FROM STEPNEY GREEN TO GOLDERS GREEN PLAYSCRIPT

Memories of the Jewish East End.
By age Exchange Theatre Trust

CAST: Gillian Gallant
Linda Polan
Charles Wegner

Directed by Pam Schweitzer

Devised by Pam Schweitzer and the company.

CHARLI'S INTRODUCTION, AND VIOLIN LINK

LINDA: In the Whitechapel area where I grew up, they were all Jewish people. Practically our whole street was full of Jews.

LINDA: And the characters! What about the characters?

CHARLIE: There was Slumpy the coke man who did removals with a horse and cart. He was a short man, immensely tough and strong. Slumpy had a regular ringside seat at the Premier Land where they had the boxing. We used to see every Sunday all the big contests, Kid Lewis, Harry Mizler, Benny Caplan.

LINDA: In our turning there was Benjamin the glazier, (CHARLIE STAGGERS WHITH GLASS) who carried his glass on his back. He was a drunk, but he never ever broke any glass putting windows in. And in the synagogue, (CHARLIE DONS TALLIS) his voice was above everybody's you know, in the chanting and the prayers. (CHARLIE SINGS: Baruch attach Adoshem) He didn't drink on the Sabbath.

CHARLIE: (AFTER VIOLIN LEAD IN, SHUFFLING DANCE AND SINGING) Old Solomon Levy Tralala tralala la…

LINDA: Old Solomon Levy, you might have heard of him. He was a character who came round several streets. He had a chap with him who used to blow on the tooter, the penny whistle.
We lived on the second floor, and we threw coins out. As a sort of prank we used to heat halfpennies in a shovel on the fire and throw them out. And he used to hold his hat up and his hat was full of holes where the coins used to fall through them.

CHARLIE: There was Prince Monolulu, with the feathered headdress. (SHOUTING) I gotta horse, I gotta horse.

LINDA: There was Larry the lamplighter who lit the gas at dusk.

(FIDDLE, FOLLOWED BY CLARINET)

LINDA: And in the houses themselves, every little window had a little business. Mrs. Stein had no carpet on the floor, but she had a few sacks of potatoes.

GILL: Next door there was a person who had in her window ribbon that my mother used to buy to do my plaits up with. Haberdashery.

LINDA: And next door to that they had – I remember this so well - well, they were rich, they had remnants of cloth to sell. Every little window was a sort of business.

CHARLIE: And all the shops were Jewish shops, one hundred per cent Jewish shops.

LINDA: Nearly all the residents bough on tick, or on the book pay when you can. There was Friedmans the grocer's shop on the ground floor and you could buy beautiful herrings in great big wooden coopers barrels.

CHARLIE: I remember the aroma, the smell of the cucumber, the pickled cucumber.

GILL: I remember walking through the Lane, Petticoat Lane, Big sacks of beigels, they were hot and the smell was gorgeous.

LINDA: And Mrs Marks – she sold herrings in the Lane – she stood there with about ten or twelve barrels all around her – winter and summer she stood there. She was skinning those herrings and cutting them up.

CHARLIE: When I was about five or six years old there were steaming hot peanuts in this great big sack. You'd get a handful of peanuts and they were boiling and they were lovely.

LINDA: I still remember the fragrance and the taste of those peanuts.

GILL: Particularly on Friday there were chicken stalls.

CHARLIE: And a woman would come over and pick up a chicken and feel it here and feel it there. (TO HER) You remind me of my daughter, she goes out with fellas who feel a bit here and feel a bit there… but they never buy.

GILL: There was the man with the baked potatoes. He trundled a little barrow and you'd have a lovely big hot baked potatoes with salad and vinegar for a penny.

CHARLIE: Salt and vinegar! And there was a man going with a barrow with all sorts of toffee he made at home. Fig toffee with nuts in it. Really lovely things and ever so cheap.

LINDA: But of course nothing was cheap to people who hadn't got anything. We were desperately poor.

GILL: But people were generous. Everybody helped everybody else.

MOTHER: Oh Isaac, I've cooked too much fish. Have this.

GILL: They always made the excuse that they'd cooked too much or something like that.

CHARLIE: And Mrs. Friedlander who lived in our road always stood outside her door on Saturday mid-day. The reason was I used to go and collect the chollant from the baker's shop. And Mrs. Friedlander knew I was going for the chollant.

MRS. FRIEDLANDER: Are you going for the chollant?

CHARLIE: And when I used to come back I'd see Mrs. Friedlander still standing there outside. "Mum, Mrs. Friedlander's still outside". So we took some out and gave it to Mrs. Friedlander.

MRS. FRIEDLANDER: Oh thank you.

CHARLIE: She'd say, as though it was unexpected.

SONG BEHIND THE FOLLOWING.

GILL: My mother would never sit down and have her meal unless she knew that her next door neighbour would have something as well. She did everything. She was the most wonderful woman. I never heard her voice raised in anger. We had two large rooms and they always looked beautiful.

MOTHER: We had what they called a Schluffbunk, a wooden thing you sat on during the day and opened out at night to make a bed.

GILL: My sister and I slept on that.

MOTHER: Papa and I had a little off-room where we slept and we partitioned it with a curtain do the boys could sleep there too.

GILL: Funnily enough, I never saw my brothers and they never saw us in our underclothes. How it was ever done, I can't imagine.

MOTHER: In the living room, we had a high mantelpiece with a velvet covering, with velvet fringes and pompoms. It was wine-coloured and had candlesticks on either side and photographs of the family.

GILL: My father was a presser. He had been a tailor.

FATHER: Gentleman's work, but then my sight failed me so I had to work from home, pressing.

MOTHER: He heated the irons over the cooker and the whole room was steamy. He pressed those trousers one after another. In our sitting room, our general room as you might say, we slept, we washed, we ate, we did. We even took baths sometimes. And all the time, the children were running in and out, getting under your feet.

GILL: My brother was very politically minded. He wanted to make life easier for the workers in the East End.

MOTHER: He did a great deal of street whitewashing of slogans and fund raising. He spoke at street corners, he went on marches.

GILL: When I was about twelve years old I joined him and heard some of the big important speakers.

MOTHER: He used to be up half the night reading.

FATHER: Using up electricity for heating and lighting which we couldn't afford.

MOTHER: Papa used to want to throw the books and the boy out.

GILL: This led to many noisy arguments, and many times my mother had to stand between them. (ALTERCATION IN YIDDISH BETWEEN PARENTS< ENDING …)

MOTHER: Less dass kind allein.

GILL: My mother was the most wonderful manager.

MOTHER: I would buy bones at that time from the butcher. They weren't like the bones you buy today. They had meat on them. I'd take the meat off and mince it to make soup. We had a coal range in those days, a range with an oven and a coke fire. And the saucepans used to go un top. And all day there were these bones boiling up with barley or whatever.

GILL: It was a remarkable thing. Out of nothing, she could make a meal. My younger brother used to come home from school around half past four.

CHARLIE: I used to have a cup of tea and half an hours play and then go to Cheder until eight o'clock at night – I should imagine my mother was glad, because I was out of her way like, you know. They crammed it into you. The five books, the Sefer Torah, they were more strict then the masters in school. If you didn't do it properly they had a big cane. We used to get a terrible wallop off them.

On one occasion, instead of going to Cheder I went for three ha'pence into the gallery of the Cambridge Cinema, bought myself a ha'penny bag of nuts and two bits of toffee, and spent a delightful three hours watching cowboy films.

GILL: Once a week in the evening my mother would bring a group of elderly ladies to the house and I would teach them English. I had a little blackboard and they would sit round in a circle in their long black dresses, down to the ankle. First I would have to address them in very correct Yiddish, which I wasn't very good at. I was the child being polite to them, and then I was the teacher and they were listening to me.

(MOTHER SINGS SHABBAS SONG)

MOTHER: I started to prepare for the Sabbath on Wednesday. If I bought a boiling chicken I'd have the liver thet I'd chop, the neck that I'd stuff and the chicken itself. There was always a good meal, there was always a hot soup.

FATHER: You know who did the best business at that time? The pawnshop.

MOTHER: The ritual was this: the suits, the table-cloth, the candlesticks, everything would go in Monday morning and would be taken out Friday for Shabbas.

GILL: Thinking back, outside our house it was white, and before the weekend you'd whiten it because it used to get dull. And you'd whiten your step with whitening. It was like painting, except it came off. You'd take a cloth and wet it and put it in the whitening and whiten it all over. My brother and I used to scrub the floor.

CHARLIE: We'd have a turn each scrubbing, and we'd sing. (THEY DO) I would sing a song while she did a piece of floor, and she would sing a song while I cleaned a piece of floor.

GILL: My father was a very religious man. He had a lovely white beard. On Friday night, he would dress himself up to go to Shul. He used to polish up his hat. I remember once we were on our way, and Father was so proud, holding me by the hand. A stone came, from we don't know where, and the hat went flying. It was a wonderful shot, but my father was in tears.

MOTHER: It was a very hard existence… but Friday was lovely. Out came the white tablecloth… and the candles.

GILL: I always remember Friday nights very well, because my father came into his own. He came home from Shul proud as a peacock. It reallywas very nice.

MOTHER: (LIGHTING CANDLES) Baruch atah adonai, elohaynu melech ha-olam. Ashare kidishanu, bemitzvotov votzivanu, lehadlik nare shel sahat.

FATHER: (POURING WINE INTO SILVER CUP) Baruch atah adonai, elohaynu melech ha-olam, beray, peree, hagafen. (ALL KISS)

FATHER: (CUTTING AND PASSING CHALLAH) Baruch atah adonai, elohaynu melech ha-olam, hamotzeh lehem min ha aretz.

(SHABBAS SONG)

GILL: On Shabbas morning I would look out of the window and see the watercart filling up with water on the corner. The vision was of absolutely empty streets because on Shabbas morning there was no traffic, no sound. Everybody seemed to respect the Sabbath whether they went to the synagogue or not.

CHARLIE: You collected the chollant on Saturday, from the bakers in Chicksand St. You went through a yard. You'd give in the metal disk and they gave you the chollant. You weren't allowed to carry the money on the Sabbath. It was extremely heavy, but I used to love exercising at thet time and I through carrying it would make me stronger, more heavily muscled.

LINDA: And that would be your hot meal. Otherwise your meals would bre cold because you weren't allowed to cook. You weren't allowed to put the light on. We used to call in a non- Jewish person to light the fire.

CHARLIE: In my early days, I used to go round all the Jews lighting their fires from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, their Shabbas. We used to go in, get their fires going, and then you'd go back and forth all Saturday to keep it going. We did maybe six or seven houses and we were only kids don't forget. And then sunset,

that was finished as far as they were concerned and you'd go for your money. A penny at the most.

MUM: After the collant, we had glasses of lemon tea served from the big shiny Samovar. We drank it through a piece of sugar held between the teeth.

GILL: (WHILE FETHER SINGS YIDDISH SONG.) My father was polish. He came from a village near Lodz.

FATHER: There were pogroms and the Jews were persecuted unmercifully. We ran for our lives on a boat.
My mother brought brass candlesticks which we've got here now. Pots and pans and bedding, you know, a quilt. We spent two weeks coming to England on the deck of the boat. My mother had a young baby in her arms and how she managed I do not know. It was a very bad crossing. We were all ill and I was seasick. My father took care of me and tried to brighten me up a bit. We landed in the docks in the East End and were taken to a shelter in Leman St. where we were kept until we could find somebody who could take care of us and give us a home. At the immigration the customs people asked my mother her name.

MOTHER: Baranovsky

GILL: How do you spell it? (MOTHER SHRUGS)

FATHER: My uncle who came to meet us said. "My name's Goldstein, you use Silverstein."

GILL: When were you born?

MOTHER: Seven weeks before Pesach.

GILL: You must have a date, with the month and the year.

MOTHER: Let him go to hell (IN YIDDISH) Haben im dreier.

CHARLIE: My uncle got us settled into a house – which was one room and kitchenette downstairs. I remember we didn't have a cradle or a cot, So my mother had one of those orange boxes, you know, a little crate and she put the baby in that. It was rat infested that house. We lived there about two years. My uncle wanted me to be a traveller with hats but I couldn't understand a word of English. My uncle said "All you have to say is 'very nice very cheap'." So I went into each millinery shop and they asked me-

LINDA: How much?

FATHER: Very nice, very cheap.

LINDA: Yes but how much?

FATHER: And a yiddisher woman at the back who heard this said,

GILL: Wiefiel kostas.

FATHER: So I knew if someone said:

LINDA: How much?

FATHER: I'd have to tell them the price. And that's how I picked up the language. Things gradually got a bit better and I started up my own business.

MOTHER: All his brothers and sisters visited at weekends. We gathered in one house. The families were terribly close and if a brother or sister didn't turn up, someone was dispatched to find out why. We made our own pleasures in those days.

(CHARLIE'S YIDDISH SONG: 'The Rabbi dances')

GILL: It was card playing amonst the grown ups. Solo.

LINDA: So who didn't put in the kitty yet?

CHARLIE: By my life, I put in already.

LINDA: Come on, come on. I'm sitting here like a golem with the ace and the jack in my hand.

CHARLIE: Believe me, mein enemies should have such a partner. Next week, better you should go to the pictures instead.

GILL: Mostly the women didn't play cards. I don't know what they did. Probably talked about marrying off their daughters. In the meantime the children played in the street.

(SONG I GIVE A PAPER OF PINS)

SCHOOL BELL

GILL: School days. My first day, the building seemed huge to me.

TEACHER: Register. Name?

KIDS: 6 names.

GILL: We all had to sit up very straight in long rows and not lean on the desks. The teacher was very stern – wearing a black dress buttoned right up to the neck.

TEACHER: Times tables.

GILL: The first day I went to school a little boy began to cry very much indeed and the teacher pulled him out of his seat and there was a puddle on the floor. He had wet the floor. So she set him on her table and whipped his legs with a ruler until they were really truly red. He was only five. A tiny little thing. And to this day I can hear the child sobbing. He sobbed his little heart out.

TEACHER: Times table.

LINDA: I remember when I first went to school I think I was about four, and they had big glass windows, you know, partitions between each room. If you got fed up and you sat at the back, you could stand up and wave to the girls in the next room.

TABLES

GILL: My brother was a year and a half younger than me and he kept sitting outside in the street and calling out.

CHARLIE: “Freda, Freda, I want to come to school!”

GILL: Shsh. You’ll have to wait until you’re bigger.

TEACHER: What are you doing? Pay attention when I speak.

GILL: She shook me thoroughly by the shoulders and no matter what you were wearing it got torn. You’d come home with a new dress torn. And your mother’d ask you what you’d been doing and all the rest of it.

BELL

LINDA: At lunch time all the mothers used to be waiting outside the gate, and we used to poke a beigel or a pretzel through the railings to the kids for their lunch.

GILL: Some of the teachers were strict, but most of them were lovely, lovely.

(ALL SING SONG: Flowers in bright sunshine…)

TEACHER: I believe that, although it sounds sentimental, the most important thing in the world is love. I had my own class and I taught them

everything. They gave me the youngster's eight to nine year olds.

GILL: Please sir, would you like to come and visit my garden. I live at the buildings.

TEACHER: Of course I'll come. I accompanied the little girl home. We climbed about six flights of stairs to their little apartment.

GILL: Mama, my teacher.

LINDA: Pleased to meet you.

TEACHER: The little girl took me to her garden. It was a flower pot on the window sill and she looked at that as if it was the garden of Eden. It's beautiful, beautiful.

LINDA: She's very proud of it.

TEACHER: Inside myself I was crying. It was very poignant.

(YIDDISH SONG OF TEACHER)

GILLIAN: Sometimes I'd go with my mother to the Yiddish Theatre, the Pavilion. I remember seeing a play called "The Dybbukk". I didn't know what it meant, and my mother explained it to me later.

MOTHER: We went in the gallery. Thrupence each I think it was. Always a full house. It was packed and it was lovely. There was one play I remember vividly. It takes place in a house, and in one part of the house there is great merriment of a party – and underneath there was a grief of a death, which sums up what life is all about. Laughter and tears.

GILLIAN: I remember seeing that. And we both came out weeping, my mother and I.

CHARLIE: (BOUNCING BALL) One two three o'lairy, my ball's gone in the airley, don't forget to give it to Mary, Not to Charlie Chaplin.

LINDA: What are you doing here?

GILL: Thought you'd moved away.

CHARLIE: I have. Just visiting. My uncle Joe still lives in the buildings.

GILL: What's it like Clapton?

LINDA: What's your school like?

CHARLIE: What, St. Johns? It's very nice there. I get beaten up three times a day after breakfast, after lunch and after tea. I'm the only Jewish boy there. First day I'm there the teacher says, "You're the Jewish boy, Silverstein isn't it?" You see he let them all know he didn't want any Jewish boys there.

GILL: Play cracker nuts?

LINDA: At Pesach time we were all in the street. We used to have those little round nuts. We used to buy thirty nuts for a halfpenny. You used to have shoeboxes with little holes and bigger holes. You had to get the nuts in. If it was a small hole you got ten nuts back.

THEY PLAY TOGETHER AND CHARLIE BREAKS OFF

CHARLIE: The most beautiful thing I can remember about living here, just before Pesach, we would get an old bucket, make holes in it, fill it with coals and walk round to all the flats in the building, shouting, "Chometz". (FREEZE POSE)
Here everybody knows everybody else. It's like one big family. Up there in Clapton… Ugh! Pesach time is the worst. As I go to school the boys shout, "You killed Jesus" and throw stones at me. I don't know what they mean. And I don't understand why it only happens in springtime. I run from one dustbin to another, protecting myself with dustbin lids.

LINDA: I went to a school in what they called The Lane then, Old Castle Street School. It was a lovely school, and every year we used to do something for Empire Day. One year we had a lovely tableau. All the colonies and everything were represented, and I was Miss Ireland. I was about six or seven years old, and they dressed us up in little aprons. And I remember so plainly we had a Jewish girl as Britannia. (LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY IN BACKGROUND) She lived in The Lane and I think her parents had a butcher's shop. She had long blond hair, and she stood at the top of this tableau. At the back of the schoolthere was all flats, the buildings. And all the mothers and fathers were looking out of the window watching. Of course most of these parents were foreigners, but they all watched because it was so entertaining.

FINISH LAND OF HOPE MARCHING

GILL: I was lucky with my schooling. I loved school. I was good at it. So good that when I was about to leave, the headmaster called on my mother.

CHARLIE: This girl shows such promise; you ought to let her go on until she's sixteen.

LINDA (MUM): So what do you want to do?

GILL: (TO AUDIENCE) I didn't want to stay, I didn't like the idea of wearing a uniform while all my friends were made up with their clothes looking rather smart. I want to start living. (TO MOTHER) I think I'd better leave. He gave me a lovely report; I've kept it to this day.

HEADMASTER: Freda's record is exemplary. She is possessed of a high sense of duty and is an extremely sensitive and well bred girl. She attacks everything given to her with courage and enthusiasm. Her mental calibre is much that she will render efficient service to her employers.

GILL: Someone came up to the school and wanted a girl for the office. Just one girl. The headmaster recommended me. I kept the books, did his typing.

BOSS: Answer these letters and take copy. I'll be out for the rest of the day.

GILL: To make a copy, I used to dampen the typewritten letter and put it in this press.

BOSS: Post these.

GILL: It wasn't really very much of a job. So I looked around to see what my friends were doing.

LINDA: My very first job was in a gown shop in Whitechapel. They were making evening dresses. When I first came, they said>

GILL: Can you make a cup of tea?

LINDA: I could make a cup of tea at home but it was a great big teapot. I hadn't a clue how to get on with it.

GILL: Blimey, she can't even make tea!

LINDA: You had big shovels to put it in. My tea never tasted like their tea, it never came out right.

CHARLIE: My first job was rather short and sharp, left school on the Friday, started work on the Sunday morning. It was next door to where I lived. They were making signboards. By the end of the week my fingers were bleeding. Friday night my boss gave me a whole half crown (Boss gives him) What's this, do you want me to get something for you?

LINDA: No that's your wages.

CHARLIE: I said "That's my what? My mother was giving me three and six when I was at school". I said good day, and that was my lot. Next I went to work in Victoria Park Road for Mr. Loss who was deaf. He sent me with a barrow to pick up some wood. Pick up some wood? Little did I know… They load this barrow with roughly two tons of plywood. And I was only a small kid. I can remember coming round the tramlines at Shoreditch Church and Hackney Rd. The wheel of the barrow got stuck in the tramline and I couldn't get it out. The wheel came off and the place was scattered with ply. I didn't take any notice. I got on the tram and went back to Victoria Park Road.

LINDA: Where's the wood?

CHARLIE: In Shoreditch. Take me for a donkey? I'm not a donkey.

LINDA: You come here, expecting work, ask for a job…

CHARLIE: He started telling me off and I said something rude under my breath.

(BOSS STOPS IN HORROR)

BOSS: I heard that. Get out.

CHARLIE: Those were the words I wanted to hear. I got my jacket and I ran.

(MUSIC)

LINDA: When I left school, being the oldest daughter, mother thought…

GILL: You've got a bit of common sense. I think we'll send you to take an apprenticeship. You can learn to do floristry work.

LINDA: Oh I tell you I was thrown in at the deep end. I was given a pair of green welly boots and a green waterproof apron. I was dumped down in the cellar and the first thing I had to do was open a great big bag of moss that was running alive with worms, and the water was going all over the place. I said "Well what's all this about?

CHARLIE: Well you've got to start at the bottom. There's a piece of barrel. I want you to moss that up to make a circle of it for a wreath.

LINDA: You had to make your own shapes from various bits of wood and so on and so forth. At the end of two or three years

apprenticeship I was still only on three half crowns a week and mother said:

GILL: I think you've had enough, we can earn more from you if we take a little shop of our own.

LINDA: So we opened our very own flower shop. And I became tha buyer for the business.

CHARLIE: I went to my father's factory to learn tailoring under the direction of old Harry.

HARRY: You've got to learn how to hold a needle. There's a way of holding your fingers when you sew a thing.

CHARLIE: But there's no thread.

GINGER HARRY: That's right, practise on that.

CHARLIE: They put me on a plain piece of cloth and a needle with nothing in it for days. (CHARLIE SINGS THE TAILOR'S SONG) I used to take the orders to the West End. I'd have to walk the whole length of Vallance Road to Whitechapel Hospital to get the bus to Oxford Circus. Then I'd carry back a whole roll of cloth on my shoulders, on the bus, crawling down the underground, with all the people coming out of work.

GILL: I had to give up my office job when my father died. I had to help my mother. She had to find some means of making a living.

LINDA (MOTHER): I couldn't do it by tailoring because that involved so many different people. You had to have someone to do one part of a garment and someone to do another. You know what I mean. My niece had just learnt millionary. I said, "Would you come and work with me and teach me?"

NIECE: I don't know, I'd have to give up my job.

MOTHER: I'm desperate. So out of pity, you could say, she came. I watched and watched, and slowly I picked it up. In those days they used to wear hats with big brims and lace. They were always wired edges you know. I put the hats in the window and the money started to come in.

GILL: I'll never forget my mother's first bankbook, I walked along with her, holding her arm to put away our first savings. She worked her way up gradually.

MOTHER: Sometimes we worked all night to finish. I can never remember a time when I didn't have needle in my hand.

GILL: Mother did the housework, worked in the workshop, took the work in, brought it back again.

MOTHER: We worked it out between us. We used to make a lot of hats to take up to the West End. We'd load them into great big bags, almost as big as we were.

GILL: I hated it because when we went on the train everybody looked at us. We were conspicuous.

(CHARLIE'S HAT SONG)
MOTHER: Come on, business is business.

GILL: We used to go to Oxford Street and the side turnings, trying to sell these hats.

CHARLIE: Let's see what you've got. No, no, no… I'll take that.

MOTHER: They'd take one or two, or even three maybe, you know.

GILL: Anyway that's how we went on and her way up gradually.

MOTHER: In the tenement block, we had a little shop window, on the ground floor, like. Customers used to come in, and I would say, "would you like to see how it looks on my daughter?" And of course she looked wonderful in it. They'd say, "Oh yes, but it won't look like on me." At least they had the sense to know that. There was a little parlour behind, behind the shop there was a little parlour and this was where they used to work. Eventually we had six, eight or even more working for us.

GILL: I looked on these employee girls as friends. People used to say "Oh they'll take advantage of you, impose on you, but they never did. We used to go for long walks; we'd walk and walk especially with one particular friend called Millie.

MILLIE: Just walking along the Whitechapel Road.

CHARLIE: WHISTLE "Hello, how have you been getting on?" It's quite simple. A fella can always get girls anytime. Would you like a tea?

MILLIE: How many romances blossomed, and marriages from the Whitechapel Road, from going for walks and walks.

GILL: The great outing was a pennyworth of picket cucumber out of a shop called Johnny Isaacs. All the Jewish girls and boys used to accumulate and have a giggle.

LINDA: Practically every Sunday morning in summer, we used to take the train to Epson and then walk right across the race course and all the way to Box Hill.

GILL: It was lovely. Just a small group of boys and girls. We used to walk along singing all the songs.

(SONG: I'M HAPPY WHEN I'M HIKING)

LINDA: We used to stop for lunch, we always used to take a picnic with us, and then find a little place. And then we'd get the train back to Box Hill because it was too far to walk all the way back again.

GILL: But it was lovely. We used to have lots of times like that.

CHARLIE: Saturday night was special. You used to dress up, bit of money in your pocket, and off to the Astoria, Charing Cross Road.

LINDA: We'd be dressed in our regalia.

GILL: In our very very best.

LINDA: A long dress, on off the shoulder strap dress, chiffon.

GILL: If it was winter you wore boots and carried your evening shoes in a bag.

LINDA: Somebody powdered your back, your mother or whoever was available.

GILL: And you went to the dance. And you felt really good.

LINDA: You was princess for a night.

(LINDA SINGS: 'I only have eyes for you)

CHARLIE: If you found a girl who could dance, a nice dancer, you'd keep with her all night.

GILL: A girl didn't fall into a boy's lap you know. I'd pick and choose. Most of the girls did.

CHARLIE: Do you want to dance? (THEY DANCE)

GILL: I liked dancing very much.

CHARLIE: Can I walk you home?

GILL: I've got to be home by ten thirty.

LINDA: I had to be home before eleven until I was eighteen. Otherwise Dad would come and meet me.

DAD: Buzz off.

LINDA: He'd say to the boy. Oh Daddy-

CHARLIE: Oh no, don't you daddy me, you'll come home and that's all there is to it.

GILL: If somebody said-

CHARLIE: Can I see you home?

GILL: You didn't take them in, cos you'd nowhere to take them. The bed was already made for the night, so you stood near the door, in the hallway, the passage.

CHARLIE: We couldn't stay there long, cos her mother was probably looking out of the window. We'd have a bit of a kiss and cuddle but nothing more.

(SONG: YES MA)

GILL: I saw him again at the Rabbi's house the next Saturday night. The Rabbi used to invite young people from the Shul to his house and he used to make lovely, lovely parties, soirees. And there was dancing to a gramophone. He was a very modern minister. He and his wife would do a tango, and it would be a demonstration tango.

CHARLIE: We went to the Savoy Theatre to see Lady Frederick. When we got there we hadn't booked you see. We were looking around for the booking office and one of the commissionaires from the Savoy hotel said.

LINDA: Would you like some tickets to go in?

GILL: And we said "Oh thank you so much" (BOTH)

CHARLIE: We wanted to give him something but he said-

COMISSIONAIRE LINDA: Naa, that's all right.

CHARLIE: We had the second row of the dress circle and because it didn't cost anything we had tea in the interval.

GILL: And we went mad and bought a programme each. I saw him every night for three years. And during all those years he'd never tell me that we would get married.

CHARLIE: No no, I cant get married, I could be rich one minute and poor the next.

GILL: I won't mention it any more, about getting married. I felt like where there's like, there's hope. I mean I loved him and I wasn't going to let him go. I only wanted him to say that one day we'd get married. Well, it took him three years. One afternoon walking down Stoke Newington, he stopped outside a big jewellers, walkers.

CHARLIE: Which one do you like then?

GILL: You're joking!

CHARLIE: No, I'm not.

GILL: That one.

CHARLIE: You like it?

GILL: Don't be silly, you haven't got that sort of money.

CHARLIE: I'd like to see that ring. Put the ring on your finger. Do you like it?

GILL: Yes.

CHARLIE: Right. Well we'll call ourselves engaged.

(GILL CRIES)

CHARLIE: What's the matter?

GILL: Why did it take so long?

(KISS AND CUDDLE. CHARLIE SINGS VALENTINE SONG.)

GILL: Mama, this is Sam.

SAM: I've a job in furniture. I'm in charge of the veneer department. I'm a foreman come manager, general dogsbody. I know exactly what work is being made and what's going out, 300 wardrobes a week. All mahogany with walnut veneer.

MAMA: Mazzletov. (KISSES EACH AND JOINS HANDS) Nothing's too good for my daughter. I decided to go all out to make a memorable do. Should it be Sterns, Monnickedams, La Boheme, Silversteins in Whitechapel? (SHE THINKS WHICH)

CHARLIE: Her mother decided to make the wedding herself. People made their own weddings if they couldn't afford it.

GILL: I had a very nice dress made. You had to get ready early, because they all wanted to have a look at you. All the neighbours and the customers.

MOTHER: They all want to see you before you go; To wish you joy.

CHARLIE: When we had weddings, Jewish people who'd never seen a top hat in their lives went to shul in a top hat. They had a frock coat hired from Moss Bros.

GILL: We came back from the Shul to the house, But on the way, we had to stop at Boris's Studios in the Whitechapel Road.

CHARLIE: For a bridal picture something more than photography is necessary, and behind every bridal portrait is the understanding of the artist. And the experience gathered only through a life time's specialisation in wedding pictures.

LINDA: He had a wonderful manner with people. People felt relaxed with him. He never stopped talking.

GILL: He had so much patience. He played about with you and put you the way he wanted.

CHARLIE: Back at the house, there were about a hundred people.

(SONG AZZELTOV)

LINDA: In those days, weddings were weddings. They'd be a table set out with drinks and cakes and things. You'd have breakfast and then you'd have a lunch. You'd have a full four course lunch. Then whoever wanted to go home and change from the morning outfit to the evening outfit would go home. The rest would stay and have tea. Then you'd come back for dinner and dancing.

CHARLIE: Parents saved all their lives for a daughter's wedding. Some took out an insurance policy that day a daughter was born. Two weeks before the wedding, they drew it you.

LINDA: They'd serve the most fabulous food and fruit and chocolates. They'd come round with big silver trays with chocolates and almonds and raisins. And if you gave a guinea for the wedding you weren't doing wrong. Weddings were weddings in those years.

GILL: That was a common patters when we moved out of the East End.

CHARLIE: It was a common patters when you married.

GILL: We'd already seen the better side of life, we'd been to dances, we'd been to the West End, we'd been to hotels. You saw a better way of life then what you'd had at home. Nicer surroundings with bathrooms and toilets.

CHARLIE: So of course it was something you wanted.

GILL: We found a house, a lovely little house, and we budgeted how much it would cost.

CHARLIE: We paid £140 deposit and it was a lovely brick built little house with a nice garden at the back. We had the ground floor, and there was a tenant upstairs.

GILL: So we moved out of the East End.

LINDA: The East End now is nothing like it used to be. It was a struggle, and we were always short, but there was a great sharing. A great trust between people. They were caring. It was such a lovely atmosphere. A Jewish atmosphere. Such a homely affair. It's done me good to speak of the old days, you know.

FINAL SONG