

The League of Extraordinary Women.
Part I
A Portrait of The Artist as A Young Woman.
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Ann and I don't interact very often. When we do, it's noteworthy.
Maybe two to three hundred words a year.

Six months ago, I sent a text to Ann with
a recording from 1964 by a British woman,
a Jewish woman. Helen Shapiro.
She was a teenager, 17 at the time, in 1964.
Just a few months before, in concerts,
the Beatles were her opening act.

Helen Shapiro's song, that I forwarded to Ann,
was the lyrical *Shop Around*,
written by Smokey Robinson.
A classic among Motown classics.

Why wouldn't Helen Shapiro
be the headliner in England, above the Beatles?

Helen Kate Shapiro was born in London in '46.
The granddaughter of displaced Russian Jews,
Her parents piece workers in the garment trade.
She attended Lea Bridge Road Synagogue.
Post war working class, there was no record player in her home, she played a small
banjo.

At age ten, she had a band with Mark Bolan
who would be known as T-Rex, as her lead guitarist.
At 13 she started singing lessons, soon recorded a demo of *Birth of The Blues*, a song
from 1926,
And was signed by Columbia Records.

She's seventy-three years old today. In 1961.
at age fourteen Helen Shapiro had a number 3
UK hit with her first song. *Don't Treat Me Like A Child*. And the same year, two number
one songs,
You Don't Know and *Walkin' Back To Happiness*.
Before she was sixteen, Helen Shapiro
had been voted Britain's top female singer.

The Beatles first national tour was as Helen's opening act. You can hear the awe in which she was held, in a late career interview by George Harrison.

As I mentioned, the song I enthusiastically forwarded to Ann was Helen Shapiro's Interpretation, I call it a translation of Smokey Robinson's Shop Around. Like everyone, I was amazed at the interaction of the levels of musical dexterity in the Smoky and The Miracles original recording. You've heard it.

As warm and truly tender as the lyric is, a sweet dialogue between a mother and her son. we all know what that feels like. I was uncomfortable with its objectification of women.

But in the hands and voice of Helen Shapiro, with this Jewish teen telling her mom She's going to shop around, for the right man, the song comes to a life by entering a new world. The banister is removed.

At the same time, across the Atlantic, everywhere in America, another woman was toping the charts.

Her name was Leslie Sue Goldstein, Leslie Gore. Born into a middle-class Jewish family. Her father, you may remember the brand created and owned Peter Pan clothes.

At 16, a junior at the Dwight School for Girls In Tenafly New Jersey, With Quincy Jones as producer, she recorded It's My Party. It still shocks.

Like Helen Shapiro's Shop Around, to this day, It's My Party makes demands.

A clue is there in the first fragment of Helen Shapiro's R and B voice. You can hear it on our website. It's low, like an acoustic bass, it's hard at first to make out what she's saying.

"When I became of age, my mother called me to her side."

Leslie Gore sings the same way, with an American Jewish girl of sixteen in a 1963 voice, again produced by Quincy Jones, these words, You Don't Own me, I 'm not one of your little toys;

So just let me be myself. I'm free and I want to be free.

In 1964, with James Brown and The Rolling Stones, Leslie Gore was featured in a mythic film called the T.A.M.I. Show, Teen Age Music International, a kind of 'rockers of the world unite. Now in the national film registry, one of the most significant films in history.

The longest performance in entire film,
by Leslie Gore.

Jewish women:

In London, Celia Black, and in the States,
along with many others including Shelly Fabares, Johnny Angel, and Edie Gorme', the most talked about American talent of all, dominated the gossip pages. Barbara Streisand.

In 1862 Moses Hess, who is wisely called
the prophet of Communism and Zionism, would write, 'What the Germans hate is not so much the Jewish religion or Jewish names
as the Jewish noses ; change of faith or name evidently does not help; consequently what the Jews are tempted to deny is not so much their religion as their race. But their noses will not vanish, their hair will remain curly hair.'

But in Streisand's tough as leather Funny Girl, she shoves that off the mountain, as her mom snarls

"Is a nose with deviation
such a crime against the nation?"

From that Jewish moment on,
Streisand changed Judaism.

No one was is more joyously Jewish
than Streisand. Especially on stage
If you've seen the show, and most the world has, you know the voice she is competing with,
is not Fanny Brice's which no one remembered,
but Helen Shapiro's and Leslie Gore's.

Happy Days Are Here Again.

One award for her great movies said: "For making films that portray women with serious complexity.

If anyone had looked, in 1962 Jewish women
In England and here, along with Motown created
The sound of America.
We really should have turned Jewish history

over to them.

In 1983 Streisand became the first and only woman to win best director award, for a unique project,
A film Isaac Bashevis Singer's short story, Yentl.

By 1983 she was the most successful and awarded entertainer in American history,
Just take on look the theatrical release poster and the close up of her baby blues,
you know you are in a private world.
Your own.

The setting a Yeshiva in the old county is so odd for a musical.

In the Jewish Pale of Settlement, in the old days, an Ashkenazi girl whose dad taught her sacred texts...he dies. Yentl decides to dress, and live publicly as a man in order to receive a yeshiva education. The story and setting are, only for Streisand, perfect for a statement to the old world,

Who would have guessed that at age five
Barbra Streisand began her own education,
like Yentl, at an Orthodox yeshiva.

It's not appropriate to put Streisand into a context,
to put her on list, her accomplishments are so in a class by themselves, so monumental they stand in their own place. Vast.

Shop Around. It's My Party. You Don't Own Me.
People. People Who Need People.
With a song called People, gently worded, softly sung.
Compared to the then fashionable, aggressive bohemian American culture:
people who didn't need people.

Carole King.
When my soul was in the lost and found,
You came along to claim it.
Composer of 118 charted Billboard hits.
Chains. The Locomotion.
It Might As Well Rain Until September.
Take Good Care of My Baby.
Up On The Roof. Downtown.
One Fine Day. You've Got A Friend.
I Feel The Earth Move.
Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow.

What you hear immediately in Carole King
is a mastery of rhythm. A very big thing.
As I became aware of this,
I realized how strikingly present it was in
Helen Shapiro, Leslie Gore,
Barbra Streisand and Carole King.

Carole King's mother and father,
A teacher and a firefighter,
Were 2nd generation Eastern European Jews.

The interaction between each of these artists
And the Motown Detroit community of musicians,
who were also creating a new classical music, to be political it shook.

Helen Shapiro sang Smokey Robinson's Shop Around. Leslie Gore's It's My Party and
You Don't Own me was produced by Quincy Jones. The Supremes recorded the entire
score of Streisand's Funny Girl and Carol King's songs were written for
Aretha Franklin and The Shirelles.

If Motown's slogan declared
The Sound of Young America, what could you call the sound of these Jewish women?
The Young Sound of The Pale of Settlement.
and there were many more, who still made a
historical contribution of their voices.
Laura Nyro, Celia Black
And Sandy Shaw among them.

The Young Sound of The Carpathian Mountains?

Perhaps one way to comprehend these women is to think of a genius who they are not.
They are not the great Debbie Friedman.
Who writing in a Jewish milieu on Jewish topics
For a Jewish audience, her audience were already advocates for their music, before
they heard it.

I read a similar view of Jewish humor,
That a Jewish jokes starts off with an assist, a freebie, not related to how funny or not it
is,
Rather crusin' on agreed givens; ideologies, not really jokes.

This line by Carol King was new:
"When my soul was in the lost and found,
You came along to claim it.

It sounds like these words by Carol King
could be speaking to us tonight
With a melody filled with simple chords and blue notes, and sung in a way we have yet
to be able to get enough off.
The Detroit partnership flourished at an unprecedented level, with the gift of
Aretha Franklin's recording of Carol King's song.

A brief piano, a few notes, she says,
"Looking out in the morning rain,
I used to feel uninspired."

Although it feels a little like a history lesson,
both in England and in the United States, everywhere.
It's hard to overstate how much joy and power,
These women gave to the world.

It would be neglectful then to not think of the women's voices not heard, silenced for
reasons of violence, or ideologies of misogyny and racism.

There was one other woman's name that did appear increasingly
as these same years passed by. That was Anne Frank.

Oh for those whose voices ended without singing.

As early as 1962 The Diary was a staple
of high school drama departments.

Anne Frank wrote two versions of the Diary. She edited.
Version B was consciously prepared for us.

Originally titled The Annex: Diary Notes,
It was found in loose slips of paper, after Anne's arrest.
It was published in the United States in 1962 as
The Diary of A Young Girl.

A play, the famous play we know so well
won the Pulitzer Prize, and the film version won an Academy Award.
Unlike any other Holocaust text,
including Ellie Wiesel's highly censored Night,
The Diary of Anne Frank and the play of it
have reached audiences and readers
a carefully held and favorite, read all over the world.

Like You've Got A Friend by Carole King,
or You Don't Own Me, by Leslie Gore,

“I’m young and I love to be young.”
As Allyson Chiu recently wrote
in a Washington Post article titled
*Published Anne Frank’s Hidden Diary Pages:
Risqué Jokes and Sex Education.*

Frank Van Vree, of the Anne Frank house said,
“The recently published pages of hidden text
serve to highlight Anne the girl,
and her inquisitive and precocious personality.

Anyone who reads the passages that have been discovered will be unable to suppress
a smile.
That make it clear that Anne will all her gifts,
was above all an ordinary girl.”

An ordinary girl who wrote a book that sold
Thirty million copies.

Along with that article in The Washington Post
included passages
somethings I had never seen before,
what turned out to be
the only known film of Anne Frank,
She appears ‘fleetinglly’ to look at a wedding
happening on the street below.

I have to say I have not been the same
since I saw it.
So much, lost.

And yet, her language, her topics,
her genius in telling her stories of youth, adolescence and young adult love;
Anne Frank is so similar to Carole King,
Leslie Gore, Barbra Streisand and Helen Shapiro.

A portrait of the artist as a young woman.