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Poetic Injustice Made into Unforgettable Music

Transforming tragedy into art respectfully can be difficult, but the result can be incredibly valuable. Whether a Shakespearean play or Israeli jewelry made from fallen kassam rockets, art provides a lens that gives new perspective and deeper understanding. This month, the Milken Archive of Jewish Music releases a new album of works—inspired by poetry from the Holocaust—that help connect us to the time, place and, most importantly, the people at the heart of it.

Based on the poetry of children in Terezin, Charles Davidson's *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* is a tribute comprising 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.

Enjoy it Now



Reflect and be inspired by Davidson and Silver.
Stream this album for free on our Spotify channel.

Sheila Silver's *To The Spirit Unconquered* was inspired by the writings of Italian poet and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi. But where Davidson made the poetry his focal point, Silver opted for purely instrumental forces to convey the emotional character of Levi's work: 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.

The Terezin ghetto was conceived as a propaganda tool to obfuscate the real atrocities behind a veil of vibrant artistic life, while concentration camps were conceived as the ultimate tool of annihilation. Both were regrettably successful at the time. Today, however, the art lives on, inspiring new art and reaching new generations. Through it, the tools of misinformation are now turned into immutable truth; and the attempted extermination turned into undeniable life.

Meet the Artist



Composer **Sheila Silver** discusses *To the Spirit Unconquered* in our documentary video.

Go to the Source



Meet an **Unsung Hero of Terezin—child poet Pavel Weiner**—in this project by the Lowell Milken Center.