

March 5, 2013

When Millions Perish, What Remains?

If six million Jews perished in the forests of Eastern Europe and no one remembers their plight, did they make a sound?

In the attics, the hidden cellars, the ghettos and the trains, they made sounds. In the *Babi Yars*, the Birkenaus and the thousands of unmarked graves, they made sounds. With their musical instruments, their voices, their brutalized marching feet, and even their eyes that resonated with silent piercing vibrations in anyone human enough to hear them...they made sounds.

But what of those sounds today? As the number of living Holocaust survivors dwindles, how do we ensure that these sounds resonate now and into the future? As educating younger generations about its horrors becomes more difficult, as new experience accrues to collective memory, how do we keep them from fading into the abyss?

The Milken Archive's answer to these questions can be summed up in one word: music. With today's release of *Out of the Whirlwind: Musical Reflections of the Holocaust*, we harness music's power to give voice to the voiceless, to unlock silence, to confront evil, and to remind us of our collective responsibility to prevent history from repeating itself.

From the Milken Archive and Beyond: More Geist from our Zeit



"WAR WAS IN THE AIR"

Miriam Kressyn was on stage when President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress for a declaration of war, marking the United States' entry into the Second World War.



THE HEAVENLY FEAST

Composer Robert Beaser offers a detailed discussion of *The Heavenly Feast*, his setting of a poem by Gjertrude Schnackenberg based on the life of Simone Weil.



PLAY THAT JEWISH MUSIC

A New History of Klezmer in Philadelphia.

News and multimedia content from around the Jewish Music world.

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There is incredible music in *Out of the Whirlwind*, some written by composers who were born in the midst of the Nazi Party's ascendance to power and moved across oceans to escape tragedy, some who were born in its shadow, and some who inherited its legacy and have struggled to come to terms with it. As the Greeks used a wooden horse to enter the walls of Troy, composers use music to transcend the walls of the mind. Once inside, its true power is unleashed: reshaping thoughts, forming emotions, creating an experience, forging a memory.

Hear the voices rise in again in evocative settings of concentration camp poems by [Gershon Kingsley](#) and [Simon Sargon](#). Let the music draw you into the hopelessness and despair in Aaron J. Kernis's *Death Fugue*, after the Paul Celan poem that led philosophers to question if poetry after Auschwitz was possible. Relive the Warsaw ghetto uprising with Max Helfman's *Di naye hagode*. Listen to the unanswered prayers.

Above all, let this “music of destruction” enjoin you—as it does us all—to remember the victims. For whatever motivations lie behind this its creation, the result is everything that art in its highest forms can be. It is at once a reflection of reality, a plea to humanity, a statement of ethos and, in this case, some measure of beauty given back to the world, born of the most hideous revelation of mankind’s darkest capacities. [Learn about it](#), [listen to it](#), [share it](#).

If six million Jews perished in the forests of Eastern Europe and no one remembers their plight, did they make a sound? Let us never learn the answer.

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