This was even sung
By the father and the mother, When they were still children.

CHORUS: We have a little tune, We're singing it together, We're singing it, It sounds so nice!

HU TZA TZA

A grine kumt in land arayn... Vet er bald 'a single man'... Krikz er nor a shkint job... Fargest er in di heyhn der soyb...

Mayn shkhnyeyn zogt zil hot mikh lib... Ikh rim arayn tsr ir in shlib... Zi hot mikh fayn oyfgenumen... In mtn iz in man gekumen... In a 'restaurant' bin ikh geven... Amzurt zikh zeyner sayn... Der en sorn hot mir shlark geshmek... Pun shafbay nakht hot dos mir oyfgevekt...

Oyf a khasene bin ikh geven... Amzurt zikh zeyner sayn... A mitzvah tentesl tantsn ale... Un mtn shlept arayn in kale... In bod bin ikh gezetsn haykh... Gessungen mitn ganteeker haykh... Mit heyse vaser hot a Yid... Mir in gantsn opgebrit...

Dem smukn cost yest zeyer tayer... Farbren ikh nis mayn gelt in 'fire'... Ikh zits mir oyfn 'roof' gants heykh... Un tsr fun keymen umast dem reykh...
DIRE GELT

DIRE GELT un oy oy oy!
DIRE GELT un bozhe moy!
DIRE GELT un gradanoy.
DIRE GELT nu men tsoln!

Kunit arnay der balebos:
Mit dem grobn shitekn:
Un az mig im keyn dire gelt.
Henet er aboy khit.

DIRE GELT

CHORUS: TWICE

Far vos zol ikh aykh gebn dire gelt
Az di bobenu aleyn zol kenen dos farsheten
Un take a tentaexc geometric.

CHORUS:
Oy, oy, oy.
Shpil, shpil, klezmert, shpil.
Vi a Yiddish harts mit gefli.
Shpil a tentaexc far mih.
Shpil, ikh bet dikh, mit neshomo, mit gefli.

Shpil zhe a nigundig fun pleytym.
Fon a folk bzeexytn un tsepeygren.
Az kinder groys un kleyn zoln kenen dos farsheten
Un take a tentaexc geometric.

CHORUS:
Shpil zhe a nigundig fun sholem.
Ez sol nit zayn a kholem nor a sholom.
Az kinder groys un kleyn zoln kenen dos farsheten
Un take a tentaexc geometric.

CHORUS:
Play for me a tune in Yiddish.
It could be either 'Misnagdish' or 'Hasidic'.
So the grandmother herself will be able to understand it.
And even do a little dance.

CHORUS:
Oy, oy, oy.
Play, play, musician, play.
Like a Yiddish heart with feeling.
Play a dance for me.

CHORUS:
Play for me a tune about refugees.
From a people wildly scattered,
So children large and small will be able to understand it.
And even do a little dance.

CHORUS:
Play for me a tune of peace.
It shouldn't be (just) a dream, but peace,
So children large and small will be able to understand it.
And even do a little dance.

CHORUS:

FIPLF KLEZMER.

Shpil zhe a nigundig off Yiddish.
Ez meg zayn Misnagdish oder Khassidish.
Az di bobenu aleyn zol kenen dos farsheten
Un take a tentaexc geometric.

CHORUS:

DIRE GELT

From the fair father brought
A new fiddle for me.
Do re mi so la si.
I play fiddle Dee Dee.

I hold my head bent down
And both eyes are staring.
Do re mi ...

Right step forward a little,
Beating the measures with the foot.
Do re mi ...

Beaming with wonder is Mother —
Perhaps (another) Itshak Perlmutter is growing!
Do re mi ...

DIRE GELT

A letter to mother
Don't delay this,
Write soon, beloved child.
Give her consolation.
Your mother will read your letter
And she will be comforted.
Ease her pain, her bitter heart.
Renew her spirit.

A brivele der mamen

Mayn kind, mayn treyst, du forst avek.
Ze zay a zon a guter.
Dikh bet mit tren un mit shrek
Dayn traye lible muter.
Du forst, mayn kind, mayn eyntslk kind.
Arber yaye yamen:
Akh kum abin nor frish gezunt
Un nit fargles dayn mamen.
Vo! For gezunt un kum mit glik.
Ze yedek vokl a brilt shik.
Dayn mames harts, mayn kind, derwik.

A brivele der mamen

Zoln zayn zoln mamen.
Strayt geshvind, ibes kind.
Shenk ir di neshome.
Dayn mame vet dayn brivele lezn
Un zi vet gemez.
Heylst ir shmurah, ir bitter harts.
Derkvishir ir di neshome.

My child, my comfort, you are riding away.
Be a good son.
I am asking with tears and with fear
Your faithful loving mother.
You are going, my child, my only child.
Over far oceans:
Come there fresh and healthy
And don't forget your mother.
Yes! Go in good health and come there with happiness.
And every week send a letter.
Your mother's heart, my child, to refresh.

A FIDDLER

S'hot der tate fun yarid!
Mir gebrakht a nave fidli.
Do re mi fa so la si.
Shpil ich fidli di di di.

K'balt dos kepl ongeboyng
Un fargots di bydeye owners.
Do re mi ...

Rsekhtn tro karoy abial.
Nkap dem tak su mitn flsi.
Do re mi ...

A brivele der mamen

Mayn kind, mayn treyst, du forst avek.
Ze zay a zon a guter.
Dikh bet mit tren un mit shrek
Dayn traye lible muter.
Du forst, mayn kind, mayn eyntslk kind.
Arber yaye yamen:
Akh kum abin nor frish gezunt
Un nit fargles dayn mamen.
Vo! For gezunt un kum mit glik.
Ze yedek vokl a brilt shik.
Dayn mames harts, mayn kind, derwik.

A brivele der mamen

Zolstu nit farzamen.
Strayt geshvind, ibes kind.
Shenk ir di neshome.
Dayn mame vet dayn brivele lezn
Un zi vet gemez.
Heylst ir shmurah, ir bitter harts.
Derkvishir ir di neshome.
When we were kids we loved to go to Grandma’s house. In the small apartment above Grandpa’s tailor shop the sounds of Yiddish songs mingled with the appetizing aroma of what we kids called Grandma Soup.

Some years later I experienced warm memories when I again heard these melodies as D.J. for “Chalil” on WYBC-FM, New Haven, Connecticut. Listeners would lend their treasured 78s and LPs to me to share with the weekly radio program’s Sunday morning audience. The instrumentals “Mazel Tov” and “Russian Sher” and the song “Shpil Klezmerl” were some of the many recordings we sampled on “Chalil”.

Other selections for Grandma Soup were found in Grandma’s little paperback songbooks. “Dona Dona”, “Undzer Nigundl”, and “Bobe un Zeyde” (also known as “Akhtsik Er un Zibetsik Zi”) came from “Zingen Mir”, published in 1954 by Sam Liptzin with the cover price “50 cent”. “A Fiddler” was found in “Lomir Zingen”, published by the Arbeter Ring (Workmen’s Circle, 1937) whose more recent publication, “Mir Trogn a Gezang” (Workmen’s Circle Education Department, 1972), includes “Oyfn Pripetshik” and “A Brivele der Mamen”.

My first recollection of “Hu Tza Tza” is a 6½ inch 78 disc with a hand-written Yiddish label made on Aunt Tillie’s Philco home recording machine. Mom sang the verses and my aunts, uncle, and grandparents answered in a chorus of voices. You’re invited to join the chorus in this taste of Grandma Soup, that mysterious blend of culinary and cultural delights we are still trying to appreciate fully.