

WHEN WORDS ALONE FAIL:
MUSIC AND THE SHOAH

**RESOURCES FOR
STUDENTS & TEACHERS**

סיפורי מוסיקה
STORIES OF MUSIC



Introduction

This lesson explores some of the musical activities that took place during the Shoah, and the ways that Jews have collectively remembered the Shoah through music.

Artists and Their Music Featured in This Lesson

Avrom Akselrod — Read more [here](#)

- ["Baym geto toverl"](#)

Leonard Cohen — Read more [here](#)

- ["Dance me to the End of Love"](#)

Hirsch Glick — Read more [here](#)

- ["Shtil di nakht iz oysgeshternt"](#)
- ["Zog nit keynmol"](#)

Yankele Hershkowitz — Read more [here](#)

- [Ikh fur in keltser kant](#)

Flory Jagoda — Read more [here](#)

- ["Adio Kerida"](#) (Flory performs)
- ["Arvoliko"](#) (Flory wrote and performs)
- [About "Arvoliko"](#) (triosefardi.com)

Gideon Klein — Read more [here](#)

- ["Lullaby"](#)
- [String Trio](#)

Hermann Leopoldi — Read more [here](#)

- ["Buchenwalder Marsch"](#) (text by Fritz Löhner-Beda)

Steve Reich — Read more [here](#)

- [Different Trains I. "America--Before the War"](#)
- [Link to full program notes of Different Trains](#)

Sheila Silver — Read more [here](#)

- [To the Spirit Unconquered I. "With great intensity--strained, sometimes violent"](#)
- [Link to full program notes of To the Spirit Unconquered](#)

John Williams — Read more [here](#)

- ["Main Theme from Schindler's List"](#)

Other Featured Individuals in This Lesson

[Vitka Kempner](#)

[Primo Levi](#)

[Fritz Löhner-Beda](#)

[Alma Rosé](#)

[Chaim Rumkowski](#)

Recordings Used in This Lesson (in order of use in the lesson)

[Different Trains I. "America--Before the War"](#) (by Steve Reich; performed by the London Contemporary Orchestra)

[To the Spirit Unconquered I. "With great intensity--strained, sometimes violent"](#) (by Sheila Silver; performed by Janet Orenstein, Brooks Whitehouse, Patricia Tao)

["Dance Me to the End of Love"](#) (by Leonard Cohen; performed by Leonard Cohen)

["Zog nit keynmol"](#) (by Hirsh Glick; performed by Adrienne Cooper, Alan Zemel, Henry Sapoznik, Irena Klepfisz, Jeff Shandler, Josh Waletzky, Lauren Brody, Lorin Sklamberg, Michael Alpert)

["Buchenwalder Marsch"](#) (by Hermann Leopoldi and Fritz Löhner-Beda; performed by Musikgymnasium Schloss Belvedere [Music High School Schloss Belvedere])

["Shtil di nakht iz ovsgeshternt"](#) (by Hirsh Glick; performed by Daniel Kahn and The Painted Bird)

["Ikh fur in keltser kant"](#) (by Yankele Herszkowitz; performed by Yaakov Rotenberg)

["Baym Geto Toverl"](#) (by Avrom Akselrod to melody by Mark Warshawsky; performed by unknown person in a Bavarian displaced persons camp, c. 1946)

[Gideon Klein's "Lullaby"](#) (written by Shalom Charitonov & Emmanuel Harussi; arranged by Gideon Klein; performed by soprano Bronislava Tomanová and pianist Aneta Majerová)

Gideon Klein's [String Trio](#) (by Gideon Klein)

["Arvoles Lloran por Lluvias"](#) (traditional; performed by Rosa Zaragoza)

["Adio Kerida"](#) (folk song; performed by Flory Jagoda)

["Arvoliko"](#) (by Flory Jagoda; performed by Flory Jagoda)

Main Title from *Schindler's List* (by John Williams; performed by violinist Csongor Korossy-Khayll, organist Xaver Varnus, with organists Balasz Barnkopf and Balasz Elischer)

Featured Topics in This Lesson

Collective memory

- [“Collective Memory”](#) (Staff of APA Dictionary of Psychology)
- [“Collective Memory”](#) by Dr. David G. Roskies (MyJewishLearning.com, reprinted from *Contemporary Jewish Religious Thought*)

Dohany Street Synagogue

- [“Exploring the largest synagogue in Europe: the Dohány Street synagogue in Budapest”](#) by Graham Paul (Jewish News, jewishaz.com)

Minimalist Music

- [“Minimalist Music”](#) (Staff of Lumenlearning.com)

Sephardic Culture and History

- [“Judaism: Sephardim”](#) by Rebecca Weiner (JewishVirtualLibrary.org)
- [“Modern Jewish History”](#) (Staff of MyJewishLearning.com)
- [“The Sephardic Diaspora after 1492”](#) by Joshua Teplitzky (MyJewishLearning.com)
- [“What Is Ladino?”](#) by Dr. Isaac Benabu (*The Blackwell Companion to Jewish Culture: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, MyJewishLearning.com)

Shoah/Holocaust History — General

- [“Documenting Numbers of Victims of the Holocaust and Nazi Persecution”](#) (Staff of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)
- [“The Holocaust in Greece”](#) (Staff of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)
- [“Kovno”](#) (Staff of *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)
- [“Nazi Camps”](#) (Staff of *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)
- [Sketches of Birkenau by Francois Reisz](#)
- [“The Slaughter of Six Million Jews: A Holocaust or a Shoah?”](#) (Prof. Zev Garber, theTorah.com)
- [“Vilna”](#) (Staff of *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)
- [“Warsaw Ghetto”](#) (Staff of The HolocaustExplained.org, The Wiener Holocaust Library)
- [“Yugoslavia”](#) (Staff of *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)

Shoah/Holocaust History — Smuggling Food into the Ghetto (Oral Testimony)

- [“Smuggling Food As a Child in the Horochow Ghetto.”](#) Oral Testimony of Charlene Schiff (*Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)

- [“Smuggling Food As a Child in the Kovno Ghetto.”](#) Oral Testimony of Judith Meisel (*Holocaust Encyclopedia*, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)

Shoah/Holocaust History — The Experience of Sephardim

- [“Sephardim during the Holocaust”](#) (Staff of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)

Shoah/Holocaust History — The Experience of Women

- [“Women and the Holocaust”](#) by Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman (The Encyclopedia of Jewish Women, Jewish Women’s Archives, jwa.org)
- [“Women & Resistance”](#) (Staff of Wagner College Holocaust Center, wagner.edu)

Shoah/Holocaust History — Resistance

- [“What We Value”--Spiritual Resistance During the Holocaust.”](#) by Yael Weinstock Mashbaum (YadVashem.org)

Shoah/Holocaust Humor

- [“Humor As a Defense Mechanism in the Holocaust”](#) by Chaya Ostrower (remember.org)
- [“Satire.”](#) Holocaust Sources in Context, (Staff of United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, ushmm.org)

Verdi and “Adio Kerida”

- [“Young Verdi & Ladino Music: A Possible Connection”](#) by Sharon Azrieli (myscena.org)
- [“Yiddish and Ladino Folksongs: Are They Jewish?”](#) by Batya Fonda (JewishFolkSongs.com)

WHEN WORDS ALONE FAIL:
MUSIC AND THE SHOAH

LYRICS

“Zog nit keyn mol” (“Never Say That You are Walking the Final Road”) —

Yiddish transliteration and translation
(Hirsh Glick)

*Zog nit keyn mol, az du geyst dem letstn veg,
Khotsh himlen blayene farshteln bloye teg.
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte sho,
S'vet a poyk ton undzer trot: mir zaynen do!*

*Fun grinem palmenland biz vaysn land fun
shney,
Mir kumen on mit undzer payn, mit undzer
vey,
Un vu gefaln s'iz a shprits fun undzer blut,
Shprotsn vet dort undzer gvure, undzer mut!*

*S'vet di morgnzun bagildn undz dem haynt,
Un der nekhtn vet farshvindn mit dem faynt,
Nor oyb farzamen vet di zun in dem kayor –
Vi a parol zol geyn dos lid fun dor tsu dor.*

*Dos lid geshribn iz mit blut, un nit mit blay,
S'iz nit keyn lidl fun a foygl oyf der fray,
Dos hot a folk tsvishn falndike vent
Dos lid gezungen mit naganes in di hent.*

*To zog nit keyn mol, az du geyst dem letstn
veg,
Khotsh himlen blayene farshteln bloye teg.
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte sho –
S'vet a poyk ton undzer trot: mir zaynen do!*

Never say that you walk the final road,
Though leaden skies obscure blue days;
The hour we've longed for will still come,
Our steps will drum – we are here!

From green palm-land to distant land of snow,
We arrive with our pain, with our sorrow,
And where a spurt of our blood has fallen,
There will sprout our strength, our courage.

The morning sun will tinge our today with
gold,
And yesterday will vanish with the enemy,
But if the sun and the dawn are delayed –
This song will go through the generations.

This song's written with blood, not with lead,
It's not a song about a bird that is free,
A people, between falling walls,
Sang this song with pistols in their hands.

So never say that you walk the final road
Though leaden skies obscure blue days.
The hour we long for will still come –
Our steps will drum – we are here!

“Shtil di nakht iz oysgeshternt” (“The quiet night is full of stars”) —
Yiddish transliteration and translation
(Hirsh Glick; arranged and translated by Daniel Kahn)

Silent stars are shining o'er you
In the frost your hands are numb
Remember, sweet comrade, how I
showed you
How a soldier holds her gun

A girl, a coat of fur and leather
Holding a pistol in her hand
Waiting and watching for the German
Convoy to come around the bend

*Shtil di nakht iz oysgeshternt
Un der frozt hat shtark gebrent
Tsi gedenkstu vi ikh hob dikh gelernt
Haltn a shpayer in di hent*

*A moyd, a peltsl un a beret
Un halt in hant fezt a nagan
A moyd mit a sametenem ponim
Hit op dem soynes karavan*

She aims her trusty little weapon
Breathes, and pulls the trigger back
A transport full of ammunition
One shot stops it in its tracks

*Getsilt, geshosn un getrofn
Hot ir kleyninker piztoyl
An oyto a fulinkn mit vofn
Farhaltn hot zi mit eyn koyl*

At dawn, she crawls out of the forest
With garlands of snow all in her hair
One more little victory for freedom
One more comrade brave and fair

*Fartog fun vald aroysgekrokh
Mit shney girlandn oyf di hor
Gemutikt fun kleyninkn nitsokhn
Far undzer nayem frayen dor*

She aims her trusty little weapon
Breathes, and pulls the trigger back
A transport full of ammunition
One shot stops it in its tracks

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“Buchenwald Marsch” (“Buchenwald March”) —

German transliteration and translation

(M: Herman Leopoldi; L: Fritz Löhner-Beda)

*Wenn der Tag erwacht,
eh´ die Sonne lacht,
die Kolonnen ziehn zu des Tages Mühn
hinein in den grauenden Morgen.
Und der Wald ist schwarz
und der Himmel rot,
und wir tragen im Brotsack
ein Stückchen Brot
und im Herzen, im Herzen die Sorgen.*

*O Buchenwald,
ich kann dich nicht vergessen,
weil du mein Schicksal bist.
Wer dich verließ,
der kann es erst ermessen,
wie wundervoll die Freiheit ist!
O Buchenwald,
wir jammern nicht und klagen,
und was auch unsre Zukunft sei –
|| : wir wollen trotzdem
„ja“ zum Leben sagen,
denn einmal kommt der Tag –
dann sind wir frei! :||*

*Unser Blut ist heiß und das Mädels fern,
und der Wind singt leis,
und ich hab sie so gern,
wenn treu, wenn treu sie mir bliebe!
Die Steine sind hart,
aber fest unser Schritt,
und wir tragen die Picken und Spaten
mit
und im Herzen, im Herzen die Liebe!*

O Buchenwald ...

*Die Nacht ist so kurz und der Tag so
lang,
doch ein Lied erklingt,
das die Heimat sang,
wir lassen den Mut uns nicht rauben!
Halte Schritt, Kamerad,*

When the day awakes, before the sun
laughs,
the crews embark for the toils of the
day,
into the dawn.
And the forest is black and the sky red,
we carry a small piece of bread in our
bags
and in our hearts, in our hearts our
sorrows.

Oh, Buchenwald, I cannot forget you,
because you are my fate.
Only one who has left you, can measure,
how wonderful freedom is!
Oh, Buchenwald, we neither lament, nor
complain,
and whatever our future may hold:
we still want to say “yes” to life,
because one day the time will come -
then we will be free!

Our blood runs hot and the girl is far,
and the wind sings softly,
and I love her dearly,
if she’s true, remains true to me!
The stones are hard, but our steps
determined,
and we carry the picks
and spades with us,
and in our hearts, our hearts love.

Oh, Buchenwald...

The night is so short and the day so
long,
But if a song from our homeland is
heard,
we do not let it rob us of your courage.
Keep pace, comrade, and do not lose
courage,

*und verlier nicht den Mut,
denn wir tragen den Willen
zum Leben im Blut
und im Herzen, im Herzen den Glauben!*

For we carry the will to live in our blood
and in our hearts, our hearts faith.

Oh, Buchenwald...

O Buchenwald ...

“Ikh fur in keltser kant” (“I am going to Kielce”) —
Yiddish transliteration and translation
(Yankele Hershkowitz)

Refrain:

*Ikh fur in keltser kant,
Dort est men retekhelekh mit shmant,
Mayrn, burkes far a drayer,
Khutsi khinem krigt men ayer.
Dortn s'leybn iz nisht tayer,
Fur avek zay nisht kayn frayer.
Ikh fur in keltser kant,
Dort est men retekhelekh mit shmant.*

Refrain:

I'm going to Kielce,
Where they eat radishes with cream,
Carrots, beetroots as much as you want,
And eggs for half the price.
Life there is not expensive,
Go there, don't be a fool
I'm going to Kielce,
Where radishes and cream they eat.

Verse:

*Dort boyet zikh a naye medine
In dem zayen mir kayn grine,
Rumkowski Khayim vet zayn indzer
fraynt
Servus yidn servus
Ikh fur nokh haynt!*

Verse:

There, they build a new nation,
Nobody there will be 'green'.
Rumkowski Khayim will be our friend.
Bye-Bye, Jews,
I'm going right away.

Refrain:

Ikh fur in keltser kant...

Refrain:

I'm going to Kielce...

“Baym Geto Toyerl” (“By the Geto Gate”) —

Yiddish transliteration and translation
(L: Avrom Akselrod; M: Mark Varshavsky)

*Baym geto toyerl
Brent a fayerl,
Un di shrek iz groys.
Es geyen yidelekh
Fun di brigadelekh,
Fun yedn gist zikh shveys.*

*Tsi zol ikh vayter geyn,
Tsi zol ikh blaybn shteyn,
Ikh veys nit ven un vu?
Der komendantele
In grinem mantele
Er nemt dokh ales tsu.*

*Milkh fun fendele
Shpek fun kendele-
Oy yidelekh, men brent!*

*Holts a shaytele,
Gelt fun baytele
Er khapt alts fun di hent.*

*O, khaver mitn shtrayf,
Ikh bin in gantsn treyf,
Helf mir baym kontrol.
Ikh gib dir af dem tsvek
Haynt a kilo shpek,
Un morgn nokh a mol.*

*Shtelt zikh oys tsu fir,
Un du shtey lebn mir,
Gey nit in der zayt.
Gey tsum rekhtn goy
“Shitas yau tvarkoy”
S’iz do a labn broyt.*

“Baym Geto Toyerl” (“Fun der Arbet”)

(Translation from: Vinkovetzky, Aharon, Abba Kovner and Sinai Leichter, eds. *Anthology of Yiddish Folksongs*, Vol. 4. Jerusalem: 1987, Magnes Press, Mount Scopus Publications, p. 135)

Near the ghetto gate
A fire burns.
The control is fierce.
Jews are coming
From the brigades
Sweat pouring from each face.

Shall I continue on,
Or shall I stop?
I don’t know what to do...
The commander there,
In his green coat
Grabs everything he can.

A block of wood,
Money from a purse,
He stands and helps himself;

Milk from the can
And soup from the pot--
Jews, we are aflame!

Oh, friend with the stripe
I am altogether “treif”
Please help me at the control!
I will give you all
I have today
And tomorrow too!

Stand in groups of four,
You stand at my side,
Do not creep forward,
Go to the gentile on the right.
“This one in o.k.”
There is a loaf of bread...

“Arvoles Lloran por Lluvias” — Ladino and translation

*Arvoles lloran por lluvias
y montañas por aires,
ansí lloran los mis ojos
por tí, querida amante.*

Trees cry for rain
Mountains cry for air,
And thus my eyes weep--
For you, love, dear.

*Blanka sos, blanca vistas
Blanka la tu figura,
Blankas flores kaen de tí,
De la tu ermozura.*

Fair-skinned you are, and fair you dress
Fair, too, is your figure.
Fair white flowers fall because of you,
Because of your allure.

*En frente de mí hay un ángelo
con tus ojos me mira
llorar quero y no puedo
mi corazón suspira*

In front of me there's an angel
that looks at me through your eyes.
I want to cry, and I cannot;
My heart sighs.

*Torno y digo
qué va a ser de mí
en tierras ajenas
no puedo vivir.*

I turn and wonder:
What will become of me?
In foreign lands
I don't have a destiny.

“Adio Kerida” — Ladino and translation

*Tu madre kuando te pario
i te kito al mundo
korason eya no te dio
para amar segundo*

When your mother delivered you
and brought you to the world
she did not give you a heart
to love another

*adio, adio kerida
no kero la vida
me l'amagrates tu*

Goodbye--goodbye beloved,
I don't want to live.
You made my life bitter.

*a, busakate otro amor,
Aharva otras puertas,
aspera otro ardor,
ke para mí sos muerta. (adio, adio...)*

I'll go look for another love,
knock on other ports,
in hope there is true passion,
because for me, you are dead.

“Arvoliko” — Ladino and translation
(Flory Jagoda; translation by Judith Cohen)

*Kuantus anyus mi kali aspirar
Laz penas di la gera ulvidar
Ulvidar, ulvidar
Dulores di pena ulvidar*

How many years must I wait
The pain of war to forget.
To forget...to forget...
The sorrows of pain to forget.

*Kuantus vezes pudemus viyajar
In laz tyeras ajenas paz tupar
Paz tupar, paz tupar,
i penas ulvidar?*

How many times can we travel
in foreign lands seeking peace
seeking peace, seeking peace--
and to forget so much pain.

*Arvoliko in la muntanya
Mi sta yamando a dizir mi la verdad,
La verdad, la verdad
a dizir mi la verdad
La verdad, la verdad,
a dizir me la krueldad.*

Dear little tree in the mountain
Calling me, telling me the truth.
The truth...the truth...
Telling me the truth.
The truth...the truth...
Telling me...cruelty.