

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Music at Kohl Mansion Presents

***VIOLINS OF HOPE* SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA**

A Priceless Collection of 50 Restored Holocaust-Era Violins

Set for West Coast Debut in Eight-Week Residency

January 16 – March 15, 2020

Uniting 42 San Francisco Bay Area Organizations With

Concerts, Exhibitions, Lectures, Films, Interfaith Services and Community Forums;

Special Commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day,

Coinciding with 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz,

Set for January 27 at San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El

Program Highlights Include Commissioned World Premiere by

Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer, *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope*,

Featuring Mezzo-Soprano Sasha Cooke, Violinist Daniel Hope and String Quartet;

"Along the Trade Route" Concerts of Folk and Klezmer Traditions with Cookie Segelstein;

Exhibitions at War Memorial Veterans Gallery, Peninsula JCC and New Museum Los Gatos;

Performances with the Violins of Hope by New Century Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco

Symphony, Oakland Symphony, Peninsula Symphony, and Bay Area Rainbow Symphony

www.violinsofhopesfba.org

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (November 22, 2019) — The *Violins of Hope*, a priceless collection of recovered and meticulously restored instruments from the Holocaust era, including instruments that were played by prisoner-musicians in the ghettos and labor/death camps, will make their West Coast debut in an eight-week residency of robust content beginning January 16 through March 15. While the collection currently includes 86 recovered Holocaust-era string instruments, the San Francisco Bay Area residency will play host to 50 strings.

Produced by **Music at Kohl Mansion**, one of the Bay Area's leading presenters of international chamber music programs, *Violins of Hope San Francisco Bay Area* represents the efforts of

forty-two organizations showcasing these iconic instruments in multiple public events including symphonic, chamber and klezmer concerts, exhibitions, film screenings, community forums and lectures, interfaith dialogues, student/teacher workshops, and ecumenical services. The momentous Bay Area debut of these revered violins will coincide with the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp by the Soviet Army and with International Holocaust Remembrance Day on Monday, January 27.

Special to the San Francisco Bay Area presentation will be the appearance of Israeli father and son luthiers, **Amnon** and **Avshalom Weinstein**, 2nd and 3rd generation violin makers and the co-founders of the *Violins of Hope* initiative. What began as a modest effort with one or two violins in their Tel Aviv atelier in 1996, the collection has grown to 86 instruments that have toured concert halls, congregations and exhibition centers in Europe and the United States. Both father and son will be presented in public forums speaking about their expert work at restoring each violin while reflecting on the provenance of these instruments, and the impact these strings as symbols of hope have had on communities worldwide.

Avshalom (Avshi) Weinstein shared, “It will be the first time the *Violins of Hope* collection will be on the West Coast of America, and we very much look forward to this important occasion. Each city we have visited has found new aspects and new ways to showcase these instruments. In Europe, the memory is a bit stronger, as they lived it. Almost every family there was involved in the war in some way, but the generations are changing. The most important aspect is to make sure we don’t forget, so that hopefully, we won’t make the same mistakes again.”

The eight-week project will be further distinguished by the presence of **James A. Grymes**, noted University of North Carolina musicologist and author of the award-winning book *Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust – Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind’s Darkest Hour*. Grymes will join the Weinstains for public speaking engagements at the San Mateo Public Library, the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco and various private and public Bay Area schools. Joining them, violinists **Hannah Tarley** and **Rebecca Jackson** will offer a performance on select instruments from the *Violins of Hope* collection.

“It is a great privilege for Music at Kohl Mansion to present the iconic *Violins of Hope*, a breathtaking and powerful collection of recovered and restored string instruments of the Holocaust,” said Executive Director **Patricia Kristof Moy**. “It is our hope that with this eight-week residency of over 40 participating organizations, the violins will not only remind us of the shameful way they were used in the past, but will also speak anew, serving as life-affirming symbols, fostering important discussions on peace and human dignity, and ultimately creating a musical bridge of grace and compassion throughout our diverse Bay Area.”

Violins of Hope San Francisco Bay Area Leadership council Co-chairs **Katherine and Roy Bukstein** commented, "The *Violins of Hope* programs will deeply impact myriad communities throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. The physical presence of these unique instruments, the music they will inspire along with their stories of the Holocaust, will surely bring all who are touched by them closer to understanding the power of hope."

Music Concerts

As previously announced and indeed a notable highlight of the project, Music at Kohl Mansion has commissioned award-winning composer/librettist team **Jake Heggie** and **Gene Scheer** for a chamber work appropriate to the occasion, *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope*. Performing in this world premiere on January 19, and preview on January 18, will be renowned opera and concert star, mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke**, world acclaimed violinist **Daniel Hope**, and a string quartet comprised of members of the **San Francisco Opera Orchestra**, violinists **Kay Stern**, **Dawn Harms**, violist **Liz Prior** and cellist **Emil Miland**. Each musician will be performing on one of the historic string instruments from the *Violins of Hope* collection. The creation of this new work is made possible, in part, by a Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions grant from the **William and Flora Hewlett Foundation** and a generous gift from **Diane B. Wilsey**.

"Both Gene and I are profoundly moved by the stories of these violins, and [they] immediately got our imaginations going," said Jake Heggie. "There are so many stories to tell. I see in this project an opportunity to gather and engage a broad spectrum of communities on the West Coast for something beautiful, moving, historic and educational, with an important message for today." This world premiere by Heggie and Scheer is the third commissioned work by Music at Kohl Mansion following earlier commissions by **Ernst Bacon** (1986) and **David Carlson** (1993).

Encore presentations of Heggie/Scheer's new chamber work *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope*, will be presented in its San Francisco premiere at Grace Cathedral and in Silicon Valley at Congregation Sinai. Replacing Sasha Cooke and Daniel Hope for these concerts will be mezzo-soprano **Nikola Printz** and violinists **Hannah Tarley** and **Rebecca Jackson**.

During the eight-week residency, concerts will be given by **San Francisco Symphony's Chamber Musicians**, **New Century Chamber Orchestra**, **Oakland Symphony**, **Peninsula Symphony Orchestra**, **Bay Area Rainbow Symphony**, **Ariel Quartet**, **Alexander String Quartet**, and the **Young Chamber Musicians** of Burlingame. Presented by special arrangement with Music at Kohl Mansion, a *Violins of Hope* chamber music concert will be performed at Seattle's Benaroya Hall by **Music of Remembrance**. Programming for many of these concerts will feature music by Holocaust-era composers who ultimately perished in the calamity. For all of these concerts, violinists will be performing on restored instruments previously owned or played by a prisoner from one of the ghettos, Nazi concentration camps, or Holocaust survivor. Part of the Weinstein's collection includes a viola and cello and both of these instruments will be played in various concerts.

Other musical concerts will include ***Along the Trade Route***, a musical exploration of shared melodies from over the centuries transcend political and national boundaries. Specific musical traditions to be explored include those of the Turks, Roma, Jews, Celts, South Asian and North Americans. Led by klezmer authority **Cookie Segelstein** of Veretski Pass, all performances will feature renowned musicians **Emmanuel During, Hemmige V. Srivatsan, Darcy Noonan** and **Suzy Thompson**, performing on historic instruments from the *Violins of Hope* collection.

Commemorating Holocaust Remembrance Day

Under the auspices of Music at Kohl Mansion, a very special program commemorating **International Holocaust Remembrance Day** on January 27 will occur at San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El. Plans at this time include remarks by *Violins of Hope* co-founders Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein, and a keynote speaker to be announced. The evening will include a performance by the New Century Chamber Orchestra led by pianist **Simone Dinnerstein**, and excerpts of Heggie/Scheer's newly commissioned chamber work, *Intonations*, performed by mezzo-soprano **Nikola Printz**, violinist **Hannah Tarley** and a quartet of musicians from the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. This free public event is presented in association with **Congregation Emanu-El, the Consulate General of Israel to the Pacific Northwest, San Francisco Interfaith Council** and **Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center**.

Exhibitions

Complementing the many music performances, the *Violins of Hope* residency will include three fascinating and insightful public exhibitions. The Peninsula Jewish Community Center in Foster City will present a special photography exhibition by Daniel Levin, ***The Weinsteins' Workshop: The Luthiers Who Restored the Violins of the Holocaust***, offering an insider's perspective into Weinsteins' eclectic workshop and forensic-like approach to restoring these instruments. In Los Gatos at the New Museum (NUMU), an exhibition entitled ***In the Artist's Studio: The Violin Workshop of Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein*** will offer a recreation of the Weinstein's Tel Aviv atelier.

Central to the exhibitions will be ***A Journey of Heroism, Healing and Humanity*** presented at the San Francisco War Memorial Veterans Building in cooperation with American Legion War Memorial Commission, with special assistance from San Francisco State University's Global Museum and the Helen and Joe Farkas Center for the Study of the Holocaust in Catholic Schools at San Francisco's Mercy High School. Plans call for a display of 20 violins from the collection sharing stories of their difficult history and emotional journey toward their restoration in addition to relevant ephemera about the Holocaust. The exhibit will explore the power of music to heal, unite, and protest throughout recent history.

All three exhibitions will offer unique educational opportunities for students, social justice and faith-based organizations, and congregations to learn about this period of systematic hatred

and bigotry in order to prevent this from re-occurring locally and globally. Related exhibits will bring context and focus to the Bay Area's history of human rights campaigns, contemporary issues of injustice, racial and religious discrimination and the horrors of genocide.

A significant program geared for California-wide students (grades 7 to 12) and teachers will be the 18th Annual "**Day of Learning Featuring the Violins of Hope,**" offering 18 different workshops and presentations by Holocaust survivors. Presented by Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center, this high-impact educational program for 700 students and teachers will be held at San Francisco's Galileo Academy of Science and Technology

Film Screenings

The intersection of music and the Holocaust is certainly no stranger to the world of cinema. As part of the eight-week residency, seven films/documentaries will be screened at the San Mateo Public Library, the San Francisco Public Library, the Carmel Jewish Film Festival, the Lark Theater, the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, and at the Osher Marin Jewish Community Center as part of the New Century Chamber Orchestra concert.

The announced films are director Roman Polanski's Academy Award-winning work of 2002, ***The Pianist***, starring Adrien Brody about the true story of a Polish Jewish radio station pianist set in the final days of the Warsaw ghetto; ***Bach in Auschwitz***, Michel Daeron's powerful documentary from 2000 featuring a series of survivor interviews with Jewish women musicians who played in the Auschwitz Orchestra; ***Violins of Hope: Strings of the Holocaust***, the 2016 documentary narrated by Adrien Brody about the work of Amnon Weinstein and his quest to restore these instruments; ***Defiant Requiem***, the historical drama by director Doug Schultz released in 2012, regarding young Czech conductor Rafael Schächter imprisoned in Theresienstadt, and his confrontational performance of the Verdi Requiem for the Nazis and visiting International Red Cross; a rare showing of the 1924 Austrian Expressionist film ***The City Without Jews***, by Hans Karl Breslauer and based on the novel by Hugo Bettauer, presented with live original music by Alicia Svigals and Donald Sosin; and excerpts from Daniel Hope's highly acclaimed documentary, ***Terezín – Refuge in Music***, integrating music written by composers in Terezín with survivor stories by musicians Alice Herz-Sommer and Coco Shumann. An additional soon to-be-released film will be announced next month by the Lark Theater.

The *Violins of Hope* Story and Collection

For imprisoned Jews, Roma and homosexuals enduring unimaginable evil during the Holocaust, music offered a haven and humanity. The strains of a beloved song supplied solace, even if only for a few moments. In some cases, the ability to play the violin spared Jewish musicians from grueling labors or death. They literally played for their lives: "We played for sheer survival. We made music in hell," recalled camp musician Heinz "Coco" Schumann.

Nearly 40 years ago, Amnon Weinstein, an internationally renowned violin-maker in Tel Aviv, heard a story from a customer who brought in an instrument for restoration. The customer

survived the Holocaust because his job was to play the violin while Nazi soldiers marched others to their deaths. When Weinstein opened the violin case, he saw ashes inside. Remembering the 400 hundred members of his own extended family who perished in the Holocaust, he was overwhelmed and knew he needed to seek out and restore other stringed instruments with stories like this one, but could not bring himself to begin the project. By 1996, Weinstein was ready. He put out a call and began locating violins that were played in the camps and ghettos. Word of Weinstein's work spread. Instruments were brought to his studio, where Amnon and his son Avshalom carefully brought each one back to life.

***Violins of Hope* World Tour to Date**

The *Violins of Hope* made their North American debut in 2012 with performances in Charlotte, NC, and have subsequently been played in concert halls, synagogues, churches, universities, theaters and other venues in Cleveland, Birmingham, Nashville, Knoxville, Sarasota, Jacksonville, Houston, Louisville, Cincinnati, Phoenix, Fort Wayne, Montreal and at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In Europe, the *Violins of Hope* have been featured in concerts in Berlin, Monaco, Paris, Istanbul, London, Rome, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Following their Bay Area engagement, the *Violins of Hope* will travel to Los Angeles for programming beginning March 22.

Participating Organizations

American Legion War Memorial Commission; Bay Area Rainbow Symphony; Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music; Carmel Jewish Film Festival; Commonwealth Club; Congregation Beth Am, Palo Alto; Congregation B'nai Shalom, Walnut Creek; Congregation Emanu-El, San Francisco; Congregation Etz Chayim, Palo Alto; Congregation Kol Emeth, Palo Alto; Congregation Sinai, San Jose; Congregational Church of San Mateo; Consulate General of Israel to the Pacific Northwest; Contemporary Jewish Museum; Facing History and Ourselves; Farkas Center for the Study of the Holocaust in Catholic Schools; Grace Cathedral, San Francisco; Jewish Community Center - East Bay, Berkeley; Jewish Community Center of San Francisco; Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center; KlezCalifornia; The Lark Theater, Larkspur; Mercy High School, Burlingame; Music at Kohl Mansion, Burlingame; Music of Remembrance, Seattle; Napa Center for Thought and Culture; New Century Chamber Orchestra; New Museum of Los Gatos; Oakland Symphony Orchestra; Osher Marin Jewish Community Center, San Rafael; Oshman Family Jewish Community Center, Palo Alto; Peninsula Jewish Community Center, Foster City; Peninsula Symphony Orchestra; San Francisco Interfaith Council; San Francisco Public Library; San Francisco State University; San Francisco Symphony; San Mateo Public Library; St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Albany; Under One Tent, Contra Costa & Tri Valley Jewish Book & Arts Festival; Veretski Pass, Berkeley; and Young Chamber Musicians, Burlingame.

***Violins of Hope* San Francisco Bay Area Financial Support**

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About Music at Kohl Mansion

Located in the 1914 Burlingame estate of Frederick and Bessie Kohl, Music at Kohl Mansion was founded in 1983 to offer quality chamber concerts on the San Francisco Peninsula. The mansion's Great Hall, built specifically for chamber music performance, offers excellent acoustics, size, and atmosphere, making it a superb chamber music venue for audiences and performers alike.

The 2019-20 season marks Music at Kohl Mansion's 37th consecutive year of presenting chamber concerts by national and international touring artists. Located just 15 miles south of San Francisco, Kohl Mansion is a favorite destination for chamber music lovers from throughout the Bay Area. The quality of performers and repertoire has built a loyal following for the series over the years. Concert-goers praise the "Music at Kohl experience," where world-class artistry is enhanced by the exceptional venue, warm ambiance, affordable ticket prices, easy accessibility, free parking, friendly patrons, and complimentary post-concert receptions. Music at Kohl Mansion also has a distinguished reputation among musicians both for the outstanding performance space and the discerning audience.

Kohl for Kids music education programs have served over 120,000 San Mateo county public school students since their inception in 1992. MAKM also makes live music widely accessible through admission-free presentations at libraries, community centers, senior facilities and other public spaces. "We continuously seek ways to live our mission of community-building through music, demonstrating that art can act as a vehicle for common understanding" says former Board President and Founder **Liz Dossa**.

Music at Kohl Mansion is an independent non-profit, 501 (c) (3) charitable organization operating in collaboration with and on the campus of Mercy High School, Burlingame.

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High-resolution downloadable photographs and video of *Violins of Hope* are available at www.violinsofhopesfba.org and <https://vimeo.com/329268655>

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