Laurence Sherr

Newsletter 2014–2018

Music of Resistance and Survival Project

2018 concert, Galicia Jewish Museum, Krakow, Poland, to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Krakow ghetto liquidation; Photo 1: pianist Pawel Pierzchala and vocalist Urszula Macosz; Photo 2: cellist Jan Kalinowski, pianist Marek Szlezer, and Sherr

Launched in 2015, Sherr's Music of Resistance and Survival Project (MoRaS) has been produced on four continents. The primary component is a concert featuring Sherr's 2014 cello sonata preceded by the Holocaust source songs that it incorporates. The concert is woven together with Sherr's commentary and media presentation about the creators of these source songs from the partisans, ghettos, and camps.

Sherr writes about project goals in the sonata's program notes: "[The source] songs provide illumination of [the creator's] lives and circumstances, allow us to gain perspective on lost and forbidden voices, and help us to understand the unprecedented tragedy of the Holocaust. By creating a new composition drawing on the work of these creators, it is my hope that performers and audiences will connect with their stories, and that the legacy of their cultural contributions will be strengthened and remembered."

The modular design of the project facilitates other types of performances. For example, cello recitals with Sherr's MoRaS presentations given before or during the concerts include Karen Becker's 2015 world premiere of the cello sonata at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and Inbal Megiddo's 2016 performances in New Zealand and Australia. Special concerts and presentations for primary and secondary school students have been given in the US and New Zealand.

The MoRaS Project has been the subject of radio and TV interviews, and several performances of the cello sonata and source songs are on Sherr's Videos and Lecture Videos pages. The cello sonata is often referred to by its full title: *Sonata for Cello and Piano–Mir zaynen do!* (the last three Yiddish words translate as "We are here!," a source song refrain that signifies identity, resistance, and survival). Support for the creation and dissemination of the MoRaS Project has come from numerous organizations, venues, and individuals, most especially a major project grant from SNCF America, Inc.

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International Tours and Appearances

Photo 1: pianist Anna Grinberg and cellist Inbal Meggido, 2016 Artist Series Concert, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia;
Photo 2: *Fugitive Footsteps* with Stuart Orme, baritone, Steve Muir, conductor, at the Clothworkers Centenary Concert Hall, Leeds, England, 2014;
Photo 3: Luke Raffanti, European premiere of the Nocturne at the 2017 Forfest Festival, Kromeriz, Czech Republic

International tours and appearances over the past five years have taken Sherr to Europe, the Middle East, and Australasia. Many of these involved Music of Resistance and Survival Project events, and most saw a combination of Sherr's concert, lecture, research, and teaching activities.

Events in Oslo, Norway in 2017 included a performance of *Fugitive Footsteps* for baritone and chorus and a Jødisk Museum lecture with a performance of *Elegy and Vision* for solo cello. Also in 2017, two European premieres and a lecture were given at the Forfest Festival in Kromeriz, Czech Republic. A dozen concert and lecture events were presented on a tour of New Zealand and Australia in 2016. Most of these were MoRaS events featuring cellists Inbal Megiddo and Katherine Hebley performing the cello sonata, including concerts by each of them in different New Zealand cities on a single day that had Sherr quickly traveling from one location to the other. Megiddo and Sherr arranged two additional 2016 events in Israel, including her Jerusalem cello recital and a MoRaS presentation and performance at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance.

Cellist Petr Nouzovsky collaborated with Sherr for 2015 MoRaS concerts in Prague, Czech Republic and Wroclaw, Poland, preceded by Sherr's lecture at the august Charles University in Prague (est. 1348); locations in the Czech Republic and England were the scenes of additional 2015 concerts and lectures. Sherr was one of the keynote speakers at the 2014 Recovering Forbidden Voices: Responding to the Suppression of Music in WWII international conference in Wellington, New Zealand, where three of his Holocaust remembrance compositions were performed, and Sherr participated in the *powhiri* (Maori welcome ceremony) to start the conference.

More complete listings are available at Sherr's Concerts and Lectures and Past Seasons pages.

Top KSU Award

Sherr with Kennesaw State University president Pamela Whitten (left) and KSU Foundation trustees

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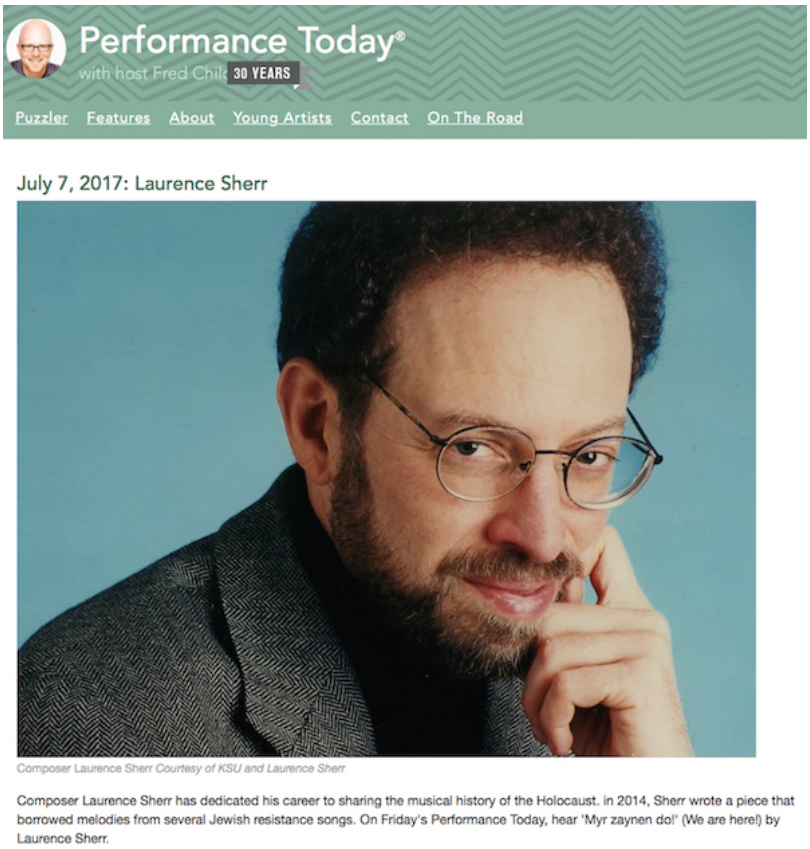
Dr. Sherr received the 2018 University Distinguished Professor Award from Kennesaw State University in recognition of his accomplishments and the exemplary integration of his teaching, creative activity, research, and professional service. In bestowing this highest faculty award at the University, the award committee especially noted the integration and international impact of Sherr's work with music of the Holocaust. Sherr plans to use the award funding to help support the production of two CDs of his music in the coming years. An article and further photos are online

Performance Today Broadcasts



During 2017, Sherr's cello sonata was broadcast three times on *Performance Today*, reaching an estimated 600,000 listeners. Sherr's composition was the featured work on two of the broadcasts. Host Fred Child provided commentary about Sherr's work before and after the recording of the live performance by cellist Karen Becker and pianist Jay Mauchley at the 2015 Red Lodge Music Festival in Montana. *Performance Today* is the most widely heard classical radio program in the US, broadcast on nearly 300 public radio stations. The commentary and performance can still be heard at Sherr's Media Interviews page.

Research

Alex Tamir (formerly Aleksander Wolkowyski) recounts the genesis and history of the music he created as a Vilna ghetto youth for his song "Shtiler, Shtiler," video interview, Jerusalem, Israel, 2016

Holocaust music research took Dr. Sherr to the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Oswiecim, Poland, the Terezín Memorial in Terezín, Czech Republic, Yad Vashem and the Ghetto Fighters museums in Israel, YIVO in New York City, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. He conducted video interviews with survivors in Jerusalem, Prague, Oslo, Wellington, and Atlanta, recording testimony about their experiences with music during the Holocaust. His compositions, lectures, concerts, and teaching draw significantly from this work.

January 2019 Appearances

Sherr lecture given in connection with the Vedem exhibit about the underground newspaper that adolescent boys created in the Terezín concentration camp

January 16, 11 am
"Music as Spiritual Resistance at Terezín" lecture
Breman Museum, Atlanta

Italian tour
January 23
“An Introduction to Klezmer and Gypsy Music" lecture
Libreria Esoterica Ibis
Bologna, Italy

January 24
"Compositional Styles in the Work of Laurence Sherr" lecture
Bruno Maderna Conservatory of Music
Cesena, Italy

January 26
Music of Resistance and Survival Concert
Teatro Titano
San Marino City, Republic of San Marino
Event for the San Marino National Day of Remembrance (marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day

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Additional Links

2017 KSU Magazine article: "Historical Notes: Professor teaches Holocaust remembrance through music"

2016 CD includes Sherr's *Midnight Dance* for solo violin

Doing & Dances Overture for orchestra, commissioned by the DeKalb Symphony Orchestra for their 50th