THEODORE BIKEL
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The photograph on the cover of this, the second album of Jewish folklore I have recorded, attempts to express symbolically my feelings as a person and as a Jew. Whatever sadness was in my Grandfather's eyes, whatever laughter, foolishness or wisdom, whatever bearing of burdens or sharing of burdens, I am a result of it, and my songs are a sum total of my family's memories.

One of these songs speaks of a goblet from which Grandfather himself used to drink and which I now hold. In a sense I feel that these songs are my goblet. No material riches were handed down to me; my family never had any. But what a wealth of spirit they possessed, and how generous they were with it! And like all generous people they still had plenty left over to bequeath to their heirs. This then was my only heirloom: the pride of being a Jew.

There are two things you can do with a precious heirloom: You can squander or pawn it, or you can cherish and honor it. Looking around our new world, you observe many who have carelessly given up the golden goblet that was theirs in exchange for the plastic cup of assimilation. There is a longing for identity, to be one of the group. But in conforming, a rich and wonderful tradition is being sacrificed. No matter what the protestations may be, a Jew is still a Jew to the world—and always will be. His heritage is richly woven with courage and striving and achievement. The commercial phrase, “togetherness,” is nothing new to the Jews who have known the love and strength of the family unit. All this is best expressed in the songs I sing.

I am deeply convinced that whatever position we attain in this world, respect for us is heightened by the mere fact that we are Jews who stand tall and straight. We know who we are and there is freedom and strength in just knowing this.

I would like to pay tribute to Fred Hellerman who is responsible for the superb musical arrangements in this album. This is as much his record as it is mine. There are many people who are sensitive; a few who are talented. I have never found anyone, however, who could combine both sensitivity and talent the way he does. He has captured the laughter of the wind in the cornfields, the rust of feathers from a golden peacock, with subtlety and a sense of good taste. He gave life to everything. I am deeply thankful for the work he did and proud to call him a friend.

THEODORE BIKEI is a unique personality in the field of entertainment. He is primarily a stage, screen, and television actor whose diverse outside interests include playing the guitar and singing folk songs of some fifteen countries in as many languages.

Born in Vienna in 1924, Mr. Bikel emigrated to Israel (then Palestine) with his parents in 1938. Five years later he joined the famed Habima Theatre and in 1944 was a co-founder of the Tel-Aviv Chamber Theatre. In 1946 he moved to London and attended the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. After extensive theatre work in England, he played the part of the Dutch doctor in the memorable English film, The Little Kidnappers, and in 1954 was brought to this country to appear in the Broadway play, Tonight in Skid Row. Since his first Broadway appearance, Mr. Bikel has been extremely busy in theatre (The Lark, The Rope Dancers); in television (The Bridge of San Luis Rey, Angry Harvest, The Hunted); and some twenty movies, among them The African Queen, The Pride and the Passion, The Enemy Below, Fraulein, The Defiant Ones, for which he received an Academy Award nomination, and I Want to Live.

His Elektra albums include: Folk Songs of Israel (EKL-132); An Actor's Holiday (EKL-105); Songs of a Russian Gypsy (EKL-150); Jewish Folk Songs (EKL-141); Folk Songs From Just About Everywhere, with Golia Gill (EKL-161); Love Songs of Many Lands, with Cynthia Gooding (EKL-109); Braio Bikil (EKL-175)

Contents—Halyet, Halyet Kinderleh; Lomir Alte Zingen; A Zomer; A Frieder; Dre Shiteleh; Der Becher; Kinder Yorn; Dora Dua; Unter A Kleyn Beymele; Der Fisher; Drej Yingelech; Papir Iz Doch Veils; Az Der Rebbe Zingt; Di Zun Vet Arunter Geyn.

ORCHESTRA UNDER THE DIRECTION OF FRED HELLMAN
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