



432 East Campus Mall
Madison, WI 53705
608.890.4818

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CONTACT: Henry Sapoznik, sapoznik@wisc.edu; Scott Carter, scott.carter@wisc.edu, 608-890-4818

MAYRENT INSTITUTE NOW HOME TO OLDEST SURVIVING RECORDINGS OF YIDDISH MUSIC

MADISON - The [Mayrent Institute for Yiddish Culture](#) is proud to announce the arrival of twelve Jewish cylinder recordings c.1901 from the Chicago-based Thomas Lambert Company, thought to be the oldest surviving recordings of Yiddish music. These rare recordings join the [Mayrent Collection of Yiddish Recordings](#), a premier repository of over 9,000 78rpm recordings of Yiddish and Jewish music, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's [Mills Music Library](#).

These extremely rare cylinders are vitally important in that they crystalize a critical moment in the emergence of the Yiddish theater from its earliest European provenance to its still to be realized new American context. While many of the songs and singers on these two-minute recordings are today wholly forgotten, among the collection is the earliest known performance of the cornerstone song "Rozhkinkes mit Mandlen" ("Raisins and Almonds"), composed by the father of the Yiddish theater Abraham Goldfaden just twenty years before for his opera "Shulamith" and recorded for Lambert shortly before the composer's death.

The Thomas Lambert Company began issuing cylinders around 1900 and, while their catalog of more than 1,000 recordings would eventually reflect only mainstream popular music, forty-eight of their first eighty releases were Yiddish, making them the first record label of the era to issue such a trove of Jewish music. Lambert cylinders are among the most uncommon of all early American sound recordings, and the Yiddish issues are the rarest of all Lamberts.

The twelve cylinders, which arrived in pristine condition, sound amazingly clear and present thanks to their superior original celluloid surface and due to the transfer skills of historian/sound engineer/collector David Giovannoni (UW-Madison, 1980), who made the collection available.

The Institute is cooperating with Grammy-award winning [Archeophone Records](#), which will reissue the recordings later this year under the title *Attractive Hebrews: The Thomas Lambert Yiddish Cylinders 1901-1904*.

Archeophone Records principal Richard Martin says, "We are profoundly grateful to the Mayrent Institute for inviting us to publish these precious recordings. Their leadership in preserving Yiddish heritage pairs brilliantly with our skill in the reissue market of ancient audio. The result will be a top-flight production that looks and sounds great and puts the recordings in their proper context.

Due to the extreme scarcity of these recordings — and to the absence of research on them — we request if anyone has other Yiddish recordings or any corresponding materials (catalogs, newspaper advertisements, correspondence, photos etc.) to please contact the institute.