

Strains of Revolution

Tuesday 27 June

Part One 17.00 – 18.00, Entrance Hall

Part Two 18.15 – 20.00, PACCAR Gallery

Strains of Revolution

The impact of the Russian Revolution upon Jews in the Russian Empire was profound and enduring. Strains of Revolution relates some of that history through the lens of music, in an exciting collaboration between the British Library, Performing the Jewish Archive, and the Royal Northern College of Music.

Part One draws upon the rich heritage of Jewish folk and choral music, drawing attention to the struggles, tragedies, internal conflicts, and deep comradeship experienced by Jews in the Russian Empire, before, during, and long after the Revolution itself.

Part Two introduces a series of new compositions, written specifically for and based upon the *Russian Revolution: Hope, Tragedy, Myths* exhibition, and performed in and amongst the exhibits. Together, exhibition and music blend to reflect the Jewish stories that form part of the Revolution story.

Performing the Jewish Archive

Performing the Jewish Archive is a four-year project funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council, and led by the Universities of Leeds, York, Wisconsin-Madison, and Sydney Australia.

The project's primary aims are to explore hidden or forgotten Jewish archives; uncover and perform lost works of Jewish music and theatre; stimulate new creativity based upon our archival findings; and develop a digital archival resource for the future.

Today's events constitute the third in a series of interactions with the British Library, under the overall description 'Archives into the Future'. These occasions bring scholars, archivists and performers together to explore new ways of animating archival materials, of rekindling interest in and care for archives today and into the future.

They form part of a wider sequence of events undertaken by Performing the Jewish Archive and some 26 partner organisations around the world. Activities include five international festivals ('Out of the Shadows' in Madison, USA; Leeds and York, UK; the Czech Republic; Sydney, Australia; and Cape Town and Stellenbosch, South Africa). Public lectures, educational activities, a travelling exhibition, and engagement with the media complement our performance activities and invite the public to share in our discoveries.

Strains of Revolution: Part 1 – Programme

The Clothworkers Consort of Leeds, cond. Bryan White

Di shvue (The oath), music by anon, arranged by Stephen Muir, words by S An-sky

Tehezakna (Strengthen our brothers), music arranged by Samuel Rubinstein, words by Hayim Nahman Bialik

In zaltsikn yam (In the salty sea), music by anon, arranged by Stephen Muir, words by S An-sky

In ale gasn – Hey, daloy politsey! (In all the streets – Down with the police!), music arranged by Zalman Mlotek, adapted by Stephen Muir, words anon.

A vinterlid (A winter song), music by Moses Pergament, words by Avrom Reyzen

Min hameysar (From out of distress), music by Froim Spektor & Josef Gottbeter, words from Psalm 118: 5–24

Proletarke, shvester mayne (Proletarian woman, my sister), music by Samuil Polonski, words by Samuil Polonski

Poljuško, pole (Little field), music arranged by Gideon Klein, melody by Lev Knipper, words by Viktor Gusev

Viglid (Cradle song), music by Samuil Polonski, words anon.

Eyli, Eyli (My God, my God), music by Simon Parmet, words by Boris Thomashevsky & Jacob Sandler

Performers

The Clothworkers Consort of Leeds (CCL) is one of the premier choral ensembles in the north of England, and gives concerts throughout the UK and abroad. It has broadcast on BBC Radio 3, recorded three CDs, and collaborated with ensembles like Fretwork, Rambert Dance, and London Musici.

www.ccl.leeds.ac.uk

Bryan White studied choral conducting at Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX), and completed a PhD at the University of Wales, Bangor. He is Senior Lecturer and Director of Research in Music at the University of Leeds, and a member of Leeds Baroque Choir.



Songs of brotherhood and strife

By the end of the 19th century, poor working conditions and harsh persecution led many working class Russian Jews to socialism. A member of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party, the renowned writer-ethnographer S An-sky (1863–1920) influenced supporters of the Jewish Labour Union, the ‘Bund’ (founded 1897).

An-sky’s revolutionary Yiddish poem **In zaltsikn yam** (1901) was a popular song among Bundists, and **Di shvue** (1902) became the anthem of the Bund. Most significant were An-sky’s expeditions documenting Jewish folklore. **In ale gasn** and **Hey, daloy politsey** (1905) were among Yiddish songs collected later by Soviet musicologists.

Whilst the Bund strove for Yiddish cultural autonomy, the Labour Zionists (founded 1906) yearned for a socialist future in Palestine. Based on a Hebrew poem by Hayim Nahman Bialik (1873–1934), the Labour Zionist anthem **Tehezakna** was arranged by Samuel Rubinstein (1886–1952) for the Helsinki Jewish choir.

At the outset of WWI, Finnish composer Moses Pergament (1893–1977) arranged **A vinterlid** by Bundist poet Avrom Reyzen, portraying the raging winds of time. The Revolution caused Pergament’s brother Simon (later Parmet; 1897–1969) to leave Russia for Helsinki; his **Eyli, Eyli**

(1919) echoes the psalm ‘My God, why have you forsaken us?’ and was composed as a meditation upon the massacres of Jews during the Ukrainian Civil War.

A similar reflective mood suffuses **Min hameytsar** by Froim Spektor (1888–1948) and Josef Gottbeter (1877–1942) of Rostov-on-Don. It was composed c.1924–25, as the Soviet regime’s anti-religious campaigns spread. Spektor fled to South Africa in 1928; Gottbeter was probably murdered during the Nazi occupation of Kislovodsk (1942).

The Bund and the Labour Zionists fragmented into separate factions after the Revolution, and by 1930 were prohibited. But the Revolution lingered long in Jewish memory, and Czech composer Gideon Klein (1919–45) arranged the Red Army song **Poljuško pole** for male chorus in the Theresienstadt ghetto (1942).

The Soviet regime nevertheless fostered Yiddish and other national minority cultures. **Proletarke, shvester mayne** (rec. 1936) is attributed to Samuil Polonski (1902–55), who also composed **Viglid** at the height of Stalinist terror (1948).

Ironically, even intellectuals and artists faithful to the legacy of the Revolution were murdered, and their Yiddish cultural institutions shut down.

Strains of Revolution: Part 1 – Translations

Di shvue

Brothers and sisters in toil and
struggle
All who are dispersed far and wide
Come together, the flag is ready
It waves in anger, it is red with blood!
Swear an oath of life and death!

Heaven and earth will hear us,
The light stars will bear witness.
An oath of blood, an oath of tears,
We swear, we swear, we swear!

We swear an endless loyalty to the
Bund.
Only it can free the slaves now.
The red flag is high and wide.
It waves in anger, it is red with blood!
Swear an oath of life and death!

Translation by Gabriella Safran
and Steven Zipperstein

Tehezakna

Strengthen our mighty brothers,
The bedrock of our land, wherever
they may be;
Keep your spirits up; cheerful and
joyous,
Come united to help our people!

Even though you have laid only the
foundations;
It is plenty, my brothers, your labour
is not in vain!
Those who follow will build, expand,
sow,
It is enough for now that our ranks
are swelled.

Who is it that disdains the everyday?
Down with the naysayers!
Rescue your people and make
ploughshares,
Until from mountaintops resounds
The voice of our Lord calling: Arise!

Translation by Simo Muir

In zaltsikn yam

In the salty sea of human tears
There is a terrible abyss.
It could be no deeper or darker,
A bloody current marks it.

The abyss has been dug for thousands
of years
By faith and hatred and pain.
And for thousands of years drop by
drop,
Tears have poured into it.

Who will finally free the worker
From hunger and eternal suffering?
And who will show him the way to
freedom,
To brotherhood, equality and joy?

The worker will free and heal the
world,
He will probe the abyss to its depths.
Long live the Jewish Labour Bund
Of Russia, Lithuania, and Poland!

Translation by Michael Alpert
and Gabriella Safran

In ale gasn; Hey, daloy politsey

In every alley where you run,
You hear rumblings.
Men, women and children
Are talking about strikes.

Brothers, enough of your drudgery,
Enough of borrowing and lending,
We're going on strike,
Brothers, let us free ourselves!

Brothers and sisters,
let us join hands,
Let's break down
Tsar Nikolai's walls!

Hey, hey, down with the police!
Down with the Russian ruling class!
Brothers and sisters,
Let's forgo formalities,
Let's shorten
Little Nikolai's years!

Yesterday he was driving
A little wagon full of trash,
Now he's become
A capitalist!

Brothers and sisters,
Let's all get together,
Let's bury little Nikolai
With his mother!

Cossacks and gendarmes,
Get down off your horses!
The Russian Tsar
Is already dead and buried!

Translation by Channa Mlotek

A vinterlid

Wild and wilder, wicked winds,
Stray throughout the world!
Snap the branches, break the trees,
Roaming free, unfurled.

Drive the birds out of the fields,
Chase them far away;
Those who cannot fly afar,
Kill them where they lay.

Rip the shutters off the houses,
Break the windowpanes;
Where a candle lights the darkness,
Blow out its remains!

Wild and wilder, wicked winds,
This is still your day!
Long, long will the winter linger,
Summer's far away.

Translation by Benjamin and Barbara Harshav

Min hameytsar

I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me, and set me in a large place. The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The Lord taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them. They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees: they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.

I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord: This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter.

I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

King James translation

Proletarke, shvester mayne

Proletarian woman, my sister
Who robbed you of your honour?
Just because you were driven by need,
You gave away everything to them.
Innocent your whole life:
Your soul for a piece of bread.
When you went begging for work,
They trod upon you.
They made a victim out of you,
Because the rich can do anything,
They do not ask questions,
Because the day and the night belong
to them.

Translation by Simo Muir

Poljuško, pole

Little field, wide field,
Heroes ride across the field,
Ay, from the Red Army.
Girls cry, they are sad today,
My sweetheart has left for a long time,
Ay, my sweetheart has left with the
army.

Look, girls, look at our path,
Look how our long trail circles
around,
Ay, happy trail.

Translation by Richard Howard

Viglid

Sleep my child, you'll be happy
You won't know any pain.
Like once your sisters and brothers
You will know only happiness and
songs.

The rudder of our land is held
By Stalin, firmly in his hand.
He leads us to great victories.
Sleep my child, my delight.

Sleep, do not toss and turn,
For all children be a model.
Sleep tight, my child, don't cry.
Stalin himself is waiting for you.

Translation by Simo Muir

Eyli Eyli

My God, my God, why have you
forsaken us?

In fire and flames we have been burnt.
Everywhere we have been shamed and
mocked.
But no one has dared to turn us away
from our holy Torah, from our holy
commandments.

My God, my God, why have you
forsaken us?

Day and night, I only pray. I keep,
with fear, our commandments.
Save us one day for the sake of our
forefathers.
Hear my prayer, my cry, because only
you, God, can help.
Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God is
one.

Translation by Simo Muir

Strains of Revolution: Part 2

Looking forward through the past: New songs from the Jewish archive

Performing the Jewish Archive brings the archival past of Jewish culture out of the shadows of obscurity. But the project also fosters new creativity, stimulating today's up-and-coming composers to 'look forward through the past' in their own music. Ultimately, around 30 young composers from the RNCM, Leeds, Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Sydney, Prague and Pilsen will have contributed works drawing on archives; all will be available from our website www.ptja.leeds.ac.uk

Programme

Ollie Lambert, *Wintersong*

Freya Holliman *soprano*

Andrew Mellor *clarinet*

Wintersong uses Reyzen's poem *A vinterlid* as both stimulus and source of lyrics. I was delighted to have an opportunity to write for bass clarinet and soprano, as I believe the combination suits this text brilliantly. In *Wintersong*, the soprano takes the role of the narrator, while the bass clarinet adds colour to the descriptive story. The piece also draws inspiration from the 'WWI', 'Revolution', and 'Civil War' sections of the British Library's Russian Revolution exhibition.

Max Burstyn, *My Soviet Passport*

Freya Holliman *soprano*

Miriam Brown *cello*

Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky was influenced by his Jewish lover, Liliya Brik, and increasingly distanced himself from permitted forms of Socialist Realism. By 1929, Stalin's regime had eroded the revolution's optimism. This theme - the beautiful or destructive ways in which idealism and reality converge - is addressed in my piece.

William Hearne, *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*

Cillian Donaghy *tenor*

Alice Millar *violin*

Using text from Russian revolutionary posters, punchy unison rhythms between tenor and violin mimic a newspaper salesman spreading Soviet propaganda.

As the musical lines diverge, conflicting voices from later posters diminish the propaganda's impact, and slogans emerge extolling Jewish freedom and the fall of the antisemitic regime. The two parts reunite, recalling the opening. The cycle repeats: waves of propaganda drive the parties apart and back together.

Anna Disley-Simpson, *Shlof, mayn kind*

Cillian Donaghy *tenor*

Miriam Brown *cello*

This piece investigates the undertones of a Stalinist Russian lullaby. This is explored through a fractious dialogue between the cellist and the singer, whilst employing musical language from the *Internationale* into the lullaby context.

Composers

Ollie Lambert

Initially a pianist, saxophonist, and singer, Ollie Lambert is currently studying BMus Composition at The RNCM under the tutelage of Laura Bowler. His passion for music stems from his experience singing seven services per week as Deputy Head Chorister of Canterbury Cathedral. (www.ollielambert.com)

Max Burstyn

Max Burstyn is a fourth-year undergraduate studying Composition at the RNCM. Recent works have been based on ideas about the relationship between music, science, and human consciousness, with a particular emphasis on self-development through objective music and art.

William Hearne

William Hearne is a 3rd year Composer studying at the RNCM under Larry Goves. He has a keen interest in the combination of acoustic and electronic performance and the enticing genre of music theatre.

Anna Disley-Simpson

Anna Disley-Simpson is in her second undergraduate year at the RNCM studying Composition with Dr. Larry Goves. Previously a winner of the BBC Inspire Young Composers Competition, she has had pieces performed at the Proms and broadcast on BBC Radio 3. She was a pupil of The Purcell School and a member of the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

Strains of Revolution: Part 2 – Translations

Ollie Lambert, *Wintersong*

Wild and wilder, wicked winds,
Stray throughout the world!
Snap the branches, break the trees,
Roaming free, unfurled.

Drive the birds out of the fields,
Chase them far away;
Those who cannot fly afar,
Kill them where they lay.

Rip the shutters off the houses,
Break the windowpanes;
Where a candle lights the darkness,
Blow out its remains!

Wild and wilder, wicked winds,
This is still your day!
Long, long will the winter linger,
Summer's far away.

Words by Avrom Reyzen, translation by Benjamin and
Barbara Harshav

Max Burstyn, *My Soviet Passport*

I'd tear
 like a wolf
 at bureaucracy.
For mandates
 my respect's but the slightest.
To the devil himself
 I'd chuck without mercy
every red-taped paper.
 But this ...
Down the long front
 of coupés and cabins
File the officials
 politely.
They gather up passports
 and I give in
My own vermilion booklet.
For one kind of passport –
smiling lips part
For others –
 an attitude scornful.
They take
 with respect, for instance,
 the passport
From a sleeping-car
English Lionel.
The good fellows eyes
 almost slip like pips
when,
 bowing as low as men can,
they take,
 as if they were taking a tip,
the passport
 from an American.
At the Polish,
 they dolefully blink and wheeze
in dumb
 police elephantism –
where are they from,
 and what are these
geographical novelties?

And without a turn
 of their cabbage heads,
their feelings
 hidden in lower regions,
they take without blinking,
 the passports from Swedes
and various
 old Norwegians.
Then sudden
 as if their mouths were
 quake
those gentlemen almost
 whine
Those very official gentlemen
 take
that red-skinned passport
 of mine.
Take-
 like a bomb
 take – like a hedgehog,
like a razor
 double-edge stropped,
take –
 like a rattlesnake huge and
long
with at least
 20 fangs
 poison-tipped.
The porter's eyes
 give a significant flick
(I'll carry your baggage
 for nix,
 mon ami...)
The gendarmes enquiringly
 look at the tec,
the tec, –
 at the gendarmerie.
With what delight
 that gendarme caste
would have me
 strung-up and whipped raw

because I hold
 in my hands
 hammered-fast
sickle-clasped
 my red Soviet passport.
I'd tear
 like a wolf
 at bureaucracy.
For mandates
 my respect's but the slightest.
To the devil himself
 I'd chuck
 without mercy
every red-taped paper,
 But this ...
I pull out
 of my wide trouser-pockets
duplicate
of a priceless cargo.
 You now:
read this
 and envy,
 I'm a citizen
of the Soviet Socialist Union!

Words by Vladimir Mayakovsky, translation by
Herbert Marshall

William Hearne, *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge*

Under Royal Protection.

Pocciat.

Women take up your rifles

We are victorious

Prepare, year one of the proletarian dictatorship

A message to the betrayed, prepare for the **tsarist**

What did we used to fight for, what are we fighting for now?

In danger, the fatherland is in danger, long live the army of the labour red present day

Vangel is still alive, slaying the reactionary dragon

Mischief, Trotsky, mischievous Trotsky boy, slaying the dragon

Slay the dragon, Trotsky slay him

To have more you must produce more, to produce more you must know more

Taken from a variety of Russian revolutionary posters by artists including Vyacheslav Polonsky, Vladimir Kozlinsky (whose eponymous work is the title of my piece), Dimitrii Moor (Jewish sympathiser, supporter of Leon Trotsky), Jewish painter Alexander Zelensky. Source: David King, *Russian Revolutionary Posters* (Tate Publishing, 2015).

Anna Disley-Simpson, *Shlof, mayn kind*

Shlof, mayn kind, vest gliklekh zayn,

Vest nit visn fun keyn payn.

Vi amol di shvester-brider,

Vest nor visn freyd un lider.

Sleep my child, you'll happy be

You won't know of any pain.

Like once your sisters and brothers

You will know only of happiness and songs.

Halt dem ruder funem land

Undzer Stalin fest in hant.

Undz er firt tsu groyse zign,

Shlof mayn kind, mayn fargenign.

The rudder of our land is held

By Stalin, firmly in his hand.

He leads us to great victories.

Sleep my child, my enjoyment.

Shlof, nit drey zikh [hin un her],

Far ale kinder [zay a muster].

Shlof-zhe, kind mayn, shlof, nit veyn,

Far dir Stalin vart aleyn.

Sleep, don't turn around [here and there],

For all children be a [model].

Sleep tight, my child, don't cry.

Stalin himself is waiting for you.

Transcription and translation by Simo Muir

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