

NAKHTISHE LIDER FIN SHKHEYNISHN DORF Night Songs from a Neighboring Village

Nakhtishe lider fin shkheynishn dorf
Farblondzhen amul tsi mayn gonik
Zi gletn man imet, zey leshn man troer
Zey flisn vi zaftiker honik

Night songs from a neighboring village
Come drifting at times to my balcony
They caress my loneliness, extinguish my sorrow
They flow like liquid honey.

Lider khakhlatske, muntere, frische,
Vus shmekn mit feld en mit shayer.
Zey filn di luftung mit varemkeyt libe,
Vus shtromt fin a heymishn fayer

Ukrainian songs, hearty and fresh
Smelling of field and barn
They fill the air with a dear warmth
That streams from the fires of home.

Nakht iz in shteytl, ikh lig of mayn gonik,
Vus toyg mir der mames geleyger?
Tsi vus az s'iz eyns, tsi vus as s'iz tsvey,
Tsi vus az s'shlugt dra shoybn der zeyger?

It's night in the shtetl, I lie on my balcony
What use is my mother's bed now?
Who cares if it's 1 AM, who cares if it's 2?
Who cares if the clock even strikes three?

Her ikh, en ikh veys nit, tsi s'iz yontef in dorf,
Tsi es hilyen zikh glat azoy yingen?
Oy, vus iz der khilik, oy, bald vet, mir dakht,
Di levune oykh un'oybn zingen

I listen and don't know if it's a holiday in the village,
Or just guys having a good time.
What's the difference? Soon, I think,
Even the moon will start singing.

Nakhtishe lider fin shkheynishn dorf
Di hartsike, vareme teyner
Biz s'heybt un frimorgn tsivargn di nakht,
Un es heybn un kreyen di heyner...

Night songs from a neighboring village
Those heartfelt, warm tones
Until dawn begins to choke off the night
And the roosters begin to crow...

Text by Bessarabian/Soviet Yiddish poet Herts Rivkin, born 1908, Kapresht, Bessarabia, Russian Empire, who perished in a Soviet prison camp in 1951. I know this song from Itzik Gottesman and Beyle Schaechter-Gottesman, of Chernovitz, Romania (now Chernivtsi, Ukraine), and Bronx, New York, and it is one of my favorites, especially in its embodiment of one important aspect of East European Jewish attitudes towards non-Jewish neighbors and their music – in this case Ukrainians in the Moldova-Ukraine borderlands.

The song was a fundamental inspiration for the concert program *Night Songs from a Neighboring Village*, created in 1994 by Michael Alpert with premier Ukrainian-American bandurist and singer Julian Kytasty and Canadian-Ukrainian singer Alexis Kochan of the Winnipeg-based *Paris to Kyiv*. An international and intercultural collaboration, *Night Songs* has enjoyed a number of realizations throughout North America, Europe and Israel, beginning as a quintet and growing into a meeting of two celebrated world music ensembles: *Paris to Kyiv* and Alpert's New Jewish Music quartet *Brave Old World*, before reaching its present form as a two-decade duo collaboration between Alpert and Kytasty.

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