

Special concert in Israel for lost music of Nazi camps

Composer spent decades to find 8,000 works written on scraps of paper or memorised

Peter Beaumont

A long quest by an Italian composer and musicologist to track down music composed by the victims of Nazi concentration camps will reach fruition in April with the first orchestral performance of many of the rescued works at a special concert in Jerusalem.

The project is the brainchild of an Italian music teacher and pianist, Francesco Lotoro. He has spent almost 30 years tracking down thousands of songs, symphonies and operas composed in Nazi concentration, forced labour and prisoner of war camps in Germany and elsewhere before and during the second world war. The search has involved scouring bookshops, archives and interviewing Holocaust survivors.

The result has been a collection of 8,000 pieces of music, including musical scores written on scraps of scavenged paper, toilet paper and

pieces of newspaper, composed in Axis and allied camps. Now some of that music will be performed for the first time at a concert by Israel's Ashdod Symphony Orchestra as part of events to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel.

They include a song written by Ilse Weber, a Jewish musician, author and poet who worked as a nurse at Theresienstadt concentration camp, in German-occupied Czechoslovakia, where she taught some of her compositions to the camp's children.

When her husband, Willi, was deported to Auschwitz in 1944, she voluntarily transferred there with their young son, Tommy. The family were all gassed.

While none of the songs that Weber wrote in the camp were written down, one of them was memorised by a child she treated in Theresienstadt - Aviva Bar-On - who will perform it for the first time since the war.

Other pieces to be performed include Tatata by Willy Rosen and Max Ehrlich, who, before their deportation from Westerbork in the Netherlands to Auschwitz, managed to smuggle a folder of manuscripts out of the camp.

Rosen was a Jewish-German

composer, songwriter and noted cabaret performer who was murdered in Auschwitz in September 1944. Ehrlich was a noted film actor, screenwriter and director who, like Rosen, was a prominent figure in the German cabaret scene in the 1930s.

Decades later, the folder containing their music was discovered in an attic in the Netherlands, about to be thrown away.

The performance in April is intended to underscore the importance of music and musical composition as a form of self expression that continued against the odds in the ghettos as well as the camps - a phenomenon that

'The compositions from the camps are a world heritage, a legacy to artists who persevered through their music'

Francesco Lotoro
Composer

has been noted by researchers at the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance museum.

Describing the importance of his project, Lotoro said: "The compositions from the concentration camps are a world heritage, a legacy to those artists who, despite losing their freedom in the most unimaginable circumstances, persevered through their music."

"Through the concert, we are striving to both restore life and dignity to these artists."

He also described to the Guardian how he had heard about Aviva Bar-On's recollection of Ilse Weber's music.

"I heard there was a survivor from Theresienstadt who said she remembered a song by Weber. When I went to see her I discovered that she could remember not only one but three of Weber's melodies and I scored them."

Lotoro added that it was not the only example of a survivor who had remembered a melody over the decades. "Some of the melodies were never written down. They were conserved in a memory that is disappearing as survivors die. Every month or so I hear of a friend dying."

Michael Sinclair, of the Jewish National Fund UK, which is supporting the performance, added that the concert was also a useful reminder at a time of growing antisemitism.

"With global antisemitism on the rise, the concert is a timely and powerful reminder of both the need to counter hatred and discrimination in all its forms, and the enduring defiance and hope of the Jewish people."

In brief

Papua New Guinea

Earthquake kills at least 16 and buries villages

Papua New Guinea has been devastated by a 7.5-magnitude earthquake that has claimed at least 16 lives.

The earthquake, the strongest ever to hit the Pacific nation, struck early on Monday, but the extent of the devastation took days to emerge because of the area's remoteness.

Uvenama Rova, the secretary general of the PNG Red Cross, said his contacts had reported many more deaths, as well as entire villages buried under landslips.

ExxonMobil, which has mining operations in the affected regions, said more than 10,000 families had been affected. **Eleanor Ainge Roy**

Taiwan

Don't panic, public told, after run on loo roll

Taiwan's premier has called for calm after a run on toilet paper, sparked by rumours of imminent price rises.

Supermarket shelves were empty after residents stockpiled supplies. Online retailers also ran out, including PChome, which sold 5m packs in three days. "We ask the public not to panic and not rush to buy," said William Lai, the premier.

Panic started after supermarkets were told by toilet paper makers of a 10-30% price rise from mid-March because of rising international pulp prices. Fair trade officials said they had met representatives from major suppliers and retailers to warn them against price-fixing. **AFP Taipei**

United States

Streisand's dog cloned successfully - twice

Barbra Streisand has revealed that two clones of her pet dog were made successfully after it died last year.

The singer and actor told the Hollywood magazine *Variety* that cells were taken from the mouth and stomach of her 14-year-old Coton de Tuléar dog, Samantha (below). "They have different personalities," Streisand said of the puppies, called Miss Scarlett and Miss Violet.

"I'm waiting for them to get older so I can see if they have her brown eyes and her seriousness."

When the cloned dogs arrived, Streisand dressed them in red and lavender to tell them apart, which is how they got their names. **Reuters**



Japan's schools pick superhero mascots for 2020 Olympics

Daniel Hurst
Tokyo

One has an athletic figure and a strong sense of justice. The other is a cherry blossom-inspired superhero.

Meet the new Olympic and Paralympic mascots that the Tokyo 2020 organisers hope will whip up enthusiasm for the Games - and drive merchandise sales.

In total, 2,042 individuals and groups submitted designs to capture the public's affection. The list was whittled down to three design pairs, which were then put to a ballot of millions of school students across Japan.

Nearly 600 cheering schoolchildren attended a ceremony in Tokyo's Shinagawa ward yesterday to hear the results. The winning mascots have not yet been given names, but they are said to "respect each other" and be "very good friends".



The Olympic mascot - featuring a futuristic blue and white chequered pattern - is described as having a special power allowing it to move anywhere instantaneously. "The mascot has a strong sense of justice and is very athletic," the biographical notes said.

The Paralympic mascot features a pink and white design inspired by cherry blossom, and can apparently move things just by looking at them. "It has a dignified inner strength and a kind heart that loves nature," according to the description.

The winning designer, Ryo Taniguchi, is an illustrator from Fukuoka in

southern Japan. "I'm just so spaced out at the moment," he said when the decision was announced. "I just want to tell my beloved wife that I've been chosen."

The selection of the mascots had attracted wide publicity across Japan. About 200,000 classes at 16,000 schools took part in the process.

Mascots are big business in Japan, with many towns and companies seeking a distinctive design to promote their region or product.

Employees in big cuddly costumes often turn up at trade and food festivals to meet and greet visitors - and

▲ Children with the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and Paralympics mascots
PHOTOGRAPH: TORU HANAI/REUTERS

hand out business cards. The best-known mascots can drive sales. Sales of food and toy products bearing the image of Kumamon, the ubiquitous black bear of the Kumamoto region, hit a record 128bn yen (£859m) in 2016.

The organisers presumably hope the mascots will be better received than the original Tokyo 2020 Olympics logo unveiled in 2015. The design had to be replaced after accusations of plagiarism.