brother, the sister,
[the bride and groom in the middle,
on a golden sleigh.] (2x)

Open the gate, open it wide!
A golden chain is coming through:
the grandpa, the grandma,
the uncle, the aunt,
the father, the mother,
the brother, the sister,
[the grandchildren in the middle,
on a golden sleigh.] (2x)

Open the gate, open it wide!
A golden chain is coming through:
a pear and an apple
and honey in pots,
the grandpa, the grandma,
the uncle, the aunt,
the father, the mother,
the brother, the sister,
[the bride and groom in the middle,
on a golden sleigh.] (2x)

02

Der Yam The Ocean

The instrumental introduction and coda of this song are based on a traditional Moldavian tune.

Ven got hot bashafn dem yam
iz nokh keyn mentsh nit geven,
keyn boym un keyn groz,
keyn ber un keyn hoz,
keyn hoyz un keyn shif.
Der yam iz geven
bloy, un sheyn, un tif.

Hot der yam zikh genumen blozn,
di khvalyes tselozn,
mit vaysn shoym gerisn,
di gants velt gevolt fargisn.
Hot got gegebn a geshrey:
Shtey!

[Zaynen di khvalyes geblibn lign
un geshvign.] (4x)

Hot got oysgemostn dem yam
mit di trit
un gezogt: vayter nit!

Un es iz aroys oyfn rand
a geler zamt
un gevorn a tsam
far di khvalyes fun yam.

When God created the ocean
there were no human beings yet,
no trees and no grass,
no bears and no hares,
no houses and no ships.
The ocean was
blue and beautiful and deep.

Then the ocean began to rise up,
with wild waves,
and white foam,
as if to inundate the whole world.
Then God cried out:
Stand still!

[The waves stayed still
and silent.] (4x)

Then God measured the ocean
with his steps
and declared: no further!

And along the edges appeared
yellow sand
that formed a boundary
for the waves of the ocean.

[Fun demolt on,
ven es heybn on
di khvalyes shturemen,
un turemen mit fayf,] (2x)
un geshrey un gebrum
zey kumen tsum rand
fun geln zamd,
un veynen un klogn,
[un kern zikh um.] (3x)

Vayl der zamd
iz der tsam farn yam.

[From that time on,
when the waves begin
to become stormy,
and to rise up hissing,] (2x)
and with shrieks and roars,
they come to the edge
of the yellow sand,
and weep and lament,
[and turn back around.] (3x)

Because the sand
is the boundary for the ocean.

03

Kits, kats, ketsele + Eyns, tsvey, dray Kitty-cat, Kitten + One, Two, Three

This musical arrangement combines two poems into one song.

The instrumental introduction to this song is based on a traditional Ukrainian tune.

Kits, kats, ketsele

[Kits, kats, ketsele,
vash mir oys a tetsele!] (4x)

Kits, kats, ketsele,
vash mir oys a tetsele!
[S'kumen gest tsu mir.] (2x)
S'kumt di mume Mirele
mit der tokhter Tsirele,
efn zey di tir,
oy, efn zey di tir!

Kitty-Cat, Kitten

[Kitty-cat, kitten
wash your little paw!] (4x)

Kitty-cat, kitten
wash your little paw!
[Guests are coming.] (2x)
Aunt Mirele is coming
with her daugher, Tsirele,
open the door for them,
oy, open the door for them!

Vasht di kats an oyerl
efnt zikh dos toyerl.
[S'kumen gest tsu mir.] (2x)
S'kumen kinder brekelekh,
raytn zey af shtekelekh,
efn zey di tir,
oy, efn zey di tir!

Eyns, tsvey, dray

Eyns, tsvey, dray,
oder-lider-lay.
Zaynen binelekh geven,
ikh hob zey aleyn gezen.
Eyns, tsvey, dray,
Oder-lider-lay.

Eyns, tsvey, dray,
oder-lider-lay.
Honik hobn zey gemakht
fun far tog un biz far nakht.
Eyns, tsvey, dray,
Oder-lider-lay.

Eyns, tsvey, dray,
oder-lider-lay.
Hot men binelekh farnart
un dem honik oysgeshart.
Eyns, tsvey, dray,
Oder-lider-lay.

The cat washes its ear
and the little gate opens.
[Guests are coming.] (2x)
Children are coming in droves,
riding on sticks,
open the door for them,
oy, open the door for them!

One, two, three

One, two, three,
oder-lider-lie.
Bees were there,
I saw them myself.
One, two, three,
Oder-lider-lie.

One, two, three,
oder-lider-lie.
They made honey
from early morning to late in the night.
One, two, three,
oder-lider-lie.

One, two, three,
oder-lider-lie.
The bees got tricked
and their honey got scooped out.
One, two, three,
oder-lider-lie.

04

Shtern faln

Stars are Falling

In the final repeat of the 2nd verse, a line of text is sung in alternating Arabic and Hebrew.

Oyf a barg mit zamd
zitsn kinder zibn.
Vos zey vintshn
hobn zey oyfn zamd farshribn.
Geshribn un geshribn,
paseklekh un krayzn,
biz farnakht in himl
shtern zikh bavayzn.

Hobn zibn shtern
ongeton di briln
un zey nemen leyenen
vos di kinder viln:
Efsher kikhelekh mit mon,
efsher tsuker-kandl,
efsher royte epelekh
un efsher zise mandl?

Nor di kinder shvaygn
un zey klern, klern
vos zoln zey oysbetn
bay di zibn shtern.
Kinder trakhtn, trakhtn
un zey hobn zikh dermont:
zey farlangen az di shtern
zoln unterkumen noent.

On a sandy hill
sit seven children.
What they wish for
they've written in the sand.
Written and written,
lines and circles,
until in the night sky
the first stars appear.

The seven stars
put on their eyeglasses
and begin to read
what the children desire:
maybe poppyseed cakes,
maybe sugar candies,
maybe red apples,
and maybe sweet almonds?

But the children stay silent
and they ponder and ponder:
What should they ask for
from the stars?
The children think and think
and then it occurs to them:
they ask for the stars
to come down closer.

Hobn shtern zikh farvundert,
staytsh, vi ken dos zayn?
Ver es voynt in himl shtendik –
yener muz in himl zayn.
Hobn kinder zikh tselakht
un zey shrayen un zey shaln:
Nu, iz meyle, vos ken zayn?
Eyn mol meg a shtern faln!

Vinkt a shtern tsu a shtern,
hern tsu vi kinder shaln,
vinkt a shtern tsu a shtern –
un zey heybn on tsu faln.

The stars were astonished:
how can that be?
Whoever lives in the sky -
has to stay in the sky.
The children started to laugh
and to shout and yell:
Well, what's the problem?
A star may also fall once!

The stars wink to each other,
and listen to the children's shouting,
the stars wink to each other -
and they start to fall.

06

Di gril The Cricket

Tsi-ri-ri, tsi-ri-ri
Tsi-ri, tsi-ri, tsi-ri-ri...

Grilt unterm tish a gril,
veys aleyn nit, vos zi vil.
[Tsi-ri-ri, tsi-ri-ri,
grilt a gril biz inderfri.] (2x)

Veys nisht keyner, vos zi est,
zagt di bobe, az zi fast,
zagt der zeyde, az zi nasht.
Un di gril zagt:
[Tsi-ri-ri, tsi-ri-ri,
grilt a gril biz inderfri.] (2x)

Tsee-ree-ree, tsee-ree-ree,
tsee-ree, tsee-ree, tsee-ree-ree...

Unter a table a cricket is chirping,
it doesn't know itself what it wants.
[Tsee-ree-ree, tsee-ree-ree,
the cricket chirps until dawn.] (2x)

Nobody knows what it eats,
grandma says that it fasts,
grandpa says that it snacks.
And the cricket says:
[Tsee-ree-ree, tsee-ree-ree,
the cricket chirps until dawn.] (2x)

Veys nisht keyner, vu zi voynt,
zogt di bobbe: in a shpalt,
zogt der zeyde: in a vant.
Un di gril zogt:
[Tsi-ri-ri, tsi-ri-ri,
grilt a gril biz inderfri.] (2x)

Geyt aroys di hele zun
zukht dos grilekhl umetum,
geyt di zun untern tish,
shart di zun ibern dil,
un dos grilekhl ligt farshtekt,
ligt farshtekt un sha un shtil,
vi di zun geyt nor avek,
un di gril zogt:

Tsi-ri-ri, tsi-ri-ri,
tsi-ri-ri biz inderfri.
Tsi-ri-ri, tsi-ri-ri,
grilt a gril biz inderfri.
Tsi-ri-ri, tsi-ri-ri,
tsi-ri-ri biz inderfri.
Tsi-ri-ri, tsi-ri-ri,
tsi-ri-ri biz inder...

Nobody knows where it lives,
grandma says, in a crack,
grandpa says, in a wall.
And the cricket says:
[Tsee-ree-ree, tsee-ree-ree,
the cricket chirps until dawn.] (2x)

When the bright sun comes out
the cricket looks all around,
when the sun shines under the table,
it scrabbles across the floor
and the cricket lies hidden,
hidden and quiet,
but as soon as the sun goes away
the cricket says:

Tsee-ree-ree, tsee-ree-ree,
tsee-ree-ree until dawn.
Tsee-ree-ree, tsee-ree-ree,
the cricket chirps until dawn.
Tsee-ree-ree, tsee-ree-ree,
tsee-ree-ree until dawn.
Tsee-ree-ree, tsee-ree-ree,
tsee-ree-ree until...

07

Bay an oremen man To a Poor Man

Bay an oremen, oremen man
geshen iz a vunder:
s'hot eynmol bay im afn boym
zikh a foygl tsezungen.

Zenen mentshn fun ek fun der velt
gekumen tsu geyn un tsu loyfn
[bay dem gliklekhn man] (2x)
dem foygl tsu koyfn.

T'er geheysn zikh gebn a bet,
un a kishn tsu kopns, tsu ru,
un [a ber fun a vald,] (2x)
un a berele tsu.

Hobn mentshn fun ek fun der velt
a bet shoyng hoblt,
a tsikh shoyng geshpunen,
nor [a ber fun a vald,] (2x)
un a berele tsu – nisht gefunen.

T'er geheysn zikh gebn a tish
un a benkl tsum zitsn, tsu ru,
un [a hirsh fun a vald,] (2x)
un a hirshele tsu.

Hobn mentshn fun ek fun der velt
a tish shoyng hoblt,
a benkl genumen,
nor a hirsh fun a vald

To a poor, poor man
a miracle happened.
One day a bird sang to him
from a tree.

People from all ends of the earth
came walking and running
to [the happy man] (2x)
to buy the bird.

So he asked them for a bed
and a pillow for his head, to rest,
for [a bear from the woods] (2x)
and a little bear, too.

People from all ends of the earth
carved a bed
and spun a pillow case,
but [a bear from the woods] (2x)
and a little bear, too – they couldn't find.

So he asked them for a table,
and a bench to sit on, to rest,
and [a deer from the woods] (2x)
and a little deer, too.

People from all ends of the earth
carved a table
and took a bench.
But [a deer from the woods] (2x)

un a hirshele tsu – nisht gefunen.
T'er geheysn zikh gebn a kleyd
un a hemd af tsu shlofn, tsu ru
un [a fuks fun a vald,] (2x)
un a roytinkn fiksele tsu.

Hobn mentshn fun ek fun der velt
a kleyd un a hemd shoy'n geshpunen,
nor a fuks fun a vald
un a roytinkn fiksele tsu –
nisht gefunen.

Zenen mentshn fun ek fun der velt,
mide un beyze gekumen
un baym gliklekh'n man fun dem boym
dem foygl genumen.

Bay an oremen, oremen man
geshen iz a vunder:
s'hot bay im afn boym, af a tsvayg
zikh a foygl a tsveyter tsezungen.

and a little deer, too – they couldn't find.
So he asked for a robe
and a nightshirt to sleep in, to rest,
and [a fox from the woods] (2x)
and a red, little fox, too.

People from all ends of the earth
spun a robe and a nightshirt,
but a fox from the woods,
and a red, little fox, too -
they couldn't find.

People from all ends of the earth
grew tired and angry
and they took from the happy man
the bird from the tree.

To a poor, poor man
a miracle occurred:
on a nearby tree, on a branch,
a second bird started to sing.

08

Barelekh Pears

Oyf a mitn vaytn veg
shteyt a groyser barnboym,
nisht gehit un on a tsoym
vaksn barn gel un broyn.

Ershtns vaksn bletelekh,
viln tsign zey optsupn.
Zaynen bletelekh hoykh fun der erd,
shoklen tsign mit di berd.

Tsveytns grinen tsvaygelekh,
vil der vint zey opbrekhn.
Zaynen tsvaygelekh zeyer shtark
fayft der vint in mitn mark.

Dritns vaksn barelekh,
vil zey yeder oyfesn.
Zaynen barelekh nit kleyn
faln in di hent aleyn.

In the middle of a broad path
stands a large pear tree,
unprotected and without a fence,
pears are growing, yellow and brown.

First, the leaves grow,
goats want to nibble them off.
But the leaves are high above the ground,
the goats can only shake their beards.

Second, the branches turn green,
the wind wants to break them off.
But the branches are so strong,
the wind blows through the market.

Third to grow are the pears,
everyone wants to eat them up.
When the pears are no longer small,
they fall into your hand by themselves.

09

Falt a regndl arop Raindrops are Falling

Falt a regndl arop,
falt er Shimelen in kop.
Shimele vet vaksn
bizn hoykhn kastn,
bizn hoykhn elmerl
biz der mames kelnerl.
Falt a regndl arop,
falt er Shimelen in kop.

Raindrops are falling,
falling on Shimen's head.
Shimen will grow tall,
up to the high cabinet,
up to the high closet,
up to his mother's collar.
Raindrops are falling,
falling on Shimen's head.

10

A krigeray A Quarrel

The music to this song is based on a traditional Bulgarian tune.

Eynmol in a zumer tog –
zun un likhtikeyt un roym –
hobn kinder zikh geshpilt
afn feld unter a boym.

Drayen zaynen zey geven:
Khone, Sorele un Bunem;
hobn epelekh gegesn
un getrunken fun a brunem.

Nor s'iz nit geven bashert
zey dos goldene gemit,
hobn kinder zikh tsekrigt,
glat azoy far gornisht-nit.

Once upon a summer day -
sunny, bright and airy -
children were playing
in a field under a tree.

There were three of them:
Khone, Sarah and Bunem;
eating apples
and drinking from a fountain.

But it was not their fate
to have sunny dispositions,
so the children quarreled,
just like that, for no reason at all.

Ven di zun hot zikh gezetst,
iz oyfgegangen di levone;
hobn kinder zikh tseredt –
Bunem, Sorele un Khone.

Bunem zogt: “bay undz in hoyf
shteyt a fesh vaser,
dortn di levone shloft
oyf a nets a naser.”

Shrayt shoyne Khone oys mit kas:
“S’iz a groyser lign!
Bay mayn zeydn afn dakh
shloft zi af di shtign.”

Sorele vert tsunter royt:
“Kh’veil a vort nit gloybn!
Di levone lem mayn bet
vigot zikh oyf di shoybn.”

Hobn kinder zikh tsekrigt
un dernokh tshedrapet,
ale oyerlekh tseflamt,
blut fun nezlekh kapet.

Ver fun zey es iz gerekht,
pruvt aleyne shoyne zogn.
Nor ikh bet aykh zeyer shtark,
ir zolt zikh nit shlogn.

When the sun set
and the moon rose,
the children began to quarrel,
Bunem, Sarah and Khone.

Bunem said, “In our yard
there’s a barrel of water,
that’s where the moon sleeps
on a wet net.”

Khone cried out in fury,
“That’s a big lie!
On my grandpa’s roof
it sleeps on the stairs.”

Sarah turned scarlet red,
“I don’t believe a word of it!
The moon hovers next to my bed
on the windowsill.”

So the children quarreled
and came to blows.
Their ears fiery red,
blood dripped from their noses.

Which one of them is right,
you’ll have to decide yourself.
Just let me make one request:
don’t hit each other!

Kadya Molodovksy’s Yiddish children’s poems in the original Yiddish can be found here:
Kadya Molodovksy, Marzipanes (Marzipans) (New York, 1970)
Kadya Molodovksy, Mayselekh (Warsaw, 1931)
online: <https://www.yiddishbookcenter.org/collections/yiddish-books/spb-nybc213169/molodovksy-kadia-mayselekh>