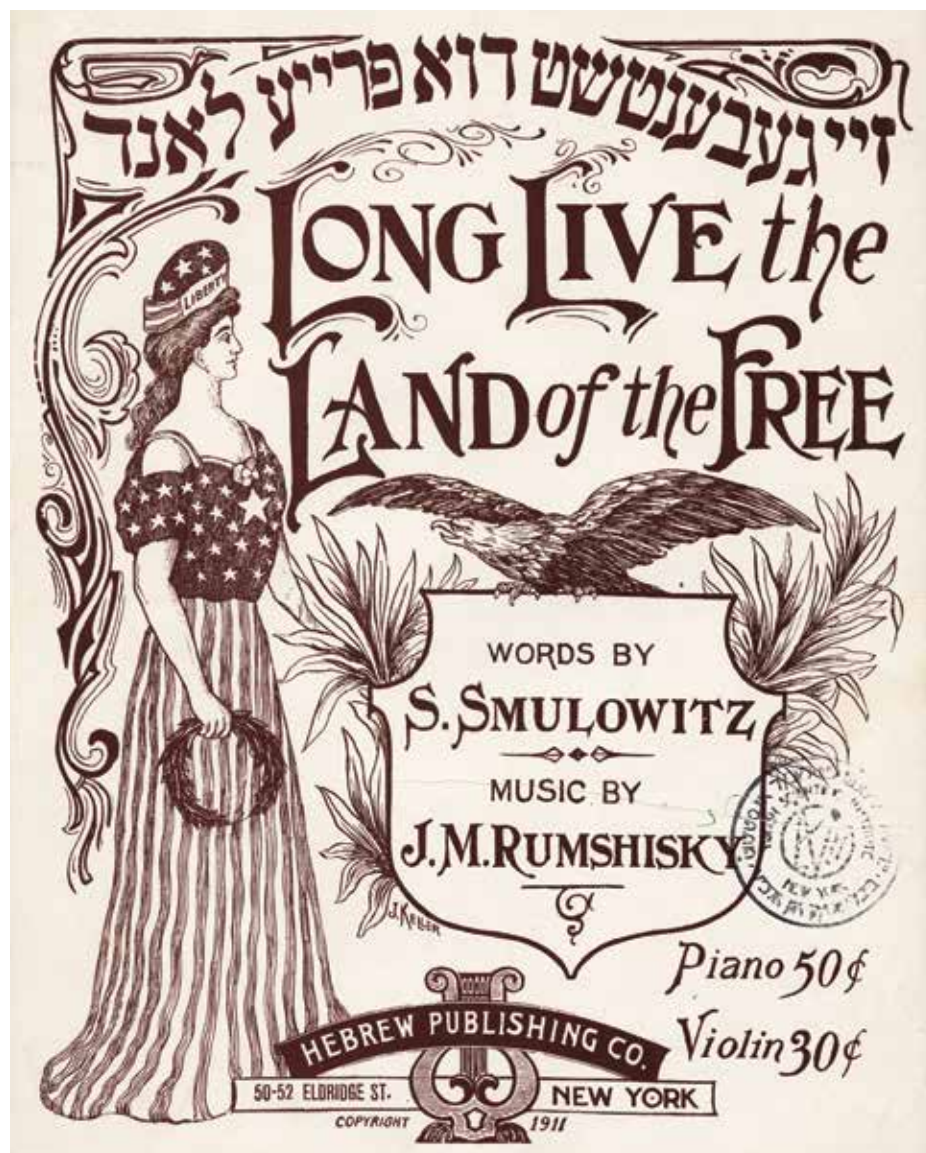


THE YIDDISHISTS

OUR SERIES DELVES INTO THE TREASURES OF THE WORLD'S BIGGEST YIDDISH ARCHIVE AT YIVO INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH RESEARCH



Sheet music cover for *Long Live the Land of the Free*, an American patriotic song in Yiddish, 1911. It includes the lyric: "Cast your vote – it gives you great power"

just one day before the inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson, the Woman Suffrage Procession attracted the attention of crowds who had travelled to the capital to see the suffragettes as well as those gathered to attend the inaugural events. In 1918, Wilson publicly endorsed women's right to vote before Congress.

The rallies that took place in the 1910s attracted the ire of opponents of suffrage, including members of the National Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, which was founded in 1911. The women attending suffrage marches often endured physical and verbal abuse from spectators and government officials. During one rally in Los Angeles in 1911, participants were told by police that speeches advocating suffrage were prohibited. But in a subversive turn, the suffragettes sang their speeches to the tunes of popular songs. The use of music to deliver political messages became a feature of suffrage parades.

Women's rights in general and suffrage in particular became prevalent themes in American popular music of the time, including that written in Yiddish for a Jewish immigrant audience. Songs such as *Froyen rekht* (Women's Rights, 1911) by Arnold Perlmutter and Herman Wohl celebrated the "women from all races thinking up plans / parading around making speeches in the streets" in support of equal rights. *Damen rekht* (Women's Rights, 1911), with lyrics by Anshel Shor and music by Joseph Rumshinsky, imagines a world in which women are given rights equal to those of their male counterparts, taking over religious life as cantors, rabbis and ritual slaughterers and gaining control of secular society in jobs such as police officers, detectives, judges and even the president. As soldiers, they "lay down their arms straight away", employing new and peaceful means of resolving conflicts.

Vayber, makht mir far president (Women, Make Me President, 1910), with lyrics by Boris Thomashefsky and music by Perlmutter and Wohl, implores women to exercise their right to vote a woman into the presidency. Its sentiment remains relevant, especially in light of the upcoming election in November: "Women, we must stay strong, we'll really show those men. / Maybe you can fool us once, but twice, forget about it!" ■

Stefanie Halpern is the director of the YIVO Archives. Visit yivo.org.

SONGS OF THE SUFFRAGETTES

The songs of early 20th-century Yiddish songwriters imagined a world where American women could become rabbis, detectives – even the president of the United States. **Stefanie Halpern** reports

This November marks the 100th anniversary of the first time women in the United States were given the right to vote. The long road to the passage of the 19th Amendment began in earnest in 1848 with the first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York. It wasn't until nearly 65 years later, with the support of Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party, that suffrage was finally endorsed on a national level by a major political party.

Influenced in part by British suffrage processions, especially the Women's

Coronation Procession, in which tens of thousands of people marched through London on 17 June 1911, American suffragettes staged large-scale parades and rallies in the name of the cause.

The Woman Suffrage Procession on 3 March 1913, organised by the National American Woman Suffrage Association, was the first such event to take place in Washington DC. With 8,000 marchers, 20 parade floats and mounted brigades marching down Pennsylvania Avenue, the parade created a national spectacle. Held