

Creating Songs in a Multi-Cultural Context: “Felker Yontev” at Camp Boiberik¹

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Abstract

Songs invoke overlapping times and spaces, allowing a reshaping of identities – discursively and politically – in a reclamation of past resources and invention of newer traditions. One such case can be seen at a Yiddish secular Camp Boiberik, which created and performed “*Felker Yontev*” (Holiday of Nations) every summer from 1922 to 1979. These musical Yiddish ritual pageants explicitly enacted Isaiah's prophetic vision, that all nations would live in peace. Each age group would represent a nation, with song, costume and dance created by counselors together with children.

Camp Boiberik, named after Sholem Aleichem's famous resort, was founded by the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute. Boiberik was directed by Leibush Lehrer from its creation until 1964. The camp blended American practices with a strong emphasis on Jewish culture, especially through Yiddish. Using archives (YIVO, Wexler, camp websites...) and interviews with former “Boiberikaners,” this paper discusses how the songs found in these archives display multiple layers of a complex Jewish identity in a post-migration context. Using an interdisciplinary perspective informed by ethnomusicology, history and cultural geography, the paper analyzes how music, text and context intertwine, in redefining a Jewish identity in the process of Americanization and how they inform part of a present musical creativity in Yiddish performance.

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TEXT

Camp Boiberik, named after Sholem Aleichem's famous resort, was founded by the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute. Boiberik was directed by Leibush Lehrer from its creation until 1964. The camp blended American practices with a strong emphasis on Jewish culture, especially through Yiddish. For almost 60 years starting from the 1920s, at the end of the *Felker Yontev* (Holiday of Nations²) which marked the ultimate moment of the season at Camp Boiberik, the “*Sholem Marsh*” (Peace March) was solemnly sung in the auditorium. Meanwhile – for the only and one time of the year – the White Dove of peace was unveiled of the mural in a wooden triangle over the stage by the two most senior campers, who pulled the curtains that had hidden the mural all summer.

² “Felker” in yiddish means “people” (Nations would be from Hebrew “goyim”)

SHOLEM MARSH Mir geyen, mir kumen, Fun barg un fun tol, Mir zingen di felker a loyb. Tseshprayt dayne fligl, Neviyisher gayst, Un zay undzer shney-vayse toyb. Mir gibn zikh frayndlakh Un fridlekh di hent, Vayl nay iz dos harts funem dor. A velt fun khaverim In glik un in noyt, Der kholem der alter vert vor. Mir zaynen di felker, Mir zaynen di velt, Mir zingen tsuzamen a loyb. Tseshprayt dayne fligl, Neviyisher gayst, Un zay undzer shney-vayse toyb.	We're going, we're coming, From hill and dale, Singing praise to the peoples. Spread your wings, Spirit of the prophet, And be our snow-white dove. We greet each other In peace and friendship, For the heart of our generation is new. A world of friends In good times and bad, The old dream comes to life. We are the peoples, We are the world, We sing praises together. Spread your wings, Spirit of the prophet, And be our snow-white dove.
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The “*shneyvayse toyb*”, the White Dove, was the central symbol of Boiberik. According to Joshua Waletzky³, under the dove was the inscription: “*Di kehile fun Yisroel iz geglikhn tsu a toyb*,” a Biblical quote meaning "The community of Israel is likened unto a dove". It symbolized the camp, it symbolized peace, it symbolized the Jewish people as a whole.

This sacred moment taking place in a secular ritual can be seen as an imitation of the opening of the *Aron-hakodesh*, the sacred ark containing the Torah scrolls, on *Yom-toyvim* (holidays). Its performance reflects a very interesting conception of Jewish secularism developed

³ Joshua Waletzky is a Brooklyn-based filmmaker and songwriter. His grand-father was among the founders of the camp, his father was a camper there, and he was himself was a camper and a music counselor for 8 years.

at Camp Boiberik by its most influential founder and long-time director Leibush Lehrer (1887 Warsaw - 1964 New York), a trained psychologist and educator. Leibush Lehrer was an influential theoretician and one of the founding fathers of the *Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute*, a network of *shules* (secular Yiddish schools) which developed a non-political and non-religious approach to Jewishness. He was born in Warsaw in 1887 and emigrated to the United States around 1909, after a traditional Jewish education and adhesion to the territorialist movement in Poland, a Jewish political movement which claimed that every national minority could have an autonomous or semi-autonomous territory.

Established in 1919 by the *Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute* in New York⁴, Camp Boiberik was the very first Yiddish secular summer camp in America. It took place every summer until 1979 near Rhinebeck, NY. Marsha Gildin⁵, in a conversation that we had in April 2014 in the Bronx, described Boiberik as a “spiritual center of secular Judaism”. She added that “the peoplehood was expressed in the culture, in the language, in the history, and the complete commitment to educating yourself around that and being in support of the people.”⁶

The *Felker Yontev* – dearly remembered by former campers as a highlight of the summer – was the celebration of the different peoples and nations of the world that concluded every summer season on the final day and evening of camp⁷. In her book about Yiddish secular

⁴ Gottesman, Itzik N., ‘Boiberik YIVO Archives RG 659.1’ Introduction to the archives catalog.

⁵ Marsha Gildin is a teaching artists, using theater and story-telling in intergenerational settings, especially at the community arts organisation Elders Share the Arts. She was a camper in Boiberik for many years, as well as her parents, so as Joshua Waletzky's family.

⁶ Interview with Marsha and David Gildin, April 23, 2014, Bronx, NY.

⁷ In folder 19 of box 1 (YIVO RG 659.1), dated from 1926, a two-pages hand-written document entitled “Felker tog in Boiberik,” very likely written by a camper, states that the first “*Felker tog*” took place “last year” (in

education in America, Fradle Freidenreich quotes a former staff member, Freidel Frank, who remembers the Festival :

“Preparations began three weeks before the end of the season. Every group became a different nation, learning their national songs. The camp artists began building gateways for each group and the seamstress began sewing national costumes... The event would start on Friday evening after dinner during the last weekend. The entire camp, dressed in white, marched with their counselors around the constructed gateway until they had completed a full circle. They then marched into the auditorium for the Shabes program where each group presented the song of their 'nation'. Parents and guests were invited to attend.”⁸

Parts of the ritual took place in the auditorium, in the fields where gates were erected for each Nation, on the hill on the way to the dining room or in the dining room itself. During an interview with Joshua Waletzky⁹, as we were elaborating about the different spaces of the ritual, he mentioned how the formalism of the ritual helped the campers know what was their own place in the collectivity, according to their age and gender. On the last Friday night of the summer, after dinner, everyone would gather in the auditorium, boys and girls entering into the room in separate lines, crossing the rows of seats to position themselves in front of the stage, facing one side of the room, showing their profiles to the audience and solemnly singing “*Shir hashirim*” (an excerpt of the *Song of Songs*)¹⁰, whose melody was from the movie “The Dybbuk,” according to

1925). The author (Sholem ?) writes that the campers wish to have such a party again this year. He describes the sequence of events, the costumes, the gates, the field.

8 “note 17: Freidel Frank, interview with the author, March 19, 2002”, Freidenreich, Fradle. *Passionate Pioneers: The Story of Yiddish Secular Education in North America, 1910-1960*. (Teaneck, NJ: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 2010), 380-1.

9 Interview with Joshua Waletzky, April 3rd, 2014, Brooklyn, NY.

10 The song was recited in Hebrew with Ashkenazi pronunciation : “Shir hashirim, Asher l’shloymo. Yishokeyni minshikoys pihu, Ki toyvim doydekho miyoyim.” (Song of Songs, Which is Solomon’s. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, For his love is better than wine.)

Itzik Gottesman¹¹, followed by *Lekho doydi*, a traditional Sabbath liturgical song recited Friday at sundown. The music counselor was sitting at the piano on the stage, and would cue the group – who collectively shared the codes of what to sing, when, and how – with a chord, or a series of chords.

Fradle Freidenreich goes on with her descriptive quote of the festival: “After the service, everyone went out to the various 'country areas,' to socialize. On Saturday evening, immediately after dinner, the 'nations,' dressed in their native costumes, went into the auditorium where they performed dances of their respective countries. Then everyone went back to their gateway and roasted marshmallows.”¹² The witness then describes Leibush Lehrer's speech and the heartbreaking farewell of the campers.

This paper aims to analyze how the songs of the *Felker yontev* – all of them in Yiddish – expressed and shaped aspects of the political, cultural and religious identity of the campers. This research is based on two types of sources: it started from an ethnographic type of research, as part of a dissertation project about contemporary Yiddish songs and the process of songwriting in Yiddish, consisting for a part in conducting interviews with former “Boiberikaner,” especially Joshua Waletzky, Marsha and David Gildin, and Itzik Gottesman. I also investigated archival material from the YIVO archives (11 boxes arranged by Itzik Gottesman).

Boiberik appeared as a both complex and consistent striking cultural and intellectual construction, located at the crossroad of multiple identities: a very rooted Jewish identity; an

¹¹ Interview with Itzik Gottesman, February 9th, 2014. Itzik Gottesman went to Camp Boiberik from 1964 to 1974.

¹² “Note 17: Freidel Frank, interview with the author, March 19, 2002”, Freidenreich, *Passionate Pioneers*, 380-1.

American identity of immigrants and their children; and a very local identity of “Boiberikaner”, envisioning Boiberik itself as a “cultural home”, all of them converging towards a universalistic and pacifistic ideal that was part of the general *Zeitgeist* of the progressive movements of the aftermath of World War I. The various plays of identification induced by the performance of the *Felker yontev*, which blended Jewish elements (Yiddish language, Biblical quotes, symbols) with external elements, evolved over the years as the historical context shifted. The ritual created an interesting superposition of places, both experienced and imagined.

When Boiberik was invented, the context of the aftermath of the First World War raised a set of questions that is very different from the evolution that occurred in American Jewish identity after the Second World War and the creation of the State of Israel. The idea of “*felker*” that Leibush Lehrer developed and expressed through the pageant can be informed by several ideological trends of the 1910s and 1920s.

Territorialist ideas, that prevailed at the time of the creation of the Yiddish “Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute” *shules* network in 1916, claimed that Jews, as all national minorities, could have autonomous territories. The “people” represented in the *Felker yontev* could thus be nations with a state, like French, Italians, Greeks; national minorities within states – whether fighting for one or not; or indigenous peoples (for examples: Druze, Gypsies, Native Americans, Basques, etc...). To write a song for Boiberikaner to sing representing a particular people at the *Felker yontev*, the music counselor – who was required to be innovative – would collect traditional melodies, translate or adapt folk songs into Yiddish, or pastiche lyrics or music in the folk style (like using a specific scale or mode for Japanese or for the Druze). Sometimes, some

words in the language of the people represented were directly used in the song, but there would always be something about peace. Joshua Waletzky gave me the example of Chana and Joseph Mlotek's pastiche of the French song “*Sur le pont d'Avignon*” that she wrote when she was a music counselor years later she first attended the camp in 1931¹³. The song was partly translated into Yiddish as “*Afn brik...*” and went into a collage of several French traditional songs, with French and Yiddish words intertwined: “En passant par la Lorraine, herts zikh a geshrey...” “Vive la France, vive la liberté!”, to end with “Ale, ale kumen on, ale tupen mit di fis. Ale ale kumen on, fun Marseille un fun Pariz,” on the melody of the “French cancan”, by the renowned French (and Jewish) operetta composer Jacques Offenbach.

Later on, Joshua Waletzky collaborated with Fishl Kolko to write another song to represent France, using “Dans le jardin de mon père, les arbres dont fleuris. Les oiseaux du monde viennent y faire leur nid. Auprès de ma blonde, il fait bon, fait bon, fait bon,” that he translated into Yiddish: “In mayn tatns gortn, blien blumen sheyn. Di felker [or: di feygelekh]¹⁴ fun gor der velt boyen dort a heym,” and then went into another song. (“In my father's garden, the trees are flowered. The birds of the world make there their nest.”).¹⁵

The First World War was followed by an international pacifist movement. The peoples represented in the *Felker yontev*, who were also potential parties of war, each sang their own song expressing their desire for peace, as a kind of League of Nations, as Itzik Gottesman stated

¹³ Interview with Joshua Waletzky, April 9th, 2014, Brooklyn, NY.

¹⁴ In the interview, Joshua was not sure of the words he himself wrote together with Fishl Kolko some years ago.

¹⁵ In an email exchange with Joshua Waletzky, he explained more specifically the collaborative process of songwriting with Fishl Kolko, who composed 90% of the songs : “My contributions to the lyrics were mostly to come up with the songs from the folk/popular song tradition of the peoples that could be woven into a Felker Yontev song or used as a model for an originally composed song. As part of this process I often suggested phrases in non-Yiddish languages (e.g., Spanish, Hawaiian) to be used in the song. Then Fishl wrote a draft of the lyrics, using the by-then traditional model of a Felker Yontev song. Then I would work with him to edit the lyrics, to make them more singable, etc...” (Personal email, August 20th, 2015)

it in an interview¹⁶. Joshua Waletzky told me that in these years, peace pageants were performed in New York public schools.

One of the very first document that you may find while looking at the first file of the first box of the archives of Camp Boiberik at YIVO is a four-page children's journal in Yiddish entitled “*Der Boiberiker glock*” (the Boiberik bell), published in 1923 by the “Children's Republic of Boiberik” [I still need to ask permission to YIVO for publishing]. Beautifully illustrated, it displays a cracked bell, reminiscent of the American “liberty bell”, symbol of American independence and related to the history of abolitionism.

[DOCUMENT]

The first article on the page is called “cooperation” and stresses an important principle of the camp. It's followed by an illustration of a tailor's scissor, and on the same page, one can find the illustration of a rooster, at that time the unofficial symbol of the Democratic Party since the last third of the 19th century. The iconography of this document gives an idea of the social and political situation of Boiberik in the American context at the moment of its birth, when most of its members were immigrants themselves and spoke Yiddish as a vernacular language. While the American symbols show an American identity in the making, and throughout the years, a progressive integration, there are many examples of macaronic songs mixing Yiddish and English in the repertoire of Boiberik. The complex identity of Eastern-European Jewish immigrants raised the issue of integration, and looking at Boiberik archives allows – although it is not the focus of this paper – to observe this process over the course of three generations.

¹⁶ Interview with Itzik Gottesman, February 9th, 2014, Bronx, NY.

The use of songs in summer camps was ubiquitous throughout the world of U.S. summer camps¹⁷, and the process of writing new songs about the camp itself was not specific to Camp Boiberik. It was a way to build a local identity and a sense of belonging¹⁸. What was special about Boiberik was probably the impact of the pedagogy and thought of Leibush Lehrer. The expression “Children's Republic” refers to a trend of pedagogical innovations and experimentations that were implemented both in the United States and in Europe in the 1920s such as Korczak and Montessori. Leibush Lehrer, who studied child psychology and pedagogy, wrote several articles about this topic.

He particularly developed original ideas about Jewish secularism, and, as Freidenreich writes, “put his ideas into practice in the camp and schools he directed. Saul Goodman¹⁹, in his tribute to Leibush Lehrer in the 1965 Yearbook dedicated to his memory, characterized Boiberik as a “laboratory”²⁰, acknowledging Lehrer's anti-conformist and pioneer vision of American Jewish secular education. Goodman explains that Lehrer had understood that it was not possible

¹⁷ "Singing at summer camps is an experience shared by many millions of Americans and vicariously shared by millions more who never went to summer camp but learned songs from those that did." Anthony Seeger and Kate Seeger 2006. *Beyond the Embers of the Campfire: The Ways of Music at a Residential Summer Children's Camp*. *The World of Music* 48(1) 33-65.

¹⁸ Cohen, Judah M. 2006a "'And the Youth Shall See Visions': Songleading, Summer Camps, and Identity Among Reform Jewish Children," in Susan Boynton and Roe-Min Kok, eds., *Musical Childhoods and the Cultures of Youth*, 187-207. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 193, 195.

¹⁹ Saul L. Goodman was born in Bodzanow, Poland. He came to the United States in 1921. A teacher in the Jewish secular schools, he rose to Executive Director of the Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute and Professor of Jewish Thought and Yiddish Literature on the Graduate Faculty of Herzliah - Jewish Teachers' Seminary. He was the author of several books in Yiddish and English, including "Traditsye un Banayung" (Tradition and Innovation), for which he received the Zvi Kessel Literary Prize, and "The Face of Secular Jews". He was a prolific writer and lecturer on Jewish philosophy, literature and education. He died in 1999 at the age of 97. (source: 'Paid Notice: Deaths GOODMAN, SAUL L.', *The New York Times*, 15 January 1999, section Classified <<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/15/classified/paid-notice-deaths-goodman-saul-l.html>> [accessed 1 August 2015])

²⁰ Goodman Saul, *Year Book Dedicated by Leibush Lehrer*, Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, NY, 1965, p. 8*.

to apply a pre-existing model of education (should it be a non-Jewish American model, or a East-European Jewish model) to the contemporary context of normalization and secularization of the Jews in the United States.

Freidenreich writes that “opposing mainstream secularists who wanted to reject everything that Jewish religion represented, Lehrer viewed Judaism not only as religion, but also as a folk culture, stressing tradition and customs. He considered these very important means to link Jews to their collective history and heritage. He understood and agreed that customs and traditions need to be adapted to modernity and to the contemporary environments in which North American Jews found themselves.”²¹

Lehrer distinguished between “the usual definitions of secular, referring to the long struggle between church and state” and a definition that would be applicable to Jewish life. For him, the line of demarcation was not a “purely religious schism between Orthodoxy and Reform”, but rather drawn “between nationalism on the one hand and assimilationism, or fusionism, on the other.”²² For Saul Goodman, Lehrer was a Jewish “survivalist”, maintaining a form of traditionalism that was careful to freedom of interpretation and to details that “would not copy the old in form and content”. “Jewish creative continuity,’ in Leibush Lehrer's words, 'required a will on the part of the group to survive.’”

It is in this context that Leibush Lehrer invented and introduced the *Felker yontev*, which remained a local Boiberik tradition until the late 1970s, and which had a profound impact on

²¹ Freidenreich, *Passionate Pioneers*, 21.

²² Leibush Lehrer, "The Jewish Secular School," *Jewish Education* 8 (January-March 1936), 33

those who attended the camp. Leibush Lehrer stressed the importance of the transmission of Jewish identity and of the Yiddish language. Fradle Freidenreich quotes in her book a former Boiberik camper: “I can remember songs as being the powerful glue that made me feel the range of connectedness from being part of my bunk on the one hand and experiencing myself as part of Klal Yisrael (the Jewish people) on the other.”²³

The *Felker yontev* was a ritual of peace, a musical Yiddish ritual pageant explicitly enacting Isaiah's prophetic vision that all nations would live in peace. While most other summer camps had "color wars" at the end of the summer, Boiberik had a "peace festival". A dozen new songs were composed every year by the music counselor for the occasion. Each age group would represent “felker fun der velt” (peoples of the world). The older campers, 15-year-old boys and girls represented the 'Boiberikaner', and the 14-year-old girls were the 'Biblishe yidn', but shortened to 'Yidn’”²⁴.

The “Boiberikaner” represented a “nay folk”, a “new people” which was hosting the Festival in their land, Boiberik, turned into the cultural home of the campers. Both groups had their song, very likely written by the then music counselor Lazar Weiner²⁵ between 1925 – when the first *Felker yontev* occurred – and 1927, when the first version of the pageant songs were edited in the booklet “Mir zingen”. These songs, together with the “Sholem marsh” remained part of the core repertoire sung every year, but the three of them transformed over the years. In

²³ “note 26: Phyllis Tobin, letter to the author, June 12, 2005”, Freidenreich, *Passionate Pioneers*, 366.

²⁴ Interview with Joshua Waletzky, April 3rd, 2014, Brooklyn, NY.

²⁵ Lazar Weiner (1897-1982): “After discovering the rich Yiddish cultural scene in early 20th-century New York City, Lazar Weiner went on to become a leading composer of Yiddish art songs and contemporary synagogue music, and a revered director of Yiddish choruses.” (Milken Archives, <http://www.milkenarchive.org/people/view/all/551>, consulted on August, 2nd 2015).

fact, it is possible to trace the changes in these songs as presented in the song booklets printed every year. And surprisingly enough, the version was modified between the year 1948 and 1949. With the creation of the State of Israel, the messianic ideal that was expressed through all the years became more explicit.

[“Felker lider” booklet (1953) – Boiberik Archives (YIVO)]

In “Fridns marsh”, the “fridns palats” (Palace of peace) of the earlier version disappear, while the dove transforms into a “neviisher gayst” - prophetic spirit, and the phrase “Der kholem der alter vert vor” (the old dream comes to life) appears in the song, instead of “Mir zingen fun sholem un freyd” (we're singing of peace and joy).

<p>1927 version Mir geyen, mir kumen, In fridns palats, Mir zingen di felker a loyb. Tseshprayt dayne fligl, Un shveb iber undz Di klore, du shney-vayse toyb.</p> <p>Mir gibn zikh frayndlakh Un fridlekh di hent, Nit mer shoyn tsezeyt un tseshpreyt. Mir zaynen khaverim In glik un in noyt, Un zingen fun sholem un frayd.</p> <p>Mir zaynen di felker, Mir zaynen di velt, Mir zingen tsuzamen a loyb. Mir kumen bagrisn Dem fridns-palats, Vu s'flatert di shey-vayse toyb.</p>	<p>From 1949 on Mir geyen, mir kumen, Fun barg un fun tol, Mir zingen di felker a loyb. Tseshprayt dayne fligl, Neviyisher gayst, Un zay undzer shney-vayse toyb.</p> <p>Mir gibn zikh frayndlakh Un fridlekh di hent, Vayl nay iz dos harts funem dor. A velt fun khaverim In glik un in noyt, Der kholem der alter vert vor.</p> <p>Mir zaynen di felker, Mir zaynen di velt, Mir zingen tsuzamen a loyb. Tseshprayt dayne fligl, Neviyisher gayst, Un zay undzer shney-vayse toyb.</p>
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If the camp was explicitly non-partisan, although within the realm of the progressive Yiddish-speaking organizations, the sensibility became generally Zionist – mainstream Jewish American in that sense. The abstract “sholem hoyz” (house of peace) has turned into the hope of a Jewish State in Israel. The reference to Israel yet remains somehow quite an abstract one, referring more to the messianic ideal of peace, than to the actual events.

In the Yearbook of 1965, one year after the death of Leibush Lehrer, Joseph Landis recalls a story, that the famous Yiddish writer and satirist Moishe Nadir once came to visit Boiberik towards the end of the season and observed the Felker Yom-Tov. “He was greatly

impressed by the pageantry, by the color and variety of the national costumes worn by the children's group, by the native songs and dance, and by the spirit of brotherhood that reigned at this ceremony at which the senior boys and girls reaffirmed the aspirations of Biblical Jews and re-echoed the famous words of Isaiah. Finally [as Joseph Landis tells it], Moishe Nadir turned to Lehrer and said, "It's wonderful, this festival in which all the peoples of the world gather together as equals. But he added, with a mild ironic smile, 'it seems to me that you've made the Jews a little more equals than the others.'"²⁶

The impact of Boiberik on many of its campers' life paths and career choices has been visible through the field work. As a songwriter, musician, and pedagog, Joshua Waletzky locates himself in the continuity of this unbroken chain of tradition, his family tradition, but also the line of music counselor who wrote songs and taught music in Boiberik like Lazar Weiner, Vladimir Heifetz, Chana Mlotek, Fishl Kolko. He remains a transmitter of a certain Yiddish musical creativity rooted in a living tradition. His album "Ariber di shotn" (*Crossing the Shadows*, 2001) features several songs about peace, like for example "Irland, 5758 - Ireland, 5758", about the conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland. Joshua Waletzky fully acknowledges the influence of Boiberik, that he calls his "musical hometown," on his creative process in his album's booklet:

"Yiddish song was what bound Boiberik together. Wonderful interpreters of the Yiddish repertoire, like Ben Bonus and Shifra Lehrer, performed regularly at the resort. Prominent Yiddish musicians were among the Music Directors of the children's camp, including, during my years, composer Lazar Weiner and musicologist Chana Mlotek. An inspiring tradition of newly written songs flourished there. As a teenage composer, I leapt into this tradition, writing scores for musical plays each summer. During my own 8-year turn as Music Director, I compiled or composed dozens of songs each summer for

²⁶ Goodman Saul, *Year Book Dedicated by Leibush Lehrer*, Sholem Aleichem Folk Institute, NY, 1965, 8*.

programs and pageants. My longtime friend and colleague Fishl Kolko, who introduced me to a treasury of Yiddish music, encouraged me to write settings for Yiddish poems and introduced me, for example, to the work of Soviet Yiddish poet Shike Driz. By my last summer in Boiberik, at age 27, I was a full-fledge Yiddish composer, writing in a living musical language.”²⁷

<p>Ver vet zeyen sholem in der ayngbakener erd? Ver vet shmidn akerayzns fun dem heldishn shverd? Ver bazorgn vet mit vaser az nito ken tropn toy? Ver vet oyshitn di tvue mit a goylem oys shtroy?</p> <p>Un ver vet shadkhenen dem shidekh tsvishn leyb un lam? Un reynikn fun vundn dem moyredikn sam? Yedn zun-fargang, nokh vayt fun shnayd-gezung, Ver, ver't zikh lozn in dem veg fun sholem aheym?</p> <p>Du vest zeyen sholem in der ayngbakener erd. Ikh shmidn akerayzns fun dem heldishn shverd. Der shokhn vet gefinen vaser khotsh nito keyn tropn toy. Der soyne t'oyshitn di tsvue mit a goylem oy shtroy.</p> <p>Un mir'n shadkhenen dem shidekh tsvishn leyb un lam, un reynikn fun vundn dem moyredikn sam. Yedn zun-fargang, nokh vayt fun shnayd-gezung, mir, mir'n zikh lozn in dem veg fun sholem aheym.</p>	<p>Who will sow peace in the baked-in earth? Who will forge plowshares from the hero's sword? Who will provide water, when there's not a drop of dew? Who will guard the grain with a monster of straw?</p> <p>And who will arrange the match between lion and lamb, And cleanse wounds of the fearful poison? Every sunset, still far from the harvest song, Who, who will take the road of peace home?</p> <p>You will sow peace in the baked-in earth. I will forge plowshares from the hero's sword The neighbor will find water, though there's not a drop of dew. The enemy will guard the grain with a monster of straw.</p> <p>And we will arrange the match between lion and lamb, And cleanse the wounds of the fearful poison. Every sunset, still far from the harvest song, We, we will take the road of peace home.</p>
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His song, “Ver vet zeyen sholem?” (Who will sow peace?) was recorded on clarinetist Michael Winograd's beautiful album “Storm game”, released in 2012, with Winograd's adaptation of a traditional tune from the Beregovsky collection. Here Joshua Waletzky continues to use these symbols and Biblical references. The image of the “leyb un lamb” (the match

²⁷ Josh Waletzky, *Crossing the Shadows/Ariber Di Shotns* (Waletzky Music Publishing Company (BMI), 2001), 1.

between lion and lamb) is related to Isaiah's prophecy, which was one of the main Biblical reference for the Boiberik “Felker yontev.” With an expression like “shadkhenen dem shidekh” (literally to “match the match”), Joshua Waletzky offers a “genuine” discourse on peace, using insider cultural idioms as a Jewish songwriter.

CONCLUSION

Thought never part of the mainstream in Jewish American culture -a minority within a minority- Camp Boiberik, through the radiant figure of his founder Leibush Lehrer, achieved the synthesis of several identities. The camp -which developed a culture of its own- blended a genuinely Jewish identity, deeply rooted in the Yiddish language, and an American one, in the process of Americanization over three generations. Not only did this require to be creative, but also to find powerful means of transmission of this set of values -old and new. The songs written and taught there, performed in rituals, pageants or games are still today dearly remembered by the camp alumni, and has inspired many of them to become educators, artists, transmitters, inspired by the pedagogy by they themselves benefited from.