

UNIT 6

MUSICAL JOURNEYS THROUGH THE HOLOCAUST

(Lorry Black)

סיפורי מוסיקה
STORIES OF MUSIC



Under even the most difficult of circumstances music continued to be composed. Music provided inspiration, comfort and was an outlet for self-expression and resistance. In the post-Holocaust world, music has played a vital role in creating and maintaining collective memory. This lesson will explore some of the musical activities that took place during the Holocaust, and the ways that Jews have collectively remembered the Holocaust through music.

Enduring Understandings (What are the big ideas learners will take away from this lesson?):

- Artistic creation did not stop during the Holocaust.
- Music played several roles during the Holocaust:
 - » Creation of music as a form of/in support of the resistance.
 - » Creation of music as forced labor.
 - » Creation of music simply for the sake of making music.
- Music created during the Holocaust continues to play a significant role in the ongoing memorialization/remembrance of the Holocaust.
- Music created during the Holocaust and music influenced by the Holocaust serve to create and maintain “collective memory.”
- Music created during the Holocaust has expanded beyond the Holocaust itself, to be incorporated more generally in moments of memorial and remembrance. (ie. poems of Hannah Senesh put to music used regularly in funerals).
- The Holocaust has influenced the development of liturgical and art music in the post-Holocaust era as a form of ongoing remembrance and memorial.

Essential Questions (What are the essential questions that frame this unit? What questions point towards the key issues and ideas that will be taught?):

- What roles do you think music played for Jews and others oppressed by the Nazi’s?
- Why do you think that, under such difficult circumstances, people continued to compose and perform music?
- How might music be a form of “resistance”?
- How do compositions composed after the war differ from those composed during the war?
- What role does music play in the creation of “collective memory”?

Resources

1. Materials

- Computer with either internet connection or on which the presentation file for the lesson can be downloaded.
- Presentation slides.
- Speakers (Bluetooth or wired for amplification of audio and video selections).
- Projector and screen for viewing of slides.
- Whiteboard / blackboard / large newsprint pad.
- Microphone (as desired)
- Writing utensils / Paper

2. Resources

- Music and the Holocaust, <http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/> The site provides concise, informative articles for a broad audience of teachers, students, commemoration organizers, and members of the general public interested in the subject.
- Heartstrings, Music of the Holocaust. Yad Vashem: <https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/music/index.asp>
- Music of the Holocaust, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/music/>

3. Instructional notes

Throughout these lessons, you will find suggested texts in discussion outlines. “Texts for the instructor are not meant to be ‘prescriptive’ ie. spoken word for word, they are provided simply as a discussion guideline. Please use your own words.”

- A. Some Principles of Adult Learning to consider (based on “What We Know About Adult Jewish Learning”, Diane Tickton Schuster and Lisa D. Grant):
- the motivation for participation often has more to do with connecting with / having an experience with friends that the subject matter.
 - intrinsic motivation
 - want to use their learning to deepen their understanding and seek connection of their life experiences to the content
 - thrive in a ‘democratic atmosphere’ (discussion, experiential learning, collaborative inquiry)
 - educated / sophisticated in many aspects of life, not so much in their Judaism.
 - “life to Torah and then back to life again” (Rosenzweig)

B. This lesson, as well as those that follow, rely heavily on the following conceptual framework as a way to discuss and “define” Jewish music.

- **Sonic:** utilizes elements like scales, rhythms, and ornamentation that are generally considered to “sound Jewish” but not necessarily specific tunes, etc.

Leonard Bernstein used cantillation motifs in symphonic works; jazz musicians might vamp on a Sephardic folk song; klezmer musicians record traditional freylakhs or Hasidic melodies.

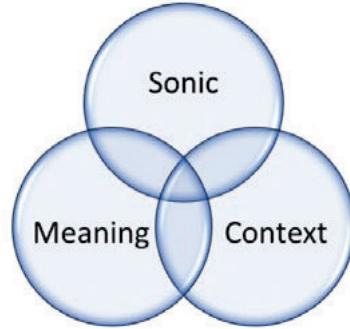
- **Meaning:** a musical piece has some kind of Jewish frame of reference but doesn’t necessarily use traditional tunes or scales, etc.

Anything that uses a Jewish text, is sung in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino could fit here.

For example: Max Helfman’s oratorio “The New Haggadah” is based on a poem about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Or, it could be something totally abstract, like an instrumental piece the composer feels reflects a Jewish concept or a personal identity.

- **Context:** “Holocaust Music is music performed during the Holocaust.”
- This category is clearly broad and not as easily defined. What exactly is Holocaust music?
- Essentially, we refer here to music composed and/or performed in the context of the Holocaust. This music encompasses every music genre and every socio/historical context in which Jews found themselves: camp prisoners, resistance fighters, or post-Holocaust compositions created in response to the Holocaust.
- Questions rising out of this frame of reference include:
- Is any music a Jew wrote or performed during the Holocaust inevitably Holocaust music? i.e. is “Bei Mir Bistu Shoen” or “Mac the knife” sung in

Theresienstadt, “Holocaust music”?



4. Preparation

A. Advance Prep

- Please read through the lesson.
- Please read through, listen to, and familiarize yourself with all of the musical pieces referenced in this lesson.
- Please read through the biographical reference material. Use this material to give brief biographical backgrounds on the musicians referenced in the lesson.
- Please be sure to familiarize yourself with the technology used in this lesson. Please go through the slideshow at least once prior to instruction so you are comfortable with the “choreography” of the lesson.

B. Classroom Setup

- Room setup is at the discretion of the facilitator and may be contingent upon enrollment.
- Projector and Screen should be set up.
- Speakers should be connected to computer.
- Technology should be tested in advance of class start time.

Color Codes Used in the Lesson

This color is used to indicate suggested talking points for the instructor. Feel free to use the text as it is written in the lesson, or to paraphrase as you desire.

 These are questions to be asked of the students.

 Texts highlighted like this are points of information and/or suggestions for the instructor in teaching this lesson.

THE LESSON

MUSICAL JOURNEYS THROUGH THE
HOLOCAUST

The Lesson

1. Background:

Slide 1

A. Ask and list answers on black/white board.

? What do you know about life for Jews under Nazi rule during WWII?

Prompt questions if necessary:

? Where did they live? (concentration camps, death camps, work camps, ghettos, hidden with non-Jewish families, forests ...)

? When? (what was the period in which all of this happened)

? What were the conditions?

? What other groups of people found themselves in similar circumstances?

B. Acknowledge that, based on our understandings/impressions that it may be a surprise to learn that there was art created under such circumstances.

Ask for a show of hands.

? Who is surprised?

? Why?

? What role do you think music played for Jews and others oppressed by the Nazi's?

List responses.

C. Give the class a general background on the place/role of music in the Holocaust using the materials provided in the appendices.

2. Music and Musicians of the Holocaust

A. Music in the Camps: Gideon Klein

Slides 2 & 3


i. Review the listening guide found in the appendix that will be used as the class listens to the following selections.

☰ Make sure that each student has enough listening guides to have one for each selection to which they will be listening.

ii. Introduce Gideon Klein using the biographical


- information found in the appendices.
- iii. Play one of the following two pieces by Gideon Klein: **Slide 4**
 “Lullaby”: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLh9hsxTnKE>)
 “String Trio”: (link given below)
 (written 9 days before he was transported to Auschwitz). (13:55)
<https://youtu.be/8dXOTjlcME4>
- iv. Discuss using the participants’ listening guide responses as well as the resource information on Music in the Ghettos and Camps found in the appendices.
- ? Why do you think that, under these difficult circumstances, Klein continued to compose and perform music?**
- B. Resistance: “Zog nit keynmol” (Glik) and “Buchenwaldlied” (Leopoldi/Löhner-Beda) **Slide 5**
- i. Introduce Hirsh Glik using the biographical information found in the appendices. **Slide 6**
- ii. Play “Zog nit keynmol” (Never say that you are walking the final road) **Slide 7**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueKUjqlizA&feature=youtu.be>
☰ English translation available in the appendices.
- iii. Introduce “Buchenwaldlied” **Slides 8 & 9**
- iv. (Buchenwald Song) using the information found in the appendices about the song and its composers.
- v. Play Buchenwaldlied **Slide 10**
<https://youtu.be/1iFOhLkYBgC>
- vi. Compare and contrast these two songs of resistance (one written among the partisans, the other in Buchenwald) using the participants’ listening guide responses as well as the resource information on resistance found in the appendices.
- C. Humor and Satire: Yankele Hershkowitz **Slide 11**
- i. Introduce Yankele Hershkowitz **Slide 12**
- ii. Play Ikh fur in Keltser kant (I am Going to Kielce) **Slide 13**


<https://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/ghettos/lodz/hershkovitchyankele/ikh-fur-in-keltser-k/>

 **Commentary on the song and English translation available in the appendices.**

iii. Discuss using the participants listening guide.

Hershkowitz provides an opportunity to discuss the use of humor and satire as a form of resistance.

 **Do you think this song should be considered resistance? Why or why not?**

 **Can you think of other examples of humor/satire as a type of resistance?**

3. Musical responses to the Holocaust post war

Slide 14

A. Steve Reich

Slide 15

i. Introduce Steve Reich using the biographical information found in the appendices.

ii. Play Different Trains

Slide 16

<https://youtu.be/22XF5b3JqMs>

 **Commentary on the composition available in the appendices.**

iii. Discuss using the participants' listening guides.

B. Sheila Silver

Slide 17

i. Introduce Sheila Silver using the biographical information found in the appendices.


ii. Play To the Spirit Unconquered


Slide 18

<https://youtu.be/45rGPS8TQ74>

 **Commentary on the composition available in the appendices.**

iii. Discuss using the participants listening guide.

 **Do these last two compositions differ from those composed during the war? If so, how?**

 **What do you think the pieces by Reich and Silver reflect regarding their understanding/ 'experience' of the Holocaust?**

 **How do these compositions fit into / help create a "collective memory" in post-Holocaust**

America?

- ☰ Consider together, as a conclusion to this lesson, what role these pieces (and similar works) play in the way we, as a Jewish people, remember the Holocaust?