

"Music in the Key of 2G Minor and 2G Major"  
by Anna Paikow

A precious ingredient in my **DNA** identity and heritage as a *Second Generation* daughter of **Shoah** survivors is my love of music, all kinds of music.

I still have my music album, cassette, and cd collection of more than 300 titles. I began purchasing albums at age 12 ... with my babysitting earnings.

Both my parents, z"l enjoyed listening to music. They sang beautifully. Imagine singing after what they had witnessed and experienced.

For my parents, z"l as for many survivors, enjoying music provided a life-affirming connection with their "pre-Shoah" lives, their families and friends, their Jewish culture and traditions.

I smile when I remember Momma, z"l singing while she was cooking and baking in the kitchen and while she was pedaling away on her vintage Singer sewing machine.

I smile when I remember Papa, z"l singing prayers in "**shul**", at home during the **Pesach Seder**, welcoming **Shabbat** and other holidays, and at **Wolyner** (organization of survivors from the province of Wolyn, Ukraine) **Society** celebrations.

After receiving an award at a *Wolyner Gala* honoring my parents, z"l, Papa, z"l began singing "**Yerushalayim Shel Zahav**" to an audience of more than 100 survivors and guests. He was beaming as he sang. The President of the *Wolyner Society* put her arms around Papa, z"l and encouraged him to end, but he would not. She and another member had to gently nudge Papa, z"l off the stage.

A year before Papa, z"l, died, he was invited to sing in the *Men's Choir* during High Holiday services. He looked so happy on the "**bimah**" (stage), and I felt so happy for him.

Both my parents, z"l loved the song, "**Katyusha**", a Russian folk song and a military march, which Mama, z"l told me was sung by Soviet Army soldiers as they "liberated" the towns, cities, and camps in Nazi -occupied Europe.

Several years ago, I marched in a May 8th parade, celebrating the end of WW II in Europe in 1945. When the participants around me began to sing "**Katyusha**", I was all smiles. This was the song that alerted Mama, z"l that the Soviet Army was near ... and that soon she would no longer have to fear being caught and killed by the Nazis or by their Ukrainian helpers.

Soon after immigrating from Displaced Persons camps to the United States at the end of 1950, my parents purchased a radio. What a treasure!

Three years later, I joined the *Second Grade Chorus* at our local elementary school. The school gifted each one of us a one-octave recorder. We performed "**The Ballad of Davy Crockett**" and "**Yankee Doodle**" at a school concert.

I enjoy serenading family and friends a "**Happy Birthday**" tune on this trusty recorder, my first musical instrument.

During my senior year at Fairfax High School, I sang "**Soon It's Gonna Rain**" from the Broadway musical, "**The Fantastiks**" in our springtime musical production. I went off key "only" twice. I think I heard a few gasps in the audience.

Years later at a high school reunion, one of my classmates remembered my singing and said that she had always admired my "**chutzpah**". I smiled, thanked her, and replied that singing was in my family **DNA**. My beloved parents, z"l miraculously survived the Shoah, loved to sing, and "**chutzpah**" was very much in their **DNA**.

I often sang during the 25 years I taught at Fairfax High School. I sang at faculty meetings, faculty retirement and birthday celebrations, in classrooms and in the Drama class' production of the musical, "**Grease**".

Nearly every week, I sang a short "promo" on the school's **P.A.** (Public Address) system about various student educational and career internship, community job and volunteer programs. A student once asked who would continue singing after I retired. I smiled and answered, "perhaps you will"!

In March 2009 I was one of several women honored by the City of West Hollywood with its "**Women in Leadership**" award. I concluded my acceptance speech by singing a favorite song, Bob Dylan's "**Forever Young**" as a tribute to the youthfulness and social activism of West Hollywood, which in 2009, celebrated its 23rd birthday.

At my retirement party, which, of course, was held at **Canter's Deli**, I sang in both English & Hebrew. In addition to other courses, I taught Hebrew as a foreign language, so it was ok to sing a Hebrew song. I sang, "**Ani veh Atah**" ("**I and You**"), a song about creating a better world ~ together.

During my spoken eulogy at Mama's, z"l funeral service, I sang the Yiddish songs, "**Kinder Yoren**" and "**Mein Yiddishe Mameh**".

I chose "**Kinder Yoren**" ("Childhood Years"), because it was one of the songs that Mama, z"l sang when she was busy sewing. "**Kinder Yoren**" was composed by **Mordecai Gebertig**, z"l a wonderful Yiddish poet and songwriter who was killed by the Nazis in the Krakow Ghetto in 1943.

I love the Yiddish term, "**mameh loshen**", the language of one's mother. I read that when we speak and sing in Yiddish, in our "**mameh loshen**", our hearts both cry and rejoice. So true.

In recent years I've sung at several **Celebrations of Life** for close friends who have "left us". I believe that my friends "of blessed memory" smiled when they heard my singing a tribute song to their lives.

When I was 11 years old, my parents, z"l purchased a second-hand violin and encouraged me to enroll in a school orchestra class to learn how to play. I performed with our elementary and junior high school orchestras. Papa, z"l and I shared the violin. He would often play Russian and Yiddish melodies ... "**by ear**".

The last time I played "my fiddle" was several years ago when, after obtaining permission, I serenaded a friend in the hospital. I squeaked through a few songs, and my good friend, Fernando, "of blessed memory", smiled and patted his heart in appreciation.

One of my favorite Yiddish films is "Yidl Mitn Fidl" ("The Jew with a Fiddle"), a film starring the magnificent **Molly Picon**, z"l. It was filmed in 1936, in pre-Shoah Warsaw and Kazmierz, Poland.

Before the Shoah, during the Shoah, and afterwards, music provided a profound source of **spiritual, cultural, intellectual, and physical resistance.**

Orchestras, choirs, and other musical groups were formed in many ghettos. Performances were often clandestine. In some ghettos and camps, such as **Theresienstadt** and **Auschwitz**, celebrated and renown Jewish musicians were permitted to create and perform music for inmates and for Nazi officers, soldiers and guards. The survival of these Jewish musicians was short-lived, as nearly all were soon murdered.

In the book, **The Inextinguishable Symphony**, Martin Goldsmith writes about the **Kulturbund (The Jewish Culture League)**, which was created in Nazi Germany in 1933. Jewish musicians were permitted to present concerts of music created by Jewish composers for Jewish audiences. Jewish musicians were forbidden to perform music composed by Germans or perform in German orchestras.

The **Kulturbund**, which also staged theatrical performances, was a cultural refuge for thousands. It was disbanded by the Nazis in 1941, and nearly all of its members as well as nearly all the Jews still living in Nazi Germany were sent to the camps.

In the ghettos of Poland and Lithuania cabaret music thrived. "Makeshift" clubs and theaters were created for Jewish people to listen to Yiddish songs, as well as to European operetta, American ragtime and Argentine tango.

One of the first anthologies of songs from the Shoah period, **Lider fun di getos un lagern (Songs of the Ghettos and Camps)** was published in 1948. The songs were collected and edited by the Vilna poet, author, teacher, and partisan fighter, Shmerke Kaczerginski, z"l.

Among the many Jewish music albums and cd's that I treasure are "**Ghetto Tango Songs**" and "**Rise Up and Fight**", a compilation of Jewish Partisan songs that was produced by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Papa, z"l loved to sing "**Zog Nit Keynmol**", "**The Partisan Anthem**", composed by **Hirsh Glick**, z"l a poet and partisan fighter, who was born in Vilna. He was killed fighting the Nazis.

Many Shoah-themed films and documentaries portray heroic stories about Jewish composers and musicians. One example is "**The Pianist**", which won the Best Picture Oscar in 2003.

Sheet music composed by Jewish victims and survivors of the Shoah that was discovered in former ghettos and concentration camps continues to be performed in concerts around the world.

In recent years, the **Violins of Hope** project has presented concerts in which musicians perform on violins, violas and cellos that were once owned by Jews before and during the Shoah.

These instruments have been brought back to life by father and son, **Amnon**, z"l and **Avshalom Weinstein** of Tel Aviv. The instruments are symbols of hope and renewal.

One of our museum's dedicated members and volunteer survivor speakers, **Susanne Reyto**, is the Co-Chair of the **Violins of Hope Foundation** in Los Angeles.

I share my DNA love and creation of music with relatives in Israel. **Cousin Hasida** is a classical pianist and instructor of classical piano and "**halil**" ( recorder ) at the **Israel Conservatory in Tel Aviv**. **Cousin Shaike** is a celebrated composer and lyricist. Quite a few of his songs accompany Israeli folk dances.

Dancing is also most definitely in our **DNA**. At **simchas** such as weddings, b'nai mitzvoth and other celebratory events, our survivor friends loved to dance. Many would have been first place winners on the television program, "**Dancing with the Stars**".

Papa's, z"l bullet wounds, inflicted when shot in a mass grave during the Shoah, did not stop him from dancing at simchas. He danced with great rhythm and style and ... a serious limp. For many years Mama suffered from bad arthritis, and yet, at every simcha ... she enthusiastically joined the "**hora**" dance circle.

Survivors danced to feel joy. They embraced dancing because they didn't know what might happen tomorrow.

Music elevates and spreads joy and light. It builds bridges between diverse communities, and reaches across divisions ~ into people's hearts and souls.

For many years, groups with little or no Jewish background have been performing wonderful Klezmer music and singing Yiddish songs with "nearly perfect" Yiddish accents at festivals around the world. These international traveling troubadours not only create good vibes, but most importantly ~ they create good will.

I love seeing the smiles of friends listening, and even better, singing and dancing along. I continue to dance, sing, play the recorder, the kazoo and my violin (after I get it tuned) ... to create joy and laughter.

I am forever grateful to my beloved parents, "of blessed memory".  
**Our musical DNA ... welcomes everyone, "leh dor veh dor"**  
("from generation to generation").