

Dona, Dona

WORDS BY Aaron Z E I T L I N (d. 1973)

Music by S H O L O M S E C U N D A (d.1974)

Sheet music published by Metro Music Co. New York 1943

The song was written for Zeitlin's play ESTERKE produced by Maurice Schwartz in 1940/1941. It became one of the most widely sung Yiddish songs and was performed in Yiddish and English translation by such singers as Theodore Bikel and JOAN BAEZ. Translations have also appeared in other languages.

The song is also interpreted as having been written in the Ghetto to express the longing for freedom.

Give ENGLISH 'summary' off the page "In a wagon lies a calf/ it is tied with a rope. High in the sky a swallow soars, is joyous and flies back and forth. The wind laughs in the cornfield, laughs and laughs & laughs -- laughs a whole day and half the night"

(Give verse 2 + 3 in English)

In YIDDISH TRANSLITERATION:

OYFN FURL LIGT DOS KELBL
LIGT GEBUNDEN MIT A SHTRIK
HOYKH IN HIML FLIT DOS SHVELBL
FREYT "ZIKH DREYT ZIKH HIN UN KRIK.
etc.

I now invite Santa Pelham to sing Donna Donna for us in the English version.

DONNA DONNA

On a wagon bound for market,
There's a calf with a mangled eye
High above him there's a swallow
Winging swiftly through the sky

How the wings are laughing
They laugh with all their might
Laugh & laugh the whole night through
& half the summer night

Donna donna donna donna
Donna donna donna don
Donna donna donna donna
Donna donna donna don.

Stop complaining said the farmer
Who told you a calf to be
Why don't you have wings to fly with
Like the swallow so proud & free.

Calves are easily bound & slaughtered
Never knowing the reason why
But whoever hears of freedom,
Like the swallow must learn to fly.