

Ball State University Faculty Artist Series

Wednesday, March, 29 | 7:30pm

Sursa Performance Hall

Hearing the Holocaust: Honoring Silenced Jewish Composers

Galit Gertsenzon, piano; Lisa Kozenko, oboe;
Cynthia L. Smith, mezzo-soprano; George Wolfe, saxophone

PROGRAM NOTES

A violinist, conductor, and composer, **Szymon Laks** was born in Warsaw, in 1901. He studied mathematics, music composition, and conducting before leaving Poland in 1925, and settling in Paris where he began studying at the Polish Conservatory in 1926. There, he quickly joined the ranks of other talented young Polish musicians. In 1941, the Germans arrested and deported Laks from Paris. He spent three years imprisoned in Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps, where he found and arranged the three Warsaw Polonaises. Later, he included them in his memoir "Music from Another World." The memoir, depicting his years of imprisonment and survival in the Holocaust was initially released in Paris, but until 1979, Polish publishers refused to print it there. Northeastern University Press released the memoir's English version in 1989. Laks managed to survive the Nazi concentration camps and has since continued to share his story of survival through testimony, and music. Laks passed away in Paris, in 1983.

Galit Gertsenzon

Born to a military family in 1898 in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, **Viktor Ullmann** studies with Schönberg, Zemlinsky, and Habà led him to develop his own compositional system focusing on the natural harmonic series while combining tonal and atonal procedures. Ullmann visited the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland on several occasions and joined the Anthroposophical Society in 1931. Thereafter, anthroposophy colored his life experience, and this philosophy is evident in most of his compositions, often through his choice of poetic texts. The texts for *Drei jiddische Lieder* (1944) were first collected with their corresponding melodies within the Kipnis Collection, assembled in Warsaw in the early-twentieth century. Ullmann explored Jewish cultural elements and themes in this cycle. Without a previous exposure to Jewish life and music prior to his imprisonment in Terezín, Ullmann depended on compositional techniques that are based on a style of folksong arrangement that became popular after World War I.

Ilse Weber, born in 1903, showed promise as a musician early in life but did not pursue music as a career. She set many of her poems to music, and often accompanied herself on guitar when performing for the sick children under her care as head nurse of the children's ward of Terezín's infirmary. Her compositional style is characterized by gripping text set to simple melodies. The texts of Weber's songs are highlighted through her naïve yet raw melodic lines. Weber's hauntingly beautiful songs are not hampered by her modest musical training. The pieces heard in this evening's performance piano accompaniments are arranged by Winfried Radeke.

Both Ullmann and Weber overcame the difficulties of living Prague under the rule of the Third Reich and Terezín's subhuman conditions. Despite the looming certainty of death, they bolstered the spirits of those imprisoned there through creativity in prose and music. Like many of the others confined within Terezín's walls, they approached imprisonment through transcendence and hope. Both Ullmann and Weber were deported from Terezín to Auschwitz in 1944 and murdered in the gas chambers upon arrival.

Cynthia L. Smith

Born in Přerov, Czechoslovakia, in 1919, pianist, musicologist, and composer **Gideon Klein** was an emerging musician, who became a victim of a dreadful tragedy that befell an entire ethnic group. Klein began his musical journey taking piano lessons as a child, and later, in 1931, he followed his sister Eliska to Prague, where he continued taking piano lessons with the well-known piano professor there, Růžena Kurzová. By 1938-9, Klein was already engaged in numerous activities as a pianist in various concerts. Unfortunately, this successful path did not last. Klein's Jewish descent determined his cessation of higher studies at the university due to the Nürnberg laws by which he and his peers were forced to leave the university by spring, 1940. Following his expulsion from the university, the ban on traveling outside of Prague also came into effect, and Klein was no longer allowed to leave Prague, or actively participate in cultural events. Despite this harsh situation, Klein proceeded with his musical activities by performing and participating in musical events. As part of his resistance, he used the fake name Karel

Vránek. Klein was deported to Terezín concentration camp in December, 1941. Klein became deeply involved with music making and teaching in the camp. He kept composing and performing widely there while also devoting time to teaching the children of the camp. During the period of 1942-1944, Klein wrote most of his works, and these works were preserved after the war. Klein was later deported from Terezín to Auschwitz and then to Fürstengrube concentration camp, where he died in 1945, just weeks before its liberation.

Galit Gertsenzon

Born in Prague, in 1894, **Erwin Schulhoff** was a brilliant Austrian-Czech pianist and composer, whose career was cut short as a result of the Nazi regime in Europe. Though his music was unknown for many years after World War II, it gained popularity in recent decades. A Pioneer of avant-garde musical trends, particularly Jazz, Schulhoff's compositional impact is now recognized, and his music is frequently performed and researched globally. Schulhoff drew inspiration from a variety of genres, such as socialist realism, jazz, dada, and atonal music. The Hot-Sonate was first made available to the general public in 1930. Commissioned by a Berlin radio station, it premiered there in 1930. Jazz elements like syncopation, chromaticism, and glissandi are prevalent throughout the composition, with the saxophone taking center stage as a solo instrument. Schulhoff, an avid advocate of communist ideals, sought refuge in Prague and obtained employment there as a radio pianist while also performing. Soon after the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia, and enforced the Nuremberg race laws there, prohibiting Jews from working, performing, and receiving education, Schulhoff resisted the Nazis and continued performing using a false name. Despite having his petition to become a Soviet citizen accepted in 1941, Schulhoff was deported and imprisoned before he could escape Czechoslovakia. Schulhoff was sent to the Wülzbug prison, in the vicinity of Weisenburg, Bavaria, in 1941. He passed away there from tuberculosis on August 18, 1942.

Galit Gertsenzon

Born in Brno in 1899, **Pavel Haas** was a Czech composer imprisoned and murdered during the Holocaust. A Follower of Leoš Janáček's compositional legacy, he incorporated a variety of folk music and Jazz into his compositions. Haas is best known for his songs for solo piano, song cycles, choral and orchestral works, and string quartets. As soon as the Second World War broke out in 1939, Haas began composing the Oboe Suite. Through two old Czech chorales, Haas showed his opposition to Hitler and the Nazi regime in this composition. The Hussite choral Kdož sú boží bojovníci and the Czech St. Wenceslas hymn, both originate in the 12th and 13th centuries. Both hymns are significant symbols of Czech patriotism, triumph, and hope. Haas' composition of the suite reflected his Czech pride and hopes for victory. In 1941, Haas was deported to Theresienstadt, where he continued to write alongside composers such as Viktor Ullmann and Gideon Klein. Some of his surviving Terezin compositions include a song cycle titled Four Songs on Chinese Poetry, a choral work in Hebrew titled Al S'fod (Do Not Lament), and an orchestral work titled Study for Strings, which was featured in a Nazi propaganda film on concentration camp Terezin. Haas was deported from Terezin to Auschwitz in 1944 and murdered in the gas chambers as soon as he arrived.

Galit Gertsenzon

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

Ich wandre durch Theresienstadt

Ich wandre durch Theresienstadt,
das Herz so schwer wie Blei.
Bis jäh meine Weg ein Ende hat,
dort knapp an der Bastei.

Dort bleib ich auf der Brücke stehn
und schau ins Tal hinaus:
ich möcht so gerne weiter gehn,
ich möcht so gern nach Haus!

Nach Haus! -- du wunderbares Wort,
du machst das Herz mir schwer.
Man nahm mir mein Zuhause fort,
nun hab ich keines mehr.

Ich wende mich betrübt und matt,
so schwer wird mir dabei:
Theresienstadt, Theresienstadt,
wann wohl das Leid ein Ende hat,
wann sind wir wieder frei?

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Wiegala

Wiegala, wiegala, weier,
der Wind spielt auf der Leier.
Er spielt so süß im grünen Ried,
die Nachtigall, die singt ihr Lied.
Wiegala, wiegala, weier,
der Wind spielt auf der Leier.

Wiegala, wiegala, werne,
der Mond ist die Laterne,
er steht am dunklen Himmelszelt
und schaut hernieder auf die Welt.
Wiegala, wiegala, werne,
der Mond ist die Lanterne.

Wiegala, wiegala, wille,
wie ist die Welt so stille!
Es stört kein Laut die süße Ruh,
schlaf, mein Kindchen, schlaf auch du.
Wiegala, wiegala, wille,
wie ist die Welt so stille!

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I wander through Theresienstadt

I wander through Theresienstadt,
my heart as heavy as lead,
until suddenly my path comes to an end,
right there by the bastion.

There I remain, standing by the bridge,
and looking out into the valley:
I would so gladly go farther,
I would so gladly go home!

Home! - you wonderful word,
you make my heart heavy.
They took me far from my home,
and now I no longer have one.

I turn around, sick at heart and tired,
things are so difficult for me:
Theresienstadt, Theresienstadt,
just when will sorrow have an end,
when will we be free again?

Beddy-bye

Beddy-bye, beddy-bye, bire,
the wind plays on the lyre.
He's playing sweetly in the reeds,
the nightingale sings in the meads.
Beddy-bye, beddy-bye, bire,
the wind plays on the lyre.

Beddy-bye, beddy-bye, blatern,
the moon, she is a lantern,
she looks from heaven's tent up high
a twinkle in her tired eye.
Beddy-byes, beddybyes, plantern,
the moon, she is a lantern.

Beddy-bye, beddy-bye, blying,
the world in stillness lying!
No sound disturbs your peace and rest,
my baby, huddle in your nest.
Beddy-byes, beddybyes, blying,
the world in stillness lying!

Wiegenlied

Die Nacht, schleicht durchs Ghetto schwarz und stumm,
Schlaf ein vergiss nun alles ringsum;
schmeig fest dein Köpfchen in meinen Arm,
Bei Mutter schläft sich's wohligh und warm.

Schlaf, über Nacht kann vieles geschehn,
über Nacht kann aller Kummer vergehn.
Mein Kind, du wirst sehn: einst wenn du erwacht,
ist Frieden gekommen über Nacht.

Translation by Cynthia L. Smith

Texts of *Ich wandre durch Theresienstadt*: Ilse Weber (1903 – 1944)

Drei jiddische Lieder (Březulinka), op. 53, "Berjoskele"

Berjoskele

Ruig, Ruig schockelt ihr gelocktes grines Kepel
mein wejssinke Berjoskele un davent on a Schir;
jedes, jedes Bletele ihr's sचेptshet shtil a t'file.
Sej schejn, klein Berjoskele, mispallel ejch far mir!

Fun weiten Marev hot sich trojrig farganvet
in die dine tvejgelech a rizer, zarter Stral,
un a stillen Kush getun di Bletelech die Klejne,
welche hoben dremlendig gehorcht dem Nachtigall.

Fun die weite Felder is a Wintele gekumen
un derzejlt die Bletelech Legends on a Shir,
Epes hot in Harzen tief bei mir genumen benken.
Sej schejn, klein Berjoskele, mispallel ejch far mir.

Text: David Einhorn (1886 – 1973)

Margaretkelech

In Weldel beim Teichel, dort senen gewaxsen
Margarithelech elent un klejn
wie klejninke Sunen mit wejssinke Strahlen,
Mit wejssinke tra-la-la-la!

Gegangen is Chavele still un farcholemt,
zulosen die goldblonde Zep
dos Helzel entblojst un gemurmelt gesungen
A Lidele. Tra-la-la-la!

Die Sun is forgangen, der Bocher verschwunden
un Chavele sitzt noch in Wald.
Sie kukt in der weiten un murmelt farcholemt
dos Lidele: Tra-la-la-la.

Text: Zalman Shazar (1898 – 1974)

Lullaby

The night creeps through the ghetto, black and silent,
Go to sleep, forget everything around you;
Snuggle your little head in my arms,
by mother, is a nice and warm place to sleep.

Sleep, overnight many things can happen,
all sorrows can be banished.
My child, you will see: One day when you wake up
peace has come overnight.

Little Birch Tree

Quietly, quietly sways its curly green head,
my little white birch tree, and prays without end;
Every, every leaf whispers softly a prayer.
Be nice, little birch tree, say a prayer for me!

From far in the west, another sad and furtive
pink slender ray peeks between the thin branches
and gives a quiet kiss to the small leaves,
that were dreamily listening to the nightingale.

Over the far fields a wind came
and told the leaves legends without end,
something else deep in my heart began to yearn.
Be nice, little birch tree, say a prayer for me.

Daisies

In the little woods by the creek there grew
daisies lonely and small
like little suns with white rays,
with white, tra-la-la-la!

Chavele walked quietly and dreamily,
her gold-blond braid loosened
her neck uncovered, and she hummed, she sang
a little song. Tra-la-la-la!

The sun has set, the young man has disappeared,
and Chavele still sits in the wood.
She gazes into the distance and dreamingly hums
the little song. Tra-la-la-la.

A Mejdle in die Johren

Ich bin schejn a Mejdle in die Johren,
wos hostu mir den Kopf fordreht?
Ich wolt schejn lang a Kale geworen
un efscher take Chassene gehat.

Du host mir zugesogt zu nemen,
un ich hob ejf Dir gewart;
farwos solstu, Duschenju, mich farschejmen.
Zi hostu Dich in mir genart?

Text: Anonymous

Translations of *Drei jiddische Lieder (Březulinka)*, op. 53, "Berjoskele" by Mira Zakai

Ukulebavka Lullaby

Lie down my son, lie down restfully.
Do not cry bitterly.
Your mother is sitting next to you
guarding against any evil.

The jackal wails outside.
and the is blowing there,
but you, cry no more.
Lie down my son lie down restfully.
Sleep, lie down, and sleep, sleep, slumber.

Night, night, night shadow
will fly very quickly.
You mustn't, mustn't, mustn't be lazy.
Tomorrow it is necessary to work.

Tomorrow, father will go out to plough
in the farrow. In the farrow, father will walk.
You will grow up and raise your head.
Only you, my little son,
you will go out ploughing together.
Sleep, sleep, slumber.

Translation by Michael Beckerman and Naomi Tadmor

A Girl Who Is No Longer Young

I am already a girl who is no longer young,
why did you confuse me?
I would long since have been a bride
and perhaps really be married.

You have promised to take me,
and I have waited for you.
Why did you, Duschenju, have to shame me,
or did you make me a fool?

שיר ערש

שכב בני

א

שכב בני שכב שכב במנוחה

אל נא תבכה מרה

על ידך יושבת אמך

שומרת מכל רע

מילל מילל בחוץ ביער התן

הרוח הרוח ונושבת רוח שם...

אך אתה, בני הקטן

שכב בני שכב במנוחה

נומה נומה שן, שכב וישן

לילה לילה לילה צל

יעוף מהר מאוד

אסור אסור אסור להתעצל

מחר צריך לעבוד.

מחר יצא אבא לחרוש

בבתלם בבתלם ילך האב

הנה תגדל תרים הראש

אף־אך אתה בני הקטן

תיצאו לחריש אז יחדיו נומה נומה שן.