TEACHING FROM "SUM TOTAL:" COMMEMORATING THE HOLOCAUST THROUGH CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE

There is divine beauty in learning just as there is human beauty in tolerance. To learn means to accept the postulate that life did not begin at my birth. Others have been here before me, and I walk in their footsteps. The books I have read were composed by generations of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, teachers and disciples. I am the sum total of their experiences, their quests. And so are you.

Elie Wiesel[1]

In recent years, calls to address racism and inequity have been amplified across our country; and institutions of higher learning, in particular, have given pause to reflect on their role as educators toward justice, tolerance, and parity. Great strides have been made to uncover the accouterments of established racism that has bristled in colleges and universities for decades.[2] These calls urge higher education leaders to define and understand racism, defend and empower its victims, and develop institutional accountability and periodic reviews.[3] While numerous higher education institutions pledge for racial equity[4], reevaluate and reshape their teaching curriculum, this paper begs leaders in performing arts higher institutions to consider the performance of music emerged from marginalized and oppressed people during the Holocaust as means to commemorate, combat various forms of racism, and preserve history while educating students and local communities about music born of struggle.

The recent (2021) music program at Christopher Newport University[5] serves as a touchstone for this exploration, as emblematic of universities' best

[1] Elie Wiesel, "Have you learned the Most Important Lesson of All?" *Parade Magazine* 24 (1992): 4-5.

[2] Council for Higher Education Accreditation, "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement," *CHEA*, May 3, 2021, https://www.chea.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/DEI-Value-Statement-May-2021.pdf

[3] Kseniia Pirnavskaia and Cornelius Kalenzi, "3 Vital Steps for Uprooting Racism on University Campuses," *World Economic Forum*, Sept. 7, 2021, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/09/racism-university-higher-education. One of many articles that emerged in 2021 to address specific inequities in higher education. Published in the *World Economic Forum*, researchers at the *KAIST-Korea Policy Center for the Fourth Industrial Revolution* stress the imperative that university campuses take immediate steps toward uprooting racism.

[4] Oyin Adedoyin, "How can Colleges Advance Pledges of Racial Equity? A New Report Suggests Strategies," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Nov. 17, 2021, https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-can-colleges-advance-pledges-of-racial-equity-a-new-report-suggests-strategies

[5] Christopher Newport University (Virginia), Department of Theater and Dance, "Reflections of the Holocaust," *OperaCNU*, Nov. 4-7, 2021, https://cnu.edu/reflectionsevent/

practices for espousing thoughtful, communal experience by showcasing music of oppressed peoples across learner levels and orientation. By engaging several academic departments, local community, and other regional organizations, such programs support an important task - specifically, the endeavor to safeguard and perform music composed during the Holocaust, and within the curriculum, explore antiracist instruction, composition, and performance on campus and beyond. Harvesting lessons learned from the recent *OperaCNU*, *TheatreCNU*, and *The Virginia Children's Chorus* production during November 2021, this paper explores selected compositions borne from repressed composers and artists across a spectrum of time, and considers the cultural and sociopolitical import of teaching and performing such music as a way to bring together individuals from diverse communities to the concert hall, and for a brief moment in time, come together as one supportive community.

Prelude

Christopher Newport University, November 2021

Hundreds of people from the peninsula of Newport News, Virginia gathered to remember and reflect upon the events of the Holocaust as Christopher Newport University played host to four evenings of performance involving two successional operas: *Brundibár*[i] and *The Trial of God*. *Brundibár*, a children's opera by Hans Krásа[ii] (a Prague composer of Jewish descent who was murdered during the Holocaust at Auschwitz) featured first, immediately followed (no intermission) by a locally-commissioned operatic composition[iii] of Elie Wiesel's 1979 play.[6] Several local organizations participated in sponsoring this series[iv], which included art exhibits, guest lectures, and musical performances throughout the 2021 fall semester.[v] The idea to bring *Brundibár* to the local stage was introduced to Professor Mark Reimer of CNU, two years prior to its production, at the suggestion of an Israeli colleague who had just conducted it abroad. Shortly afterwards, program administrators and faculty across multiple academic departments began devoting many months of coordinated effort and visionary leadership to bring the ideas into implementation, and commemorate the musical and literary resistance that arose from Terezin and Auschwitz, to Newport News Virginia's Christopher Newport University.

How History Unfolds into Music and Song

Brundibár in Prague & Terezín (1938-1944)

There are many ways to tell a story of persistence amidst harsh circumstances in the camps, and *Brundibár* is an excellent example of a resistance and survival story. Of all musical works composed and performed by artists incarcerated in concentration camps during the Holocaust, *Brundibár*, an

[6] Elie Wiesel, *The Trial of God (as it was held on February 25, 1649, in Shamgorod* (New York: Random House, 1979).

expression in the form of opera, made for children and performed by children, carries a unique testimony and orientation. At the heart of this piece is the fact that children, the most innocent and vulnerable of all, were victimized by perpetrators. The opera's composer, Hans Krása, was an established, award-winning Czechoslovakian composer whose prominence reached the United States in the first half of the twentieth century and his music was performed by the Boston Symphony[7]. It was from Krása's 1938 collaboration with Adolf Hoffmeister, a social activist, poet, and illustrator that this protest-opera originated.[8]

Brundibár premiered in Nazi-occupied Prague and was performed by the children of a Jewish orphanage on Belgicka Street[9]. The performance was followed by another in 1942, with mass deportations of Bohemian and Moravian Jews to Terezín. In 1943, a copy of *Brundibár's* score was smuggled into the camp. Krása, who was deported there, re-orchestrated the score for the musicians able to play, and it premiered in Terezín on September 23, 1943, in the hall of the Magdeburg Barracks.[10] The opera was so popular in Terezín that it was later staged for the purposes of Nazi propaganda in a film[vi] produced and directed by Kurt Gerron in 1944. Later that year, it was performed for the 55th time during an inspection of the camp by the International Red Cross.[11] A few weeks after, in October 1944, a mass deportation of Terezín prisoners to Auschwitz and other camps in the East marked the ending of *Brundibár*'s production and the death of many of its performers and musicians including its beloved composer, Hans Krása.[12]

Brundibár Today

Brundibár is a universal story of hope, survival, and communal support. It is a composition that can be performed anywhere in the world and carry a resounding, wide-ranging message of encouragement, trust, love of community, unified purpose, and triumph. Both meaningful and malleable, it is an asset for music departments seeking to stage inspiring compositions of resiliency, empathy, community engagement, and drama. The orchestration is minimal and easily adaptable for various ensembles, depending on the scope and aptitude of a music program orchestra. The opera serves as a perfect educational platform today, just as it was in the Prague orphanage and Terezín concentration camp so many years ago. It is a tale about a poor family and a testament to the power

[7] Jože Karas, *Music in Terezin* 1941-1945 (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2008), 103-110.
[8] Ibid., 93.
[9] Joseph Toltz, "Brundibár: Introduction and Brief History," *Music and the Holocaust*. https://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/brundibar/
[10] Karas, 93.
[11] Ibid., 98.
[12] Ibid., 110.

of teamwork and communal support. The main characters are siblings, Aninka and Pepíček, whose mother is sick. The children go on a journey to the town's marketplace to look for milk (prescribed by the doctor) that might save their mother. Unfortunately, they lack the money needed to purchase the milk. Then they notice *Brundibár*, the old organ grinder who plays at the street corner and receives coins. They, too, begin to sing in hopes of earning milk-money, but they are unsuccessful. No one listens to them and *Brundibár* chases them away. Three animals arrive to their rescue: a sparrow, a cat, and a dog. The animals help recruit other children to join in Aninka and Pepíček's choir. The following morning, all the children and animals begin vibrant communal singing. Their beautiful songs endear the support of townsfolk and Aninka and Pepíček have the money for milk. Suddenly, *Brundibár* sneaks in to steal it. All the children and animals chase him to recover the milk money. The story concludes in a victory song about conquering the wicked *Brundibár*.[13]

Pedagogical Possibilities of Testimony & Witnessing

What kind of testimony does this opera give its listeners, and what kind of significance can it hold within music programming in higher education? Dr. Kurt Singer, a Berlin-born musicologist deported to Terezín (and who died there in 1944), published one of the first demonstrations of *Brundibár's* pedagogical possibilities and advocated for the study and performance of the opera:

> *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. We have here a theme which has appeal for children and grown-ups alike, a moral plot motif recalling the old fairy tales, popular singing kept simple in choral sections but occasionally becoming quite complex in duets and trios, and a sensitive balance of dynamics maintained between a dozen instruments and three dozen singers. We have also a Czech national coloration, music-making without recourse to modern experimentation (at which Krása is a master), a clever balance of scenic effects between the orchestra pit and the stage, an orchestra used with taste and economy and a singing line which is never obscured or smothered by the instruments…. 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

[13] Sofia Pantouvaki, "Repetition and Performance: The Case of Children's Opera Brundibar Today," *Repeat Conference, Centre for Practice as Research in the Arts*, 2007: 2. http://www.cpara.co.uk/events/repeatrepeat/embodiment.html

> or symphony, chorus or opera, there can be no higher praise for a work of art.[14]

Singer's review of the opera could not be more timely or relevant today.

Many of Terezín's children were murdered in the Holocaust, as was composer Krása and many of *Brundibár's* performers. What we are left with is the spirited testimony of musical resistance from the depths of Hell. When those children could not express their agony in words – could not fight their outrageous circumstance in action – they chose to sing.

Figure 1. *Brundibár* cast in the Terezín concentration camp.[15] (Photograph property of the Jewish Museum in Prague https://www.jewishmuseum.cz/)

Brundibár is a simple story with powerful meaning. It is about hope and social justice, and as such, it provided solace and ephemeral comfort to those enjoying its performance, as well as to those endeavoring to bring it to life. Today, it endows audiences with much of the same, albeit from a contemporary perspective: an allegorical telling of victory over a tyrant; music that is approachable, memorable, and enjoyable; and an orchestration that is delicate and challenging enough to provide entertainment for sophisticated

[14] Karas, 99.

[15] Tereza Štěpková, "Brundibár," *Institut Terezínské Iniciativy*, Aug. 21, 2011. https://www.holocaust.cz/en/history/events/brundibar/

and inexperienced ears alike. This testimony – and its witnessing by both music students and general audiences – is aligned with learning objectives and civic engagement initiatives commonly charted in music curricula and program accreditations, and can make for rich and robust discourse in the classroom and beyond it.

Teaching the historical events of the Holocaust and its artistic reverberations is critical at this time. Often, music generated out of oppressive and discriminatory circumstance (political or otherwise) is a survival tool, a form of physical and spiritual resistance. Performing arts leaders in colleges and universities are continuously tasked with developing novel ways for inclusion. While institutional efforts continue on a trajectory toward promoting inclusion and equity, arts administrators know that musical multiculturalism and diversity allow for a deeper understanding of aesthetics, authenticity, and values. And yet, hate crimes (particularly antisemitism) continue to rise[16]. Recent surveys, too, have shown an alarming lack of knowledge about the Holocaust,[17] suggesting significant unfamiliarity with the kind of delegitimizing behavior that can lead to genocidal atrocities of a most horrific scale. The musical perspective is a multisensory approach to teaching about humanity and inhumanity, and compositions such as *Brundibár* provide testimony to the experience and legacy of those whose lives were brutally cut short. Music leaders in higher education might embrace works like *Brundibár* (or one of the many others composed in Nazi-occupied Europe) and promote their performances beyond campus community.

CNU's 2021 production of *Brundibár* (see fig. 2 & 3) gave audiences the opportunity to explore an artistic response (sound and text) to struggles endured by its composer and original cast. How can millennial audiences possibly understand what Hans Krása, and his child-performers encountered while imprisoned? Those who came to observe these performances listened to the music as a story told in sound - collective testimony in song - and, for a brief moment in time, personally communicated with and connected to what might have otherwise remained a remote and "other-person's" history.

[16] Avi Mayer, "Hate is on the Rise: Antisemitism Surges on America's Far Left and Far Right," *USA Today*, Oct. 26, 2021, https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2021/10/26/antisemitism-rises-far-left-and-right/6138796001/?gnt-cfr=1

[17] Conference on Jewish Material Claims against Germany, Inc. (Claims Conference), "First-ever 50-State Survey on Holocaust Knowledge of American Millennials and Gen Z Reveals Shocking Results," *Claims Conference*, Sept. 16, 2020, https://www.claimscon.org/millennial-study/

Figure 2. Virginia Children's Chorus performing *Brundibár* at Peebles Theatre, Nov. 4, 2021. Photograph by Ryan Bible, Lecturer of Lighting and Sound, Christopher Newport University

Figure 3. Virginia Children's Chorus performing *Brundibár* at Peebles Theatre, Nov. 4, 2021. Photograph by Ryan Bible, Lecturer of Lighting and Sound, Christopher Newport University

The Art of Musical Resistance
Musicians in Terezín

When it came to spiritual and artistic resistance, Terezín was like no other. Less than an hour drive north of Prague, the Terezín camp and ghetto (also known as, *Theresienstadt*) served several purposes during the Second World War. It was a fortress town repurposed in 1941 by the Schutzstaffel (or, the SS). With an adjacent prison, Terezín functioned as both a concentration camp (receiving 144,000 deportees bound for labor camps and the gas chambers of Auschwitz) and a retirement settlement for older Jews, many of whom were successful and quite prominent. Jews from across Europe arrived in its first year. Unlike other camps, which were more transient, Terezín inmates were held for longer periods of time before ultimately sent out to other sites. Because of this, the camp was able to establish its own community, with its own administrative practices, and committees to help create and encourage a rich cultural life there. This life included numerous concert performances, lectures, and education programs for children and adults. It was all part of the collective consciousness and intention of prisoners to make their lives worth living, enriched with spiritual and intellectual significance.[18] *Brundibár* was not the only opera performed in Terezín. In fact, camp prisoners enjoyed several operas composed and produced within its walls. Among these is Bedřich Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, a comic opera inspired by the folk traditions of his Czechoslovakian village. This three-act opera featuring Czech songs and dances brought "home" to the incarcerated prisoners, who longed so desperately to return. Other repertory favorites in this genre included Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *The Magic Flute*, *La Serva Padrona* by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Puccini's *Tosca*, and Bizet's *Carmen*. Perhaps the most notable Terezín opera, on par with *Brundibár* for younger audiences, is Viktor Ullmann's *The Emperor of Atlantis,* composed and rehearsed there but never performed because the singers and musicians were all sent to the Auschwitz gas chambers before its debut. Years of incarceration in Terezín are reflected in Ullman's reflections on the spiritual and mental significance of making music there:

> *It must be emphasized that Theresienstadt has served to enhance, not to impede, my musical activities, that by no means did we sit weeping on the banks of the waters of Babylon, and that our endeavor with respect to arts was commensurate with our will to live. And I am convinced that all those who, in life and in art, were fighting to force form upon resisting matter, will agree with me*.[19]

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[18] Hans Günther Adler and Jeremy Adler, *Theresienstadt* 1941-1945: *The Face of a Coerced Community* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 517.

[19] Rachel Bergman, "Creativity in Captivity: Viktor Ullmann's 'Der Kaiser von Atlantis'," *Opera Journal* 38, no. 2 (2005): 3-19.

Today, Ullmann's *Emperor* is revitalized in music departments and community theaters across the country.

Reviving Testimonies through Music
Elie Wiesel's *The Trial of God*

While CNU's 2021 production of *Brundibár* gave audiences a light-hearted and hopeful show of triumph, its subsequent opera invited viewers to consider a world apart – a dark, pessimistic survivor's view of life and torturous doubt. The idea to adapt Elie Wiesel's play, *The Trial of God* (based on Wiesel's experience in Auschwitz) to music, came from a community member, Professor Theodore Reiff, who established the Reiff Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution at Christopher Newport University in 2013. Professor Reiff's idea was set in motion when CNU reached out to Andrew Scott Bell, a successful LA-based film composer and notable alumnus, and Professor Jason Carney from CNU's English department. Engaging these two young artists in the work of preserving memory and testimony of the Holocaust resulted in the opera entitled *The Trial of God*. In the opera, Scott Bell and Carney reflect upon the testimony of a broken man who has lost his family, community, and former life. The program's listeners experienced a chasmic shift from a child's hope to an adult's despair. Alone, Wiesel's play raises existential questions about the human condition and the resilience of a man (how far can a man can go in challenging long-cherished religious and cultural beliefs?), but in contrast to Krása's childlike reverie, the succeeding work comes to stage as a shock.

Sixteen-year-old Elie Wiesel was in Auschwitz when he witnessed three Jewish scholars put God on trial. The verdict finds God guilty of crimes against creation and humankind. After announcing the decision, there is silence, and as evening approaches, all members go off to pray the Jewish evening prayer, *Maariv*, in the evening service. Wiesel remembers this while contemplating questions of his own as to why God allowed such catastrophic human suffering. Wiesel takes his audience through his childhood experiences during the invasion and later as an imprisoned teen in Auschwitz, further into the broken hearts of destroyed and shattered Jewish towns across Europe. *Shamgorod*, the village at the heart of Wiesel's play, could be any town destroyed at the hand of an enemy throughout the course of world history; therefore, its local performance is relevant and timely, especially transforming his testimonial reflection into a story told in sound under the superior craftsmanship of both Scott Bell and Carney. Central to Wiesel's subjective and objective inquiry are questions anyone, in any town, might ask. Why did God allow entire communities to be destroyed? Why did children die, why were women raped, and why were whole towns and villages slaughtered? The opera, as the play, does not provide the answers to

these questions; rather, through Wiesel's historic text, Scott Bell and Carney give voice to his inner thoughts and questions to continue the skillful crafting of his characters through new lyrical and rhythmic content. To a modern audience perhaps unfamiliar with Wiesel's experience, this opera offers yet another opportunity to listen, commemorate, and better understand the effects of the Holocaust through the sung dialogues and testimonies, thus providing an invaluable contribution to learning about the holocaust through music listening.

The setting of the opera, as the play, is a fictional ruin. Shamgorod is a Jewish town in Europe prior to the war. Its name divides into two languages: *sham* in Hebrew means *there*, and *gorod* in Russian means *town*. Characters too, dressed in seventeenth-century style, bring the modern audience promptly into collective, imaginative reckoning: *Inside the kingdom of night, I witnessed a strange trial. Three Rabbis – all erudite and pious men – decided one winter evening to indict God for allowing his children to be massacred. I remember: I was there, and I felt like crying. But there nobody cried.*

Wiesel, followed by Scott Bell's musical setting, and Carney's libretto take audiences back to 1649, after a pogrom where death has triumphed. The annihilated village is buried in dust and darkness. Only a few people survive, and they sit alone in an inn where many atrocities took place. The rabbis Wiesel witnessed in the camp are now three fictional minstrels in the play: Mendel, Avrémel, and Yankel. They all seem unaware and disconnected, both physically and viscerally, to the atrocities that took place in the town. Other characters include Berish, the innkeeper, who is sorrowful and angry. He lost his entire family with the exception of his daughter, Hanna, who has been raped for hours by an angry mob. Berish was forced to watch this and is now witness to her transformation as a weak, disconnected, and fragile woman. Maria, a servant at the inn, is a humiliated soul as well. A Russian orthodox priest who attempts to direct Berish and his daughter to the Cross in an attempt to save them from another massacre. The minstrels come to the inn, hoping to exchange some laughter and play for food, but as soon as they realize that there are no Jews left in the town and witness the angry and mournful state of Berish, they decide (in minstrel fashion) to put God on trial. Finally, audiences are given Sam, a satanic character who does not reveal his identity and who, it seems, is vaguely familiar to each character on stage. He is slippery and ubiquitous; his presence perhaps felt in other fallen towns. Sam comes in, calculatingly defending God, in what feels like another diabolic act. His character is corrupt and destructive.

Throughout the opera, questions are loud and persistent. The power of God is doubted and Jewish tradition – long-told and cherished by generations for thousands of years – is questioned. Audiences are tested of sacred understandings and cultural identifications in ways that are challenging and at times offensive. Through the character of Berish, provocative questions that

challenge Jewish tradition and years of faith, practice, and religious tradition are presented, asking audiences to reflect, evaluate, and reconsider their beliefs in light of this event. This is a single testimony made up of many stories, meant to prod and poke at established and dearly-held views of past and present.

Through lyrical and textual depths, Andrew Scott Bell and Jason Carney transform Wiesel's thematic elements to bring the story into fresh and clear relief, such that its essence occupies the stage in ways that help us picture this testimony in our minds and through our senses.

Lessons Learned and Future Possibilities

CNU's recent production of *Brundibár* and the *Trial of God* serves a constant reminder to other institutions, on the essential role that music programs in higher education institutions hold when they collectively collaborate toward projects that embark on the celebration of human rights. Lessons learned from this, and other performances would reach a wide-range of learners where they are; rather than slow-based, didactic lecturing or disassociate texts, music penetrates layers of human existence beyond the factual level, and transcendent of space and time.[20] Student and college-town communities can learn about these events together through generative listening practice outside the familiar, self-identified contexts of age, culture, and ethnicity.

It was therefore unfortunate that due to restrictions made by Elie Wiesel's estate, CNU's production of *The Trial of God*, was not permitted to be recorded or shared publicly in any capacity, and as a result, this unique, real-time theatrical experience was unfortunately short-lived. The musical setting gave Wiesel's textual testimony life through Andrew Scott Bell's mastery composition and Jason Carney's unswerving libretto. Wiesel's work, transformed into an operatic form also gave fresh new voice to young performers, and listening opportunities to audiences that would have never experienced these testimonies otherwise. And yet, the experience was to be held and hallowed within the theater walls. The end of the final show on November 8th, 2022, marked the End - leaving no remnant or digital imprint of this commemoration. A lesson to be learned in this experiment: future interpretations and derivatives are unencumbered by previous performances, or otherwise composed contingent on further performance and reproductions thus allowing the content to carry on perpetually refreshed, reinterpreted and appreciated anew.

Fruitful Partnerships Among Diverse Organizations

Within the past few decades, various higher education institutions and

[20] Rebecca Rovit, "The 'Brundibár' Project: Memorializing Theresienstadt Children's Opera," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 22, no. 2 (2000): 111-122. http://www.dx.doi.org/10.2307/3245896

local performing arts organizations programmed *Brundibár* solely, or along with other smaller-scale works. Some paired *Brundibár* with short works previously composed by marginalized composers, while others paired it with newly commissioned works by living composers inspired by the events of the Holocaust. One important lesson to be learned from all past productions was the fact that all savored considerable support and partnership from local organizations, Jewish federations, and private donors. Such partnerships proved to be fruitful and productive thus promoting the educational goals of the music.

One such 2011 production by the University of Kentucky Opera, centered *Brundibár* at its heart, and enjoined by Holocaust survivor Ela Weissberger, a child performer from the original cast in Terezin.[21] Later that year, assisted by the University of Kentucky Opera, the Philharmonic orchestra in Evansville, Indiana partnered with *Cypress*, a local committee promoting respect in schools and jointly produced *Brundibár*. The Evansville production too, invited Ela Weissberger as its guest. Evansville's production too, was assisted by Richard Kagey who served as the set designer for the University of Kentucky Opera.[22] Another *Brundibár* production in Indiana (2016) was made possible by a local non-profit theatre in Bloomington, producing *Brundibár* along with Tony Kushner's curtain raiser: *But the Giraffe*.[23] This production too conducted a collaboration between Stages Bloomington and the Jewish Theatre of Bloomington. [24]

Other endeavors to commemorate the Holocaust through *Brundibár* include the 2014 Cincinnati Chamber Opera. Accompanied by the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, this production paired *Brundibár* with *Der Kaiser Von Atlantis* (*The Emperor of Atlantis*), another widely performed opera, also composed in Terezin by imprisoned composer Viktor Ullmann who collaborated there with the young Jewish poet and artist Petr Kien. *The Emperor of Atlantis* perfectly fits within a performance program for its approximately one-hour length, and compelling parallel to *Brundibár*.[25] Comparably to CNU and others, Cincinnati's production too, was made possible due to support from local organizations such as the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, Arts Wave Cincinnati, and the Holocaust and Humanity Center.[26]

Upcoming 2022 productions of *Brundibár* include the Indianapolis Opera

[21] An appearance by one of the production's original performers, Holocaust survivor Ela Weissberger.
[22] Roger Mcbain, "'Brundibar' leaves storybook look behind for concentration camp reality," *Courier and Press*. https://archive.courierpress.com/features/brundibar-leaves-storybook-look-behind-for-concentration-camp-reality-ep-445605631-324689551.html/
[23] Tony Kushner. "But the Giraffe." The Virginia Quarterly Review. Fall 2006, Volume 82. Published September 17, 2006. https://www.vqronline.org/play/giraffe
[24] Stages Bloomington, https://www.stagesbloomington.org/brundibar
[25] Orchestral and vocal scores by Eulenburg publishers widely available for purchase especially from Schott Music Website (www.schott-music.com)
[26] Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, https://jewishcincinnati.org/calendar/community-calendar/theresienstadt-opera- project.

Company whose main mission is to "educate, inspire and entertain through the creation and presentation of musical storytelling for our diverse Hoosier community." [27] As such, the Indianapolis opera programmed Brundibár along with composer Lori Laitman's *Vedem*, a theatrical oratorio describing events experienced in Terezin by a group of imprisoned boys who founded an underground newspaper of poetry and essays titled: *Vedem* (translated from Czech: "In the Lead").[28]

Postlude

As the Christopher Newport University community gathered to share four evenings of opera, it witnessed together the shared testimony of Holocaust victims through the lens of Hans Krása, Adolf Hoffmeister, and Elie Wiesel, and through the artful and faithful interpretations of Andrew Scott Bell and James Carney. A Small university with restrictive budgets was able to bring to the stage a production such as this, with its high level of performance, direction, conducting, and acting.

Such successful production offers other institutions of higher education a lesson on positive cross departmental collaboration, fundraising efforts reaching out to diverse donors, from private family funds to human rights organizations, and state funds. With the support of those local and state organizations, and with the university's president council on diversity and inclusion that supported the first Jewish studies faculty member, the music department was able to initiate, execute, and support the performance series, which attracted hundreds of people from both inside the institution and out. Arts leaders in higher education can trace the steps taken by CNU, and other institutions and local theatre and opera companies mentioned above, and learn a lesson: If a small, liberal arts university can do this, any could.

As many who have studied the historical events of the Holocaust know, the testimonies of its survivors are rich and varied, just as there are many ways for one to listen and comprehend. These artful expressions of the unthinkable transcend place and time in potent ways that connect people of diverse backgrounds, faiths, and races. While the experience of the Holocaust cannot be understood through one story, one lesson, one movie, or one musical piece, music educators and leaders can find that engagement in different types of testimony brings students and audiences momentarily closer to the horrors of the time – a time when humanity revealed its worst. Unique to individual experience, these stories encourage us to delve into an ugly past while sanctifying and blessing the lives of those murdered in its grips. They are our living and breathing inheritance,

[27] Indianapolis Opera, https://www.indyopera.org/
[28] http://artsongs.squarespace.com/vedem/

our "sum total," and vital to understanding the whole of human experience and our places in it long after we exit the theater.

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[i] Directed by John A. McGuire, conducted by J. Lynn Thompson, and enjoined by the Virginia Children's Chorus (Carol Thomas Downing, Director).

[ii] *Brundibár's* librettist was poet, illustrator, and social activist Adolf Hoffmeister.

[iii] Andrew Scott Bell, film composer and distinguished CNU alumnus, was commissioned the composition of this opera along with CNU English professor, Jason Carney, whose libretto of the opera was derivative of Wiesel's play.

[iv] *Reflections of the Holocaust* is a series of performances, lectures, and commemorations resulting from years of coordinated vision and effort. Several individuals raised ideas to bring music associated with the Holocaust into relief and communal appreciation from the stage; one of whom is Professor Theodore R. Reiff, a local retired physician and founder of the *Reiff Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution* https://cnu.edu/reiffcenter/ and president of the *Genocide Education Project* https://genocideeducation.org/. Dr. Reiff suggested that Wiesel's play be adapted to opera.

[v] These include, but are not limited to: the Diamonstein Family Charitable Fund, the Barbara and Ralph Goldstein Charitable Fund, the Eugene and Betty Levin Family Philanthropic Fund, the Reiff Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution, the Tidewater Jewish Foundation, the United Jewish Community of Virginia Peninsula Endowment, Inc., and the United Jewish Community of the Virginia Peninsula.

[vi] The film's unofficial title was, *The Führer Gives a City to the Jews*.

…

A pianist of international acclaim, **Dr. Galit Gertsenzon** is a music historian, educator, and advocate for music and musicians of the Holocaust. Born and raised in Israel, she studied piano performance and musicology at the Buchman-Mehta School of Music in Tel Aviv. For more than two decades, Dr. Gertsenzon has studied and performed music from the cultural, political, and social aspects of those who make it. Earning her Doctorate in Musical Arts in Piano Performance from the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music in 2012, her research continues to examine the compositions, performances, and musicians of World War II and the Holocaust. Her ethnomusicological insights and applications are featured in the peer-reviewed literature of music, Honors Education, Judaic studies, and Holocaust Studies.

Dr. Gertsenzon is an Honors College professor at Ball State University (Indiana), where she delivers global studies curricula integrating music and society. Named the recipient of The Vander Hill Distinguished Honors Educator Award (2018) for her course, Forbidden Sounds: Music of the Holocaust, Dr. Gertsenzon maintains an active career lecturing and performing across the US and beyond. Dr. Gertsenzon can be reached by email: ggertsenzon@bsu.edu