BAD OLD SONGBOOK

DANIEL KAHN & THE PAINTED BIRD
A MEYDL FROM BERLIN / I LOVED A GIRL FROM BERLIN

music & Yiddish: Trad- Warsaw, 19th cen; English & arrangement: D. Kahn
from YIVO Ruth Rubin Archive, "Gelibt hob ikh a sheyn meydele"

gelibt hob ikh a sheyn meydele fin der shtut Berlin
iz zi gefurn iberfreygn tsi ir futer in Vien
fur ikh mir aroys amul azoy di velt oystsikikn
flit arup a sheyner foygl en tit mayn harts derkvikn
nisht azoy di sheynkeyt vi dus hoykhe flien
a brivele hot er mir arintergevorfn tsi shtamt es oys fin Berlin?

ikh nem dus brivele in der hant arayn in fang ikh un tsi leyenen
plitsling falt af mir a shtarke moyre, fang ikh un tsi veynen
farvus zol ikh nit veynen azoy vi nukh a korbn
mayn tayere kale vos ikh hob gehat, mayn sheyn meydl iz geshtorbn

once I did love a pretty girl, down in old Berlin
but she took off to her old man, to talk it out with him
I went out to see the world, I traveled round & round
& high above a pretty bird dropped a letter to the ground
I took the letter in my hand & fearfully I read
my darling girl is gone away & all my love is dead
so brothers, do not play at love, five years just left me yearning
& forget about the pretty girls, they’re only good for burning

kimt aher libe brider, in kayn libes nit tsi kenen
tsizamennemen ale sheyne meydelakh en afn fayer zey farbrenen
tsi farbrenen afn fayer biz af di kleyne koyln
finef yur a libe tsi shpiln nisht amul tsi kenen poyln
gelibt hob ikh a sheyn meydele fin der shtut Berlin...
LOVE LAYS LOW
words & music: Daniel Kahn

love lays low
everywhere you go / & the wind it will blow
through the town you used to know
& every golden song / just reminds you of what's gone
so turn off the radio...

love lays low
be it silver, be it gold / be you young, be you old
be you standing in the cold
be you rich, be you poor / it's always more than you can afford
yes, love lays low...

what you feel, what you know
what is real, what is show
when to kneel, when to go
when to give up all control
all you lose is your time
while you're hanging on the line
between the river & the road...

love lays low
be it fast or be it slow / be it buried deep in the snow
be it oh so long ago
it will take far too long / it will take more than a song
for to let, to let her go
it lays you low / love lays you low...
GOOD OLD BAD OLD DAYS
words & music: Daniel Kahn

I followed you over the border down to the Spree
you were standing alone by the water waiting for me
we wandered along by the river, the towers all shrouded in haze
& we kissed by the wire & they all held their fire
in the good old bad old days

just remember how lovely it couldn't have been
when the world was as closed as a door
I remember those nights down in old east Berlin
with the microphones listening under the floor
& every stamp in this passport of mine
was a record of kisses you gave
yes we suffered in style & it's all in the file
in the good old bad old days

all the streetlights were waltzing together, crimson & green
& your dress was as gray as the weather, oh what a dream
we built up a city of whispers & classified war dossiers
I gave you control of my papers & soul
in the good old bad old days

ah yes wasn't it miserable, wasn't it grand?
when the world had an iron divide
& people could take a political stand
just by singing a song for the opposite side
now nobody cares who you are anymore & nobody cares what you say
it's liberty's curse, but was it really much worse
in the good old bad old days?
now Alyosha is gathering flowers every May
& the statue of Marx by the tower faces away
by the wall is a souvenir table with hammers & sickles displayed
on new watches, that work, & they're sold by a Turk
in these good old bad new days

now I'm working for Euros & drinking alone
where we used to spend marks at the bar
& the weeds have grown over the border of stone
that cuts through the town like a surgical scar
& so many streets on this faded old map
are like names written over a grave
it all makes me so mad cause it wasn't that bad
in the good old bad old days

so don't look for a final solution here in Berlin
for capitalist prostitution comes from within
don't worry about revolution we'll just keep the aesthetic clichés
in this market of fleas, selling klezmer CDs
for the good old bad old days

so Genossen, tavarishi, let's make a toast
to the time when the state knew your name
& we'll all say "l'chaím", "na zdrowye" und "Prost"
to that braver old world where we all are the same
where nobody loses & everyone wins
just as long as each comrade obeys
but that's all in the past so let's raise up a glass
to the good old bad old days
Wo sind eure Lieder,
eure alten Lieder
fragen die aus anderen Ländern,
 wenn man um Kamine sitzt,
mattgetanzt und leergesprochen
und das high-life Spiel ausschwitzt.

Ja, wo sind die Lieder,
unsre alten Lieder?
Nicht für'n Heller oder Batzen
mag Feinsliebchen barfuss ziehn,
und kein schriller Schrei nach Norden
will aus einer Kehle fliehn.

Tot sind unsre Lieder,
unsre alten Lieder.
Lehrer haben sie zerbissen,
Kurzbehoste sie verklampft,
braune Horden totgeschrien,
Stiefel in den Dreck gestampft.

vu zenen di lider
ayere alte lider?
fregn di fun andere lender
ven me zitst bay fayer-hits
flakhgetantst un pustgeredt
alts multikulti oysgeshvitst
(vu zenen di lider / di alte daytshe lider?
nisht farn toler oder groshn /zol mayn ligling boreves tsien
un keyn oysgeshrey keyn tsofn /vil aroys fun gorgl flien)
toyt zenen di lider
ayere alte lider
lerer hobn zey tsebisch
farrumplt hot zey amolek
broyne hordes toyt geshrign
tsetrotn inem shtivl-drek
...
where did all your songs go?
all the German folk songs?
we all have our hootenannies
irish sessions, campfire songs
yiddish choral workers anthems
midnight russian singalongs
(but where are all your ballads? / all the German ballads
not for a Heller or a Batzen
will Feinsliebchen take off her shoes
no one hears the wild geese crying
no one sings the nordic blues)
dead. the songs are buried
all the songs are are buried
ethnomusical-icided
strummed to death by brownie shirts
screaming hordes of Hitler children
stomping jackboots in the dirt
GROYS DASAD

criminal/love song from YIVO Rubin archive; arrangement: Daniel Kahn

-in fun groys dasad leyg ikh zikh shlofn
-un mayne hent leyg ikh tsu kopns
-un af ales hob ikh kharote, ober tsurik kon ikh nit khapn
-khapn, khapn tsurik kon ikh nit
-vayl mayne hent zaynen farbunden
-un efenen mayn biter harts, aroyszen voltn zikh di vundn
-di vundn fun mayn hartsn/ikh kon zeyn keynem nit antdekn
-un fun mayn lebn oystsushraybn/kayn tint un feder volt nit klekn
-oyb tint un feder volt shoyn yo klekn
dan voltn mayne hent nit stayenen/ un far dir mayn zis lebn
-volt ikh di gantse velt stradayenen
-foter shtey oyf fun dayn keyver
-un her zikh oys tsu mayne neytn
durkh a libe gey ikh arumet azoy vi an arestant in keytn
-an arestant er geyt in keynt
-mistame iz er dokh take vert
-un az ikh gey arum in keytn/ mistame iz dokh mir fun got bashert

(in great sorrow I lay me down, my head in my hands. I regret everything, but I can take nothing back, for my hands are tied. I cannot reveal the wounds of my heart to anyone & to write of my life? there would not be enough ink or pens. even if there were, my hands would fail me. & for you, my sweet love, I would suffer all over the world. father, get up from your grave & hear of my troubles. because of a love, I go around like a prisoner in chains. prisoners in chains probably deserve it. & as I am in chains, probably God has willed it this way.)
STORY OF ISAAC
words & music: Leonard Cohen; arrangement: D. Kahn/J. Shulman-Ment

the door it opened slowly / my father he came in
I was 9 years old/ & he stood so tall above me
his blue eyes they were shining / & his voice was very cold
he said, "I've had a vision / & you know I'm strong & holy
I must do as I've been told" / so we started up the mountain
I was running, he was walking / & his axe was made of gold

the trees they got much smaller now / the lake a lady's mirror
we stopped to drink some wine / then he threw the bottle over
it broke a minute later / & he put his hand on mine
I thought I saw an eagle / but it might've been a vulture
I never could decide / then my father built an altar
he looked once behind his shoulder / he knew I would not hide

& you who build these altars now / to sacrifice these children
you must not do it anymore / a scheme is not a vision
& you never have been tempted / by a demon or a god
yes you who stand above them now / your hatchets blunt & bloodied
you were not there before / when I lay upon a mountain
& my father's hand was trembling / with the beauty of the word

& if you call me brother now / forgive me if I inquire
"just according to whose plan?" / when it all comes down to dust
I will kill you if I must / I will help you if I can
when it all comes down to dust / I will help you if I must
I will kill you if I can / & mercy on our uniform
man of peace or man of war / the peacock spreads his fan
GODBROTHER
(for Daron Spielman, nee Darren Spillman)
words & music: Daniel Kahn

you took your name all the way to the desert
& you were changed in the name of your Lord
you gave your word unto Zion
& your hand to the sword

we were the sons of American plenty
your mother held me as her own
we grew to cross many borders
different roads, different homes

o, Godbrother
what have you done?
gone
to Judea
with a shovel
& a gun
THE MARRIAGE HEARSE by Jake Shulman-Ment (recorded for AC z"l) / UMET UMETUM (orphan's lament – written 2009 for ADK z"l)
Yiddish words: D. Kahn; music: "Arrivals/Departures", Michael Winograd

umet umetum / vi a volkn viklt zikh di velt arum
ot iz mayn umet / a nepldik ferd / trognndik a zekele mit erd
umet umetum / kh'bin a yosem shlepndik di velt arum
zukhndik hevl / zukhndik gelt / zukhndik a tatn vos zikh felt
tsvishn fremde gey ikh aleyn / unter mayn kop a kishele fun shteyn
keyner nito vos ken mikh shoynen / nit in ergets umetum
volt ikh geven a kleyne nakhtigal / volt ikh gefloygn af a shtral
aroyf in himl tsu a nayer heym / mit muter un foter, ov un eym
ober mayn umet, gro un krum / halt mikh afn bodn vi an anker
dos ferd hot mikh fartribn / di erd iz kalt un shtum
kh'bin faryosemt un farvoglt gor / un der vinter kumt shoyn tsu
geyn/s'tut der himl vern gor a groyer / un di tsayt iz vi a fleshl
geleydikt shoyn fun vayn / mit umet, umet umetum

(sorrow everywhere, wraps itself like a cloud around the world, a fog-shrouded horse, dragging a satchelful of earth. sorrow everywhere. I am an orphan, dragging around the world, searching for nothingness, for money, for a father who is gone alone among strangers, under my head a pillow of stone no one who can shelter me. I am nowhere, everywhere. were I a little nightingale, I would fly on a beam of light up to heaven to a new home with a mother & a father. but my sorrow, gray & crooked, anchors me to the ground. the horse has driven me, the ground is cold & mute. I am orphaned & homeless. & winter comes, the sky turns gray, & time is a bottle, emptied of wine, with sorrow everywhere.)
Die alten, bösen Lieder,
Die Träume bös und arg,
Die lasst uns jetzt begraben,
Holt einen großen Sarg.

Hinein leg' ich gar manches,
Doch sag' ich noch nicht was;
Der Sarg muss sein noch größer,
Wie's Heidelberger Fass.

Und holt eine Totenbahre,
Mit Bretter fest und dick;
Auch muss sie sein noch länger,
Als wie zu Mainz die Brück'.

Und holt mir auch zwölf Riesen,
Die müssen noch stärker sein
Als wie der starker Christoph
Im Dom zu Köln am Rhein.

Die sollen den Sarg forttragen,
Und senken ins Meer hinab;
Denn solchem großen Sarge
Gebührt ein großes Grab.

Wisst ihr, warum der Sarg wohl
So groß und schwer mag sein?
Ich senk' auch meine Liebe
Und meinen Schmerz hinein.
OLARIA OLARA / snow is falling / la-di-da
snow is falling on the ground & I am dreaming
& my mind flutters far away from home
snow is falling on the room & on our ceiling
& our dying little dog is letting go
OLARIA OLARA / beat the black drum / ra-ta-ta
& the children love the pretty little horses
& the little soldiers with their wooden guns
little vampires in my little verses
on the roof I'm staying up to see the sun
OLARIA OLARA / in your arms / awoo-la-la
little Oliver the orphan boy is smiling
& then little Adolf Hitler pets his hair
on his finger he has put a pretty diamond
& they fly away embracing in the air
OLARIA OLARA / violins & tra-la-la
& we'll all get together at the banquet
I hope all my compañeros make the trip
& we'll all share a bottle & a blanket
& we'll drink the last bitter sip
OLARIA OLARA / round & round we cha-cha-cha
the Marquis de Sade is dancing with a hippy
& the murderer & victim are in love
& the minister gets married to the Gypsy
& the virgin loves Beelzebub
everything is far away & getting better
& the snow is falling from above
everyone is going round & round together
& my girl is full of happiness & love... OLARIA OLARA
DANIEL KAHN: Voice, Accordion, Piano, Electric Guitar, Ukuleles, Hammond B-3 Organ, Banjo, Harmonica, Toy Piano

JAKE SHULMAN-MENT: Violin, Back Vocals

HAMPUS MELIN: Drums, Percussion, Back Vocals

MICHAEL TUTTLE: Contrabass, Electric Bass, Back Vocals

also from DANIEL KAHN & THE PAINTED BIRD on ORIENTE MUSIK:

2006: RIEN CD 73: The Broken Tongue

2009: RIEN CD 71: 2011: RIEN CD 77:
Partisans & Parasites
Lost Causes

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Sweetheart, do not love too long:
I loved long and long,
And grew to be out of fashion
Like an old song.
—W.B. Yeats, "O Do Not Love Too Long"

many have seen & many have known
that love is both silver & gold
but love lays low
both the rich & the poor
& burns like a fire in your soul

—Yiddish folksong "Gold un Zilber", Bronya Sakina via M. Alpert, Eng: D. Kahn


DEDICATED to the memory of my father A. David Kahn, my uncle Seymore Rowe, David Blair, Ferry Ettehad, Tamara Brooks, Carol Lonner, Mel Dalbow, & especially Adrienne Cooper: friend, teacher, diva, revolutionary, mentor, song worker, mother, baleboste, khaverte. —DK
Daniel Kahn & The Painted Bird: BAD OLD SONGS

01. A MEYDL FROM BERLIN (trad./Kahn) 3:58
02. LOVE LAYS LOW (Kahn) 3:05
03. GOOD OLD BAD OLD DAYS (Kahn) 5:40
04. DIE ALTEN LIEDER (Degenhardt/Kahn) 3:32
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06. STORY OF ISAAC (Cohen/arr:Kahn,Shulman-Ment) 3:38
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08. THE MARRIAGE HEARSE (Shulman-Ment) / UMET UMETUM (Winograd/Kahn) 5:28
09. DIE ALTEN BÖSEN LIEDER (Schumann/Heine/arr:Kahn) 4:03
10. OLARIA OLARA (Savvopoulos/Kahn) 2:40

TOTAL TIME: 39:36

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