



# 2020

## YIDDISH CIVILIZATION LECTURE SERIES

THURSDAY  
**JUL 09**

### **THE BARTON BROTHERS, MICKEY KATZ, AND OTHERS: YIDDISH-ENGLISH BILINGUAL PARODY SONGS**

RONALD ROBBOY | *Delivered in English.*

In the years immediately following the Second World War, the Barton Brothers, an anarchic Catskill comedy duo, began recording humorous macaronic (that is, bilingual) parody songs that relied in no small part on Yiddish theater and radio for raw material. The Bartons' unexpected success—their send-up of Yiddish radio, “Joe & Paul,” was a bona fide hit, however improbable—inspired clarinetist Mickey Katz, based in Los Angeles and working with first-rate studio players, to begin recording his own exceedingly funny Yiddish-mixed-with-English lyrics set to the melodies of current Hit Parade songs. Capitol Records issued (possibly to their own amazement) a steady stream of these Yinglish albums by Katz all through the 1950s and into the '60s. These in turn inspired Allan Sherman, a TV gameshow writer/producer, to begin recording his own parodies of standards and folk songs. Though hardly any of Sherman's lyrics had actual Yiddish content, many still had a clearly Jewish inflection that often alluded—phonetically, grammatically, or syntactically—to Yiddish beginnings.

Close readings of selected tracks by the Bartons, by Katz, and by Sherman will focus on their language, their music, their delivery, and what made them so influential and so very funny.

**RONALD ROBBOY** is a musician and independent scholar of Yiddish theater music. He was for many years a cellist in the opera and symphony orchestras of San Diego. His own music has been heard at both The Kitchen and MOMA in New York City, and in 1995 the San Diego Jewish Film Festival commissioned his score to Molly Picon's silent *East and West*. Active in the earliest years of the West Coast klezmer revival, Robboy's work with poet Jerome Rothenberg led to the creation of his experimental Big Jewish Band. As Senior Researcher for the Thomashefsky Project, and working closely with Chana Mlotek z'l at the YIVO Archives, he developed the reconstructions of Yiddish theater scores that conductor Michael Tilson Thomas took to Carnegie Hall. Robboy has written for *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and *Perspectives of New Music*. Earlier this year, he taught in the YIVO-Bard Winter Program, and his study “Abraham Ellstein's Film Scores” appeared in the *Polin* yearbook this spring. With Goldfaden scholar Alyssa Quint, he is co-editing a critical edition of the operetta *Shulamis* (1880) for Dusseldorf University Press (forthcoming).

## DISCOGRAPHY

### THE BARTON BROTHERS AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

*Jewish Comedy Songs*, the Barton Brothers [Eddie and Murray Barton], Apollo Records LP 475, 1957, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ -rpm LP.

Re-released as *Joe and Paul Meet Cockeye Jenny: Jewish Comedy by the Barton Brothers*. Barton Records LP 475, n.d., 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ -rpm LP.

Re-released as *Joe and Paul: The Best of the Barton Brothers*, BB Music, 1999, compact disc. Distributed by Hatikvah Music (Los Angeles), <http://www.hatikvahmusic.com/cgi-bin/details.pl?key=877>.

The songs on these releases (“Joe and Paul,” “Cockeyed Jenny,” “Tzouris,” “Minnie the Flapper,” “Cut Speech,” and “Arriba”) were all arranged and conducted by Irv Carroll, who was not credited on the LPs or CD, but was on the original 78-rpm singles released by Apollo during 1947–8. Some of those singles can be found at Internet Archive, [https://archive.org/search.php?query=barton\\_brothers\\_irv\\_carroll](https://archive.org/search.php?query=barton_brothers_irv_carroll).

*Stories Our Jewish Mother Forgot to Tell Us*, the Barton Brothers, Jubilee JGM 2061, n.d., 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ -rpm LP.

*Yiddish-American Comedy*, Barton Brothers, arranged and conducted by Irv Carroll (side A); Irving Kaufman (side B); Rivoli Records R5, circa 1960s, 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ -rpm LP. The Barton Brothers’ material are sketches and songs (“Mambo Moish,” “The Story of Little Red Riding Hood,” “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere”) that were all originally released on Apollo 78s in the 1950s. Irving Kaufman’s material (side B) is unrelated. Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/bartonbrothersyiddishamericancomedy>.

“Chi-Ri-Bim, Chi-Ri-Bom” (Apollo C-2446, 78 rpm) and “Bagels and Lox” (Apollo C-2447, 78 rpm), the Barton Brothers, music Sholom Secunda and words by Hy Jacobson, were both taken from the *Bagels and Yox* revue, in which the Barton Brothers appeared on Broadway in 1951.

*Menasha Skulnik & 20th Century Yiddish Humor*, Leisure Time Music LTM-154CD, 1994, compact disc. An omnibus CD, comprising two LP collections: (1) *Menasha Skulnik* and (2) *20th Century Yiddish Humor*, both issued on the Banner label in the 1960s. The individual tracks had all originally appeared on 78-rpm records. *20th Century Yiddish Humor* includes Billy Hodes, the Leslie Brothers, Myron Cohen, Larry Best, George Jessel, Leo Fuchs, and the Radio Aces.

*Music from the Yiddish Radio Project*, Shanachie 6057, 2002, compact disc. Includes the original radio jingle for the actual Joe and Paul’s clothing store.

*Yiddish Radio Project: Stories from the Golden Age of Yiddish Radio*, Scott Simon, David Isay, Henry Sapoznik, Carl Reiner et al., HighBridge HBP89173, 2002, two compact discs.

## **MICKEY KATZ**

Most or all of the parody songs collected on Katz’s LPs can be found on YouTube. Many of his recordings can also be streamed at the Recorded Sound Archives (Florida Atlantic University) and the Dartmouth Jewish Sound Archive (Dartmouth College), though both require listeners to apply for registration.

### POPULAR-SONG PARODIES

Mickey Katz and His Kosher-Jammers initially released singles on 78s (and then also some 45s), beginning in 1947 with “Haim Afen Range” (side A) and “Yiddish Square Dance” (side B), RCA Victor 25-5081. By 1950, Mickey Katz and His Orchestra, as he was now called, had moved to Capitol Records, where they continued releasing his singles but also began collecting them on LPs. Katz also re-recorded some of his RCA titles for re-issue by Capitol. Original RCA singles can be found at the Internet Archive, [https://archive.org/search.php?query=kosher\\_jammers](https://archive.org/search.php?query=kosher_jammers); and Capitol singles at [https://archive.org/search.php?query=mickey\\_katz\\_and\\_his\\_orchestra](https://archive.org/search.php?query=mickey_katz_and_his_orchestra).

### **LP collections**

*Mickey Katz*, Mickey Katz and His Orchestra, Capitol Records H-298, 1951, 10-in. 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ -rpm LP. This first collection had eight songs.

*Borscht*, RCA Victor, LPM-3193, 1954, 10-in. 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. This collected Katz's RCA singles on LP.

*Mickey Katz And His Orchestra*, Capitol Records T-298, 1955, 12-in. 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. This was a re-release of the first LP, expanded to twelve songs.

*Mish Mosh*, Capitol Records T-799, 1957, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP.

*Katz Puts On The Dog*, Capitol Records T-934, 1958, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. Liner notes by Max "Slapsy Maxie" Rosenbloom.

*The Most Mishige*, Capitol Records T-1102, 1959, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. Liner notes by Mickey Katz.

*The Hits Of Mickey Katz And His Orchestra*, Capitol Records T-298, 1959, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. This was a re-release of the 1955 *Mickey Katz And His Orchestra*.

*Comin' 'Round The Katzkills*, Capitol Records W-1307, 1960, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP.

### **CD collections**

*Greatest Shticks*, Mickey Katz, Koch Records KOC-CD-8059, 2000, compact disc. Sixteen tracks drawn from different collections.

*Mish Mosh*, Mickey Katz, Renaissance CDREN006, n.d., 2 compact discs. Fifty-six tracks on two CDs. The title (and graphics) are borrowed from the Capitol *Mish Mosh* LP, but the many tracks are drawn from various collections. Renaissance is based in the U.K.

*Borscht Riders in the Sky*, Mickey Katz and his Koshers Jammers, Castle Pulse PLSCD-794, 2006, compact disc. Twenty tracks drawn from different collections. Castle Pulse is based in the U.K.

*Strictly Kosher: The Singles Collection, 1950-1962*, Mickey Katz and his Orchestra, Jasmine Records JASCD 825, 2016, 2 compact discs. Fifty-six tracks on two CDs. Not the same collection as the *Mish Mosh* CD (Renaissance), though they share many titles in common; but this also includes some previously uncollected singles. Jasmine Records is based in the U.K.

### KATZ INSTRUMENTALS

*The Family Danced*, Mickey Katz, Capitol Records H-457, 1953, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. Eight klezmerlike settings of instrumental *simkhe* tunes.

*Mickey Katz Plays Music for Weddings, Bar Mitzvahs and Brisses*, Capitol Records T-1021, 1958, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. This was a re-release of *The Family Danced* expanded to twelve instrumental numbers. Liner notes by Harry "Parkyakarkus" Einstein.

*Fiddler on the Roof*, Mickey Katz and His Orchestra, Capitol Records ST-2387, 1965, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. "Music from the hit Broadway show in Mickey's warm, traditional instrumental style."

*Simcha Time: Mickey Katz Plays Music for Weddings, Bar Mitzvahs and Brisses (The Klezmer Sessions)*, World Pacific CDP 7243-8-30453-2-7, 1994, compact disc. This is a re-release on CD of *Music for Weddings, Bar Mitzvahs and Brisses*, with the addition of previously unreleased material as well as several tracks from the Broadway revue *Hello, Solly* (1967). Liner notes by Will "Wilski" Friedwald.

### KATZ SPOKEN-WORD COMEDY AND MUSICAL NOVELTY ALBUMS

*Katz Pajamas*, Mickey Katz, Capitol Records W-1257, 1959, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP.

*The Borscht Jester*, Mickey Katz, Capitol Records T-1445, 1960, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. Liner notes by Chico Marx.

*Katz at the U.N.*, Mickey Katz, Capitol Records T-1603, 1961, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP.

*Sing-Along with Mickele*, Mickey Katz and “Der Ganser Gang,” Capitol Records T-1744, 1962, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. Choral treatments of ten songs drawn from Yiddish theater and other sources. Liner insert with complete lyrics. Not so much a parody as a straight emulation of Mitch Miller’s Sing-Along albums and television show.

*Hello, Solly!*, Mickey Katz, Larry Best, Stan Porter, and Vivian Lloyd; live recording of musical and comedy revue, Capitol Records W-2731, 1967, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP.

#### OTHER KATZ INTERPRETERS

*Don Byron Plays the Music of Mickey Katz*, Don Byron, Elektra Nonesuch 70313-2, 1993, compact disc.

### **ALLAN SHERMAN**

Most or all of Allan Sherman’s work can be found on YouTube.

*My Son, the Folk Singer*, Warner Bros. Records W-1475, 1962, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. Liner notes by Steve Allen, Richard Gehman et al.

*My Son, the Celebrity*, Warner Bros. Records W-1487, 1963, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. Liner notes by Richard Gehman.

*My Son, the Nut*, Warner Bros. Records W-1501, 1963, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP. Includes the song “Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh!,” which was also released as a single, a Grammy-winning Billboard hit.

*Allan in Wonderland*, Warner Bros. Records W-1539, 1964, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP.

*For Swingin’ Livers Only!*, Warner Bros. Records W-1569, 1964, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP.

*My Name Is Allan: Allan Sherman Sings Great Movie Hits & Songs from the Cutting Room Floor*, Warner Bros. Records W-1604, 1965, 33<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>-rpm LP.

Though Sherman did record further—and there have been many posthumous releases, as well—his career began a precipitous decline in the mid-1960s. The first three albums contain his classic work. In 2005, Rhino Records released a limited-edition retrospective, *My Son, the Box* (Rhino Handmade RHM2 7891), a box set now difficult to find.

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