Return to Life

Music of the Ex-Concentration Camp Orchestra

A BENEFIT CONCERT FOR THE MIDWEST CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

With their arrival in 1946, the first wave of Holocaust survivors to call Kansas City home confronted their return to life. The conclusion of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg that fall also marked a pivotal chapter in the pursuit of postwar justice.

On November 6, MCHE will commemorate these watershed events with a special concert at the Folly Theater featuring music originally performed by Jewish musicians once confined in the Kovno ghetto, assembled postwar at St. Ottilien in Bavaria, a monastery used as a Jewish hospital and displaced persons camp. The event will honor Kansas City’s Holocaust survivors.

Originally named the St. Ottilien Orchestra, later the Ex-Concentration Camp Orchestra, and finally the Representative Orchestra of the She’arit Hapletah (the Surviving Remnant), the group performed at the Liberation Concert, the first official gathering of Jewish survivors, held on May 27, 1945, at St Ottilien. From 1945 to 1948, they played triumphantly in striped concentration camp uniforms in front of a banner that read “Am Yisrael Chai.” (“The people of Israel live.”) On two occasions the musicians were joined by renowned conductor Leonard Bernstein.

After garnering praise for their inspirational performances throughout the American and British zones in Germany, the orchestra was invited to play for prosecutors and staff of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg and for the first Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland.

David Ben Gurion and Golda Meir were among the orchestra’s fans.

MCHE’s Return to Life Concert will showcase pieces from the orchestra’s Nuremberg program, performed by a 40-piece orchestra conducted by James Murray III, director and conductor of the Northland Symphony, music coordinator and instructor at Metropolitan Community College - Maple Woods.

CREATING HARMONY

Thursday, October 6, 2016, 7:00 p.m.
White Theatre
Jewish Community Campus
5801 West 115th Street
Overland Park, Kansas

Please call 913-327-8196 or email rsvp@mchekc.org to make complimentary reservations for the film. Seating begins at 6:30 p.m. for those making reservations by October 3. General seating begins at 6:45 p.m.

Theater fees have been underwritten by the White Theatre Grantor Fund at the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Kansas City.

The film, narrated by Tovah Feldshuh, will be introduced by principal producer Dr. John J. Michalczyk, professor/co-director of film studies and current chair of the Fine Arts Department at Boston College.

Dr. Michalczyk has produced and directed twelve documentaries, having scripted eight of them.

Creating Harmony is offered in conjunction with MCHE’s Return to Life Concert. Concert patrons making commitments of $1,000 or more by October 3 will be recognized at the film.

OCTOBER 6 FILM DOCUMENTS HISTORY OF EX-CONCENTRATION CAMP ORCHESTRA

Described as a remarkable documentary about renewal, resistance and resilience, Creating Harmony: The Displaced Persons’ Orchestra from St. Ottilien explores the history of the Ex-Concentration Camp Orchestra through photographs, archival footage, concert programs and interviews with participants, audience members and witnesses. MCHE will host a free screening of Creating Harmony on Thursday, October 6, at 7 p.m. A dessert reception will follow the program.

Surviving victims of the Nazi genocide used music as a means to chronicle what they had experienced, to raise morale and to imagine possible futures after the catastrophe.

Members of the Ex-Concentration Camp Orchestra perform on stage in Nuremberg, Germany.

Photo Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of David Granat

Surviving victims of the Nazi genocide used music as a means to chronicle what they had experienced, to raise morale and to imagine possible futures after the catastrophe.

Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland.

RETURN TO LIFE CONCERT
Sunday, November 6, 2016
Concert 7:00 p.m.
Folly Theater
300 West 12th Street
Kansas City, Missouri

Private patron reception preceeding the event.

CONCERT INVITATIONS HAVE BEEN MAILED TO MCHE MEMBERS AND MAJOR DONORS. PLEASE REFER TO THE INSERT BETWEEN PAGES 6 AND 7 OF THIS NEWSLETTER OR VISIT MCHEC.ORG/CONCERT FOR DETAILS OR TO MAKE RESERVATIONS FOR THE CONCERT. PROCEEDS WILL SUSTAIN THE IMPORTANT WORK OF MCHE.
New Americans: Appreciating Their Challenges and Achievements

Journeys to Kansas City

Through the efforts of President Truman, Dean Harrison of the University of Pennsylvania and General Eisenhower, DP camps became more livable. Until they were officially closed in 1952, largely as a result of Israeli statehood in 1948 and relaxed U.S. immigration policies under Truman, they became hubs of Jewish renewal, marriages, record birth rates and education. In the end, more than 100,000 made it to the United States. Fewer than 20% ever saw a psychologist.

Survivors who came to Kansas City were aided by local organizations, including the Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Services. Often, they were met at Union Station by Esther Levins. They attended English classes taught by Morrie Tuchinsky, of blessed memory. The late Clara and Hyman Brand opened their home to them, and bankers, including the late Sam Schultz, arranged loans for them, fully aware they had no collateral to offer.

These “New Americans” focused on the future—establishing homes, providing for their families and educating their children. Met by a war-weary population with little interest in hearing their stories and with no extended families of their own, they created their own social communities, serving as each other’s family. Together, they celebrated holidays and simchas, but they also shared each other’s ever-present pain.

Beyond the Veil of Irrevocable Loss

In her essay “America’s Incomprehension,” Dr. Beth Cohen states that the media, in their quest to transform Holocaust survivors’ struggles into heroic and victorious narratives, crafted an image of survivors as acculturated and triumphant, minimizing the “veil of irrevocable loss,” the ever-present anguish of memory and “survivor guilt.” Recently, trauma-informed care has begun to address psychological needs of what is now an aging and diminishing population, but in the 1940s and 50s, decades before the term PTSD came into use, doctors and social workers could not fully grasp how the Holocaust affected survivors’ perceptions, their families and their health.

I continue to be amazed that these individuals had the strength to re-tell and, hence, to re-live their stories or even to put one foot in front of the other each day. For most, their resilience goes far beyond that. These “New Americans” created our community’s Memorial to the Six Million. They imparted values of family, education and community service to their children. Serving as models of acceptance and resilience, they have instructed young people not to hate.

On November 6, we will honor local survivors at our Return to Life concert at the historic Folly Theater. Please consider being part of our special tribute to them and to the contributions they have made in our community.
I have a confession—I am a Broadway musical junkie! I love the stories, the music and the dancing. Musical theater brings people together to share in the experience of art, talent and storytelling. I’m a bit of a purist with an affinity towards the classics like Fiddler on the Roof. However, recently I attended the national touring company production of the show If/Then.

The show illustrates how our lives can take a totally different direction by twists of fate and the choices that we make. “What If” I would have taken a different route to work today? Would I have avoided the traffic congestion and not spilled my coffee? “What If” I had ignored that phone call 37 years ago from a friend? Would I ever have met my husband had I not answered that call?

What If

So many times, the simplest decisions we make or twists of fate that occur change the course of our lives. I reflect on this often as I think about the lives of Holocaust survivors and those who perished. When my mother and grandmother arrived at Stutthof concentration camp in August 1944, they approached the camp leaders who ordered my grandmother to go to the left and my mother to the right. That was the final memory my mother had of her last moment with her mother. “What If” they had switched places?

My uncle also arrived at Stutthof with them and then was sent to the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau on September 10, 1944. “What If” my mother would have been chosen? How does it happen that my oldest daughter would be born on September 10, 1986? While one Jewish life was destroyed, 42 years later another Jewish life was beginning in the same family. Every day, I imagine what could have been had the “What Ifs” taken a different course.

Decisions and Choices

While we can’t control or begin to understand the “What Ifs”, we can recognize the impact we can make based on our decisions and choices. This is the overwhelming theme that MCHE second generation speakers present to students. We ask them to consider what we can learn from the history of the Holocaust and how they can apply these lessons to their own lives.

“What If” one day they arrived at school to find that their best friend was not allowed to attend anymore simply because of his or her religion or that their favorite teacher had been fired because new rules prohibited her/him from teaching? What would they do?

We ask students to consider the actions they can take to stand up against intolerance and indifference and to practice acceptance and tolerance rather than hatred and discrimination. Stand by your friends when you see them hurting or bullied. You can make a difference by simply considering “What If” this were happening to me? Would I want others to speak out against bigotry and prejudice on my behalf? We can recognize the signs of hate and take action.

Return to Life

Broadway music brings us to a place of joy and reflection. Whether it is a show-stopping production number with lavish costumes and sets or a simple ballad by one performer, the music asks us to contemplate and wonder how the story of the musical could play out in our lives.

On November 6, we have the opportunity to experience this with our program, “Return to Life—Music of the Ex-Concentration Camp Orchestra”. I hope you will join us that evening to hear the music of survivors as they returned to life. We can imagine the “What Ifs” and make a difference.
Return and Remember

2017 FREE FILM SERIES FOCUSES ON POSTWAR EXPERIENCES

At the end of World War II in Europe, those who survived the Holocaust were faced with the difficult task of beginning life anew. For some, this meant a return to their countries of origin; for others, immigration to new lands. For most, return to life was made possible by a desire to move forward—away from the past. Only later were survivors and western society able to remember and reflect upon these experiences. Films in this series were chosen to explore this process of returning and the complications of remembrance.

Every Face Has a Name • February 22
This uniquely moving documentary finds and interviews Holocaust survivors and war refugees seen in a 35mm archival film reel showing their arrival at the harbor of Malmo, Sweden on April 28, 1945. The film captures their reactions and reflections as they see their postwar selves for the first time in decades. The group includes Jews from all over Europe, as well as Polish mothers and children, members of the French resistance, British spies, and a young American wrongly accused of being a spy while visiting her grandparents and deported to Auschwitz. It is a powerful film that captures the joy and sorrow of immigration. (Running time: 76 minutes, English, Swedish, Hebrew with English subtitles)

Ida • March 15
In 1960’s Poland a young woman is on the verge of her taking vows as a Catholic nun. Orphaned as an infant during the German occupation of World War II, she suddenly learns that her parents were Jewish. Together with her unconventional aunt, her only surviving relative, she embarks on a road trip into the Polish countryside to learn the fate of her family and to decide her own future. (Winner, Best Foreign Language Film of 2015 - Running time: 80 minutes, Polish with English subtitles)

Jealous of the Birds • April 26
Some 15,000 Holocaust survivors remained in Germany after WWII. How could they stay? Jealous of the Birds was born from this pivotal question. Filmmaker Jordan Bahat begins his quest with a desire to understand the choices made by his own grandparents. Through interviews with survivors, their children and other Germans, Bahat explores what it means for victims to live among perpetrators and for children of those perpetrators to deal with the guilt borne from the crimes of their parents. It reminds us that choices of the past create legacies that play out across families, nations, cultures and generations. (Running time: 78 minutes, English, German)

Remember • May 24
With the aid of a fellow Auschwitz survivor (Martin Landau) and a hand-written letter, an Auschwitz survivor struggling with memory loss (Christopher Plummer) embarks on a cross-country odyssey to find the former Nazi responsible for the deaths of his family members. This suspense-filled story is one of belated revenge and ultimate accountability. (Running time: 95 minutes, English – Rated R)

Film Series

Program Schedule
All films will be shown on Wednesdays in the Jewish Community Campus Social Hall. Each program will begin at 7:00 p.m. with an introduction by Dr. Shelly Cline.

Complimentary snacks and beverages will be provided.

Reservations
Advance reservations are encouraged by calling 913-327-8196, visiting the MCHE office, or emailing rsvp@mchekc.org with full contact information.

Those making advance reservations by noon the day prior to each program will be seated at 6:30 p.m. General seating begins at 6:45 p.m.

Sponsorship Opportunities
To help defray costs associated with theater use, licensing, refreshments and publicity, MCHE invites sponsorships of $150 for individual films and full series sponsorships of $500 (Supporter) or $1,000 (Patron).

Those interested may make their commitments online, by mail or by calling MCHE Executive Director Jean Zeldin at 913-327-8191. Donations are also appreciated at the door but not expected.

For additional information, visit mchekc.org/filmseries.
MCHE Continues Popular Lunch and Learn Program

**DIFFERENT HORRORS, SAME HELL: GENDERING THE HOLOCAUST**

Both men and women were persecuted and killed by the Nazis; yet their experiences with these events—as portrayed by Holocaust scholar Myrna Goldenberg in *Different Horrors, Same Hell*—differed according to gender.

Beginning February 14, 2017, MCHE’s public historian Dr. Shelly Cline will offer a five-week adult education course exploring these important differences and the impact of gender on survival. Sessions will be held on consecutive Tuesdays from noon until 1:15 p.m. at the Jewish Community Campus.

Participants are encouraged to bring a dairy or vegetarian lunch. A course fee of $50 includes reading materials, beverages and dessert. Those interested may register at the MCHE office, online at http://www.mchekc.org/lunchandlearn or by calling Shelly Cline at 913-327-8194.

**What is Gendering the Holocaust and Why Does It Matter?**
By Shelly Cline, Ph.D.

People often assume that a discussion about “gender” is really code for a discussion about “women.” It isn’t. Rather, a gendered approach to the study of the Holocaust considers the experiences of women and men in relation to one another, as well as how femaleness or maleness impacts an individual’s time during the Holocaust. It also erodes the notion that any one set of Holocaust experiences can be viewed as universal or normative. Gendering is not about a hierarchy of suffering, nor does it detract from the Jewishness of Holocaust victims. Instead, it makes our understanding of the survivor experience much more robust and nuanced.

Read more at http://mchekc.org/lunchandlearn/

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**Gender in the Ghettos - February 14**

Ghettos were the last place where Jews functioned as families and communities. In the midst of deteriorating conditions and extreme hardship, they sought not just to survive but to live. This session examines the gendered pressures and expectations experienced by both women and men in ghetto life.

**Gender in the Camps I: The Experience of Women - February 21**

From the moment of arrival, gender mattered. Women and men were separated upon entry to the camps and from then until liberation their experiences would be markedly different. This session will explore the different hardships and strategies for survival that camp life entailed. How did female social norms outside the camp prepare or hinder survival inside? How did pregnancy and sexual assault complicate their Holocaust experience?

**Gender in the Camps II: The Experience of Men - February 28**

Part II will explore many of the same themes as the previous session as they applied to men. How did the social norms and experiences of men outside the camp prepare or hinder survival inside? How did men experience the process of arrival and selection? We will also discuss the problem of a universal Holocaust narrative: Why are so many of the most famous accounts and memoirs of men?

**Gendered Perpetration - March 7**

Though most perpetrators were male, some were not. Throughout the war, 3,500 women served as guards in the camp system. Though their work and responsibilities were the same as their male colleagues, their experience was not. As a female minority, these women often were targets of discrimination, and they were expected to adhere to a male military code of behavior exhibited by their colleagues. Ultimately, these factors greatly affected the lives of prisoners. This session will examine the experience of these women and how their gender impacted their work and the suffering of prisoners within the camps.

**Popular Culture Representations - March 14**

Over past decades, the Holocaust has been richly represented in literature and film. How do these representations compare to the real events, and how is gender used to tell these stories? This session will look at cinematic representations of several survivor accounts covered in previous sessions.
Thank you to the hundreds of generous donors who supported the work of MCHE during our last fiscal year. We can’t do it without you!

Thank you for your ongoing support of MCHE.

We are grateful to our donors who have made gifts to MCHE during our last fiscal year ending June 30, 2016. We are also thankful to the donors who have made gifts of $10,000 or less (not listed below) who are not eligible to be recognized in this list. You are recognized in our donor directory which is available by contacting MCHE at 913-327-8190 or info@mchekc.org.

Please note that a donation of $10,000 or less must be received by June 30, 2016 to qualify towards the fiscal year. Thank you for your generosity.

DONATIONS RECEIVED JULY 1, 2015 - JUNE 30, 2016 ~ THANK YOU!

* of blessed memory  
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Donors who have been members for 20 years or more were honored at MCHE’s Annual Meeting on June 21. Prior to presenting them with special buttons recognizing their long-time support, Christopher Beal, board vice president of fund development, praised the group: “Being a dues-paying member for 20 years demonstrates an incredible commitment to our mission over a long period of time and shows that MCHE must be doing something right.”

The 20+ membership program will continue through June 2018. All membership categories are eligible.

Buttons will be mailed to those who have achieved this milestone and were not present at the meeting.

See page 12 for a list of the 2016-17 Board of Directors and Council of Advocates elected at the annual meeting.

20+ MEMBERS AS OF AUGUST 25, 2016

David & Alice Jacks Achtenberg
Frank Adler
Ed & Cheryl Alexander
Sam & Janice Balot
Rolfe & Sylvia Becker
Donavon & Cathy Blake
Irwin & Rita Blitt
Mike & Sherry Blumenthal
Betty Brand
Bruce Culley & Linda Larkins
Zandy & Peggy Davis
Sam Devinko
Harold & Arla Edelbaum
Alan Edelman & Debbie Sosland-Edelman
Gus & Elinor Eisemann
Roger & Virginia Emley
Federman Families
Trudi Galblum
Josh & Ronna Garry
Ron & Susie Goldsmith
Marvin & Adelle Goldstein
David Goodman
Stan & Janey Goodman
Laura Greenbaum
Rip & Clara Grossman
Allen & Gail Gutovitz
Ron & Barbora Porter Hill
Laura Rollins Hockaday
Lynn Hoover
Gordon & Suzanne Kingsley
Lori Klarfeld
Tibor & Carla Klausner
Phil & Marie Koffman
Bill & Regina Kort
Howard & Sharon Levitan
Craig & Colleen Ligibel
Jack Mandelbaum
John Mandelbaum & Bruce Larsen
Mark & Ellie Mandelbaum
Walter* & Joan March
Mary Ann McCue
Robert & Nancy Milgrim
Sue Seidler Nerman
Steve & Rosie Nochlin
Allen & Jeanie Parelman
Joe & Stacy Parelman
Shelly & Steve Pessin
Ed & Karen Porter
Jay & Ellen Portnoy
James & Mireille* Remer
Hal & Carol Sader
Bill & Fani Schifman
Regina and Bill Kort
Kevin & Joanne Schwartz
Fred & Judy Sherry
Bob & Aletha Simon
Josh & Jane Soisland
Neil & Blanche Soisland
Stewart & Esther Stein
Harvey & Donna Thalblum
Lowell & Evy Tilzer
Ralph & Nina Turec
Susan Vogel
Davey & Mindy Wajcman
Judy Wasserman*
Maureen Wilt
Sheldon Whishna
Nancy Wolff
Michael & Ruth Worthington
Bob & Jean Zeldin
Stan & Joyce Zeldin
Louis & Janet Zwillenberg

*of blessed memory

As the daughter and only child of two Holocaust survivors, it was extremely important for me to support MCHE. My parents were fully supportive of MCHE until the day they died, and they would be so proud to see all that this organization has accomplished!

Regina and Bill Kort

We, mankind, have a built-in ungodly propensity toward intolerance, bigotry and hatred of “the other”—those who do not believe as we do, those who do not look like us or come from different cultural backgrounds. Recent genocidal episodes in Kosovo, Darfur, Rwanda, and Nigeria affirm this notion. Regina and I have supported MCHE these many years in the hope that what we do in education will impact individuals in such a way today that they will do the right thing in the future to address our collective dark side.
Propaganda is the utilization of a message to sway opinion—be that in the form of advertising a product or selling a political message. During the Nazi period, propaganda was used for a variety of purposes, ranging from electioneering to preparing the highly integrated German society to view their own neighbors as inferior beings, worthy of exclusion and, eventually, annihilation.

MCHE’s 21st annual White Rose Student Essay Contest examined the role of Nazi propaganda in the Holocaust. One hundred and ninety-two students from 17 regional schools researched the goals and methods of Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda and explored the experiences of one Jewish survivor affected by these circumstances.

A panel of Blue Ribbon judges identified 10 finalists in each division, and winners were announced at a ceremony attended by the students, teachers, families and MCHE White Rose Society members who collectively sponsored this year’s contest.

Grace Davis of Lincoln College Preparatory Academy was the top prize winner in the 8-9th grade division. Her sponsoring teacher was Darryl Henderson. Jordan Hoffman of Lee’s Summit High School won the 10-12th grade division. Her sponsoring teacher was Christopher Bobal. Both of these winning essays can be read at http://mchekc.org/white-rose-student-essay-contest-finalists.
White Rose Essay Contest Theme – 2017

JEWISH RESISTANCE IN THE GHETTOS

The enormity of the Holocaust was such that no victim response to it would have stopped the Germans from implementing genocide. Jews under Nazi control faced various and overwhelming obstacles to effective resistance. Despite this, Jews repeatedly sought to oppose Nazi policy in various ways. While armed uprisings or partisan activities are often held up as examples of successful Jewish resistance, not all resistance was armed. Often the only course of action available was an act of unarmed resistance.

Successful acts of resistance took many forms, ranging from personal acts to preserve dignity; social acts to preserve the community such as organizing clandestine schools, soup kitchens and underground record keeping; political acts such as the sabotage of the German war industry; and eventually, armed uprisings.

Nowhere was resistance more robust than in the ghettos where Jews last lived as families and communities and resistance activities occurred amidst extreme conditions and against enormous odds.

In recognition of the efforts of individual Jews and community groups to persevere through the choiceless choices of the Holocaust, the 2016-2017 essay contest theme is “Jewish Resistance in the Ghettos.” Students will describe the goals and obstacles to one form of resistance and explain how it was implemented by one Jewish person or group. In reflecting on their research, students will also address the thought of Holocaust historian Lucy Dawidowicz who said, “‘The wonder is not that there was so little resistance, but that, in the end, there was so much.”

Postmark deadline is March 23.

Locating Jewish and Roma Mass Graves

MCHE WILL MAKE RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR EDUCATORS

Father Patrick Desbois and staff members of Yahad in Unum, a non-profit organization supporting Desbois’ work in locating mass graves of Jewish and Roma (often referred to as gypsies) victims of the Nazis in Eastern Europe, were featured at a conference for regional educators and Holocaust center professionals in Denver, Colorado in April. Through the generosity of the Herman Family Foundation and at the invitation of the Colorado Holocaust Educators, MCHE staff members Shelly Cline, Jessica Rockhold and Jean Zeldin traveled to Denver to participate in the workshop.

Father Desbois, author of The Holocaust by Bullets, described his work in utilizing bystander interviews, in addition to both German and Soviet archives, to locate previously unknown mass graves throughout eastern Poland and former Soviet territories where Einsatzgruppen units executed Jewish communities in mass shooting actions. He highlighted the educational resources available through Yahad in Unum and encouraged participants to teach with primary source documents in a micro-history environment where, rather than looking at the scope and breadth of an Einsatzgruppen action, students would explore the unique circumstances of one shtetl (small village), utilizing sources to corroborate evidence.

Conference participants are expected to reconvene in Denver next year to participate in a full professional development program focusing on these resources, which will then be available for use in future MCHE courses for educators and at the university level.
Night of Broken Glass
Kristallnacht took place on November 9 and 10, 1938, when the Nazi SS and other national police agencies in Germany, Austria and the Sudentenland carried out a series of violent, state-sponsored, anti-Jewish pogroms devised by Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s Minister of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. Designed to appear as spontaneous, these events came to be known as Kristallnacht (commonly translated as “Night of Broken Glass”), a reference to the broken windows of synagogues, Jewish-owned stores, community centers and homes destroyed and plundered by the rioters. In all, 267 synagogues were burned or destroyed, 7,500 Jewish businesses were vandalized or looted, at least 91 Jewish people were killed, and approximately 30,000 Jewish men were imprisoned in concentration camps. Rioters also damaged Jewish cemeteries, hospitals and schools while police and fire brigades stood aside, under orders to intervene only if the fires threatened non-Jewish property. Kristallnacht ended the illusion that normal Jewish life under the Nazis was still possible. It also marked a turning point in Nazi anti-Jewish policy that would culminate in the Holocaust—the systematic, state-sponsored mass murder of the European Jews.

MCHE Hosts USHMM Research Scholar
THE CAMP SYSTEM IN OCCUPIED EUROPE

Auschwitz, Dachau and the Warsaw ghetto are names familiar to those who have studied the Holocaust, but most people are amazed to learn that the Nazis and their allies actually established over 42,000 camps, ghettos and other sites of detention, persecution or forced labor. Nor do most people know much about conditions in those places or the broad range of prisoner experiences.

In order to fill this vast knowledge gap, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and Indiana University Press are compiling and publishing an Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945. According to USHMM, “the work aims to answer basic questions about as many individual sites as possible; to provide scholars with leads for additional research; and to memorialize the places where so many millions of people suffered and died.” When completed, the eight-volume set will be the most comprehensive and current guide to the Nazi camp system in existence.

The first two volumes published so far include a total of over 4,000 pages describing early camps and ghettos as well as descriptions of how the Nazis conducted the Holocaust throughout the scattered towns and villages of Poland and the Soviet Union.

Dr. Geoffrey Megargee, senior applied research scholar at USHMM, serves as editor of the encyclopedia, heading up a team of researchers, scholars and volunteers from all over the world. On Thursday, January 26, 2017, at 7:00 p.m. in the White Theatre at the Jewish Community Campus, MCHE will host Dr. Megargee, who will speak about the camp system in Nazi occupied Europe, addressing the differences among death camps, slave labor camps, and concentration camps and explaining which prisoners were sent to each and their places within the German Reich.

Complimentary reservations are available by calling 913-327-8196 or emailing rsvp@mchekc.org. Those making reservations by Monday, January 23 will be seated beginning at 6:15 p.m.; walk-ups will be seated on a space-available basis, beginning at 6:45 p.m.

Theater costs for this program are underwritten by the White Theatre Grantor Fund.
2Gs Share Their Parents’ Stories

Now in its 10th year, MCHE’s Second Generation (2G) Speakers Bureau, which began as a supplement to the original survivor speakers bureau, has grown into a dynamic program and primary delivery mechanism for personalized Holocaust testimonies. Currently comprised of 13 volunteer speakers who share the Holocaust experiences of their parent(s) as well as personal perspectives, the group continues to reach record numbers of middle and high school students. During the 2015-2016 school year, a new record was achieved—5,213 students at 35 schools.

Though middle and high school audiences have always been the primary audience for second generation speakers, in recent years MCHE has received an increasing number of requests from the community, including faith-based groups, social service organizations, corporations and governmental agencies.

Over the past year, MCHE speakers addressed groups totaling 1,456 adults. Among them were commanders in the U.S. Army attending an ethics symposium at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, active duty servicemen at Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth, and the immigration staff at the local office of Homeland Security.

Reaching people in positions of authority with the ability to make decisions regarding intervention in refugee crises or escalating genocidal situations has been motivating and empowering for these children of Holocaust survivors. “To prevent the Holocaust from fading into history, says 2G Steve Cole, “it is our duty to tell the very personal stories of its impact on our parents, our relatives and ourselves.”
Professional Jewish musicians, adept at chamber music, jazz, cabaret and classical music, often played during the Holocaust whether it was for Nazi entertainment, ridicule or to keep hope alive and soothe their own despair.

In conjunction with its Return to Life Concert on November 6 (cover story), the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education presents Music in Hell, a traveling exhibit on loan from the Kupferberg Holocaust Center at Queensborough Community College in New York. Through wall panel images both poignant and disturbing, Music in Hell examines the wide scope of musical activities that existed before, during and after the Holocaust, illustrating the indomitable will of Holocaust victims.

On display at the Jewish Community Campus September 20 through November 27, Music in Hell may be viewed during regular Campus operating hours.