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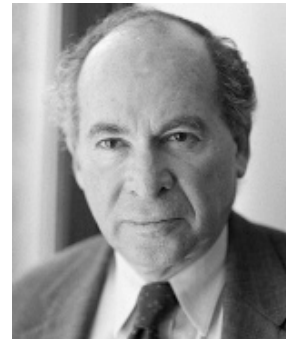
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## Spirits Unconquered

### Holocaust Memorial Works by Charles Davidson and Sheila Silver Newly Added to the Milken Archive of Jewish Music

Musical memorials to the Holocaust tread on sensitive ground. On one hand, they perform a crucial function for humanity's collective memory. On the other hand, there is significant risk of belittling the topic in the name of artistic expression. Two composers who have successfully navigated the risky waters of this endeavor to produce musically significant works with dignity and veneration are [Charles Davidson](#) and [Sheila Silver](#). A newly released album from the Milken Archive of Jewish Music's [Volume 19, \*Out of the Whirlwind: Musical Reflections of the Holocaust\*](#), gives both works their rightful place in the Milken Archive's pantheon of music of the American Jewish experience.

Davidson's [I Never Saw Another Butterfly](#) cantata is based on the 1960s publication (of the same name) of poems written by children interred at Terezin—a ruse camp set up by the Nazis to throw off the scent of those who suspected the mass murder of Jews under Hitler's reign. Though it was simply a waypoint en route to the Auschwitz death camp, Terezin depicted a scenario where prisoners enjoyed relative freedom and produced significant artistic output. (Recent years have witnessed productions of Hans Krása's opera, *Brundibár* and a version of Verdi's *Requiem Mass* that were composed and staged in Terezin, as well other composers' versions of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*.)



Davidson's tribute to the child poets comprises nine poem-settings for children's choir and piano, performed here by the San Francisco Girls Chorus. From touching beauty to foreboding, despair, and all points in between, his composition gives unique expression to the range of emotions contained in the poems while conveying its own identity as a work of art. *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* has been performed more than 2,500 times, including in 1991 at Terezin, in the presence of former Czech President Václav Havel.



Sheila Silver's string trio, *To The Spirit Unconquered*, was inspired by the writings of Italian poet and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi. Silver uses a variety of techniques to convey different aspects of the concentration camp experience described in Levi's writings: fear, through dark string tremolos and crashing, dissonant piano chords; memory, through floating piano lines and swooning strings; barbarism, through quick, syncopated rhythms, staccato stabs, and angular melodies; transcendence, through the soaring melodies of the final movement. In a 1998 interview with the Milken Archive (available at

<http://www.milkenarchive.org/videos/view/112>), Silver claimed *To the Spirit Unconquered* as her most successful piece, stating that it had been widely performed and won over audiences skeptical of modern music. In her own words, it is "about the ability of the human spirit to transcend the most devastating of circumstances, to survive and to bear witness."

Though both of these works can be appreciated on their artistic merits alone, their grounding in the maxim to *never forget* imbues them with a compelling, inescapable urgency. They command listeners of all faiths and backgrounds to approach them with undivided attention.

*I Never Saw Another Butterfly*; *To the Spirit Unconquered* is available on [iTunes](#), [Amazon](#) and [Spotify](#). Learn more at: <http://www.milkenarchive.org/albums/view/135>.

Founded in 1990 by philanthropist Lowell Milken, the Milken Archive of Jewish Music reflects the scope and variety of Jewish life in America. The Archive's virtual museum [www.milkenarchive.org](http://www.milkenarchive.org) is an interactive guide to music, videos, oral histories, photos and essays.

***For information or interviews, contact [media@milkenarchive.org](mailto:media@milkenarchive.org).***

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