



# קלעזנייעס KlezNews

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## זײַט באַגריסט קלעזמרים און קלעזפּריינד

### Life in Bonim

by Renah and Keith Wolzinger

It's August 22, 2005, and the families of Bonim return once again, arriving by plane and by car, loaded with luggage, instruments, and of course snacks for the kids. Klez Kanada has become an annual reunion of families that come from across the U.S. For the past 6 years, the children have grown from toddlers to tweens and teens, and many have even become scholarship recipients. Technology being a big part of our kids lives, they keep in touch by email and instant messaging.

The parents of Bonim have become a close-knit group as well. Upon arrival at camp, we burst into the office with fingers crossed hoping to be reassigned to Bonim, our annual home together. We swap stories of our lives during the year, and are always amazed on how the kids have grown. We love to find out what everyone is doing with their music, and how playing Klezmer has changed our lives. Some families see each other during the year, but since we come from both the West Coast and the East Coast, and have many activities all year with our kids, meeting seems difficult to arrange.

So now we're all back, and it's almost as if we never left. We've never skipped a beat (so to speak). The kids are not

*It is important that KlezKanada convey not only how to play klezmer and Yiddish music, but that it also imbue participants with some sense of Yiddish culture. This year's experiment was to set up an afternoon-long set of three sessions, "Klezmer 101", beginning with an hour-long Yiddish language session. Those with at least some Yiddish listened to Peysakh Fishman talk in simple Yiddish about the language and about Ashkenazic culture. I have tried to capture a few fragments of the talk.*

Shvell—Threshold

"If you don't understand everything, stop me immediately and I will explain." Peysakh lines his article out, at first slowly in Yiddish, then English, back and forth to clarify and to convey ideas.

Pamelekh – langsam – slowly.

Tzu redder. Wen a civilizatzia of ein fus is sehr shver—Ashkenaz civilization is more than 1000 years old.

Idische geshichte – Jewish history

Tzu voynen in a golus – to live in diaspora – is sehr shver – is very bad.

First he talks about Aramaic, the Jewish language of the Talmud.

Bregn – borders

Ki – cattle

The ghettos (judengas) forced Jews to live together. We don't have a land. What holds us together? The Torah.

Bushe – embarrassment – shande, a kharpe – not to know Torah.

Yeshivas in Germany competed, were equivalent to those that had been in Babylonia.

Great Rabbis included Gershom, who forbade polygamy, and Rashi. And the best yeshivas were from Poland to Frankreich, the Rhine Valley.

Shteyger vun lebn – lifestyle (style of living)

A tzimes makhn vun meren (fruit? Is a pun on "mehr" – more)

Challah, Borsht

Talks about pulling German and Slavic words into Yiddish. Then talks about new languages being pulled into Yiddish today, and Yiddish into English.

Molerei – painting

The Yiddish table is our new altar, replacing that of the destroyed temple. Each holiday we eat special foods to give us the sense of the holiday. The tish, the table is for the kinder.

Someone comes up to say that she can even type Yiddish (with latin letters) in e-mail, and there are small classes all over.

Peysakh says that Yiddish isn't dead, but there isn't Yiddish art and film and a market—a place where people conduct commerce in Yiddish.

Var vos nicht – why not?

To live a full Yiddish life, you need to speak and eat and live in Yiddish, not just speak it here and there.

# “Gitl Purishkevitch” — Stories of Draft Resistance from many times and places

A new piece of musical theatre based on a monologue by **Sholem Aleichem**, and created by **Jenny Levison** and **Josh Waletzky** is coming to life. Since the piece is about a mother getting her son out of the czar’s army, Jenny and Josh have been gathering oral histories of other draft resisters. Here is a first installment of those stories.

## **Damian Nisenson**

I come from Buenos Aires Argentina. In the beginning of 1977, some months after the army coup in Argentina, I had to go into the army. Mine was the first group that had to go into the army when we were eighteen years old. Before that people went into the army at twenty one. So we were really really very young. And it was a very hard situation – very young soldiers having to go kill innocent people, making them disappear. We had to get involved in very nasty things that we didn’t want to get involved in. And me personally, I had another situation at that time. By the time I had to go to the army, my former girlfriend just had disappeared, my best friend had disappeared. So I really didn’t know what to do. But this wasn’t something I could just avoid. I really had to go. I didn’t feel brave enough to do any kind of thing, to flee the country, or anything. So I went to the army.

The mother of a friend, who was a psychiatrist, told me once, “I can help you. Just they can believe you’re crazy.” But I wasn’t brave enough to do that either. So first day, we had to be there I think it was something like six in the morning. It was summer. Summer in Buenos Aires can be very very hot. We spent about the whole day under the sun. We sitting on asphalt. Very very ugly. The sergeants and corporals they were just walking around us, kicking us. We were treated very very badly. In the evening they gave us army clothing. If you were tall they gave you short, small clothing. If you were small

like me, they gave you very very large clothing. If your feet were big, you had small shoes – you know – every possible way to make you feel bad was good for them. And in the middle of the night, we hear some shooting. And then the officers came into the room. We were about three hundred some young soldiers, our very first night. They came into our room, shouting, screaming, hitting the metal bars of the bed frames with their sticks. We had to jump out of our beds in our underwear. Some of the kids were crying, shouting, pissing in their pants. It was complete madness. Meanwhile, the shooting kept on outside. Meanwhile



they made us do squats for an hour, while the officers were walking behind us and kicking us in the balls.

That was the first night. Then, about four in the morning, we went to sleep for another hour, and then the day began. When we came outside, there was a very old car, full of holes. It seems that this car with a single person in it just broke in front of one of the walls of the army quarters. And at that point, everyone was so crazy that everybody just started shooting. They killed the man. But it was just a detail of the kind of ugly things that happened at the

time. Right then I made the decision that there was no way I could stay a whole year in the army. I never liked the army, but I thought I had to do it, I was called to do it. There was no legal way I could avoid, but then I said, “No. This is not for me. It’s not just that I don’t agree. It’s much more than that.”

Then in the morning we had a medical exam – all the 300 of us were completely naked outside. There was an nurse officer who was walking one by one and asking, “Do you have anything to declare?” And I saw that of these 300 kids, only ten or twelve made one step forward. One gave one reason – asthma, and another had, well, all different things. And when it was my turn I just --- I was already comedian at the time. I started working when I was fourteen, fifteen years old in Argentina, and I said to myself, “Well, I have to do something.”

I walked one step forward, and I said, “I have some nervous problems.” And this guy looked at me, and I think he believed it could be true, so at that moment I became part of the probably sick people group. That means that we have to undergo a series of tests. It depended on what kind of disease you said you had. And doctors would decide if you were really sick or not. If they decided you were not, you were going to have a very very bad and very very long time in the army. If they thought you were sick, you were out.

For a whole month, thirty days, 24 hours a day, I was playing the fool. I walked very slowly. I spoke slowly. I was very slow in everything I did. Every time they were a bit rough, I started crying. I really pushed myself to the limit, but after a month they decided I had to go to the army hospital, two or three times a week, to make tests. We had to put on civilian clothing and form a walking line. We had one army officer in the back, in civilian clothing, *Continued, page 4, column 1*

# KLEZKANADA EN ESPAÑOL

by Sergio Smilovich

primer reporte,  
Estoy sentado enfrente de Ari davidov,  
Me invita a escribir sobre klezkanada en castellano  
sentado estoy en klezkabaret, lugar donde se improvisa especialmente durante la noche,  
sirve de lugar de conferencias, teatro lugar de reunion, y es la noche, la noche cuando los sonidos klezmaticos salen a la luz de la luna,  
la luz del tiempo  
y de un Nuevo amanecer , siempre,  
ayer empezo la celebracion de los 10 años de klezkanada.

Tengo la suerte de participar por segunda vez en el este maravilloso, especial festival de musica klezmer donde musicos de todas parte de los continents vienen por una semana a dar, brindar, llenar, escuchar, investigar, crear , desde el domingo 21 de agosto hasta el proximo 28 de agosto.

Enfrente de este klezkabaret, esta el lago, la montania, el silencio, la luna, y el cielo, los cielos , las agues y las agues arribas de los cielos,

La calma de este lugar que queda a 100 kilometros norte de montreal, en el bnei brith camp , es unica.

Es un lugar propicio para la creacion, la interpretacion, escuchar los sonidos, los nuevos sonidos, los silencios, los nuevos silencios, la musica klezmer de todos los tiempos, y de una nueva luz, Nuevo

Se ven todos los instrumentos, tubas, guitarras, fiddlers, microfonos, trombones,

Antes una banda klezmer, percussion, trompeta, clarinete, violin, trombon, bajo, juegan una musica para que la gente pueda

bailar, expresar, sentir,  
Ahora la distorsion de un microfono asusta, como siempre,  
Pero todo vuelve a la calma otra vez,  
Las luces se apagan,  
Y el show esta por comenzar, la gente me pregunta: que haces?

Y les digo: estoy escribiendo un informe en espaniol para klezkanada, ca va? Se acerca la gente a nuestra mesa, en la esquina de la esquina,

Esperamos la conexion magica a internet para chatear con mi hijito tomy, los extranio, claro! Y zoe, !

Klezkabaret se prepara para sonar,  
Dejar la historia escrita es una manera de grabar las palabras , imagenes que continuan en el tiempo,

Primero la palabra, luego la imagen, despues grabar los sonidos de la palabra, y luego

Ahora el bullicio que pinta todas las historias que se encuentran

.... Y se largo. Presentan en ingles al festival de improvisacion, todas las noches a partir de las 10 y media son las casi once de la noche, se anuncian 11 grados para la noche, casi me olvide de los +40 y de los -40 que van a venir,

piano solo, asi comienza esta noche, como se llama el pianista? le pregunto a ari davidov,;

pitch sokolow, me dice le traduzco al ingles lo ultimo que escribi y sonrie al entender la historia que escribo en primera persona,

... y la noche sigue,

.... Y la luna la espero,

---- y los aplausos comienzan,

---- y a mi amor la imagino,

siempre

וַיִּצַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן־הָאָדָמָה כָּל־חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם...

And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air.

*Evelyn Maizels: Papercut inspired by Genesis 1:19.*





**Nisenson**, *continued from page 2*  
and they said, “If I see any of you looking at someone, talking to someone in the street, I will kill you all.”

That was our every day’s bread. For one month we had that. After a month I had a speech by an army colonel saying, “You sure you’re sick? Because if you’re not sick, the shame of not having done your part for the country will follow you all your life.” Of course at that moment I started to feel that things were really right, that I was about to get out of there. He gave me a letter. When I went back to army quarters that day I couldn’t see what was in the letter, because it was closed, but that very same evening. An officer came to me and said, “Oh, shame on you. You can’t go tonight because we can’t let you go in the night, but tomorrow morning you are out of here. You piece of garbage.” He insulted me in many ways. I couldn’t

really laugh at that moment, but the thing is that it worked.

Something I couldn’t know at that time is that not only my fellow soldiers had to kill people, they had to participate in all kinds of ugly things they didn’t want to do. And there was no way they could refuse without risking their lives – is that a few months later the Argentinean dictatorship started fighting with the Chilean dictatorship and they had a little war, for a few months, on the southern border of Patagonia. So many of my fellow soldiers found themselves in a real war. Not only in a civil war, a hidden war – but in also a real war against another army, just because two crazy Generals decided they wanted to fight for I don’t know what piece of mountain.

But by that time, I was already in Israel. That was the first thing I did when I got out of the army.

**Bonim**, *continued from page 1*  
seen much, except at bedtime. They are constantly kept busy with the kids program and their friends. It’s a wondrous thing to watch them spend time with their camp friends. The friends come by our cabin in the morning to walk to breakfast; they swim, learn songs, take lessons, and talk the night away.

Same with us parents. We spend a lot of time together, play our music, attend classes and activities, and share the day’s events at mealtimes. The evenings are filled with music late into the night as well as visiting and enjoying the camp culture. We always make new friends and spend a lot of time getting to know them. It seems we always make new friends on the last day and have to pick up again with them the next year. We have certainly become KlezKanadians!

## א ביסל יידיש a bisl yiddish for klezmerim

*compiled by Kolya Borodulin for the absolute beginner’s “Yiddish 101” session*

ער האָט בײַ איר אַ ווערט ווי אַ  
פויקער בײַ די כלי־זמר.

Er hot bay ir a vert vi a  
poyker bay di klezmer.

He’s worth as much to her as  
the drummer to the band

מע לויפֿט ווי אַ מויז איבערן  
צימבל.

Me loyft vi a moyz ibern  
tsimbl.

To run like a mouse across  
the tsimbl.

וואָס ווילסטו איך זאַל  
אַרנשטעלן אַ כלי־זמר אין  
תחת ארצן?

Vos vilstu ikh zol  
araynshteln a klezmer in  
tukhes arayn?

What do you want? I should  
stick a klezmer up my ass?

מע צימבלט אויף די נערוון.

Me tsimblt oyf di nervn.

It’s really getting on my  
nerves.