INTRODUCTION

The songs on this record are part of the large cycle of artistic expressions in song and music given by the inmates of the ghettos, labor camps and death camps to the infernal conditions in which they lived and died. Cantor ABRAHAM BRUN, whose singing we are pleased to record, is one of the few survivors of the Lodz Ghetto in Poland, where he used to sing these numbers.

Since Liberation Day in 1945, a good many books and articles have seen the light describing the Holocaust of European Jewry or dealing with the Jewish and general human aspects of the problems arising out of that most inhuman and most systematically and scientifically barbaric plan of extermination recorded in history. The interest in those problems has increased especially since the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem. It is still difficult for even the most gifted writer to convey and for the most perceptive reader to grasp the full extent of that tragedy and that degradation of the human spirit.

These songs, some of which call for courage, others merely voicing despair and pain, are an important and unique part of the Literature of the Holocaust. They bring you right into the heart and soul of the sufferers.

We deem it our duty, therefore, to record these songs, so that they may not be forgotten. They should serve as a reminder of the most tragic period in Jewish history. They are echoes from the Inferno, which no Jew ought to forget.

The songs, as mentioned, are rendered by Cantor ABRAHAM BRUN.

Following are a few biographical notes about Cantor Brun:

Abraham Brun was born in Lodz, the youngest of five children in a prominent Hasidic family.

He began his cantorial career as a boy singer in synagogue choirs. He studied music in Vienna, officiated as cantor in various congregations, and appeared in concerts all over Poland.
During the last war he appeared in the Ghetto of Lodz in a program of Jewish songs.

The High Holidays of 1940 found him worshipping in the “Intellectuals’ Kitchen”, located in a pre-war cinema on Zgierska Street. There he prayed before the altar accompanied by a choir. Later he appeared in the same hall in a concert of Jewish songs accompanied on the piano by Theodore Rieder. In 1941 he sang in the Kultur-Haus on Krawiecka Street in a program of Jewish songs written by the poet Zelkowicz, with music by composer David Beigelman.

During the High Holidays of the following year he officiated secretly as cantor in the hospital on Lagewnicka Street.

He conducted the Yom Kippur service in 1943 in the ghetto prison on Czarnecka Street. Jews were in charge of the prison. The Nazis were not to know of the services.

During Hanukkah of 1943 he sang at a concert with a choir conducted by Professor Sender, at a secret place.

This was Cantor Brun’s last public appearance as cantor in Lodz.

On the eve of Rosh Hashanah in 1944 he chanted prayers in Birkenau, which was also known as “Gypsy Camp”, at Auschwitz. That same evening he led in the maivir services in a barracks. Jews stood guard to see that no German should notice what went on and changed guards to enable each one to take part in the services.

The next day, while waiting for the prisoner’s number to be stamped on his forearm, he prayed under the open sky. On the Day of Atonement he prayed in a camp of coal miners.

In May of 1945 he was liberated by the United States Army. In the fall of that year, during the High Holidays, he prayed in the historic synagogue of Modena, in Italy. After completing a course in voice training he left for Israel. He was immediately received as Head Cantor in the Central Synagogue in Haifa. In 1948 Cantor Brun came to America and was engaged as cantor of Temple Bethel in Long Beach, N.Y., a position he has graced to this day.

Cantor Brun, who has acquired an enviable reputation as first rate cantor and singer on radio programs and at concerts and on records, is married and lives with his wife Hannah and his daughters Marylin and Judy at Long Beach, N.Y.
TEN OF US SEATED

Ten of us are seated, saddened and enfeebled,
Tired and broken. Night hangs heavy over the place,
Starting up in silence. Thin silver silk drops a quiet echo around in the distance,
Take a guitar in your hand, brother,
Play the melody of a stranger in the land,
The yearning for repose, the yearning for joy—
Play these on the gentle strings,
The night will depart, the day is coming,
No longer enfeebled,
There are tidings of happiness and of joy.
The silver silk starts up in silence,
Diffusing a quiet echo around in the distance,
Take a guitar in your hand, brother.

SIDE ONE, BAND TWO

SCHOOL DAYS

Music by David Beligmann; Words by Zelkowicz
When I Was Taken To Hebrew School

When I was taken to cheder, wrapped in my father’s praying shawl, the prayer book smeared with honey, the teacher urged me to lick the honey and savour the sweetness of the Torah, Though his words and his voice were sweet, I trembled from head to foot,
Still the Hebrew alphabet is embedded in my memory, as I learned it in my childhood in Hebrew school, even though many years have passed since.
Yet I remember it to this day in its order, Although I have studied many subjects meantime, their traces are obliterated, while the alef-beis of the cheder has remained with me.
When I first beheld the rebbi’s hand with the heavy whip all ready, it was my good luck that near the rebbi my mother happened to stand, guarding me as an angel, and then I began to realize the difficulties of being a Jew.

And yet the alef-beis is embedded in my memory, as I acquired it at cheder in my childhood. Many years have gone by, but I still remember it by heart. Many subjects have I studied meantime, but they are gone from my mind. The alef-beis of the cheder remains with me, and will remain forever.

*teacher’s

NO RAISINS AND NO ALMONDS

Words by Isaiah Spiegel (Lodz Ghetto), Music by David Beligmann
(A Parody on a Traditional Jewish Lullaby)

No raisins and no almonds, father did not go a-trading, hush-a-bye my sonnie boy, hush-a-bye my sonnie boy,
He has left us and is gone, to the ends of the earth, hush-a-bye my sonnie boy, hush-a-bye my sonnie boy.
Owls are screeching, wolves are howling, O God! have mercy and help us! hush-a-bye my sonnie boy, hush-a-bye my sonnie boy.
Somewhere he stands and watches, many raisins and almonds, hush-a-bye my sonnie boy, hush-a-bye my sonnie boy.
He will surely come around to see you, child, my only son, my glory, hush-a-bye my sonnie boy, hush-a-bye my sonnie boy.

SIDE ONE, BAND THREE

UNCLE ITZI

by M. Kulbak

Our Uncle Itzhi has learned how to be a tailor, and so he turns old rags into clothes as good as new.

SIDE ONE, BAND FOUR
He arrives in a small village with his thread and needle; he hangs out a sign: Clothes are altered here!

Having patched up a whole village--he goes into another; until the whole countryside comes out renovated from his hands.

He arrives in a little village with his thread and needle; he hangs out a sign: Clothes are altered here!

SIDE ONE, BAND FIVE

IF NOT FAITH
(A Fragment)

If not for my faith in the Lord, may He be blessed, what good would be all that I do in the world?

If not for my faith in His salvation--it would not be worth my while to go on living a single moment.

SIDE ONE, BAND SIX

LITTLE JEW BROTHERS
by David Ignatov

Little Jew brothers, haw-haw-haw! There we go dancing and leaping, haw-haw-haw! We raise our little hands, waw-waw-waw! We clap and we clap them, faw-faw-faw! Little Jew brothers, haw-haw-haw! once again and once again, haw-haw-haw!

God is great, our Father in Heaven, ta-ta-ta! He is great, He is glorious, la-la-la! His own little children are we, we, we! And He guards us, mother mine, oh, how well he guards! He will not forsake us, us, us, us, us!

SID ONE, BAND SEVEN

TONY RABONON (The Talmud Student)
Music by David Beigelmann; words by Zelekowicz

The pale rabbinic student Chonon sits bent over the folio of the Talmud, muttering over and over Tony rabonon--Thus did our masters teach--without getting the point.

Oy, again and again Tony rabonon--now what do they mean? and what are they driving at?

How about lifting your eye, Chonon, and taking a look outside? How about facing the real world? Look at it!

You have completed your assigned daily page.
But, then, does not the Mishna say explicitly, that any student who interrupts his study of the Torah to admire nature, is committing a mortal sin! Away with you, evil temptation!

Get behind me, Satan!

And Chonon sits bent over the folio again, sits there deeply immersed in thought, still unable to get the main point of the passage.

Then suddenly Tzivia comes to his mind, Tzivia, the butcher’s daughter, he sees her clearly before him, and everything else disappears; the trader and his ledger in the Talmud and the sage who deals with their problems.

He now sees how comely Tzivia is, and how good it would be to be supported by her father as a son-in-law, instead of by the meager public funds for students.

Why wait until another young man comes along?
And what is wrong with permitted nuptial love-making?

Has not the Torah commanded us to be fruitful and to multiply?
Oceans have their shores and prisons have their gates, our pain and woe are without end or limit.

The Spring has come into the land—but it has brought us the dreary season. The day is filled with the flowers, but we are to be seen only by the night. When the Fall grows golden with the wheat—only pain grows in our hearts; somewhere a mother is bereaved, when her child is taken to the Ponar. The Vilnia river is like a prisoner chained and groaning in its pain—ice floats floating through Lithuania into the Baltic Sea. Somewhere the darkness is dissolved, the sun is shining in the dimness—Come quicker, riding knight your child is calling on you, Your child is calling.

Quiet, be quiet, springs are gushing in our hearts around, until the gates have fallen, we must be still, be still. Keep from merriment, my child, your smile is our betrayal now. Let our pain and woe be as a leaf in the fall. Let the Spring gush silently—keep still and keep hoping. Once freedom comes, your father will return, sleep my child, sleep. Liberated like the Vilnia river, renewed like the green trees in blood, the light of freedom then will shine on your sweet little face, my son, on your sweet face.

* The Ponar groves near Vilnia, where the Jews were murdered en masse by the Nazis and their local collaborators.

QUIET, BE QUIET.
Words by Kaczerkinski (Vilno Ghetto). Music by Alec Wolkowski

Quiet, be quiet, let us keep still, graves are growing here, They have been planted by our foes and they grow green against the blue. The roads lead to the Ponar* groves, but none lead back to town. If father disappeared somewhere and with him our gladness gone, Do not cry, my child, my treasures, crying won't do any good, Our foe will never understand our woe.

SUNs DO NOT BECOME EXTINGUISHED
by L. S. Pernowitz

It is night—The sky is overcast with a thick black pall, and the forest with its mysteries casts a gloom upon my spirit.

I send my gaze out into space, but derive no solace from it, and I mutter in despair, the light of the sun has gone out.

Then a loud and ringing voice suddenly calls to me from afar: suns do not become extinguished, their rays will reach you in due time,
SHUT YOUR LITTLE EYES

Shut your little eyes,
the birds are coming
to circle around
at the head of your cradle.

Bundle in hand,
our home in embers and ashes,
we are settling out,
my child in search of our fortune.

God has closed the world around us,
right reigns everywhere,
waiting for us
in horror and awe.
Here we are, the two of us,
in our burdensome hour,
not knowing at all
where the road may take us.

Stripped and naked,
they drove us from our house
in the dark of the night,
they drove us into the field,
in a storm and a wind and a hail
which came with us as we wandered,
my child,
It went with us into the abyss
of the world.

MY YEARS

It is not by the number of my years
that you ought to count my age,
nor by the color of my hair
divided my years.

Every sigh is a hole in my heart;
every groan takes a year off my life.
Hence my face is dark
and wrinkled with deep furrows.

And wherever a child may cry,
stretching forth its tired arms,
a fire is kindled in my heart
and my limbs die off one by one.
Every sign cuts a hole in my heart,
every groan takes a year off my life.
Hence my face is dark
and wrinkled with deep furrows.

A SONG

by Aliza Greenblatt

A song is a blade of grass,
a song is a flower,
a song is a heart
roaming the earth.

A song is a word,
a song is a sound,
a song is of God,
a heavily chant.

A song is a sigh,
a song is a tear,
a song is a heart--
and perhaps even more.

WHY NEED WE CRY?

Why need we cry, why need we mourn?
We will yet live to see the end of Frank,
Biri-bam-bam, biri-bam-bam.
Let us be merry and let us tell jokes,
We will yet rejoice over the funeral of Hitler,
Biri-bam-bam, etc.

Let us find comfort, forget our woes,
We will live on while the worms eat Hitler,
Biri-bam-bam, etc.

The enemies who take us there to Treblinka,
they will sink into the earth,
Biri-bam-bam, etc.

We will yet together, arm-in-arm
dance over the graves of the Germans,
Biri-bam-bam, etc.