

Wimoweh

(a.k.a. "The Lion Sleeps Tonight")

Words & Music:
Solomon Linda

Well, it has taken until the 21st century for Solomon Linda to get his due. He wrote this song in 1939 in South Africa for his own a capella quartet, The Evening Birds. It became a hit record in the 1940s, but apartheid limited his negotiating power such that he eventually sold the rights to the song to Gallo records in the 1950s for roughly \$1.70. Finally, his three daughters won 25% of all past & future royalties in a March 2006 court settlement.

The original song was based on the traditional Zulu song "Mbube Wimoweh" (literally, "the Lion sleeps"). It has been recorded by this name or the Xhosa variant "Wimoweh" by Miriam Makeba, The Weavers, Karl Denver, Dave Newman, The Tokens, Tight Fit & Ladysmith Black Mombazo & others. George David Weiss, Hugo Peretti & Luigi Creatore are often given credit for writing this song. It's nice to finally credit the original songwriter.

Correspondent Dan M. relates that it is supposedly about Chaka Zulu. It is he who is the Lion and, like Bran the Blessed or King Arthur, is sleeping until needed again by his people.

[first 2 lines are usually a capella, although chords are given]

G C G D
Weee-dee-dee-dee, da-dee-dee-dee-dee, a-wee-um-bumblay. [2x]

CHORUS:

G C
Uyimbube, Uyimbube, Uyimbube, Uyimbube,
G D
Uyimbube, Uyimbube, Uyimbube, Uyimbube. [2x]

G C G D
In the jungle, the mighty jungle, the lion sleeps tonight.
In the jungle, the quiet jungle, the lion sleeps tonight

CHORUS: *[plus a canticle section over the Uyimbubes...]*

Near the village, the peaceful village, the lion sleeps tonight.
Near the village, the quiet village, the lion sleeps tonight.

CHORUS:

Hush my darling, don't fear, my darling, the lion sleeps tonight.
Hush my darling, don't fear, my darling, the lion sleeps tonight.

CHORUS:

**Uyimbube = "You're a Lion" in Zulu. Pronounced as "oo-yim-bweh-beh" and often misheard (and misspelled) by English speakers as "a-wimoweh".*

