

***Six Songs from Ellis***  
**Repertory Dance Theatre**

**AUDITION MONOLOGUES**  
**CHOOSE ONE- Memorization not necessary**

**Doukenie Babayanie** man or woman

Born 12.12.1905, emigrated from Greece 1919

I don't know how much you believe in God, but believe in God. If God wants things to happen, will happen...You, see, my mother had a brother in America. I wrote him, a letter... and told him that my dream, I love to get out from here...and I said, "If you only give me a chance to bring me to America..." My uncle-he was a gambler, a heavy gambler- I didn't know that, I found out later. The same night that he got the letter, he played. He said the man that was playing, he was a ticket agent. My uncle said, "we'll play one ticket for my niece." And he won. He said, "Another play for the expenses." And he won.

**Andrew Lichanec** man or woman

Born 5.25.1907 , emigrated from Czechoslovakia (Aus/Hung) 1913

And uh, all of a sudden the train pulls in and we're standing there, saying goodbye to each other and I hopped on the train, I sat there and I look out through the window and I saw my grandfather standing under a tree, until I got out of sight. And uh, this, this here stays, it stood in my memory all the time and if I was an artist, today, my age, I don't know why, but I could draw a picture of that man standing there, the way he was looking. He just stood there, just like a statue or something and he didn't move he just kept looking and I kept looking through the window on the side at him, you know, until the train pulled out. I was leaving, I was leaving something I didn't understand, you know I dreamt so much about him. Sometimes, dreams used to scare me. I would dream, I'd be entering the village, I could see off distant like a fog, roofs and everything and here I am in my mind saying. "Oh, I'm going to be there, I'm going to be there, I'm getting to see him, I'm going to see him." I would wake up and I would be disappointed because I didn't see him, until the day here, 12 years ago I went to Europe, I walked around that village, and this woman took me to that cemetery, I stood in front of his grave, she says, "He's buried here, here's the flowers, I'm taking care of him." Believe it or not, for 12 years I never had one dream. I think my mind is at rest, at ease because I stood there at his grave and I said a prayer, I did, and I think I helped myself, I rest my mind by doing that I maybe he did too, maybe he did see me there.

**Michel Huysman** man or woman

Born 2.5.28, emigrated from Belgium 1942, age 14

When the Germans had invaded and the Germans had conquered, we figured they were...going to come into South France too... Vichy, France—that's where we were...So everybody wanted

to go back home. Homesick for Belgium. Homesick for—for the home. Homesickness is a very serious illness, believe me. We all wanted to go back. And there were arrangements at...the Dutch Consul in...Toulouse. And my father and my uncle and we all inscribed in to go back. And the night before these buses were to go back, the convoy leader...wanted to see ...all the people that were going to go back. And he approved of everybody except me. I looked too Semitic; I looked too Jewish. Well, I don't know if I looked Jewish but, for a Dutch kid, I looked Jewish. I had jet-black hair and there were not many of us around with that color hair...And there was no way he would take us. So we were forced to stay... And I was crying so and was—my sister was also upset. Everybody else went back and most of those people, including my uncle, wound up in Belsen and Auschwitz and places...

SIGRIST: So I—I guess—I guess I'm just curious about the fact that there seems to be no fear about going back...

HUYSMAN: None. There wasn't any fear about going back. We figured, "Oh, well. It's going to be tough. The Germans are mean," and all that. But we hadn't heard of anything about—and I think homesickness was really the thing that was, you know...We didn't think back about the pictures we saw of Austria before. Somehow, these things disappear from the mind when you're homesick.

**Luby (Ljubica) Tonic Wuchina**      man or woman

Born Sept 16. 1921, emigrated from Yugoslavia, 1927

...And my mother was getting very uncomfortable being without him (my father) for six years. Do they decided that he had enough money saved that he could pay for her passage and start a home together here...Well...it's so abstract, what a child thinks about a different country... Mostly I thought about this man who was my father, and I really didn't even know what a father was. So I used to sing little stories...there by myself...make up little stories and sing them about how I would travel to see my father. And about the ship, that I would go on a ship. And I had no idea what an ocean was or the ship. So my idea of a ship and the ocean first, that it was a wide stream. And the ship was, I conjured up sort of a little raft, and I thought that we would be in the middle of this raft, and either side we could reach shore. So when I saw the ocean and I saw the ship it was unbelievable. It was all different from my imagination.

**Steen, Emanuel (Manny)**      man

Born 6.23.1906, emigrated from Ireland

They took your papers and they tagged you...They had too many. Understaffed. Over crowded. Jammed. And the place was the noisiest and the languages and the smell... Foul, you know what I mean? But I am nineteen...You figure, "Get out of here fast," you follow me?...Frankly, the worst memory I have of Ellis Island was the physical...You had to, uh, reveal yourself. They gave you what we used to call in the army...a "short arm inspection." Right there in front of

everyone, I mean, it wasn't private!...And the women had to open their blouse and here this is terrible. Remember, these were immigrants from a very reticent people and here ...I had to open my trousers and fly and they would check you for venereal disease or hernia or whatever they were looking for...I was a young buck. I was in good shape, you know, but just the same...I mean, it's terrible with women, young girls and everyone, you know...it's a very unpleasant memory...It was years later I just thought they didn't have to do it that way...Remember, this is the height of immigration. They were coming in by the thousands. I mean the day I was there I saw maybe three, four, five thousand. Who counts, you know what I mean? The place was jammed, follow me?

**Inge Nastke**

woman

Born 1912, emigrated from Germany 1922

So, this is what happened. Here I was, I was released and the nurse took me back to huge waiting room and I ran to the far side of the area, no grandmother. There was a grandmother but it wasn't mine.. All of the sudden, somebody took me by my arm and whirled me around and she said, "Where in the world did you come from?" It was the matron, the overseer. And I explained, I said, "I have just been released from the hospital and I thought my grandparents were here waiting for me. "Oh, your grandparents? I'm sorry child but they have been released many weeks ago." So I, this was colliding with an iceberg... "Oh," she said, "Don't cry, don't cry, we're going to fix you up." You see, in their excitement, my grandparents had taken my winter clothes and my coat and my hat, everything. So, I just had my dress and it was bitter cold. This was December. She said, "Don't cry, don't cry, we'll see that everything will be alright." And she took me down the hall and she had a huge bunch of keys around her waist. She took one of those keys and opened a door, there we were in another large room and it had a huge pile of clothing, uh, brought there by the Salvation Army and the Goodwill Industry and the Red Cross. She said, "Now, you try on a coat," she spoke with a very slight German and she said, "Here, try on, try on." And I tried on coat after coat after coat. Either it was for the romper set, or much too big for me. Well, she kept looking at her watch, "Mach schnell, mach schnell!", that means "Hurry up, I don't have much time." And she pulled out a long green wool coat and it reached down to my heels, sleeves covered my hands completely, she pulled out a little cap, it was gray with a big red pom pom and green mittens. She said, and I looked and, they had an oval mirror, and I almost started to cry when I saw myself. And she said, "I'm sorry, we don't have your size, but it's warm, that's the main thing, you won't freeze to death. So, by and by, somebody came in and hung a tag around my neck with all pertinent information. Then the official said, "Follow me, you will be brought to Manhattan. I took a last look at the Statue of Liberty and I was wondering, "Would I ever meet again," and then I looked at Ellis Island and I thought, "Oh, how many tears I had to shed there." I really cried me a river.

**Max Mason (Masonschnik)**      man or woman

Born 1.23.1912, emigrated from the Ukraine 1921

Back in the old country I never knew my father because he had left for the United States when I was only perhaps a year or fifteen months old. The closest I ever had contact with him was on a big picture in which he was part of a musician's band in the Russian army. His face and head were approximately the size of a pinhead. And Mom had once pointed out that that was my father, and every Friday night when I had chicken soup I used to come over to that picture and feed my father chicken soup. That was the only knowledge and contact I had of him. The first time I ever saw him was right here in Ellis Island.

When we landed on May 10th of 1921, he and an uncle of mine brought him down to the island here and I saw that he was hugging my mother and they were exchanging embraces, so I concluded that I may have some claim on him, too. So I climbed on his back and I patted him, and that was my introduction to my father.

**Leah Sonnenshein Shai**      man or woman

Born 9.25.20, emigrated from Romania, born in US

It's not that my mother was so self-sacrificing...I grew up in a milieu that everybody was trying to bring who, whatever relative they had out of Russia, get out of Romania...So my mother was very happy that her sister was coming...She came on the ship, and my uncle and my father came down that day to meet her (at Ellis Island)...to bring her to our house...And so we were all in our apartment waiting...And my uncle and my father finally came in without my aunt. What has happened? And they told us that my aunt had not passed the spoken question period...and one of the questions was, "How many feet does a horse have?" I think if I live to be a hundred I will never forget that. And my aunt's answer, as she explained it to her husband and my father, was she didn't know was he fooling her, was he trying to trick her, or was it a serious question. So she didn't answer...I think by then she was totally confused...But that was the question that seemed to stop her....And they were told that she was slated for deportation because she was, they didn't know how badly, but she was mentally retarded... My father asked people and was eventually sent to an attorney who hired investigators to find out what had happened in this interrogation period, and it seemed as though she didn't know how many feet a horse had...She eventually was sent back....So, unfortunately, my aunt, according to the laws, did not belong as a legal immigrant because she was obviously mentally retarded...