

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Special Collections

1-24-2000

Works of Composers Imprisoned During the Holocaust to be Performed at UMaine Concert

Joe Carr

University of Maine

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/social_justice



Part of the [European History Commons](#), [Holocaust and Genocide Studies Commons](#), and the [Race and Ethnicity Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Carr, Joe, "Works of Composers Imprisoned During the Holocaust to be Performed at UMaine Concert" (2000). *Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion*. 279.

https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/social_justice/279

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Social Justice: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

The Wayback Machine - <http://web.archive.org/web/20000419153227/http://kramer.ume.maine.edu:80/~paffa...>

Works of Composers Imprisoned During the Holocaust to be Performed at UMaine Concert

Jan. 24, 2000

Media Contact: [Joe Carr](#) at (207) 581-3571

ORONO -- During the Holocaust, a number of highly esteemed Eastern European musicians were imprisoned at Terezin Concentration Camp. There, under horrific conditions, they composed remarkable works of art that continue to speak to and about the immortality of the human spirit.

The works of three of those artists will be performed in a concert Sunday, Feb. 6 at 2 p.m., Minsky Recital Hall at the University of Maine, by pianist Phillip Silver and members of the UMaine School of Performing Arts faculty.

The pieces also will be featured on Maine Public Radio's "Live at 11" with Dave Bunker on Tuesday, Feb. 1.

For Silver, who lost members of his family in the Holocaust, bringing "Music in Terezin" to the stage is his way of ensuring that the people and the past are not forgotten. As an artist, Silver is honoring the memories and the music of the artists, all of whom died while incarcerated.

"Even under oppressive circumstances, the human urge to create and make something permanent comes through," says Silver of the music. "There is something heart-wrenching about artists being cut off in the prime of their careers. I find it difficult to separate the music from the circumstances under which it was composed," says Silver.

"In the midst of complete horror, the human urge for survival, beauty and communication comes through. It is an example of the human spirit refusing to bow down."

Gideon Klein, whose Piano Sonata will be performed by Silver, was only 23 when he was sent to Terezin and had not established his presence as a composer prior to incarceration. Viktor Ullmann, a student of Arnold Schoenberg, whose music was known and performed prior to his incarceration, composed a great deal while in camp, using his writing to maintain sanity. In his own words, his artistic endeavor "was commensurate with his will to survive."

Ullmann wrote 25 works, including an opera, in a two-year period. As a result of his experiences, the compositional language changes to become at one and the same time simpler, yet more dissonant, impassioned, and at times, difficult to listen to because of its extreme emotional quality. The music also contains symbolism, reflecting Ullmann's rediscovery of his Jewish roots.

Ullmann's Piano Sonata No 7 in D Major was completed two months before he died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Along with this work, Silver, with soprano Nancy Ogle, will also perform a second Ullmann work, Six Sonnets de Loud'ze Labé. This work was composed for his wife Elizabeth who also perished in Auschwitz.

"Through such music, we find messages and codes being passed between the prisoners," says Silver. "For example, the people understood the meaning behind a quotation from the Czech national hymn incorporated into a work. It was a message to their audiences not to give up. A series of Chinese poems translated into Czech and set to music dealt with absence, sorrow and old friendships resuming at home. Symbolism permeates the music."

The concert also includes the only work known to exist by Robert Dauber, Serenata for Violin and Piano, performed by Silver and violinist Anatole Wieck. The Nazis allowed a cafe to be formed, and Dauber wrote salon music. Works by the other artists were composed for permitted musical/cultural series utilized by the Nazis as part of an elaborate hoax to quash rumors of the the atrocities being committed at other camps, and to present Terezin as a "typical" example of concentration camp life, says Silver.

Between pieces, Silver's 13-year-old daughter Noa will read poetry from a book entitled "I Never Saw Another Butterfly." This book contains poems written by children who were imprisoned and later died at Auschwitz.

"A great tragedy and injustice happened," says Silver of the Holocaust. "But the human spirit lives on in these good pieces of music. What happened to these composers, what they left behind should be a permanent part of human memory, one that requires us to think about injustice, both then and now."

For ticket information, call the Maine Center for the Arts Box Office at 581-1755 or toll free at (800) MCA-TIXX.