



For Immediate Release

VIOLINS OF HOPE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA CONCLUDES SUCCESSFUL WEST COAST DEBUT OF ICONIC COLLECTION OF HOLOCAUST-ERA STRINGS; PRODUCED BY MUSIC AT KOHL MANSION, 42 ORGANIZATIONS PRESENTED OVER 80 PERFORMANCES, EVENTS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS ATTRACTING 29,454 INDIVIDUALS FROM NAPA TO CARMEL, PLUS SEATTLE



www.violinsofhopesfba.org

BURLINGAME, CA (April 16, 2020) — The *Violins of Hope San Francisco Bay Area* has recently concluded the West Coast debut of the *Violins of Hope*, a priceless assemblage of 87 Holocaust-era string instruments once played by Jewish musicians from the concentration camps and ghettos. Recovered and carefully restored by award winning Israeli father and son luthiers, **Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein**, 52 instruments from the collection were presented in their Bay Area debut, most of them played in performances while others were on display.

The Bay Area's highly successful eight-week residency (Jan. 16 – March 15) of over 80 programs of musical performances, exhibitions, education programs, public forums, inter-faith services and film screenings was presented by a diverse roster of 42 non-profit performing and visual arts organizations, faith-based institutions, libraries, community centers, schools and universities and attracting 29,454 individuals across eight Bay Area counties: Napa, Marin, Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara and Monterey, in addition to performances in Seattle, WA.

Produced by **Music at Kohl Mansion (MAKM)**, a leading Bay Area presenter of an international chamber music series and music education programs, the *Violins of Hope San Francisco Bay Area* residency was three years in-the-making and led by MAKM Executive Director **Patricia Kristof Moy** and associate producer, **Pam Lampkin**. **Katherine and Roy Bukstein** served as *Violins of Hope San Francisco Bay Area* Leadership Council Co-chairs.

Producer **Patricia Kristof Moy** said: "On February 16, 2017, three years after first learning of the *Violins of Hope*, I summoned the courage to reach out to Amnon Weinstein and wrote: 'We are confident that a visit by

the *Violins of Hope* to the San Francisco Bay Area would be received with great enthusiasm and broad support.' The next morning, Amnon telephoned from Sarasota, FL, where the Violins were on tour and said he'd be 'thrilled' to bring the Violins for the first time on the West Coast. Three weeks later, composer Jake Heggie accepted my invitation to write a new chamber work for the *Violins of Hope*, and later that fall, the Wm. & Flora Hewlett Foundation made our dream possible with the first of many gifts and grants from our generous community. None of us could have imagined that three years later, with 42 partner organizations and over 200 musicians, the *Violins of Hope* would light the Bay Area on fire for eight weeks in 48 venues and bring together nearly 30,000 individuals of all ages and backgrounds to share unforgettable performances and stories of such profound and powerful resonance. The Bay Area is forever enriched."

Avshalom Weinstein, *Violins of Hope* co-founder commented, "The Violins of Hope San Francisco Bay Area was an astonishing experience with many highlights." Weinstein added, "The new musical piece [*Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope*] by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer, the many beautiful concerts and the multiple different events and school programs were among the high points. Although we ended up with the onset of the coronavirus, we're hoping to be back in September to present the final two concerts with the Peninsula Symphony and violin soloist Cihat Askin. Thank you San Francisco Bay Area for an amazing time."

Over the course of eight weeks, there were many programmatic highlights including 21 concerts of symphonic and/or chamber music that featured instruments from the VOH collection beginning with a world premiere chamber work by Jake Heggie commissioned and presented by **Music at Kohl Mansion**; the **San Francisco Symphony** chamber musicians; **Oakland Symphony**; **New Century Chamber Orchestra**; **Ariel Quartet**; **Alexander String Quartet**; **Bay Area Rainbow Symphony**; and a string quartet from the Seattle-based **Music of Remembrance**. The **Peninsula Symphony** was originally scheduled to present two closing concerts which were cancelled due to the COVID-19 novel coronavirus; both concerts have been rescheduled for Sept. 11 and 12 in San Mateo and Campbell respectively.

Of great musical distinction was Music at Kohl Mansion's plan to commission a new work by the award-winning team of composer **Jake Heggie** and librettist **Gene Scheer**. Supported by a **Hewlett 50 Arts Commission** grant from the **William and Flora Hewlett Foundation** and a generous donation by **Diane B. Wilsey**, Heggie and Scheer's *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope* was given two sold-out world premiere concerts at the historic Kohl Mansion on January 18 and 19. The critically acclaimed debut engagement featured celebrated mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke**, violin virtuoso **Daniel Hope**, student violinist **Sean Mori**, and a string quartet comprised of musicians from the San Francisco Opera Orchestra: violinists **Kay Stern** and **Dawn Harms**; violist **Patricia Heller**; and cellist **Emil Miland**. The evening, which also included chamber works by Schubert and Mendelssohn, was recorded live for future release on the Pentatone classical music label.

Complementing the symphonic and chamber music concerts, klezmer violinist and historian **Cookie Segelstein** led 11 sold-out concerts titled *Along the Trade Route*, a showcase of klezmer, folk, traditional, and world music performed by a roster of acclaimed musicians.

The *Violins of Hope San Francisco Bay Area* coincided with the 75th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. In recognition of this solemn event, a free civic concert was presented on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, at San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-El. The event featured excerpts of Heggie's *Intonations: Songs from the Violins of Hope* with mezzo-soprano **Nikola Printz** and violinist **Hannah Tarley**, in addition to a performance by the New Century Chamber Orchestra led by guest pianist **Simone Dinnerstein**. A special commendation was presented to Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein by the Consul General of Israel, **Shlomi Kaufman**.

Three major exhibitions were offered including *Violins of Hope, A Journey of Heroism, Healing and Humanity* presented at the San Francisco War Memorial Veterans Gallery; *The Weinsteins' Workshop, the Luthiers Who Restored the Violins of the Holocaust* at the Peninsula Jewish Community Center; and *In the Artist's Studio: The Workshop of Amnon and Avshalom Weinstein and the Violins of Hope* at New Museum Los Gatos.

In addition to multiple public forums and community discussions, film screenings and inter-faith services, guest speakers and musicians playing on instruments from the Violins of Hope collection, visited over 7,500 students and teachers in 20 Bay Area public and private schools offering in-depth programming about the Holocaust, the power of music and the importance of hope.

Lead Sponsors of the *Violins of Hope San Francisco Bay Area* included:

William & Flora Hewlett Foundation; Diane B. Wilsey; Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation; Walter & Elise Haas Fund; Victoria & Terry Rosen; Katherine & Roy Bukstein; Carlstrom Productions; John & Marcia Goldman; Kenneth Gundry & Susan Kasdan Gundry; Anonymous; David Anderson & Judy Preves Anderson; Donna Dubinsky & Len Shustek; Hellman Foundation; Diane & Stephen Heiman; Linda & Frank Kurtz; Bernice Lindstrom; National Endowment for the Arts; Daniel Springer & Lisa Coscino; Mervyn L. Brenner Foundation; Robert A. Ellis; Bette & Joseph Hirsch; The Estate of Shirley Sachs Hort; Nancy Livingston & Fred Levin, the Shenson Foundation; Julie & David Levine; and Abby S. Rumsey.

In collaboration with Music at Kohl Mansion, the following organizations participated:

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, SF · Congregation Etz Chayim, Palo Alto · Congregation Kol Emeth, Palo Alto · Congregation Sinai, SJ · 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, SF · JCC - East Bay, Berkeley · JCC of SF · Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center · KlezCalifornia · 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 Los Gatos · Oakland Symphony Orchestra Osher Marin JCC, San Rafael · Oshman Family JCC, Palo Alto · Peninsula JCC, Foster City Peninsula Symphony Orchestra · SF Interfaith Council · SF Public Library · SF State University SF 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 · Young Chamber Musicians, Burlingame.

While gallery exhibitions, film screenings and lectures still occurred in the eighth and final week (March 8 – 15) of the *Violins of Hope* residency, 11 public and private educational programs and musical performances were forced to cancel due to the then-evolving shelter-at-home county and state mandates regarding the novel coronavirus COVID-19. As the Bay Area residency drew to a close, the shared humanity and resonance of the *Violins of Hope* never seemed so poignant. www.violinsofhopesfba.org

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