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April 10, 2024

Echoes of Courage: Vocal Works of Jewish Music from the Holocaust

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2024

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An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
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Music

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Abstract

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By Karyn Lisker

"Echoes of Courage" is a thesis vocal recital that represents the culmination of two years of research into Jewish music from the Holocaust— a genre encompassing compositions and adaptations from the Holocaust era—and rehearsal of compelling stories through music of historical, musical, and personal importance. This research amplifies several Jewish voices from the Holocaust—some are well-known, and some are seldom sung, yet all are crucial testimonies through which to learn and honor the experience of the victims of the Holocaust. The music is representative of the geographical and linguistic diversity prevalent among Central and Eastern European Jewry during the Holocaust as well as the wide range of experiences that Jews had during this time. Each song in this recital speaks to the radical oppression and unbearable loss that Jews experienced during the Holocaust while emphasizing immense resilience. The program notes, texts, and translations are meant to accompany viewers as they experience this recital. Through a nuanced interplay of text, interviews, and music, the performance aims to link musical thematic sections of music from the Holocaust within their historical context to their potential for creating empathy as a tool through which to combat modern antisemitism. The recital is meant to inspire scholarly engagement, social reflection, and personal empathy regarding the human dimensions of the Holocaust. As such, the presentation underscores the imperative for critical examination of historical antisemitism and its contemporary manifestations.

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Thank you from the bottom of my heart to all in attendance today: Emory University administrators, faculty, and staff who I have been lucky to admire and learn from throughout my college career, and my dear friends and family who have helped me see this project come into fruition, always leading with unconditional love and support, and to those who traveled from near and far—Mexico, St. Louis, and New York—to join me for this culminating occasion.

Finally, thank you to my peers Carol and Chunjin for performing with me today, my friend Micah for sharing her wisdom, Lori Laitman for providing insight into Holocaust music and her pieces I perform today, and finally, Manuela Bornstein for trusting me with her story so courageously.

- Karyn Lisker

Karyn Lisker,

soprano

Dr. Hanna Song,
collaborative pianist

Senior Honors Recital *Echoes of Courage*

From the studio of Dr. Bethany Mamola

Friday, March 22, 2024, 3:00 PM.

Performing Arts Studio
1804 N. Decatur Road,
Atlanta, GA 30322

*** Please hold your applause
until the end of the recital ***

Program

Eli, Eli — Halichah Lekesariyah

David Zehavi
(1910-1977)

Persecution in Daily Life

Jew
from *Letter to Warsaw**

Thomas Pasatieri
(b. 1945)

Yisrolik

Misha Veksler
(1907-1943)
arr. Mordechai Sheinkman

S'brent

Mordecai Gebirtig
(1877-1942)
arr. Sheinkman

Legacies of Fortitude

In kriuvke

Yiddish folksong
arr. Sheinkman

Tsvey taybelehk

Yiddish folksong
arr. Sheinkman

Tsen brider

Rosebery D'Arguto
(1890-1942)
arr. Sheinkman

Shtil, di nakht iz oysgeshternt

Hirsh Glick
(1922-1944)
arr. Sheinkman

- Intermission -

**Letter to Warsaw* was commissioned by Music of Remembrance and was premiered on May 10, 2004, at Music of Remembrance's Holocaust Remembrance concert, Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA.

Program

Defiant Marches

Ne csüggedj

Unknown
arr. Sheinkman

Minutn fun bitokhn

Gebirtig
arr. Sheinkman

Zog nit keyn mol

Glick
arr. Sheinkman

Captured Innocence

Selections from *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*

Lori Laitman
(b. 1955)

The Butterfly

The Garden

The Old House

Chunjin Park, clarinet

Selections from *Vedem***

Laitman

Memories of Prague

Five

Carol Xu, violin

Song of Survival

Zol shoy'n kumen di geule

Abraham Isaac Kook
(1865-1935)
arr. Sheinkman

short reception to follow

*****Vedem*** was commissioned by Music of Remembrance, Mina Miller, Founder and Artistic Director. Premiered on May 10, 2010 at Benaroya Recital Hall in Seattle, WA.

Featured Performers

Karyn Lisker, 22, from St. Louis, Missouri, is a senior at Emory University and will be graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Music (Vocal Performance) and Psychology. Karyn studies voice under Dr. Bethany Mamola and collaborative pianist, Dr. Hanna Song. She is a former student of Bradley Howard and Erika Tazawa. Karyn has performed in Emory Choir's Concert Choir under Dr. Eric Nelson's direction for four years as Alto 2 and serves as Co-Director of Public Relations. Karyn's vocal studies have generously been supported by Emory's Friends of Music, the 2018 Music Scholarship, and the Atlanta Symphony Chorus Robert Shaw Memorial Outstanding Singer Scholarship. This year is Karyn's ninth of studying voice. At Emory, Karyn is involved in research at the Marcus Autism Center, and has or currently serves in leadership roles in Pi Beta Phi Fraternity for Women, Emory Hillel, Hillels of Georgia, Office of Spiritual and Religious Life, and the Student Well-being Advisory Committee.

Hanna Song is a pianist, chamber musician, vocal coach, and educator. Dr. Song has performed in prestigious concert halls and schools worldwide, including Carnegie Hall's Recital Hall and Lincoln Center in New York City, as well as La Schola Cantorum in Paris, France. She has collaborated with members of renowned orchestras such as the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, New Haven Symphony Orchestra, and Montreal Symphony Orchestra. Additionally, Dr. Song has been invited to perform at various music festivals and institutes, including the Duxbury Music Festival, SongFest, and the European American Musical Alliance Institute. She earned her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in collaborative piano from Boston University on a Merit Scholarship from the College of Fine Arts and holds a Master of Music degree from Boston Conservatory at Berklee. Dr. Song furthered her studies in Lieder and German Romantic poetry at the *Franz Schubert Institut* in Baden-bei-Wien, Austria. Currently, she serves as an artist affiliate at Emory University.

Violinist **Carol Xu** ('24C) will be graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics & Human Health and Music Performance. She is the current concertmaster of the Emory University Symphony Orchestra, and performs in chamber ensembles around the Atlanta area.

Clarinetist **Chunjin Park** ('24C) will be graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Architectural Studies. While at Emory, Chunjin has performed with the Emory University Symphony Orchestra, Emory Wind Ensemble, and chamber ensembles in the Atlanta area.

Featured Guests

Manuela Bornstein, born in France is a music enthusiast who survived the Holocaust. Manuela immigrated to the United States in 1960 and has lived in Atlanta since 1976. She is a regular speaker at museums and schools and participates in events to educate on and commemorate the Holocaust.

Lori Laitman is a widely celebrated American composer of vocal music who has written multiple operas, choral works, and over 300 art songs. Some notable compositions are *The Scarlet Letter*, *Vedem*, and *Ludlow*. Refer to program notes for more information.

Micah Ross ('24C) will be graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic. As a sophomore, Micah created the curriculum for a Holocaust Learning Fellowship at Emory Hillel which she has taught every semester for the past two years. She also conducted research with Special Envoy and Emory Professor Deborah Lipstadt on antisemitism and social media.

To Learn More

Scan this QR code to:

- read the story of how Karyn's late maternal grandfather escaped Europe in 1941
- access a list of resources for further Holocaust learning



Musical Score Acknowledgements

The Woodruff Library at Emory University assisted in discovering a substantial amount of works set for voice and piano that were suitable for this recital.

The following works come from *Yes, We Sang! Songs of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps* by Shoshana Kalisch with Barbara Meister (full citation in Bibliography). The texts and translations included below are credited to this book. The authors for the translation of the songs' texts is not specifically indicated in the book—the label “Unknown” marks those instances.

- i. Yisrolik
- ii. S'brent
- iii. In kriuvke
- iv. Tsvey taybelekh
- v. Tsen brider
- vi. Shtil, di nakht iz oysgeshternt
- vii. Ne csüggedj
- viii. Minutn fun bitokhn
- ix. Zog nit keyn mol
- x. Zol shoyn kumen di geule

The sheet music used in this recital for “Jew” from *Letter to Warsaw* by Thomas Pasatieri is also available at the Emory library. The full citation can be found in the bibliography.

Introduction

Welcome to “Echoes of Courage,” a recital that represents the culmination of my growth as a student, musician, and person over the past four years.

The idea for this recital was born two years ago as I researched repertoire in preparation for my Junior recital. As a lover of world languages and interested in expanding my repertoire beyond the Western canon, I toyed with the idea of featuring songs from around the globe. At the same time, I was learning with Emory’s Concert Choir a choral arrangement of “I Believe,” a poem that was inscribed on the wall of a cellar in which Jews hid during the Holocaust.¹

I believe in the sun, even when it’s not shining.

I believe in love, even when I don’t feel it.

I believe in G-d, even when He is silent.

I was moved by this message of undying faith and resilience while fighting for personal survival and survival of the Jewish nation. I realized that although the authors of this poem are unknown, knowing their words was the only way to keep their memory alive; and, the sentiments they held were critical testimonies through which to document, honor, and teach the stories of the Holocaust. I wondered, if this one poem has been arranged several times and is regularly performed, what other songs exist? What songs are not sung?

These questions led me to discover a cohort of songs I did not know existed—Holocaust music. By this phrase, I mean songs composed before and during the Holocaust that were sung by Jews. Many poems written during the Holocaust have also been set to music after the Holocaust by composers such as

¹ Howe, Everett. “I Believe in the Sun, Part V: The Source.” *The Humanist Seminarian* (blog), April 5, 2021. <https://humanistseminarian.com/2021/04/04/i-believe-in-the-sun-part-v-the-source/>.

the ones you will hear today—David Zehavi, and Thomas Pasatieri, and Lori Laitman—and fall under the rubric of Holocaust music.²

The variety of works presented in today's recital are representative of the geographic and linguistic diversity that existed in Central and Eastern European Jewry during the Holocaust. The texts speak to the wide range of experiences that Jews had throughout the Holocaust—many perished, some hid and were found, others survived concentration and death camps, and few hid and survived. What I aim to demonstrate in today's performance is the trend of sustaining resilience because of and despite the constant oppression and threat of destruction that Jews experienced during the Holocaust.

Music is a unique vehicle through which to engage with this history because music amplifies the meaning of text while also making this learning more “palatable,” as expressed by Laitman in an interview in January of this year.³ However, one must be careful to not allow music to romanticize this history—rather, the interaction between text and music ought to inspire learning, reflection, and empathy. I hope you leave this recital more knowledgeable about the human experience of the Holocaust, charged with a sense of our collective responsibility to think critically about the relationship of antisemitism in the past and present.

“Halichah Lekesariyah” is a poem that was written by Hannah Szenes (1921-1944) in 1942 and is best known by its opening phrase “Eli, Eli” since its musical arrangement by Jewish Israeli composer

² “Heartstrings. Music of the Holocaust.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
<https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/music-in-the-holocaust.asp>.

³ Lori, Laitman. Personal Interview. Zoom, January 16, 2024.

David Zehavi (1910-1977) in 1945.⁴⁵ Hanna Szenes was a Hungarian Jew who wrote poetry from a young age. She is remembered as a resistance fighter, a paratrooper who in a courageous attempt to organize resistance to save as many Hungarian Jews as possible, was captured, tortured, and executed in 1944.⁶⁷ Zehavi has set hundreds of poems to music. Zehavi was born and lived in Ottoman then British Mandate Palestine—he brings the perspective of a Jew who did not personally experience the Holocaust but who was connected by ethnic and religious ties to Jews and Jewish suffering throughout the diaspora.

Today, “Eli Eli” is one of the most widely recognized songs for Holocaust remembrance. The recital opens with this song to invite and orient the audience with a familiar tune for many to engage with the material that will follow. Sung a cappella, this artistic decision is meant to highlight the voice as an artifact of oral history and to spur reflection on how much of today’s music exists today because it was passed down from one musical witness to another.

“Eli, Eli – Halichah Lekesariyah”

Eli, shelo yigamer l’olam:
Hachol v’hayam, rishrush shel hamayim,
B’rak hashamayim, t’filat ha’adam.

- Hannah Szenes (Original in Hebrew)
- Transliteration: Malka Tischler

“My God, My God – A Walk to Caesaria”

My God, I pray that these things never end:
The sand and the sea, the rustle of the water,
The crash of the heavens, the prayer of man.

- Translation: Malka Tischler

⁴ Neiger, Motti, Oren Meyers, and Eyal Zandberg. “Tuned to the Nation’s Mood: Popular Music as a Mnemonic Cultural Object.” *Media, Culture & Society* 33, no. 7 (October 2011): 971–87. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711415741>.

⁵ “David Zehavi | Jewishmusic.” Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://jewish-music.huji.ac.il/en/content/david-zehavi>.

⁶ Jewish Women’s Archive. “Hannah Szenes (Senesh).” Accessed April 2, 2024. <http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/szenes-hannah>.

⁷ “Hannah Szenes: Zionist, Paratrooper and Poet | Yad Vashem.” Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://www.yadvashem.org/from-our-collections/hannah-szenes.html>.

Persecution in Daily Life

The first section of the recital thematizes the ways in which Jews' lives changed as antisemitic ideology inspired anti-Jewish propaganda and legalized discrimination. Although the songs in this section are about Jews in Poland, the strong sense of Jewish identity they communicate in the face of persecution speaks to the challenges that Jews faced across Europe.

The text for "Jew" was written by Pola Braun (1910-1943), a poet and cabaret artist who composed it in exile in the Warsaw ghetto.⁸ Braun's creativity persisted through participation in secret barracks concerts with fellow prisoners at the Madjanek extermination camp before she was executed. Thomas Pasatieri (b. 1945) is an American opera composer who set this poem to music as one of five pieces that make up the song cycle *Letter to Warsaw*.⁹ Pasatieri's "Jew" provides a unique musical and historical perspective, having been composed in the United States over 50 years after the end of the Holocaust. The text's humanization of Jews is a message that emerges from the past but remains salient in light of modern antisemitism in the U.S. In "Jew," the child asks their mother if being Jewish is a disgrace after being referred to pejoratively as "a little Jew." The repeated questions build in intensity, volume, and frustration. The mother's response, each adjective rhythmically prolonged, can be interpreted as her attempt to articulate the complexities of Jewish existence, as well as her feelings of defeat at needing to have this conversation with her young child.

"Yisrolik" is an account of life in the Vilna ghetto told through the perspective of a young boy named "Yisrolik." The text is by poet and playwright Lev Rozenthal (1916-1944), with music by pianist and composer Misha Veksler (1907-1943). It was originally performed by Rozenthal's sister Khayele

⁸ Mina, Miller. "Letter to Warsaw." Music of Remembrance. Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://musicofremembrance.org/show-details/letter-to-warsaw>.

⁹ Music of Remembrance. "Thomas Pasatieri." Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://musicofremembrance.org/artist-details/86/thomas-pasatieri>.

Rozenthal (1924-1979). This trio of musicians often collaborated before Kahyele was deported to Kaiserwald, Veksler to Ponar, and Rozenthal to Dautmergen.¹⁰¹¹

Veksler and Rozenthal were murdered, but Khayeles survived and was able to return to the stage and perform for the rest of her life.¹² A strophic, cabaret-style piece, “Yisrolik” is a song of moral resistance and survival, telling the story of thousands of boys like Yisrolik who, despite facing starvation and execution if found, were messengers who bravely traded and smuggled resources to keep their families alive.¹³ The first two verses and refrains refer to the kinds of materials Yisroliks seek; as the tempo slows for the last verse and refrain, Yisrolik recognizes his “tough” and “brokenhearted” reality yet affirms that one must prevail with a “whistle and a song.”

“S’brent” (It burns), text and music by Krakow native Mordecai Gebirtig (1877-1942) was a poet and songwriter who was known for his children’s songs, lullabies, and love songs.¹⁴ Gebirtig was murdered while being marched to the Krakow train station for deportation to the Belzec death camp. In 1938, Gebirtig wrote “S’brent” in response to the rise of pogroms and antisemitism in Poland, but the song did not become popular until during the Holocaust.¹⁵ Gebirtig imparts a dramatic warning of impending destruction, begging Jews to take immediate defensive action. The lower tessitura (range of

¹⁰ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!: Songs of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps*. 1st ed. New York, New York: Harper & Row, 1985.

¹¹ “Misha Veksler.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
<https://holocaustmusic.org/places/ghettos/vilna/vekslermisha/>.

¹² “Khayeles Rozental.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
<https://holocaustmusic.org/places/ghettos/vilna/rozentalkhayeles/>.

¹³ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

¹⁴ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

¹⁵ “YIVO | Gebirtig, Mordkhe.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Gebirtig_Mordkhe.

notes) and daunting stepwise minor-mode melody suggests a growing fire and metaphorically depicts the changes in daily life that Jews experienced.

“Jew”

Tell me, dear mama, what does the word ‘Jew’ mean?
Is it something shameful, some sort of disgrace?
Tell me, do Jews really wear long beards
Tell me, do they sway when they pray?
Tell me, dear mama, is it a disgrace,
that I am such a little Jew?

A Jew, dear child, is suffering,
A Jew, dear child, is bad fate,
A Jew, dear child, is worry.

A Jew must hold back every blow.
A Jew dear child, is a hopeful heart,
A Jew is belief in the future, in better days to come,
A Jew never loses his courage,
He laughs though his heart sometimes trembles.

Tell me, dear mama, why everyone sneers at him,
Why everyone laughs and sneers?
Tell me, are Jews good for nothing?
Tell me have they never produced anything, anything?
Tell me, dear mama, is it a disgrace,
That I am such a little Jew?

A Jew is...wait,
I know what to tell you,
Jew is a mighty word, believe me,
A Jew is very likely the only person,
Who knows truly bitter tears.

- Pola Braun (Original in Polish)
- Translation: Barbara Milewski

“Yisrolik”

Nu koyft zhe papirosn,
Nu koyft zhe sakharin.
Gevorn iz haynt skhoyre bilik vert.
A lebn far a groshn,
A prute-a fardinst—
Fun geto-hendler hot ir dokh gehert.

Refrain

Kh’heys Yisrolik—
Ikh bin dos kind fun geto.
Kh’heys Yisrolik—
A hefkerdiker yung.
Khotsh farblibn gole-neto,
Derlang ikh alts nokh
A svistshe un a zung!

A mantl on a krag,
Takhtoynim fun a zak;
Kaloshn hob ikh—s’feln nor di shikh.
Un ver es vet nor vagn,
Tsu lakhn; oy, a sakh—
Dem vel ikh nokh vayzn ver bin ikh!

(Refrain)

Nit meynt mikh hot geborn
Di hefkerdike gas.
Bay tate-mame oykh geven a kind.
Kh’hob beydn ongeborn,
Nit meynt es iz a shpas—
Kh’in geblibn vi in feld der vint.

Refrain

Kh’heys Yisrolik—
Nor ven keyner zet nit
Vish ikh shtil zikh.
Fun oyg arop a trer.
Nor fun mayn troyer—
Beser az men redt nit,
Tsu vos dermonen
Un makhn s’harts zikh shver.

- Lev Rozenthal (Yiddish)

“Yisrolik”

So, come and buy my cigarettes,
Sweet’ner and other good things.
Try my bargains, I won’t be underbid.
A life for a penny,
My profit’s even less.
You must know me—the ghetto dealer kid

Refrain

I’m called Yisrolik—
Your kid from the ghetto.
I’m called Yisrolik—
Hefty, tough, and strong.
I’m always broke and yet, oh,
I can always muster
A whistle and a song!

A coat without a collar,
Pants made from a sack;
I have galoshes but no shoes inside.
No one better holler,
No one give me flak; Don’t laugh at me—
you see, I have my pride!

(Refrain)

But that’s not how I started
Out in this tough place.
Mother, father made me a loving home.
But now I’m brokenhearted,
It’s no joke to face—
I’m left like the wind in the field, alone.

Refrain

I’m called Yisrolik—
And when no one sees me,
Quietly I wipe away a tear
Of grief I’ve had my part.
Let’s not talk about it—
Why remember
And grieve my heavy heart?

- Unknown

“S’brent”

S’brent briderlekh, s’brent!
Oy, undzer orem stetl nebekh brent!
Beyze vintn mit yirgozn
Raysn, brekhn un tseblozn,
Shtarker nokh di vilde flamen—
Alts arum shoy n brent.

Refrain

Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh
Mit farleygte hent
Un ir shteyt un kukt azoy zikh
Undzer shtetl brent!

S’brent, briderlekh, s’rent!
Oy, undzer orem shtetl nebekh brent
S’hobn shoy n di fayertsungen
Dos gantse shtetl ayngeshlungen—
Un di beyze vintn huzhen,
Undzer shtetl brent!

(Refrain)

S’brent, briderlekh, s’brent!
Oy, es ken kholile kumen der moment:
Undzer shtot mit undz tsuzamen
Zol oyf ash avek in flamen,
Blaybn zol—vi nokh a shlakht,
Nor puste, shvartse vent!

(Refrain)

S’brent, briderlekh, s’brent!
Di hilf iz nor in aykh aleyn gevendt.
Oyb dos shtetl iz aykh taller,
Nemt di keylim, lesht dos fayer,
Lesht mit ayer eygn blut,
Bavayzt az ir dos kent.

Refrain

Shteyt nit, brider, ot azoy zikh
Mit farleygte hent
Shteyt nit brider, lesht does fayer
Undzer shtetl brent!

- Mordecai Gebirtig (Yiddish)

“It burns”

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
Our poor little shtetl is on fire!
Furiously angry winds storm,
Madly around the whipped flames swarm,
Ever wilder grows the fierce blaze—
Everything’s on fire

Refrain

And you stand around and stare
While the flames grow higher.
And you stand around and stare
While our shtetl burns.

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
Our poor little shtetl is on fire.
Tongues of fire have swallowed down
Houses, streets, our whole little town,
And the angry winds are howling—
Our shtetl is on fire.

(Refrain)

It burns, broths dear, it burns!
Our little shtetl soon will be on fire.
This our village in which we dwell
Will be a fiery hell,
Blackened as after a battle,
Walls like a burning pyre!

(Refrain)

It burns, brothers dear, it burns!
If we don’t help ourselves, our fate is dire.
If you love your poor little town,
Please don’t let them burn it all down.
Put out the flames with your own blood—
Only you can squelch the fire.

Refrain

Brothers, don’t just stand and stare
While the flames grow higher.
Brothers, don’t just stand and stare
While our shtetl burns.

- Unknown

Legacies of Fortitude

The next set tells the stories of those who faced incredible danger with dignity. Each song commemorates individual Jews who confronted torture and death with a resolute commitment to the Jews' identity and survival. These individuals selflessly sacrificed their freedom.

"In kriuvke" ("In a hideout") is a song about hiding in the woods for survival, with text by Elia Magid (1910-?) and David Gertsman (1901/1905-?).¹⁶ Magid jumped off a moving train that was heading to the Treblinka death camp and Gertsman escaped a prisoner-of-war camp—they joined a group of individuals in the woods who together built an underground shelter.¹⁷ Both Magid and Gertsman survived but their exact whereabouts after the Holocaust are unknown.¹⁸ Their song transmits the anxiety and terror that one experienced when in hiding, communicated through the tension of the vocal and piano lines moving in contrapuntal motion. Nevertheless, the third verse opens with "we are a people hopeful for tomorrow"—an adamant proclamation expressed as a collective "we" speaks to this commitment to the survival of the Jewish people.

"Tsvey taybelek" ("Two doves") is an old Yiddish folksong that was popularized in the Vilna ghetto by the "nightingale" Liuba Levitska (1917-1943). She studied voice and drama at the Vienna Conservatory and graduated with honors. At 21 years old, she played Violetta in *La Traviata* at Vilna's Yiddish Opera Theater. When Levitska was discovered smuggling a small bag of food, she was imprisoned and executed in the Ponary Forest. It is believed that Levitska sang "Tsvey taybelek" as she was shot to death.^{19,20} The thin-textured piano accompaniment not only highlights the lullaby-esque vocal

¹⁶ Bret, Werb. "Yiddish Songs of the Shoah: A Source Study Based on the Collections of Shmerke Kaczerginski." Peer reviewed | Thesis/dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 2014.

¹⁷ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

¹⁸ Bret, Werb. "Yiddish Songs of the Shoah"

¹⁹ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

²⁰ "Lyube Levitski." Accessed April 2, 2024.
<https://holocaustmusic.org/places/ghettos/vilna/levitskilyube/>.

line but when considered together could be the image expressed by the text of two doves torn apart by evil forces. Levitska faced death singing words of love.

“Tsen brider” (“Ten brothers”) by Martin Rosenberg (1890-1943), who was known professionally before the war as Rosebery d’Arguto, was a Polish-Jewish musician who had a career as a conductor.²¹ At the concentration camp Sachsenhausen, Rosenberg adapted a previous folk version of the song into his own “Tsen brider” in 1942.²² The song begins and ends with heart-wrenching cries, as the push-and-pull vocalisms accentuate the harrowing experience of having one’s loved ones ripped away. Courageously, the last brother faces his fate at the gas chambers but begs to sing one last song—and, the final message, representing Jews, is “we hurt no one, and did no wrong.”

Hirsh Glick (1922-1944) was a poet who attempted to participate in political activism during the Holocaust. Glick was forced from one concentration camp to another in the years leading to his death; the songs he wrote throughout were memorialized by his friends. “Shtil, di nakht iz oysgeshternt” or “The quiet night is full of stars” is another piece on the theme of Jewish resistance in the face of grave danger. This song draws on the stories of several women who became heroines of warfare for the sacrifices they made to save fellow Jews—a few include Sonia Madeisker, Zofia Yamaika, Rosa Robota.²³ The piano’s majestic accompaniment to an occasional dissonance with the vocal line represents the “brave spirit” with which each of these women led their lives during the Holocaust.

²¹ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

²² Jacobson, J. “‘Tsen Brider’: A Jewish Requiem.” *The Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (September 1, 2000): 452–74. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mq/84.3.452>.

²³ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

“In kriuvke”

Ikh zits mir in kriuvke un ikh trakht zikh,
Ikh bin shoyrn mid az dos oyg farmakht zikh.
Ikh bin geblibn aleyn, ikh bagis zikh mit geveyn,
Tsi veln mir fun danen aroysgeyn?
In a forest hideout, dark and deep,

Refrain

Shpilt, shpilt, strunes fun payn—
Shpilt-zhe mir a yidishn nign.
Shpilt, shpilt, strunes fun payn—
Tsi veln mir derlebn dem fridn?

Ikh hob gelebt in hofnun unin strebn.
Ikh bin nokh yung—es velt zikh mir nokh len.
Geven zenen mir ruik in der heym;
Itst bin ikh a bandit in vald aleyn.

(Refrain)

Mir zaynen a folk fun moykhes,
Fun tsores hobn mir shoyrn nit keyn koykhes.
A yedn folk iz gut, es gist nor yidish blut—

Oy, helf undz Got in itstiker minut!

(Refrain)

- Elia Magid & David Gertsman
(Yiddish)

“Tsvey taybelekhn”

Tsvey taybelekhn zenen ibern vaser gefloygn,
In di piskeleh hobn zey zikh gekisht.
Fasholtn zol vern yener mentsh oyf der velt,
Vos er hot zikh in undzer libe—oy,
arayngemisht.

Un az du vest kumen in a vaytn land, lubelyu,
In mayne verter zolstu zikh badenken.
Un az du vest kumen iber a tifyn vaser, lubelyu,
Far groys tsores zolstu zikh nit dertrenken.
And when you have come to a far-off land,
lubelyu,

“In a hideout”

My weary eyes close but I cannot sleep.
I sit and wait and brood; I cry bitterly.

Will we ever escape, again be free?

Refrain

Play, play strings of pain—
Play a Yiddish melody for me.
Play, play, strings of pain—
Will a world of peace ever be?

I lived a hopeful life with much to give.
I am still young—I want so much to live.

Quietly we lived in our peaceful home;
Now I’m an outcast in the woods, alone.

(Refrain)

We are a people hopeful for tomorrow,
But now too weary to bear so much sorrow.
No other people suffers, only Jews they kill—
Oh, help us God, now, let it be thy will!

(Refrain)

- Unknown

“Two doves”

Two doves flew over the wide water,
Their loving beaks kissing high above.
A curse on that person—so evil, so cruel—
Who tore from me my own true love.

Be sure to remember my words of love.
And when you have come to deep waters,
lubelyu,
Do not drown for sorrow, my little dove.

Un az du vest kumen in a fremdn land, lubelyu,
Mayne verter zolstu bakenen.
Un az du vest kumen iber a groysn fayer,
lubelyu,
Far groys tsores zolstu zikh nit farbrenen.

Tsvey taybelekhn zenen ibern vaser gefloygn,
Zeyere fligelekhn hobn zey tsushpreyt.
Farsholtn zol vern yener mentsh oyf der velt,
Vos er hot undzer libe, azoy gikh tsusheydt

- Old yiddish love song

“Tsen brider”

Tsen brider zenen mir geven;
Hobn mir gehandelt mit vayn.
Eyner iz geshtorbn—
Zenen mir geblibn nayn.
Oy, oy, oy, oy.

Refrain
Yidl mitn fidl,
Moyshe mitn bas,
Shpil-zhe mir a Lidl,
Men firt undz in dem gas.

Eyn bruder nor bin ikh geblibn,
Mit vem zol ikh veynen?
Di andere hot men derharget—
Tsi gedenkt ir zeyer neymen.
Oy, oy, oy, oy.

Refrain
Yidl mitn fidl,
Moyshe mitn bas,
Hert mayn letst lidl
Men firt mikh oykh tsum gas.

Tsen brider zenen mir geven—
Mir hobn keynem nit vey geton.

- Rosebery D'Arguto (Yiddish)

And when you have come to a distant land,
lubelyu
Be sure to remember my words of love.
And should you come across a great fire,
lubelyu,
Do not burn for sorrow, my little dove.

Two doves flew over the wide water,
Spreading their wings high above.
A curse on that person—so evil, so cruel—
Who so soon destroyed our own true love.

- Unknown

“Ten brothers”

Ten happy brothers were we together,
We lived by dealing in wine.
One of us died early—
And and so we remained nine.
Oy, oy, oy, oy.

Refrain
Yidl with the fiddle,
Moyshe with the bass,
Play for us a little,
The gas chamber we face.

One brother only I remain.
With whom shall I sigh?
All the others coldly killed—
Remember them and cry.
Oy, oy, oy, oy.

Refrain
Yidl with the fiddle,
Moyshe with the bass,
Let me sing my last song,
The gas chamber I face.

Ten brothers were we together—
We hurt no one and did no wrong.

- Unknown

“Shtil, di nakht iz oysgeshternt”

Shtil, di nakht iz oysgeshternt,
Un der frost hot shtark gerent.
Tsi gedenkstu vi ikh hob dikh gelernt
Haltn a shpayer in di hent.

A moyd, a peltsl un a beret,
Un halt in hant fest a nagan.
A moyd mit a sametenem ponim
Hit op dem soynes caravan.

Getsilt, geshosn un getrofn
Hot ir kleyninker pistoyl.

An oyto, a fulinkn mit vofn
Farhaltn hot zi mit eyn koyl.

Far tog, fun vald aroysgekrokh,
Mit shney-girlandn oyf di hor.
Gemutikt fun kleyninkn nitsokhn
Far undzer nayem, frayen dor.

- Hirsh Glick (Yiddish)

“The quiet night is full of stars”

Quiet night so full of stars,
Bitter frost bites at your hand.
Do you remember when I showed you how
To hold a gun like a man

A girl in sheepskin and felt beret,
In her hand she held a gun so tight.
A girl with velvet face fresh as the day
Kept back the enemy's trucks all night

She aimed at the target, shot and hit!
Her little gun seemed never to tire.

An enemy truck loaded with weapons
Was held by her unceasing fire.

At dawn she crawled from the woods,
Garlands of snow on her hair.
Her brave spirit gives all courage
To fight for our freedom everywhere.

- Unknown

Defiant Marches

The title of the next thematic section is based on the term “death marches” which describes long distance marches in harsh conditions that were forced on concentration camp prisoners as a tactic of torture or to tire them to death.²⁴ Although the text of these songs do not refer to the aforementioned death marches, the rhythmic, marching core thus temporally reclaim this technique of physical oppression as a source of resilience. The songs in this set, however, are temporally reclaimed as “defiant” because these songs were written and sung with the purpose to defy the imminent danger with resistant attitudes.

“Ne csüggedj” or “Don’t despair” is a Hungarian march that was recalled by the author of the book from which many of the song’s in this recital came from, *Yes, We Sang! Songs of the Ghettos and Concentration Camps*. Shoshana Kalisch (n.d.) is a Hungarian Jew who was exiled to the Galanta ghetto before being deported to Peterswaldau labor and concentration camp.²⁵ The geographic and linguistic diversity of Hungarian Jews and those in surrounding regions is an important memory to include when considering the effects of the Holocaust; although Hungary was not invaded until one year before the end of World War II, Hungarian Jews met the same fate as the rest of European Jewry. The unknown author of this song was Kalisch’s sister’s school teacher who wanted to distract the young students from harsh circumstances and instill hope in the young children. “A song on our lips and faith in our hearts, / In storms the believers stay strong”—with a catchy tune and uplifting beat, this song cannot achieve any goal but pride and optimism for the Jewish nation.

“Minutn fun bitokhn” (“Moments of confidence”) travels back to Krakow, Poland, where Gebirtig wrote this song, which makes references to religious (Hasidic) Jewish melodies to increase the morale of Jews in the ghetto. In the second verse, Gebirtig references Haman, a villain in the story of Purim, a Jewish holiday, who tried to plan the death of all Jews in the Persian empire but Mordekhai, the

²⁴ “Death Marches.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/death-marches>.

²⁵ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

Jew in this story, traps Haman in a dire fate.²⁶ Similarly, in the fourth verse Gebirtig makes another biblical reference, this time to the story of Cain and Abel, warning the Jews’ oppressors that their hands will never be cleansed of Jewish blood. Thus, “Minutn fun bitokhn,” a strophic, fast, and intense melody that evokes the feelings of strength Gebirtig intended, is not only a march for moral resistance, but a call to take action and defend the survival of Jews.

Perhaps one of the most well known songs in this recital after “Eli, Eli” is “Zog nit keyn mol” which translates to “Never say” but is best recognized as the “Hymn of the Partisans” or as the “Song of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.”²⁷ Glick wrote this song upon learning of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943—its marching pulse and percussive dynamics is a manifestation of the spiritual resistance that Glick felt the need to provide for Jews in the region. The song had a deep impact in the Vilna ghetto and its impact spread to concentration camps.²⁸ “Zog nit keyn mol,” courage intrinsic to the music and text, was most defiantly sung while performing forced-labor work, and, in the presence of guards.

“Ne csüggedj”

Ne csüggedj, ne sirjál, bús Izrael.
Elmulnak a nehéz órák.
Büskén viseld el ezt as időt
Nyilnak még kertedben rózsák.

Támaszod legyen az ifjú sereg
Friss dallal munkára készen.
Ajkunkon dal van szivünkben
Ki hisz a viharban sem vész el.

“Do not despair”

Don’t despair, don’t weep, oh, sad Israel.
Soon will end these sorrowful hours.
Bear these dreadful times with pride;
Your garden yet will bloom with flowers.

Your strength will come from legions of young.
Ready to work with fresh song.
A song on our lips and faith in our hearts,
In storms the believers stay strong.

²⁶ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

²⁷ “Hirsh Glick.” Accessed April 2, 2024.

<https://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/ghettos/vilna/glikhirsh/>.

²⁸ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

Zászlónkon jelszavunk a szeretet
Hirdetjük merre csak járunk.
Csak fel a fejjel előre nézz
Még győzni fog ez a nép!

- Unknown (Hungarian)

“Minutn fun bitokhn”

Yidn, zol zayn freylekh!
Shoyn nit lang, ikh hof:
S’ekht bald di milkhome,
Es kumt bald zeyer sof.
Freylekh, nor nit zorgn,
Un nit arumgeyn trib.
Hot geduld, bitokhn—
Un nemt alts on far lib.

Nor geduld, bitokhn,
Nit lozt aroys fun hant.
Undzer alt kley-zayin,
Vos halt undz gor banand.
Hulyet, tants talyonim.
Shoyn nit lang, ikh hof—
Geven amol a Homen,
Es vart oyf im zayn sof.

Hulyet, tants talyonim.
Laydn ken a yid.
S’vet di shvertse arbet,
Undz keynmol makhn mid.
Kern? Zol zayn kern!
Kol-zman ir vet zeyn
Iz umzist dos kern,
S’vet do nit vern reyn.

Vashn? Zol zayn vashn!
Kayins royter flek,
Hevls blut fun hartsn—
Dos vasht zikh nit avek.
Traybt undz fun di dires,
Shnaydt undz op di berd.
Yidn, zol zayn freylekh!
Mir hobn zey in d’rer!

- Mordecai Gebirtig (Yiddish)

Love is the watchword on our flag,
We herald it wherever we may be.
Lift up your hearts and look straight ahead:
This people yet will be free!

- Unknown

“Moments of confidence”

Jews, be merry, be strong!
Don’t give up, but hope:
The war will soon be over
And they will soon be gone.
Be merry, and no grieving,
Don’t give in to despair.
There’s comfort in believing—
Have patience to forbear.

Have patience, have confidence,
Hold them close at hand.
Our spirit is our weapon
To keep us a tight-knit band.
Dance, ye wicked henchmen.
Before long, you’ll see—
Like Haman long before you,
Dire your end will be.

Dance, ye wicked henchman.
We Jews have known travail.
Despite the cruelest labor,
Our strength will yet prevail.
Must we sweep? Then we’ll sweep!
As long as need be.
But no amount of sweeping
Will clean your infamy

Blood that flowed from Abel
Makes a dark-red stain—
No amount of scrubbing
Can cleanse the hands of Cain.
You can drive us from our houses,
Cut our beards, our joys dispel.
Jews, be gay, be merry!
Henchman, go to hell!

- Unknown

“Zog nit keyn mol”

Zog nit keyn mol az du geyst dem letstn veg,
Khotsh himlen blayene farshteln bloye teg.
Kumen vet nokh undzer oysgebenkte shot—
S’vet a poyk ton undzer trot: Mir zaynen do!

Fun grinem palmenland biz vaytn land fun
shney,
Mir kumen on mit undzer payn, mit undzer vey;

Un vu gefaln iz a shprits fun undzer blut,
Shprotsn vet dort undzer gvure, undzer mut.

S’vet di morgnzun bagildn undz dem haynt

Un der nekhtn vet farshvindn mitn faynt.

Nor oyb farzamen vet di zun un dem kayor—
Vi a parol zol geyn dos lid fun dor tsu dor.

Dos lid geshribn iz mit blut un nit mit blay,

S’iz nit keyn lidl fun a foygl oyf der fray.
Dos hot a folk tsvishn falndike vent—
Dos lid gezungen mit naganes in di hent!

- Glick (Yiddish)

“Never say”

Never say you’ve come to the end of the way,
Though leaden skies blot out the light of the day.
The hour we all long for will surely appear—
Our steps will thunder with the words: We are
here

From lands of palm trees to far-off lands of
snow,
We come with anguish, we come with grief,
with pain and woe;
And where our blood flowed right before our
eyes,
There our power’ll bloom, our courage will
arise.

The glow of morning sun will gild a bright
today,
Night’s darkness vanish, like the enemy cast
away
But if we perish before this dawn’s begun—

This song’s a message passed to daughter and to
son.

In blood this song was written, and not with pen
or quill,
Not from a songbird freely flying as he will.
Sung by a people crushed by falling walls—
Sung with guns in hand, by those whom
freedom calls!

- Unknown

Captured Innocence

The second-to-last section represents more works of poems written during the Holocaust and set to music afterwards. The text of these pieces come from poems written in the Theresienstadt concentration camp by young boys—thus, the title “captured innocence” is meant to represent the 1.5 million Jewish children that were captured and murdered in the Holocaust²⁹ while simultaneously alluding to the child’s outlook that is captured in the poems written by the young boys of Theresienstadt.

The songs in this two-part section were composed by Lori Laitman (b. 1955), an American composer highly regarded for writing beautiful and striking music.³⁰ A considerable portion of her catalog has been dedicated to Holocaust-theme music, including *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (1996) and *Vedem Songs* (2010). Laitman’s compositional style is especially unique and intriguing because she places an emphasis on letting the text and its meaning guide the music that she creates. As an American composer who wrote these songs with their English translation and published them in the United States, Laitman makes the stories of these boys from Theresienstadt accessible to any person who might otherwise never listen to this part of history.

I Never Saw Another Butterfly is a song-cycle of six vocal works—originally composed for solo voice and saxophone and later adapted for clarinet and bassoon—that feature selected texts from a book of the same title. The selections sung today—the first, fourth, and sixth pieces—portray the dramatic arc from hope to despair that Laitman intended to illustrate in this song cycle.

“The Butterfly,” with text by Pavel Friedmann (1921-1944)³¹, opens with a melody in the clarinet that reminisces the flutters of a butterfly’s wings, and the words explore the symbolism of a free butterfly

²⁹ “Children during the Holocaust.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/children-during-the-holocaust>.

³⁰ Lori, Laitman. “About Lori.” Lori Laitman, Composer, March 2024.
<http://artsongs.com/biography>.

³¹ Laitman, Lori. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly — for Soprano and Bb Clarinet*. Enchanted Knickers Music, 1996 and 2018.

that does not enter the ghetto. This idea can be interpreted as a message that no living being would choose to live in a place like the ghetto and that such a place like this has the capacity to take the life out of any living being. Despite this lament, the text communicates an enduring hope, perhaps to soon return to a life where butterflies are also found.

“The Garden,” with text by Franta Bass (1930-1944)³², marks the turning point in which the hope of Laitman’s arc dies and turns to despair. In this song, the steady eighth-notes in the clarinet depict the boy walking and exploring the garden. As the vocal and instrumental lines swell with each other, the promise of a rose and boy blooming at the same time disappears as the vocal line descends: “the little boy will be no more.”

“The Old House,” with text also by Bass, conveys total despair. While the previous songs in this cycle created images based on people, the text now focuses on an empty house in which no humans are found. The clarinet reflects this emptiness, defeatedly repeating a monotonous pedal tone as if it were a heartbeat, not once pushing beyond this thin texture, until the end of the piece when the clarinet leaves the voice alone, whispering “silence.”

The Butterfly

The last, the very last
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.
Perhaps if the sun’s tears would sing
 against a white stone...
Such, such a yellow
Is carried lightly ‘way up high.
It went away I’m sure because it wished to
 kiss the world good-bye.
For seven weeks I’ve lived in here,

Penned up inside this ghetto.
But I have found what I love here.
The dandelions call to me
And the white chestnut branches in the court.
Only I never saw another butterfly.

That butterfly was the last one.
Butterflies don’t live in here,
in the ghetto.

- Pavel Friedmann

³² Laitman, Lori. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*.

The Garden

A little garden
Fragrant and full of roses.
The path is narrow
And a little boy walks along it.

A little boy, a sweet boy,
Like that growing blossom.
When the blossom comes to bloom,
The little boy will be no more.

- Franta Bass

The Old House

Deserted here, the old house
stands in silence, asleep.
The old house used to be so nice,
before, standing there,
it was so nice.
Now it is deserted,
rotting in silence –
a waste of hours.

- Bass

Vedem Songs is also a song cycle of six vocal works which were extracted from the *Vedem* oratorio to create this independent song cycle. The text of these songs tells stories of the boys who wrote and “published” *Vedem* (Czech for “In The Lead”), a clandestine magazine, as prisoners at Theresienstadt.³³³⁴ This cycle exhibits the incredible literary depth and wisdom of these boys, filled with nostalgia and a commitment to honoring one’s own past life.

The text of “Memories of Prague” was written by Petr Ginz (1928-1944)³⁵, the editor of the magazine *Vedem*, who is remembered as a child prodigy for his poems, drawings, and paintings. By the age of 14, Ginz had written eight science fiction novels. At that age, he was deported to Theresienstadt and two years later died in Auschwitz.³⁶ This song describes the infuriating tragedy of prisoners feeling and being caged like animals, grief for the lost prospects of a free life, and concurrently, a love song for Prague. The imagery in this song is clearly painted by the interactions between the vocal melody with violin and piano accompaniment: the low, spoken-like rhythm expresses darkness and pain while the accompanying instrumentation swells as the Vltava river.

“Five” is the second selection from the song cycle, written by Hanuš Hachenburg (1929-1943), another poet contributor to *Vedem* who died at Auschwitz.³⁷ A seemingly more dynamic and up-beat piece, the song in fact depicts attempts at freedom but instead, tragic loss and loneliness. Many questions can be asked to try and interpret the meaning of this text full of symbolism. While it is certainly possible

³³ Music of Remembrance. “Vedem.” Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://musicofremembrance.org/show-details/work-vedem>.

³⁴ “Vedem Underground: The Secret Magazine of Terezin, Atlanta, GA.” Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://www.thebreman.org/Exhibitions/Now-on-View/Vedem-Underground/>.

³⁵ Laitman, Lori. *Vedem Songs — Mezzo Soprano with Violin and Piano (Score and Violin part included)*. Enchanted Knickers Music, BMI, 2010 and 2018.

³⁶ “Vedem” by Petr Ginz. Yad Vashem - Holocaust Education Video Toolbox. Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPx21mTXQ8>.

³⁷ “Hanus Hachenburg | Database of Victims | Holocaust.” Accessed April 2, 2024. <https://www.holocaust.cz/en/database-of-victims/victim/91703-hanus-hachenburg/>.

that Hachenburg refers to literal books, the sentiments of five books being sewn up in a sack can be an analogy to being prisoner; in pleading, “calling for freedom,” the narrator proclaims that they—the “novels,” Hachenburg and his friends, or five other individuals—“hadn’t been finished,” that they are young boys who are meant to be loved and have more to live, that their life’s stories are supposed to still be written. Keeping with this metaphor of books representing people, the final two stanzas could be alluding to the way in which Theresienstadt was used to deceive outsiders from learning of European Jews’ fate.³⁸ The books, or boys, might have tried to “declare to the world” of the “state” trading bodies, learning of the concentration camps’ truth, but the song ends with an agitated duet between the piano and violin as the books retreat into silence—alone and forgotten by the world.

The poetic texts in these songs commemorate the specific kind of resistance that these boys were committed to, despite such tragic and harsh conditions: they prolonged the threats to their physical existence as much as possible by exercising free will of thought and creativity—internal survival.

“Memories of Prague”

How long since I last saw
The sun sink low behind Petrín Hill?
With tearful eyes I gazed at you, Prague,
Enveloped in your evening shadows.
How long since I last heard the pleasant rush of water
Over the weir in the Vltava river?
I have long since forgotten the bustling life on Wenceslas Square. Those unknown
corners in the Old Town,
Those shady nooks and sleepy canals,
How are they? They cannot be grieving for me
As I do for them. Almost a year has passed.
For almost a year I have huddled in this awful hole.
A few poor streets replace your priceless beauty.

³⁸ “Theresienstadt.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/theresienstadt>.

Like a beast I am, imprisoned in a tiny cage.
Prague, you fairy tale in stone, how well I remember!

- nz (Petr Ginz)
- Translation: Paul Wilson

“Five”

This morning at seven, so bright and so early
Five novels lay there, sewn up in a sack
Sewn up in a sack, like all of our lives,
They lay there, so silent, so silent all five.

Five books that flung back the curtain of silence,
Calling for freedom, and not for the world,
They're somebody's novels, someone who loves them...

They called out, they cried, they shed tears, and they pleaded
That they hadn't been finished the pitiful five.

They declared to the world that the state trades in bodies
Then slowly they vanished and went out of sight.

They kept their eyes open, they looked for the world
But nothing they found. They were silent, all five.

- Academy (Hanuš Hachenburg)
- Translation: Paul Wilson

Song of Survival

The last section of the recital consists of one song, a song that came after the Holocaust to help survivors recognize the horrors of the Holocaust and allow sufficient time and space for grief. Yet, it emphasizes the importance of not letting the past inhibit the prospects of a brighter future.

The melody of “Zol shoy n kumen di geule” (Let salvation come) is credited to Abraham Isaac Kook as one of his favorite tunes.³⁹ Commonly referred to as “Rav Kook,” he is remembered as a significant figure for the world Jewish community; Rav Kook was the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi of British Mandate Palestine before World War II.⁴⁰

The text to this song was written by Shmerke Kaczerginski (1908-1954), a poet and partisan fighter born in Vilna, Poland. In the Vilna ghetto, he was a leader of the youth club; one of if not the most well-known song of his is “Shtiler, shtiler” (Quiet, quiet). As part of the Paper Brigade, Kaczerginski began to collect significant Jewish books and artifacts when he was a forced laborer, and the salvaged items have been preserved since then.⁴¹ After the Holocaust, various social and political pressures moved Kaczerginski and eventually his family to various locations in Europe and South America. Across these locations, Kaczerginski was devoted to making the events of the Holocaust known all over the world. He died young in a plane crash; nevertheless, his life story and legacy in Jewish culture lives on.⁴² One of his publications *Lider fun di getos un largen* (Songs of the ghettos and concentration camps) is considered

³⁹ Shoshana, Kalisch, and Meister Barbara. *Yes, We Sang!*

⁴⁰ “YIVO | Kook, Avraham Yitshak.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Kook_Avraham_Yitshak.

⁴¹ “YIVO | Kaczerginski, Shmerke.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Kaczerginski_Shmerke.

⁴² “YIVO | Kaczerginski, Shmerke.”

one of the most significant references for Jewish folk song and music from the Holocaust.⁴³ It is works like his that allows for a recital such as this one to be possible.

I hope the stories and memories conveyed today through Holocaust music leave you with a more profound understanding of the diversity of experience that Jews faced in the Holocaust. These songs commemorate the stories of some Jews in their courageous fight against genocidal forces and help us humanize the Jews' suffering and resilience. I hope you leave this recital humming a tune, carrying with you the memory of at least one individual highlighted today.

“Zol shoyn kumen di geule”

Ongezolyet ofn hartsn, makht men a
lekhayim.
Oyb der umet lozt nit ruen, zingen mir a lid.

Iz nito keyn bisl bronfn, lomir trinken
mayim.
Mayim khayim iz dokh khayim—vos darf
nokh der yid?

Refrain

Zol shoyn kumen di geule
Zol shoyn kumen di geule
Zol shoyn kumen di geule
Meshiekh kumt shoy bald!

S’iz a dor fun kule-khayev, zayt nit keyn
naronim—
Un fun zindikn—Meshiekh gikher kumen
vet!
Akh, du tatele in himl, s’bretn bney
rakhmonim:
Ze, Meshiekh zol nit kumen a bisele tsu
shpet!

(Refrain)

“Let salvation come”

Though our hearts are ever aching, to life
our cups we raise.
Though our grief will ever haunt us, it’s life
our song will praise.
If there’s not a drop of brandy, let water be
our brew.
Water, after all, is life—what else needs a
Jew?

Refrain

But salvation soon will come;
Yes, salvation soon will come
Salvation soon will come
Messiah soon will come

We who live have not been sinless—fools
deny their blame.
You’ll see—despite all our sinning,
Messiah’ll come just the same!
Oh, hear, good Father up in heaven, your
humble people’s prayer:
That when Messiah shall arrive, some Jews
will still be here!

(Refrain)

⁴³ “YIVO | Holocaust: Music and the Holocaust.” Accessed April 2, 2024.
<https://yivoencyclopedia.org/printarticle.aspx?id=2199>.

S'tantsn beymer in di velder, shtern oyfn
himl.
Reb Yisroel, der mekhutn, dreyt zikh in der
mit.
S'vet zikh oyfvekn Meshiekh fun zayn tifn
driml.
Ven er vet derhern undzer tfiledike lid.

(Refrain)

- Shmerke Kaczerginski (Yiddish)

Trees are dancing in the forest, stars bright
in the sky.
'Midst them the honored Reb Israel, twirling
dances by.
Messiah will waken from his slumber, now
he can't be long.
He will hurry to us when he hears our
prayerful song

(Refrain)

- Unknown

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