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THE KADDISH PROJECT:

Music of Remembrance and Hope

ADDRESSING GENOCIDE

Genocide is an ongoing global crisis. In places such as Rwanda, Darfur, Congo, Kenya and the former Yugoslavia, communities have been devastated by ethnic violence. The fact that the intentional and systematic destruction of individuals and entire cultures continues to take place makes it critical that we work to understand and prevent genocide.

How can one consider such an immensely difficult subject without becoming completely overwhelmed? The Holocaust, as a particularly egregious example, provides a means to examine the universal issue of genocide. In making one catastrophic historical example of genocide understandable and relevant to our lives today, we may be able to recognize the implications of genocide in the present—and learn how to prevent it in the future.

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

The Kaddish Project is designed to address these issues. *Kaddish*, a singular choral work, consists of fifteen movements for chorus, soloists and chamber orchestra based on firsthand accounts of Holocaust survivors. In words and music, it illustrates a specific moment in history while illuminating the Holocaust as a profound human tragedy—one whose implications extend beyond the Jewish experience to concern all people everywhere.

Created by composer Lawrence Siegel and named for the Jewish prayer for the dead, *Kaddish* conveys the stories of Holocaust survivors in their own words, providing a window into their experiences. By illustrating our shared responsibility to respond to prejudice, hatred and injustice, the piece is at once an act of remembering and a call to awareness and action.

CREATING KADDISH

Siegel, an award-winning composer, theater artist and performer, has worked extensively with communities developing original theatrical productions based on community members' words and experiences. In the spirit of this work, and inspired by his own cultural heritage, in 2006 Siegel traveled to Poland and the Czech Republic to begin laying the groundwork for this piece. A series of interviews followed with Holocaust survivors in cities around the United States and Canada.



KADDISH by LAWRENCE SIEGEL was commissioned by the Cohen Center in honor of the Center's 25th Anniversary
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The stories that emerged, together with other written testimonies, have become the core of *Kaddish*. Taken together, these individual pieces form an evening-length concert work: a cycle of songs in fifteen movements, each conveying a distinct facet of the survivors' experiences before, during, or after the Holocaust. The resulting personal nature of this work has the power to inspire not only empathy but also action.

The Kaddish Project was conceived and launched in partnership with the Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies at Keene State College in Keene, NH, where the debut performance of *Kaddish* will take place in May 2008. It will go on to make its professional world premiere with the renowned vocal ensemble VocalEssence, under the direction of maestro Philip Brunelle, in Minneapolis, MN in November 2008 before embarking on a national and international tour. This performance will be dedicated to the memory of Tom Lantos, the only Holocaust survivor ever elected to the US Congress; Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who took action by rescuing Tom, his wife Annette and many others during the Nazi reign of terror; and Stephen Feinstein, the beloved director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota.

THE MUSICAL WORK

Kaddish celebrates human voices in every sense: the beauty of song, and the power of individual testimony. While conveying its message through survivors' words, *Kaddish* simultaneously incorporates elements of folk music, weaving in themes and melodies suggestive of klezmer and other musical traditions. This folk element lends a poignancy to the music that extends the emotional power of words.

As a musical composition for chorus and chamber ensemble, *Kaddish* is truly distinctive. Using music's unique ability to bridge cultural, racial and religious boundaries—to move, awaken, inform, warn, heal, unite and inspire—it expresses empathy for and acceptance of differences among peoples and communities. As performed by a chorus of 50-plus voices along with a professional instrumental ensemble, *Kaddish* will demonstrate a moving solemnity in keeping with its subject matter. Because of its deep and enduring impact, *Kaddish* is destined to become a permanent part of the choral repertoire, a work that will be performed in communities around the world.

PROVIDING RESOURCES

The Kaddish Project sponsors a related multifaceted education and outreach program designed to acquaint audiences and students with the issues of genocide. The five components, which constitute the Kaddish Project's educational program, can be used in combination or individually. Together, they become a powerful tool for educating the public about the experiences and lessons of the Holocaust.

- *Reflections on Kaddish*: A full-color forty page volume consists of essays by distinguished scholars and photographic images by the artist Leslie Starobin, along with contextual information from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. It will be distributed nationally to choral groups, educators, community groups, religious leaders and members of audiences at performances of *Kaddish*.
- *Educational Program*: A customizable series of arts-based activities using selections from *Kaddish* has been designed for use by classroom teachers and teaching artists in residency. Incorporating an in-school concert



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or recorded program of selected pieces from *Kaddish*, these activities introduce background on the Holocaust and engage students ages 11-18 in the lessons of genocide. Designed by classroom teachers, historians, dancers, musicians and visual artists, this program will pilot in several New Hampshire schools in fall 2008, enabling it to be developed into a curriculum available to choral groups, schools, youth groups, arts programs and faith communities across the country.

- ♦ *Libretto*: A booklet containing the text of *Kaddish*'s fifteen movements provides a written record of the words to be sung in performance, with lyrics in English, Polish, German, and Yiddish.
- ♦ *Recording*: A recording of *Kaddish*, performed by the acclaimed chorus VocalEssence and conducted by its founder Philip Brunelle, will be made available in CD and MP3 formats
- ♦ *Website*: The Kaddish Project website consists of all the educational materials as well as links to other websites about the Holocaust and other genocides. Much of its contents will be available online as downloadable files.

Each of these components can stand alone—as a discussion group item, a curricular or personal study resource, a cultural product, or an artistic work. Combined, they create a comprehensive educational program.

REPAIRING THE WORLD

The most important message of the Kaddish Project is its emphasis on mutual understanding and empathy among faiths and cultures—and of working to maintain that understanding in the face of difference. This focus on global peace and justice promotes the Jewish principle of *tikkun olam*: healing or repairing the world. The responsibility to make the world a better place is a fundamental value of the work, and of Jewish identity itself. At the same time, it allows the project to build bridges to other cultural communities, social issues and world concerns.

SPEAKING TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Kaddish has special significance to the Jewish community. This essential act of remembering is critically important in raising awareness of anti-Semitism and discrimination of all kinds. *Kaddish* enables the important act of remembering the Holocaust—honoring the victims and survivors, while celebrating the enduring existence of a people threatened with destruction. The work's focus on the importance of family and the beauty of everyday life emphasizes the role of memory in shaping the present.

The work also provides a way of enhancing Jewish community life through a shared social and cultural experience. It celebrates and connects to the vibrant Jewish culture that existed in Europe before the war and was not extinguished. It offers people an opportunity to learn about Jewish culture and interfaith relations. It culminates in a message of survival and affirmation for the Jewish people. In all of these ways, it leads people in an exploration of their Jewish identity

CELEBRATING OUR SHARED HUMANITY

In focusing specifically on the Holocaust, *Kaddish* provides a means to address what has been described as a universal rift in human civilization: the pervasive problem of genocide. Hatred, prejudice, fear and suspicion

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of “the other” continue to fuel terrible violence. Recent genocides make it clear that the lessons of the Holocaust are still critically important and demand our attention and involvement.

Kaddish is a reminder of our shared responsibility as humans to respond to difference with empathy and understanding, and to confront and combat intolerance, injustice and hatred. The Kaddish Project, in reflecting upon the Holocaust, hopes to help prevent future atrocities. The Project’s aims transcend Jewish issues—going beyond even the Holocaust itself—to capture the value of remembrance: in recognition of human tragedy, the responsibility to create beauty in the world and celebrate our shared humanity.

BRINGING KADDISH TO LIFE

Many people face these issues with concern and a pressing desire to do something—through education, community activism, or the support of causes they care about. We invite you to join us in our important endeavor and help bring the Kaddish Project to life.

Over the past year, a growing number of individuals, foundations, and corporations have endorsed the Kaddish Project by offering their time, advice and financial support. Their generosity has provided nearly one-half of the project’s \$1 million-plus cost. If you would like to be part of helping the Kaddish Project inspire discussion, community and awareness of genocide through an extraordinary musical work, we hope you will consider joining the family of Kaddish Project supporters

THE KADDISH PROJECT PATRON CIRCLE

Kaddish Project Patrons are individuals who care deeply about the vision of the Kaddish Project and wish to help extend its message of global peace and understanding. By making a tax-deductible contribution, Kaddish Project Patrons can enable *Kaddish* to be heard by as many people as possible, in the United States and throughout the world.

- + Symphony Patron: \$100,000 contribution
- + Concerto Patron: \$50,000 contribution
- + Sonata Patron: \$25,000 contribution
- + Oratorio Patron: \$10,000 contribution
- + Aria Patron: \$5,000 contribution

All Kaddish Project Patrons will receive a copy of *Reflections on Kaddish* and will be acknowledged in performance programs and educational materials in appreciation of their generous support.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information please contact Jan Cohen, Executive Producer, at (603) 358-2300 or by email at information@kaddishproject.org.



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