

Art from Ashes: A Concert in Commemoration of the Holocaust

Doctoral Recital Series: Alexandra Birch – Violin, Michael Lewis - Piano
Katzin Concert Hall | March 1, 2016 | 7:30pm

Program

Romance in F	Ludwig Van Beethoven 1770-1827
Baal Shem Vidui (Contrition) Nigun	Ernest Bloch 1880-1959
“by my death...” mvt. 2	Gil Dori b. 1986
A Poeme about the Holocaust	Emil Leyvand 1923-2010

Intermission – 10 Minutes

Two Pictures of Hassidic Life Chabader nigun Freylechs	Yoel Engel 1868-1927
Sonata for Solo Violin Allegro con fuoco Andante cantabile Scherzo – Allegro grazioso Finale – Allegro risoluto	Erwin Schulhoff 1894-1942
Suite Hebraique Rhapsodie	Ernest Bloch 1880-1959

Program Notes

Romance in F – L.V. Beethoven

In times of war and conflict, the arts are often appropriated by the dominant party for the sake of advancing their political agenda. Hitler and the Nazi party were notorious for promoting “Germanic” music as the only music appropriate for the Reich, music that did not have the overtones of socialism, Judeo-bolshevism, or other dissident ideas against the ideology of the Nazi party. Under Hitler’s regime, Jews, along with many other non-party members and marginalized groups were banned from playing music, and especially of nationalistic German composers such as Hitler’s personal favorite, Wagner. Beethoven was included in this category as a composer who possessed the “heroic German spirit”, and is one of the most well-known and popular composers to today.

Baal Shem – Ernest Bloch

Composed in Cleveland in 1923, Baal Shem is a three movement work by Swiss-Jewish-American composer Ernest Bloch. Bloch was a prodigious violin and compositional pupil studying with Ysaye in Paris and Iwan Knorr in Frankfurt before coming to the United States as an exile from war-torn anti-Semitic Europe in 1916.

Baal Shem refers to a Jewish figure, literally “Master of the Name”, an expert in Kaballah/Jewish Mysticism who is familiar with the uses of the different names of G-d in spiritual practice. The founder of Hasidism, Baal Shem Tov, or Israel ben Eleizer from Ukraine introduced practices that took Kaballah from exclusively a scholarly study to a daily connection to mysticism. A nigun is a type of tune that is highly improvisatory and sung on Jewish texts.

“by my death...” – Gil Dori

“by my death...”, for chamber ensemble and laptops, explores the Jewish narrative of destruction and construction. It reflects on links between tradition and innovation, past and future, death and life, that are inherent to any aspect of Jewish and Israeli culture. The second movement was written for Alexandra Birch, and it focuses on the Holocaust. With texts by the Jewish Ukrainian-American poet Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach, it portrays a personal, vivid experience of the horrors.

The complete piece will be performed on Tuesday, April 12th, 2016, at 7:30pm, Katzin Concert Hall. Gil Dori is an avid composer, interested in electronic music, laptop performance, indeterminacy, proportional procedures, and Jewish music. The latter was the topic of the course Gil taught at Arizona State University.

Gil’s music has been performed internationally, and his works have been selected for MUSLAB, New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival, SEAMUS National Conference, Balance/Unbalance, Explore!, and PARMA Music Festival. He is the recipient of the Joan Frazer Judaism and the Arts Award for his piece *Vanitas*, and the winner of the Itay Weiner Composition Competition for his piece *Two Nights*. Gil recently received the Schwartz Scholars Fund Grant to support a curated concert series about music and the Holocaust he directs.

Gil is Doctor of Musical Arts student at ASU. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Haifa University, Israel, where he graduated summa cum laude, and a Master of Music degree from ASU.

A poeme about the Holocaust – Emil Leyvand

Emil Leyvand was born into a Jewish-Ukrainian family in Odessa, Ukraine in 1923. An accomplished violinist, he studied at Moscow Conservatory, and with renowned teachers Stolyarsky and Mostras. In 1941 he volunteered for the war and fought on the Eastern front against the Germans. During the war years, Leyvand also played as part of the Aleksandr Tsfasman Jazz band. Following the war, Leyvand worked for the Russian Radio and Television Symphony orchestra, and collaborated with David Oistrakh, Emil Gilels, and Mstislav Rostropovich. He came to the United States in 1990, and died in Indianapolis in 2010. Special thanks to Bret Werb and USHMM for access to this score and for assisting in research.

Two pictures of Hassidic Life – Yoel Engel

Yoel Engel was a Jewish-Ukrainian composer from Berdyansk. He was fortunate to study law and music in Moscow, and is credited with preserving Jewish music from the shtetl. Stasov encouraged him to study the music of his “own people” and Engel had an interest creating a “nationalistic” Jewish music patterned after the Russian and German schools. The two pieces played tonight come from Engel’s work in the countryside, specifically around his hometown of Berdyansk doing ethnographic research and collecting songs. This is particularly important to preserve the Jewish culture of the region given the survival rates of Jews in Ukraine and former USSR during the Holocaust.

Sonata for Solo Violin – Erwin Schulhoff

Erwin Schulhoff was a German-Jewish composer from Prague. Born into a musical family, he was a prodigy entering Prague Conservatory at the age of nine under a personal recommendation from composer Antonin Dvorak. He fought for the Austro-Hungarian army in the first world war, and was imprisoned in an Italian prison camp during the first world war. During the 1920s, Schulhoff toured Germany and Paris, and was highly influenced by Dadaism and Jazz. From his writings, he was obsessed with the “mechanical doll” aspects of Dadaism, and portraying the grotesque horrors and absurdities of war. The solo violin sonata is from this period (1923) and follows the same model Schulhoff outlined for his *Suite for Chamber Orchestra*. There are two outer, “mechanical-doll” movements with two inner movements with more specific characters. Schulhoff died in 1942 in Wülzburg concentration camp in Bavaria.

Suite Hebraique – Ernest Bloch

Suite Hebraique was composed by Ernest Bloch in 1951. It is part of a larger cycle for Viola and Piano called *Five Jewish Pieces*. Three of the pieces that become the suite are the *Rhapsodie*, *Processional* and *Affirmation*. The work was extremely well received, and Bloch also transcribed the piece for violin and piano and violin and orchestra. Tonight you will hear the *Rhapsodie*, a wandering fantasy on Jewish themes.

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