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THIS ISSUE'S  
QUOTABLE QUOTE

"We pass our strength, courage, and vulnerabilities to our children whether by choice or automatically."

## Yom ha-Shoah program features unique 'Phoenix from the Ashes'

BY JUDITH JAMIESON  
AND MIRIAM ROSS

All are welcome at the 32nd annual interfaith commemoration of the Shoah, which will be presented at Temple Emanu-El, in Providence, on May 4, at 7 p.m. The free community-wide, interfaith Holocaust commemoration honors the memory of the 6 million Jewish victims and millions of others who perished in the darkness of the Shoah.

This year's *Yom ha-Shoah* program, "Phoenix from the Ashes: Terezin in Words and Music," celebrates the triumph of the human spirit over adversity through a unique multimedia presentation and original song cycle composed, directed and performed by internationally renowned pianist and composer Judith Lynn Stillman.

Stillman, artist in residence and a professor of music at Rhode Island College, will be joined by mezzo-soprano Krista River, of Emmanuel Music, and tenor Adam Klein, of the Metropolitan Opera.

"Phoenix from the Ashes: Terezin in Words and Music" brings to life poetry written by boys, ages 12 to 15, who were housed in Room One in the Terezin Concentration Camp. The



Judith Lynn Stillman

work was discovered in their secret weekly magazine, *Vedem* ("In the Lead"), which documented their lives in artwork, essays and poetry. Miraculously, the magazines were never discovered by the Nazis.

Of the scores of boys who knowingly put their lives in deeper danger to create *Vedem*, one had the insight and courage to save the nearly 800 pages of manuscripts. After the camp's liberation, Sidney Taussig retrieved the magazines and made sure, in the years that followed, that *Vedem* was published.

Taussig has been living in recent years, in Florida. His compelling story is told in video interviews with Stillman, which are interspersed with the songs in "Phoenix from the Ashes."

Stillman said that once she learned of the *Vedem* texts, "I felt instantly drawn to give a rebirth to those tragically muted voices."

"Phoenix from the Ashes: Terezin in Words and Music" debuted at the Czech Republic's embassy in Washington in 2014; it was filmed and later shown on PBS.

A member of Temple Emanu-El, Stillman has created a special version of "Phoenix from the Ashes" for this year's *Yom ha-Shoah* program, an artistically more complex presentation, tailored to reflect the Rhode Island audience and its specific relationship to *Yom ha-Shoah*.

While we now hear those boys' voices, other voices were lost. Stillman's composition reminds us of the music that was never heard – melodies that died with their composers, who died in the camps. But several examples of their artistry, especially the music that was found at Terezin, will be performed and honored in this spe-

cial version.

Stillman's other compositions include a similar, serious musical response to the Armenian Genocide, "Armenia 100: When the Music Stopped," which was first performed last year at that community's centenary remembrance.

In a purely entertainment vein, Stillman created a comic micro-opera, "Dueling Double Divas," which she calls "a Gilbert and Sullivan meet Monty Python-esque frenzy."

Each year brings a specific theme to the *Yom ha-Shoah* service, but many features of the program are timeless. These include the procession of survivors and their families, the lighting of candles, and both the "El Malei Rachamim" and the mourners' Kaddish.

The program is free and open to the public. A reception follows.

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