VOICES OF SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE: MUSIC OF THE TEREZÍN GHETTO

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INTRODUCTION

In a number of ways, the Terezín ghetto appeared similar to many of the other Jewish ghettos of the Second World War. High walls surrounded the former garrison town, which housed inmates in overcrowded barracks. The words *Arbeit Macht Frei*[1] were written above the gates. Inside those gates, however, life soon began to erupt with musical and cultural activity. Jewish-Czech composers and conductors such as Raphael Schächter, Viktor Ullmann and Gideon Klein took an active role in creating a cultural and musical life in the ghetto, assembling choirs, chamber ensembles, opera companies, a cabaret, and even a jazz band called the Ghetto Swingers. Such musical activities, however, were not merely a creative distraction from the reality of life in the ghetto. This study will demonstrate that, in addition, music in Terezín helped these inmates to endure in seemingly unendurable circumstances. Providing inmates with a form of spiritual resistance, music gave them a powerful mechanism for empowerment, coping with their trauma, and defiance.

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In 1780, the Hapsburg Emperor, Joseph II, built a fortress town near the convergence of the Elbe and Eger rivers. He named the town *Theresienstadt* after his mother, Empress Maria Theresa, and designed it with the intent of protecting Prague from a potential attack from Frederick the Great of Prussia. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the town was militarily obsolete, and served only as a maximum-security prison.[2] It wasn't until the Republic of Czechoslovakia became established after World War I that the town's name

[1] The German phrase, *Arbeit mach frei* literally means *work will make you free*, and was displayed in
[2] Perhaps the Terezín prison's most well-known inmate was Gavrilo Prinzip, whose assassination of the Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand sparked the beginning of World War I.

was officially changed to the Czech equivalent, Terezín, and became a residential home to nearly 6,000.[3]

During the very early 1940s, the world became "increasingly alarmed by the Nazis' wholesale arrests and transport of the occupied western countries' Jewish populations to unknown destinations."[4] In response, Nazi leadership decided to create a ghetto at Terezín as a propaganda tool. Nick Strimple describes the concept behind the ghetto:

> A town in a picturesque area where Jews could be observed living "normal" lives within their own close-knit community – a community that just happened to include the intellectual and artistic cream of European Jewry.[5]

In 1941, the Nazis evacuated the residents of Terezín and began transporting Jews to the newest ghetto.

The first transport arrived November 24, 1941 and consisted of 324 young men called *Aufbaukommando* [building detail].[6] Working to prepare the ghetto for future arrivals, these men slept on the floors of the Sudeten barracks. On December 4, an additional thousand men arrived in the second *Aufbaukommando.* This group included engineers, physicians and technical and labor personnel. Transports to Terezín continued swiftly; by September 1942, the ghetto would reach its capacity at 58,491, almost ten times the town's original population.[7]

Musical and cultural activity began organically from the time of these early *Aufbaukommandos*. While the Nazis forbade possession of musical instruments, there were many who risked their lives and smuggled instruments into the ghetto. Jože Karas even notes

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[3] "Choral Music in Theresienstadt: 1941-1944," The OREL Foundation, date accessed: January 22, 2014, http://orelfoundation.org/index.php/journal/journalArticle/choral_music_in_theresienstadt_1941-1944
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Karas, Jože, *Music in Terezín 1941-1945* (New York: Beaufort Books, 1985), 10.
[7] Ibid.

a story of a resourceful cellist who "dismantled his cello into a few pieces of wood, wrapped them into a blanket together with some glue and clamps, and once in Terezín, reassembled the instrument and began to play again."[8]

Relatively quickly, musical concerts and activities began taking place throughout the ghetto. Chamber music and operas were heard in attics, while men and women gathered in the basement of the barracks to sing together at night. In 1942, the Nazis officially condoned such activities with the establishment of the *Freitzeitgestaltung* [Administration of Leisure Time Activities], which the Jewish inmates ran themselves. In condoning such activities, the Nazis were able to continue using Terezín as a propaganda tool while allowing the Jewish inmates to give birth to a flood of artistic creativity. Musicians gave recitals and concerts featuring the music of fellow inmate-composers such as Viktor Ullmann, Pavel Haas and Gideon Klein. Operas were staged, playwrights mounted new productions, and cabarets were performed in a café resembling those of Prague.

As Terezín was transformed into a thriving cultural center, inmates began to experience the variety of ways in which music impacted their lives in the ghetto. One powerful example can be found in the documentary, *Defiant Requiem*, where Marianka May acknowledges music's role in her experience, remarking: "I think that my stomach stopped growling when I started singing."[9] Given the hardship that those in Terezín were facing, such a statement might appear hyperbolic. I contend, however, that May was speaking from a place of deep sincerity. This study will demonstrate that for those living in the Terezín ghetto, music was indeed a source of spiritual resistance, which served as a mechanism for empowerment, coping with trauma, defiance, and ultimately, survival.

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[8] Ibid., 13.
[9] *Defiant Requiem*. Dir. Doug Shultz. Partisan Pictures, 2012.

CHAPTER ONE
במהרה בימינו יבוא אלינו עם משיח בן דוד[10]

When considering the history of human oppression, one observes that when a group is persecuted on account of its collective identity, one means of survival is to embrace and take ownership of that very identity—even among members of the group who may not identify themselves as such. Like those who developed a Pan-African or LGBT identity in the face of discrimination and worse, inmates of the Terezín ghetto responded to persecution by embracing their common Jewish heritage. This chapter will demonstrate how the Jews of Terezín utilized music as a vehicle for connecting to that heritage through liturgical texts and melodies, Yiddish and Hebrew folk songs and settings of secular Hebrew poetry.

Reclaiming and Re-inventing Identity: Parallels to Other Oppressed Communities

After generations of slavery, men and women of African descent continued to face discrimination, both nationally and globally. Though they came from any number of various regions of the huge continent of Africa (and few knew their origins as a result of the complexity of the slave trade), their oppressors saw them as one entity. In response to this collective identity being thrust upon them, they created a broad, Pan-African identity but re-defined it in their own terms. In this way, isolated black communities could feel part of a larger society and could guarantee the survival of their culture. As George J. Sefa Dei, Professor of Equity Studies at the University of Toronto, argues:

> Reclaiming and reinventing our Africanness… is not an option but a necessity for survival in order to regain our sanity… It is through such reclaiming of our

[10] *In haste and in our days, may He come to us, Messiah, son of David.*

> Africanness that we develop a consciousness of who we are as a people and the responsibilities of such reclamation.[11]

In a similar but not synonymous way, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals have been persecuted for centuries. While an individual's sexuality is unique, they have often been persecuted as one people. However, in the 1990s, the organization *Queer Nation* sought to unite the LGBT community by reclaiming the word *queer*, which had long been used as a derogatory term for effeminate gay males. Particularly for those in the LGBT community who reject distinct sexual identities and gender binaries, taking on this once disparaging term as their own provided an opportunity for crafting a collective identity in their own terms.

Collective Identity in the Terezín Ghetto

The Nazis persecuted Jews, regardless of belief, practice and affiliation. For them, one was Jewish by dint of having at least one Jewish grandparent—a definition that is broader than that of Jewish law, which ascribes Judaism to those with a Jewish mother alone. Even those who felt no connection whatsoever to Judaism were therefore subject to incarceration and persecution in the Terezín ghetto. The late historian and musicologist of Terezín, David Bloch, estimated that a large number of inmates "were highly assimilated, and others [were] first or second generation converts to Christianity."[12] Composer, Viktor Ullmann, for instance, was raised Catholic and later identified as Protestant before he was rounded up as a Jew by the Nazis and transported to Terezín. Like so many other oppressed

[11] George J. Sefa Dei, "Reclaiming Our Africanness in the Diasporized Context: The Challenge of Asserting a Critical African Personality," *The Journal of Pan African Studies,* nol. 4, no. 10. (January 2012): 47.
[12] David Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann's Yiddish and Hebrew Vocal Arrangements in the Context of Jewish Music in Terezín." *Viktor Ullmann: Die Referate des Symposions anlässlich des 50.* (October, 1994): 79.

peoples, these inmates responded to their persecution by embracing their shared cultural and religious heritage.

Embracing Jewish Life

Indeed, Terezín was filled with evidence of such an embrace of Jewish life. In December 1941, Terezín inmates came together, celebrating God's miracle during the first night of Hanukkah. The ghetto library contained more than 10,000 volumes of books in Hebrew, and lectures were regularly given on religious topics. In fact, the Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt, Dr. Leopold Neuhaus, who survived the war, indicates that Jewish text was even used as a means for the inmates to explore their suffering; he lists *Suffering as Expressed in Job*[13] among the common lecture topics.

The desire to connect more deeply to Jewish life was so strong, in fact, that Asher Belinger, a former cantor, built and painted a secret synagogue. The tiny synagogue (just over two-hundred square feet) was above ground, but built in secret in one of the houses in the ghetto. In an effort to truly create a spiritual home, the ceiling was decorated with six-pointed stars, painted in red and black.[14] The walls, as they stand today, appear to have once been covered with decorative paintings, biblical verses and original prayers.[15] The verses that still remain on the walls express messages of hope, offering a haunting counterpoint to the known fate of those who once filled the room. Such texts include "If I forget thee, O

[13] David Bloch. "Jewish Music in Terezín – A Brief Survey." *Verfemte Music: Komponisten in den Dikraruren unseres Jahrhunderts.* (Frankfurt and Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 1995): 107.
[14] While there is no evidence to suggest that this is the case, one wonders if painting Jewish symbols in Nazi colors was intentional on Belinger's part.
[15] "The Hidden Synagogue at Terezín," The Jewish Federation of Pinellas & Pasco Counties, FL, accessed January 22, 2014. http://www.jewishpinellas.org/page.aspx?id=54863.

Jerusalem”[16] and “Yet, despite all this, we have not forgotten Your name. Please don't forget us”[17] (fig. 1).

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Other texts include “Please turn away from Your fierce anger, and have compassion on the people You chose as Your own”[18] (fig. 2) and “Know before whom you stand” (fig. 3).[19]

This embrace of Jewish cultural and religious life was expressed profoundly through the music of Terezín, particularly music that was inspired by liturgical melodies and texts. Zikmund Schul (1916-1944) was born to assimilated Jewish parents but would go on to

[16] Psalm 137:5.
[17] Tachanun, morning liturgy.
[18] Tachanun, morning liturgy.
[19] Talmud, Brachot 28b.

reconnect with Judaism while living in Prague[20] and eventually became Terezín's most prolific composer of liturgically-inspired music. More than any other composer in the ghetto, Schul drew on Jewish liturgical motives as both a source and an inspiration, particularly in his compositions for string quartet. For instance, Schul arranged Vilem Zrzavy's melody of *V'lirushalayim Ircha* for string quartet and baritone voice. This piece, which employs an operatic cantorial style for the soloist, features beautifully rich writing for strings, evoking the deep yearning of the text. Schul continues to utilize liturgical music in a small fantasy for string quartet, based on Cantor David Grünfeld's *Uv'tzel K'nofecho*. Unlike *V'lirushalayim Ircha,* this is not an arrangement, but rather, in the words of David Bloch, "a free improvisation in its spirit, incorporating some of its characteristic intervals and ornamental gestures."[21] In a third piece, simply titled *Tzaddik,* Schul composes for four instruments on two staves, presumably yet again, for string quartet.[22] While no text accompanies the instrumentation, per se, the manuscript contains Schul's notations, including Psalm 92:9 – "*tzaddik katamar yifrach"* [the righteous will blossom like the palm]. Surely, Schul found his inspiration in this Psalm, traditionally recited at *Kabbalat Shabbat*.

Schul's compositions draw from additional parts of the Jewish liturgical tradition. In his *Cantata Judaica* (1942), for instance, he combined two texts from the daily *sh'moneh esreh* into powerful text painting. The work's finale, the only movement to survive the war,

[20] After studying musical composition with Paul Hindemith in Berlin, Schul returned to Prague where he developed a close relationship with Rabbi Lieben of the Alteneuschul (Old-New Synagogue). As a result of this relationship, he eventually received a stipend from the Jewish community for reviving a collection of medieval Jewish manuscripts, which seemed to cultivate an interest in Jewish music.
[21] Bloch, "Jewish Music in Terezín – A Brief Survey," 112.
[22] David Bloch theorizes that while despite no instrumentation being specified, the musical range makes it an unlikely setting for choral singing and was therefore, most likely a setting for string quartet.

contains: "*t'ka b'shofar gadol l'cheiruteinu"* [Blow the Great Shofar for our Freedom][23] and "*bim'heira v'yameinu"* [Soon, in our Days].[24] Here, these liturgical texts stand in for the inmates' calls for liberation and redemption.[25] Schul highlighted the message by opening the movement with a series of repetitions of the leaping perfect 5th interval, imitating the sound of the shofar evoked in the text.

Arguably, Schul's most ambitious liturgical work is his setting of *Mogen Ovos* for soprano, baritone, mixed choir and organ. As the use of organ likely indicates, Schul composed this work while still living in Prague, though the fragments of the score were found in Terezín after the war.[26] While Schul wrote the vocal parts in a grand, cantorial style, he did not utilize the *magen avot* mode so often associated with this prayer. Instead, he writes an extraordinary duet for soprano and baritone, utilizing unusually wide vocal ranges (in some cases, spanning more than two octaves) in a style that pays homage to the great 19th century synagogue music for cantor, choir and organ.

Music in Terezín also represented the tradition of Jewish folk music, especially in the compositions and arrangements of Viktor Ullmann (1891-1944). As mentioned above, Ullmann never identified as a Jew in his early life. His Christian background not only informed his world outlook, but also his art; prior to his transport to Terezín, there is nothing[27] in his musical indicating any Jewish content or interest.[28] After being impacted by

[23] Sh'moneh Esreh, Shomeah T'filah.
[24] Sh'moneh Esreh, Birkat Haminim.
[25] Such calls for defiance through music discussed at length in chapter three.
[26] Aside from the manuscripts, which were found in the ghetto after the war, there is no historical evidence of a public performance of Mogen Ovos in Terezín.
[27] This can be said with the exception of a setting of Psalm 130, which can just as easily be understood as a Christian text.
[28] Bloch, "Viktor Ullmann's Yiddish and Hebrew Vocal Arrangements in the Context of Jewish Music in Terezín," 79.

life and culture in Terezín, however, he began to write popular choral arrangements of well-known Hebrew and Yiddish songs culled from the *Jüdisches Makkabi Liederbuch* (Berlin, 1930). Ullmann's multi-volume collection, *Lieder für gemischten Chor, Frauenchor, Männerchor und Knabenchor*[29], features arrangements of Yiddish songs such as *Az der Rebbe Elimeylekh and Sha Shtil* and Zionist folk songs such as *Anu Olim* and *Amcha Yisrael Yibaneh*. While this music seems less sophisticated than some of the art music being composed in the ghetto, its popularity in the ghetto speaks to something remarkable about Jewish identity. One could argue that even for those who didn't actively identify as Jews, folk melodies resonated so deeply because they evoked the memories associates with such melodies. One does not need to be an actively observant or even identifying Jew to have memories and associations with folk melodies, and this music expressed those melodies in a new way. In arranging these songs for choir, he enabled groups of people to come together, make music together, and create new memories and associations. Through this music, performers and listeners alike were able to reclaim Jewish folk music as uniquely their own.

In contrast to Ullmann and Schul, composers such as Gideon Klein (1919-1945) and Pavel Haas (1899-1944) drew on secular poetry in Hebrew for their works.[30] Born into a Moravian family, Gideon Klein gained recognition as an extraordinary musical talent at a relatively young age. In 1940, just a year prior to his transport to Terezín, he was granted a scholarship to attend the Royal Academy of Music in London, however anti-Jewish

[29] Songs for mixed choir, men's choir, women's choir and children's choir.
[30] This speaks, perhaps, to a seemingly unending question among the Jewish musicological community of how to accurately define Jewish music. One could certainly argue, however, that even in the absence of explicit religious content, musical settings of secular Hebrew poetry are inherently Jewish. The language of biblical and liturgical texts evokes those traditions even when used to describe something non-religious. And in Terezín, where many different languages were spoken, the use of Hebrew is even more significant.

legislation prohibited his emigration. Once in Terezín, Klein joined Schächter and Ullmann as one of the leaders of musical activity in the ghetto. He gave at least fifteen solo recitals, participated in chamber music concerts and composed for strings, piano, choir and solo voice. Among his vocal music were settings of Hebrew texts such as the beautiful *Wiegenlied* [Lullaby] and *Bachuri Le'an tissa* [My Son, Where Are You Going]. Technically not an original composition, *Wiegenlied* is an arrangement of the preexisting Hebrew song, *S'chav b'ni* [Sleep, My Son] by Emmanuel Harussi. Klein's arrangement of Shalom Chartinov's poem balances Harussi's lilting melody with a romantic and rich harmonic accompaniment in the piano. In *Bachuri Le'an tissa,* Klein writes for women's choir, hauntingly pairing a lyrical melody with the simple yet deeply poignant text:

> *My boy, where will you go?*
> *Sweetheart, it's all over.*[31]

The Moravian-born composer, Pavel Haas, joined Klein in composing musical settings of Hebrew poetry. In 1942, he composed the powerful, *Al S'fod* [Do Not Lament] for male choir. The text was taken from a David Shimoni poem, originally intended as a rallying cry for Jewish settlers in Palestine under threat of attacks between 1936 and 1939. For the Jews of Terezín, however, it offered a message of strength and resolve, using the Hebrew language:

> *Do not lament, do not cry.*
> *At a time like this, do not lower your head,*
> *but work, work...*
> *In the path of affliction goes deliverance.*
> *And the blood screams for the people's soul:*
> *Awake and labor, redeem and be redeemed.*[32]

[31] Translated by Professor Joshua Jacobson.
[32] Translated by Professor Eliyahu Schleiffer.

Notably, Haas himself did not speak or read Hebrew. Yet his desire to compose in the ancient tongue propelled him to overcome even that obstacle. Bloch notes that Haas copied the text for his composition directly out of the score of an earlier setting by J. Millet (printed in the 1930s in *Shirej Eretz Yisrael* and published by the *Jüdischer Verlag* in Berlin).[33] In fact, the dotted rhythm in Haas' composition is a direct result of his "careful study of Millet's version, which served him as a guide to a correct pronunciation of the Hebrew."[34]

In choosing to compose in Hebrew, Haas and Klein demonstrated in profound terms just one of the ways in which Terezín inmates reclaimed Jewish language, music and culture as their own. The Hebrew language, with which many assimilated Jews had little to no connection, now became a vehicle for expressing the contents of their souls. Ullmann took music of Jewish memory and arranged it in a way that enabled inmates to create new memories. Zikmund Schul embraced both liturgical music and text as an inspiration for creating new music of Jewish identity. Holocaust survivor Gisele Reinhold noted, "it was those who identified strongly to Jewish life… that had the best chances of mental survival because while the Nazis said you are lesser because you're Jewish, they said [yes] we're Jewish, but it means something else."[35] While this music allowed the inmates to connect to their people, it also allowed them to redefine themselves as Jews, but in their own terms. This culture was theirs and in reclaiming it, they were able to enrich their lives and enhance their ability to endure.

[33] Bloch, "Jewish Music in Terezín – A Brief Survey," 113.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Gisele Reinhold passed away in 2005. This paraphrased testimony was passed down by her daughter, Sheila Reinhold.

CHAPTER TWO

Wir nehmen's Leben sehr leicht hin,
den wenn es anders wär ein Malheur[36]

As in pre-war Berlin, and later in Westerbork, Vilna, and Warsaw, the musical phenomenon of cabaret played an unexpected, yet prominent, role in Terezín. Unlike the cabarets of Berlin, which presented pointed satires of the political environment, its counterpart in Terezín avoided such statements. Rather, these artists poked fun at themselves and their surroundings. While giving voice to the abysmal conditions in the camp, the venue in which they performed, ironically, transported them to another place and time. Situated in a café meant to resemble those of pre-war Prague, inmates were ushered to tables by a "waiter," where they could sit and listen to music for hours. This setting offered a powerful escape, allowing the inmates to act and behave as they had before the war. Yet while the environment connected them to their prior lives, the music itself expressed, in bitter detail, the current reality. On the one hand, the setting "freed" them from the ghetto; on the other, the music made them feel more attached to it.

Cabaret humor conjures up images of slapstick comedy routines. However, much of the humor in the Terezín cabarets was not as explicit as those comic stereotypes. Rather, the environment was lighthearted and subtle satire took barbs at the performers themselves. Such a setting enabled inmates to bare their souls and reveal truths, and the use of both irony and humor made those realities more bearable.

[36] *We take life very easily, for otherwise it would be a disaster.*

The Juxtaposition of Serious Text with Whimsical Music

While humor came across in the comical lyrics of the cabaret music, satire also emerged by juxtaposing a serious text with whimsical music that evoked jazz and popular standards of the time. Jazz composer and pianist, Martin Roman (1910-1996), for instance, was a master of such a technique. Roman was one of the most promising jazz pianists in Berlin, where had worked with Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Coleman Hawkins and Django Reinhardt. In addition, he had been a member of two of Germany's foremost jazz ensembles, the Weintraub Syncopators and the Marek Weber Band.[37] Once in Terezín, he directed a jazz band, *The Ghetto Swingers,* and wrote music for the cabaret, including the title song from Kurt Gerron's *Karussell.* In this song, with lyrics by Dr. Leo Strauss[38] (1897-1944), Roman plays a coy game, balancing the serious, metaphorical text with lush harmonies and musical idioms that call to mind composers such as Kurt Weil. The piano composition, for instance, includes fast-paced runs that may be indicative of the improvisational style of Roman's own playing.

Roman's music and Strauss' text work hand-in-hand, forging a connection between Terezín and the war beyond the ghetto. For instance, the song's middle section features a lively waltz that was likely familiar to many listeners. The section includes a direct musical quote from Siegfried Translateur's (1875-1944) *Sportpalast Valse* (originally titled *Wiener Praeterleben*). The *Sportpalast Valse* was given its name due to its popularity at the Berlin Sportpalast [Sport Palace], where Hitler gave a prominent speech in October 1938.[39] The text

[37] "Jazz and Popular Music in Terezín," The OREL Foundation, accessed: January 22, 2014. http://orelfoundation.org/index.php/journal/journalArticle/jazz_and_popular_music_in_terez237n
[38] Born in Vienna to the famous operetta composer, Oskar Strauss, Leo Strauss became an accomplished musician and was one of the foremost librettists in Terezín.
[39] Reinwald, David, "Cabaret Music of the Holocaust" (Thesis, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 2006): 63.

likens existence in Terezín to that of a carousel – "a strange journey, without a goal, which nevertheless affords its passengers much experience and whose music will always be remembered."[40] While the song continues for several verses, its core message is expressed within the very first verse:

> In years long past when we were little children we shared a common ideal.
> If our parents wanted peace in our flat or if by way of reward,
> We could choose a present, all the children would cry out quickly:
> Carousel! Please, please, carousel!
>
> We ride on wooden horses and turn round and round in a circle.
> We long to be dizzy before the merry-go-round stops.
> It's a strange journey a trip without a goal.
> We cannot escape from the circle and yet we experience a lot
>
> As long as we live, we'll never forget the barrel-organ music,
> Even when the images have long-since faded
> The tune, after all, still rings in our ears.[41]

Roman beautifully expresses both the dizzying experience of life in the ghetto and the hope of so many of these imprisoned artists: that the music might live on even after the ride is over.

Roman utilizes a similar approach of music/text juxtaposition in his other notable cabaret song, *Das Lied von den zwei Ochsen* [The Song of the Two Oxen]. The composer's musical setting is striking: using rich jazz harmonies and a flowing melody, he paints a picture of a smoky nightclub rather than a filthy ghetto. Once the singer expresses the text, however, the musical setting becomes quite comical. Manfred Griffenheim's lyrics acknowledge a difficult truth about life in the ghetto. As a result of what Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck called the "indiscriminate herding together [of] disparate groups from every part of

[40] David Bloch, "No One Can Rob us of our Dreams: Solo Songs from Terezín." *Israel Studies in Musicology* 5 (1990): 78.
[41] Hope, Daniel. Liner notes. von Otter, Anne Sophie. *Terezín-Theresienstadt*. Deutsche Grammaphon, CD.

Europe,"[42] deep clashes existed between inmates of different nationalities. Griffenheim hints at this in the song's second verse:

> You hear people talk differently here,
> Not only in the idiom, but also in meaning.
> The Dutch, the Danes and the Czech, and German,
> From Prague, Vienna and Berlin.[43]

Initially Griffenheim uses the song's title characters, the oxen, as impartial witnesses to such clashes, though the animals don't take sides. In the end, though, he calls for unity among the inmates, closing with the words, "Jews are we all, as the oxen, all are oxen." In this way, he reminds the audience that the Jews of the ghetto are one people, regardless of their nationality or spoken language.

The Libretti of Dr. Leo Strauss

In other cabaret music, the satire lies primarily in the text. Dr. Leo Strauss was a master of such statements, which he aimed directly at the Terezín inmates. In his song, *Als Ob* [As If], he collaborated with composer Willy Schwarz to demonstrate the very farce in which they themselves are participating: inmates gathering in cafes, listening to fine music and behaving as they had before the war. His lyrics depict an unknown, seemingly wonderful city which he names, "As If." While it first appears that Strauss is describing a dream city that he and the other inmates might inhabit one day, it soon becomes clear that he's speaking about Terezín itself:

> I know a lovely little town
> This town is really spiff
> The name I can't quite place for now
> I'll call the town, "as if."

[42] Ruth Schertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Limited, 1989): 4.
[43] Hope.

This town is not for everyone
This town's a special place
You've got to be a member of a special 'as if' race

The townsfolk are quite normal there
As if in life, forsooth!
They greet all rumors from outside
As if they are the truth…

They've even got a Kafeehaus!
With customers so toffee
Who sit and swap the latest tosh
By cups of 'as if' coffee.

At meal times what a queue for soup
They scramble round the pot
As if the water had some meat
As if the soup was hot.

At night they lie upon the ground
As if it was a bed
They dream of kisses, love bites – ow!
They've bugs and fleas instead.

They bear their burden with a smile
As if they knew no sorrow
And talk of future happiness
As if it were… tomorrow.[44]

As Cantor David Reinwald notes, the repetition of 'as if' likely refers to the Stanislavskian drama technique of the same name, with which Strauss (a man with significant background in theatre) was likely familiar. In Reinwald's words, this technique "helps actors manage a realistic portrayal of various activities, sometimes as simple as pretending to drink a cup of coffee." [45] While in a typical dramatic context this technique helps actors to effectively put themselves in imaginary circumstances, in Terezín, Strauss

[44] *Theatrical Performance During the Holocaust: Texts, Documents and Memoirs*, ed. Rebecca Rovit and Alvin Goldfarb. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999): 159-160.
[45] Reinwald, 50.

sees this as a delusion. While condemning those who participate in the 'as if' philosophy of life, Strauss acknowledges the importance of such a technique for psychological survival.

In two other selections, Strauss comments on life in Terezín by using the comic system of reversal, a method of comedy writing in which the author takes audience expectations and subverts them. For instance in the song, *Einladung* [Invitation], a singer demonstrates how better off the rest of the world would be if they lived in the ghetto, and invites them to do just that:

> Friends and loved ones, do you suffer
> From a life of want and fear?
> Things at home becoming tougher?
> Pack your bags and join me here.[46]

Though Strauss may make light of the difficult conditions in the ghetto with mockery and humor, in the very last stanza, he acknowledges the truth behind the silliness:

> Here's a wacky world of showbiz
> Full of laughter, fun and games.
> The only thing I'd like to know is:
> How we all get out again.[47]

Strauss expresses a similar sentiment in his well-known *Terezín-Lied* [Terezín Song]. Rather than utilizing original music, this song is a contrafact[48] on a melody from the 1924 operetta *Gräfin Mariza* [Countess Marissa] by Jewish and Hungarian composer, Emmerich Kálmán (1892-1953). Kálmán was one of Europe's leading composers of operetta and worked alongside Franz Lehar and Oskar Strauss in Vienna until he emigrated to the United

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[46] *Theatrical Performance During the Holocaust: Texts, Documents and Memoirs,* Rovit and Goldfarb, 143.
[47] Ibid. 144.
[48] The technique of reclaiming a piece of music by composing new lyrics to a pre-existing melody. Jazz musicians frequently use contrafact technique in a slightly different way by creating a new melody over a recognizable harmonic structure.

States to escape Nazi persecution. Interestingly, the Nazis banned his music after his emigration, yet through this contrafact, his melodies were still heard in Terezín.[49]

The *Gräfin Mariza* melody is taken from the song, *Komm mit nach Varasdin* [Come with Me to Varasdin] a song in which the leading man tries to woo his love interest into coming to his hometown, Varasdin. To adapt the song for Terezín, Strauss alters the text within the original rhyme scheme. For instance, he uses a clever rhyme to transform the opening verse of the refrain from *Komm mit nach Varasdin* to *Ja, wir in Terezín* [Yes, we in Terezín]. He also keeps pieces of the original intact, maintaining even more of an auditory link to the character and tone of high-class operetta. For instance, both the original and the contrafact begin with the text, "ich bitte nicht lachen" [please do not laugh], alerting listeners to the serious matter behind the façade of a familiar, comic melody:

> Yes, we in Terezín, we take quite easy,
> Because if it were different, it would be a disaster.
> There are beautiful women, it's a pleasure to view them.
> Therefore I really enjoy being in Terezín.
> I am free of any guilt and therefore have a lot of patience,
> Even when my heart is full of longing.
> Yes, we in Terezín, we take life quite easy and we love our little Terezín.

The musical evidence leads little doubt that humor functioned as one of many survival mechanisms in the ghetto. Jan Fischer, a survivor who was involved in the Terezín cabaret as an amateur and chose to pursue a career in theater after the war, reflects: "[Please] don't think there was sadness in the ghetto… the tougher the situation, the more you need humor."[50] At the same time, as demonstrated above, the humor in the Terezín cabarets was used not only to distract from, or deny, reality. The humor enabled inmates to poke fun at

[49] Reinwald, 72-73.
[50] Richard Krevolin and Nancy Cohen, *Making Light in Terezín: The Show Helps Us Go On.* (New York: Power Story Publishing, 2013), 45-46.

themselves; the satire of self-critique helped them to acknowledge and articulate the painful details of their lives. Surely, this is the antithesis of denial and proved, we hope, therapeutic.

Chapter Three
Libera Me, Domine

The music of Terezín also helped empower the Jewish inmates in spreading a message of defiance against their captors. While overt in some cases and concealed in others, the defiance of the Jews of Terezín infused them with hope, triumph and strength, and enabled them to endure amid seemingly unendurable conditions. This chapter will explore the ways in which musical experiences empowered performers and audience members alike, as seen through the narratives of Hans Krása's children's opera, *Brundibár*, and Raphael Schächter's controversial and tour-de-force performances of Giuseppe Verdi's *Messa da Requiem.*

Responding to the Nazis' Linguistic and Cultural Superiority

In order to understand the ways in which music could be a tool for defiance among the Jews in Terezín, one must understand the powerful role that language played in the ghetto. The Nazis fervently believed in the supremacy of German culture and language and instilled those values in their adherents throughout the war. Note, for instance, how the Nazis renamed the Czech town of Terezín as the German, Theresienstadt. Although they employed translators in many of the foreign lands they occupied, the Nazis present in Terezín, by and large, did not speak or understand a word of Czech, the language spoken by the majority of inmates.[51] Linguistic confusion was surely aggravated by what Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck called, "indiscriminately herding together disparate groups from every part of Europe."[52] Ironically, the clash of languages provided an opportunity for the Jewish inmates to use their "foreign"

[51] "Original Play Teaches Students about Holocaust," The Jewish Voice, accessed December 12, 2012. http://www.jvhri.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1285:original-play-teaches-students-about-holocaust&catid=41:community&Itemid=62
[52] Schertfeger, *Women of Theresienstadt*, 4.

tongue as a guise for defiance. Right under the Nazis' gaze, the musical performances at Terezín struck at the Nazis' sense of linguistic superiority.

Brundibár: The Children's Opera

One piece of music performed at the camp emerged long before the first transport of Jews reached Terezín. In 1938, the Czech Ministry of Education and Culture sponsored a competition for a children's opera. Among those vying for the prize was a 40-year-old Prague composer, Hans Krása (1899-1944), who partnered with the Czech leftist avant-garde librettist, Adolf Hoffmeister (1902-1973). Their entry was titled, *Brundibár*. The children's opera follows the adventures of two poor children who head to the market in hopes of buying milk for their sick mother, only to be thwarted by the evil organ grinder, Brundibár. After the title character torments the children, a herd of friendly animals befriends them, leading to a call to action and the defeat of Brundibár, as the children return home in triumph. While the composers submitted the opera to the Ministry of Education's competition, the Nazi race laws eventually barred the Jewish Krása from participation in such a contest and even congregating in public life.[53]

One of the places that the Jews of Prague did gather after being excluded from public life was a Jewish orphanage called *Hagibor* [The Courageous]. Its director, Rudolph Freudenfeld, was an avid music lover and worked to cultivate musical activities within the orphanage's walls. In July 1941, Freudenfeld celebrated his fiftieth birthday at a musical gathering whose guests included conductor Raphael Schächter,[54] composer Hans Krása,

[53] "Brundibár." Music of Remembrance: Ensuring that the Voices of Musical Witness Be Heard, accessed May 12, 2013. http://musicofremembrance.org/~musicofr/work/brundib%C3%A1r.
[54] Raphael Schächter (1905-1940) was a reknowned pianist and conductor in Prague before being transported to Terezín. Once in the ghetto, he was one of the leaders of all musical activity.

pianist Gideon Klein[55] and the Czech National Theater's stage director, Frantisek Zelenka[56]. It was at this gathering that Raphael Schächter proposed that the group take steps to mount the premiere of Krása's *Brundibár*.[57]

As the work began, Krása was transported to Terezín, and Freudenfeld's son, Rudolf Freudenfeld, Jr. took over the musical direction of the opera while Zelenka remained in charge of both stage direction and scenic design. His low-budget and inspired design included several posters with pictures of the different animals in the cast - all with cut-outs for the child actors to insert their heads where the animals' faces would ordinarily be.[58]

The opera was performed just three times before the Nazis rounded up both Freudenfelds, along with Zelenka and Gideon Klein, the accompanist.[59] It was Freudenfeld, Jr., however, who had the foresight to hide a copy of the opera's score in his luggage, which would later allow Krása to reconnect with his composition. Surrounded by inmates who were world-class musicians, Krása re-orchestrated the score for thirteen instruments and staged a new production cast with child-inmates in September 1943. The opera became a hit among the ghetto population. In fact, *Brundibár* saw more performances than any other opera in Terezín. The audience saw a modified version of the opera, as playwright Tony Kushner, who adapted *Brundibár* in 2003, noted, "the poet Emil Saudek wrote a new anthem for the opera's finale, emphasizing *Brundibár*'s political value as allegory--in photos of the

[55] Gideon Klein (1919-1945) was an extraordinarily gifted Czech pianist and composer of classical music. His compositions were both secular and Jewish in nature (see chapter two).
[56] Frantisek Zelenka (1904-1944) was amongst the most influential stage director and designers of Czech theatre. Trained as an architect, he went on to direct and design works of theatre ranging in style from Shakespearean to contemporary satire.
[57] Karas, *Music in Terezín 1941-1945*, 97.
[58] Ibid., 97.
[59] Ibid.

production the boy playing *Brundibár* is wearing a mustache, which, though more of the handle-bar than toothbrush variety, surely made its point."[60]

Despite such simple costumes and a cast of young amateurs, Dr. Kurt Singer[61] praised the opera's high level of artistry in the following review, which circulated in the ghetto:

> *Brundibár* shows how a short opera of today should look and sound, how it can unite the highest in artistic taste with originality of concept, and modern character with viable tunes.... In this little opera, born of a serious mind and yet so pleasant to the ear, idea and form, thought and preparation, concept and execution are joined in a fruitful marriage of mutual collaboration: Whether it be cast in a large or small form, whether it be song or symphony, chorus or opera, there can be no higher praise for a work of art.[62]

Ultimately, fifty-five performances of *Brundibár* are known to have been given in Terezín, more than any other opera in the ghetto.[63] The opera's popularity was surely due to factors beyond its cultural and entertainment value. The message of the seemingly innocent children's opera was loudly heard by inmates as one of liberation, empowerment and ultimate victory. As Karas eloquently put it:

> The children represented the hope for the future, while the story itself acquired a political connotation. The mean *Brundibár* personified evil. When the children started to sing the final chorus, *Brundibár [is] defeated, we got him already...*, there was no doubt in the minds of all present that they were singing about Hitler himself.[64]

Perhaps even more dramatic than the experience of those who attended a performance of Brundibár were the impressions on those children who performed in it. As one instance, Terezín survivor, Ela Weissberger, has devoted her life to speaking to children and adults

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Dr. Kurt Singer (1885-1944) was a Jewish musician, conductor, musicologist and neurologist. In Terezín, Singer wrote a variety of reviews of cultural events and concerts, aiming to hold the inmates to high artistic standards.
[62] Karas, *Music in Terezín 1941-1945*, 101.
[63] Ibid., 98.
[64] Ibid., 102.

about her experience playing the role of The Cat in the ghetto production of *Brundibár*. In a 2009 interview that aired on *60 Minutes*, she notes that performing was a liberating experience for her, if only for the costumes. "This was the only time they said we don't have to put on the Jewish star," she remarked. "[It was] a couple minutes of freedom."[65]

Weissberger wasn't alone. Apparently, most of the child actors were cognizant of the message of defiance they were putting forth. Eva Gross, a teacher for the young cast members, has remarked that the symbolism of the evil, mustached villain was not lost on the children. "The whole thing was symbolic," she notes. "*Brundibár* was Hitler... yes, [the children] knew."[66] Another member of the *Brundibár* ensemble, Hana Drori, claims that performing in *Brundibár* was "our way of fighting evil - the Germans."[67]

The message conveyed in *Brundibár* was not merely one of defiance but also of empowerment. Recalling the finale of the opera, Weissberger remembers:

> [The message of] the victory song was that we overcame Hitler. And we sang that with such energy... the audience was only 100 people in the room. They would stand and they would stamp their feet and clap and we would repeat [the song] until someone would come in and say, *it's 8 o'clock, we have to get out*... I always say that music was part of our lives there. It was part of the resistance against the Germans. We couldn't fight [any] differently.[68]

Giuseppe Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*

Following upon the success of *Brundibár*, pianist and conductor Raphael Schächter took further steps to facilitate experiences of defiance through music. In January 1942, amid

[65] "Brundibár: How the Nazis Conned the World." *60 Minutes*. CBS. 11 Feb. 2009. Television.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Weissberger, Ela, interviewed by Kenneth Aran, USC Shoah Foundation, 1997.

continued fear of transports to the East, Schächter began to assemble a chorus to prepare and eventually perform Giuseppe Verdi's masterwork, *Messa da Requiem.*

Among the most dramatic orchestral and vocal masterpieces of all time, Verdi's requiem was first performed on May 22, 1874 to mark the first anniversary of the death of Italian poet, Alessandro Manzoni. The requiem was originally conceived as a tribute to composer Gioachino Rossini after his death in 1868. The work was meant to be a compilation of sorts, with each section written by a different composer, culminating in the final *Libera Me* movement, which Verdi would write. Citing a lack of commitment from the other composers, however, conductor Angelo Mariani cancelled Rossini's requiem. It wasn't until the death of Verdi's literary hero, Manzoni, that he revived the project himself, including a slightly revised version of his original *Libera Me.* Following its premiere in 1874, the work was immediately hailed as a masterpiece and performed one after another in the world's leading music capitals to popular acclaim.[69]

Schächter's decision to perform the Verdi Requiem garnered significant attention, not merely because of the daunting task of preparing such a work. Outraged over the notion of Jews in the ghetto performing a Catholic mass, the Jewish Council of Elders[70] met with Schächter, warning him that they would be perceived as apologizing for being Jewish. They implored Schächter to direct his talents instead to mount one of the beautiful pieces of

[69] "The Verdi Requiem." San Francisco Opera, accessed: January 22, 2014. http://sfopera.com/Season-Tickets/2013-14-Season/The-Verdi-Requiem.aspx.
[70] The Jewish Council of Elders functioned as a self-governing authority of the ghetto, despite being completely beholden to the German authorities for implementing orders and making selections for the deportations. The Council organized municipal services, such as housing, sewage and sanitation, policing, and religious, judicial, and postal services.

classical music inspired by Jewish themes, which had been banned in all of occupied Europe.[71] But Schächter insisted on moving forward with his plans for the Verdi Requiem.

Just as *Brundibár* used the language barrier between the Nazis and ghetto inmates to enable an experience of defiance, Schächter utilized the Latin text of the mass as its own guise for a hidden meaning. Edgar Krasa, who was Schächter's close friend during their internment in Terezín, notes that the conductor's ultimate goal was to "transform [the requiem] from a mass for the dead into a mass for the dead Nazis."[72] Schächter wanted to "sing to the Nazis in Latin what he could never tell them in German - specifically, the [message of] *Dies Irae*, day of wrath, or *Liber Scriptus*, the book containing the names of all the sinners."[73] The message behind *this* requiem was clear: one day the Nazis would perish, they would meet their Maker, and they would be held accountable for their sins.

In July 1943, Schächter assembled a 150-person choir and began to teach the requiem by rote, giving the singers this powerful, hidden subtext as their charge. In order to facilitate a profound experience for the singers, Schächter prioritized their understanding of the text, alongside their musical mastery. Marianka May recalls:

> I had never in my life heard a requiem... I also didn't know more than two Latin words, and Rafi [Schächter] made sure that he would exactly translate into Czech the meaning of each word. Rafi told us the most important thing is how you feel when you sing this.[74]

Schächter realized that it was only through understanding the text in one's native language that the singer could successfully express the meaning of the requiem that he intended.

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[71] *Defiant Requiem*.
[72] *Defiant Requiem.*
[73] Susie Davidson, *The Music Man of Terezín: The Story of Rafael Schaechter as Remembered by Edgar Krasa* (Boston: Ibbetson Street Press, 2012), Kindle Edition.
[74] *Defiant Requiem.*

Maestro Murry Sidlin, Artistic Director of the Defiant Requiem Foundation[75], reinforced this point when he stated: "If you read the text as though you're a prisoner, then it has a different meaning altogether. Suddenly the *Libera Me* (which literally means *deliver me, O Lord*) now means *liberate me, O Lord*."[76]

While Schächter's translations of the requiem text certainly opened the possibility of an enhanced cognitive connection, there may have been something even deeper taking place. One might argue that on some subconscious level, this particular requiem resonated so strongly with the Jewish inmates because it contained within it hints of Jewish liturgical modes. In the final movement of the work, for instance, the soprano soloist and choir sing a beautiful a cappella chorale that appears to highlight *selicha* mode. This point in the score (fig. 1) can be understood as *selicha* mode in B-flat, as outlined in figure 2. While this appears similar to a simple B-flat minor modality, the top line (voiced by the soprano soloist when fully realized) descends in the final measure of this excerpt, moving from a G-flat to F-natural, and finally an E-natural. Upon arriving on the E-natural, Verdi highlights the raised 4th scale degree, a distinctive sound that those familiar with Jewish music might recognize as *selicha* mode:

[75] The Defiant Requiem Foundation is a non-profit organization that is devoted to preserving the memories of Raphael Schächter and all the Terezín inmates. The foundation has produced the feature film, The Defiant Requiem, as well as a multi-media concert event under the same name. The foundation has also developed an educational curriculum for Holocaust education and the Raphael Schächter Institute in Prague.
[76] *Defiant Requiem.*

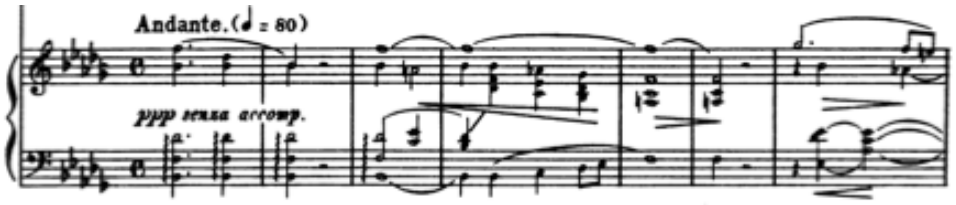

Figure 1. *Requiem, Libera Me* (measures 138-141)

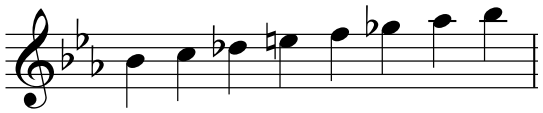

Figure 2. Selicha mode in Bb

Later in the very same movement, the music evokes *ahavah rabah*, a related liturgical mode. In focusing on the soprano choral line in this excerpt (fig. 3), one can see the sopranos oscillate between F-natural and E-natural (*dona eis)*, highlighting a minor-second interval and a resolution on E-natural. With the E-natural now as a home base, the ascending line that follows clearly outlines the *ahavah rabah* mode. On the text, *Eis Domine*, the soprano line moves from E-natural, to the lowered F-natural, then the raised G-sharp, and finally, the A-natural, highlighting the most opening pitches of the *ahavah rabah* mode (fig. 4).[77]

[77]Sharon Azriel, "The Mysterious Motives of Giuseppe Verdi: Four Short Essays on Judeo-Christian Motives and Moral Themes within the Music of Giuseppe Verdi." (Diss. University of Montreal, 2011): 37-40.

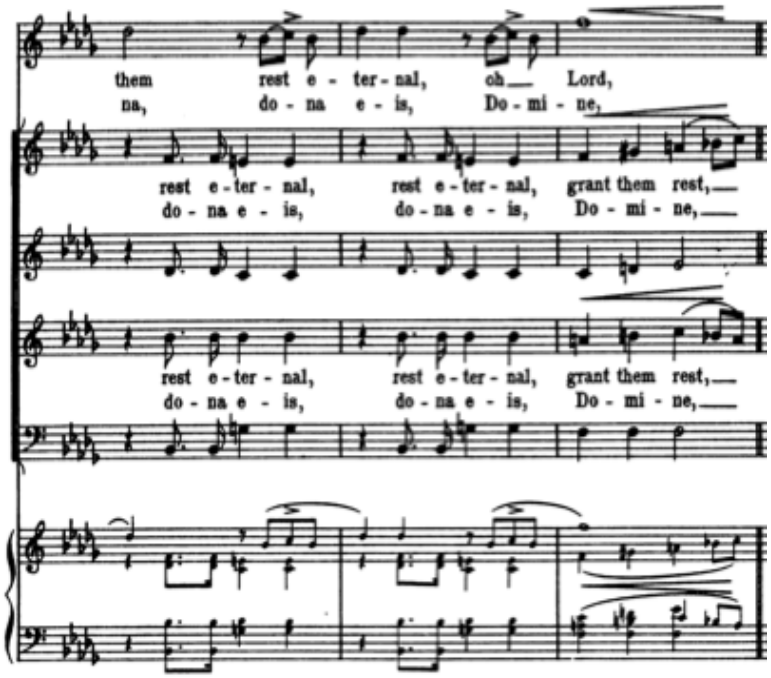

Figure 3. ***Messa da Requiem, Libera Me*** **(measures 142-144)**

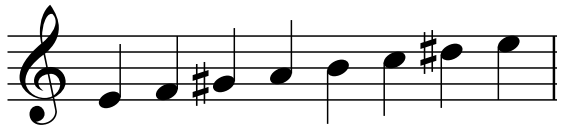

Figure 4. ***Ahavah rabah*** **mode in E-natural**

In September 1943, it was announced that 5,000 inmates would be transported to the east. In the wake of this devastating news, after just six weeks of rehearsals, Schächter announced that his choir would present a performance of the requiem while the choir was still intact. This performance, which was attended by original detractors such as music critic, Dr. Kurt Singer, composer Viktor Ullmann and the entire Jewish Council of Elders, was considered a "rousing success."[78] Singer, who was so often critical of the musical culture in Terezín, hailed the requiem in his *Belated Glosses to Verdi's Requiem* as a "performance of a

[78] Davidson, *The Music Man of Terezín: The Story of Rafael Schaechter as Remembered by Edgar Krasa*, Kindle Edition.

big-city standard."[79] While Schächter certainly maintained high musical standards for his choir, he continued to focus on their *experience* of singing the masterwork, which in this case, appears to have been transformative. Hana Karas explains: "It was tremendous and I still don't understand it. There was only a piano but for me, it was like a whole orchestra played. It made us feel human."[80] Marianka May expands on those words, saying:

> This room became the protective walls of something good, something meaningful, something healing and something that showed everyone who was listening that Rafi had put all of us... in another world. This was not the world of the Nazis. This was our world.[81]

As transports to the east resumed, Schächter over and again refilled and retaught choirs, offering a total of fifteen performances. One such performance took place during a visit by the International Red Cross. For this visit, which the international community had long requested, the Nazis transformed Terezín into a beautiful, idyllic town - a propaganda stunt meant to show the world how well the Jews were being treated. In advance of the beautification, the Nazis deported several thousand inmates to Auschwitz, creating more space in the ghetto. They cleaned the streets, erected a community hall, built theaters, a children's home, a playground and a café. Chava Kisler recalls that "all the streets and footpaths were scrubbed and facades of buildings were painted, but only on the commission's choreographed route."[82] As a crucial part of this visit, Schächter and his choir were to perform the requiem in a gala concert, hosted by Adolph Eichmann and additional high-ranking Nazi officials.

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[79] Karas, *Music in Terezín 1941-1945*,140.
[80] *Defiant Requiem.*
[81] *Defiant Requiem.*
[82] *Ghetto Theresienstadt: Deception and Reality,* dir. Irmgard von zur Mühlern, Pegasus Entertainment, 2006.

The fact that Schächter was taking part in such a farce mattered far less to him than the great potential of what was possible in this concert.[83] Up to this point, Schächter's charge had been merely theoretical; the choir had never had an opportunity to *actually* sing their message of defiance directly to Nazi officials. This performance, however, transformed the abstract into a profound reality. After simply instructing his singers to "let them have it,"[84] Schächter led his choir onto the stage, where they sang their message of defiance loudly and clearly to Eichmann and other high-ranking Nazi officials. Looking directly into their eyes, the Jews stood before the Nazis and sang to them what they could never say. Marianka May describes the experience:

> We proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that yes, they have our bodies. Yes, they took our names and gave us numbers. But they don't have our souls, or our minds, or our beings. What we are cannot be taken away. Not yet.[85]

Indeed, this performance of the requiem was the choir's last. Schächter and all members of this particular choir were transported to Auschwitz shortly after the International Red Cross' visit.

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The experiences of performing in the Terezín productions *Brundibár* and Verdi's Messa da Requiem appear to have been utterly transformational for those involved. The impact these experiences, however, speaks to something much larger than Terezín; these performances not only demonstrated music's ability to lift the soul, but also it's ability to

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[83] *Defiant Requiem.*
[84] Davidson, *The Music Man of Terezín: The Story of Rafael Schaechter as Remembered by Edgar Krasa,* Kindle Edition.
[85] *Defiant Requiem.*

transform. While the voices of young and talented children expressed the exuberance of triumph over tragedy, they also revealed music's ability to create hope in the face of despair. While Schächter's chorus of inmates sent a powerful message of defiance to their Nazi captors, they also demonstrated music's ability to transport those who are suffering to another world, transforming their existence in monumental ways. These inmates revealed something extraordinarily powerful about music; they demonstrated that in performing beautiful music, filled with layers upon layers of meaning, they had the power to transform their grim reality into one in which they had voices, power and in which justice could be done.

CONCLUSION

While the notion of spiritual resistance is both uplifting and powerful, it is often difficult to prove as a demonstrable factor that contributed to survival in the ghettos and camps of World War Two. A distinction should be made, however, between ghettos like Terezín and many of the Nazi concentration camps. Although there was a crematorium at Terezín[86], mass killings did not occur there. Dr. Jennie Goldenberg notes that survival in such camps was due to "luck, miracles, and random circumstance or chance."[87] But the leading causes of death at Terezín were malnutrition and disease. In this context, inner strength, fortitude and spiritual resistance played significant roles in the inmates' ability to survive.

Evidence demonstrates that Raphael Schächter, Gideon Klein, Viktor Ullmann and others sensed this as they led the musical activities in Terezín. They understood that music could unite a community of inmates, allowing them to empower themselves by redefining Jewish identity in their own terms. In using music to reclaim Jewish religion, language and culture, these inmates (including even those who may not have previously identified as Jews) took their Jewish heritage - the very reason for their oppression - and transformed it into something empowering and beautiful. Music allowed them to give voice (quite literally) to the difficult realities of their lives. They employed light-hearted cabaret, as a vehicle for satire; by playing with the relationship between music and text, they expressed their deep

[86] The Terezín crematorium was only built in order to dispose of the bodies of all those who had died from disease.
[87] Jennie Goldenberg. "Explanations for Survival by Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust: Exploring the 'Hows' and the 'Whys' – the Means and the Meaning," in *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution.* (Berlin: Secolo Ferlag, 2005): 531.

pain and made it more bearable. Musical language provided them with a unique conceptual weapon: they could sing a message of defiance directly to their Nazi captors.

While Schächter and others may have intuited this, it is unlikely that they actively understood what we know today from a scientific perspective: participating in the creation of beautiful music mitigated the inmates' pain and reduced their suffering. Glenn Fox, a Ph.D. candidate at the Brain and Creativity Institute at University of Southern California, reflects on the brain activity that likely occurred when inmates were creating and performing music:

> You'll have a release of drugs known as endogenous opiates… pain-relieving drugs. What happens is that your brain is actually capable of creating many of these chemicals by itself, and when you're watching a creative work—when you're looking at art, when you're looking at dance—and you're feeling good about watching this, your brain will actually create these chemicals and will, quite literally, reduce the pain, the physical pain that you are feeling, as a result of watching [these performances]… And the body's response to this stress would be marked by the release of a number of chemicals, notably cortisol and adrenaline, that when released into the body will literally take brain resources away from normal neuronal function and reroute them into other parts of the body. So, when they… watch these plays and performances, their brain chemical state will change such that new other chemicals, such as dopamine and the endogenous opiates, endorphins, will be released and will actually counteract the bad physical effects of the cortisol and the adrenaline that were coming as a result of the trauma. So they will feel, quite literally, a change in their body state as a result of watching these performances.[88]

When the compelling narratives behind the music of Terezín are paired with the scientific evidence that Fox presents, one understands how crucial music was to the inmates' survival. This is represented in Marianka May's recollection: "I think my stomach stopped growling when I started singing."[89] Beyond the fact that the music brought the inmates together, lifted their spirits and offered a means of empowerment, it apparently went a step further: reducing the physical affects of their trauma and helping them to survive.

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[88] Krevolin and Cohen, *Making Light in Terezín: The Show Helps Us Go On*, 134.
[89] *Defiant Requiem*.

This study focused on the Terezín ghetto as a lens for exploring the extraordinary power of music. The melodies of Terezín contain the legacies and memories of their composers, performers and audience members alike, but they also carry within them the message of music's profound ability to empower the oppressed, unite a community and restore both the spirit **and** the body. As we continue to study, perform and hear the music that these inmates composed and took into their souls, we are reminded not only of its power to alter the existence of a generation of ghetto inmates; more potently, we are reminded of music's potential to transform the lives of individuals and communities in all circumstances and in all generations.

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