

World Premiere of *Stories From the Violins of Hope* -- An Original Drama from The Braid with Music from the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony, Creating a Poignant, Unforgettable Theatrical Experience Featuring a Surviving Violin from the Holocaust

Original Show Brings Stories of Surviving Holocaust Violins to New Generations Through Live Zoom Performance by The Braid (formerly Jewish Women's Theatre) with Music from the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony



A.J. Meijer, Back of Violin of Hope, Rosie Moss

Los Angeles and virtually everywhere (January 11, 2021) The Braid (formerly Jewish Women's Theatre), the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony Chamber Players (LAJSCP), and Temple Isaiah will honor International Holocaust Remembrance Day with the world premiere of *Stories From the Violins of Hope*. The theatrical production, to be available live on Zoom, is the first to tell on stage the story of the famed collection of stringed instruments that survived the Holocaust and were brought back to life, and to the world, by an Israeli family of violin makers.

The live production, postponed last spring due to COVID-19, has been re-imagined for a live Zoom performance with seven actors and five musicians. Directed by The Braid's Producing Director Susan Morgenstern, it will take place at 2 pm PST, on Sunday, January 31, 2021. Virtuoso violinist, Niv Ashkenazi, will play the only

violin from the *Violins of Hope* collection currently in the United States. The rest of the collection remains in Israel until live concerts can resume.

Speaking from Israel where he continues to restore Holocaust violins sent to him from all over the world, violin maker Amnon Weinstein, who founded the traveling *Violins of Hope* project with his son, told playwright Lisa Pearl Rosenbaum, “I had to find a way to let these violins speak, to tell the world they were once played by people who had dreams, and so much talent that has been lost. Every piece of music played on them says, ‘Never Again.’”

Rosenbaum explains, “The story is based on my extensive conversations with Amnon and my research about the violins. What struck me was that Amnon’s father, Moshe, was also an extraordinary violin maker. He left Lithuania for Palestine before World War II and set up a music store and workshop in Tel Aviv. Members of the newly founded Palestine Orchestra, (now the Israel Philharmonic) all of whom were exiled Jews from Europe, wanted to get rid of their German-made instruments. Moshe could not bear to destroy them, so he put them away in his attic. Years later, his son Amnon reclaimed and restored them, and added them to his collection of violins that survived concentration camps, ghettos, transport trains and the forests of Eastern Europe. This is a story that needs to be told.”

Stories from the Violins of Hope came about through the efforts of Gail Solo, principal underwriter of the event and Temple Isaiah congregant. She said, “I am honored to be the matchmaker for this collaboration. I have spent my life living with the mantra, ‘Never Forget and Never Again.’ This production fulfills that commandment, and is particularly poignant as the last survivors of the Shoah are leaving our world.”

“The violins will outlive Holocaust survivors and be there to tell the story to the next generation,” said Dr. Noreen Green, Artistic Director of the LAJSCP. Green curated the music that will be performed by LAJSCP throughout Rosenbaum’s play.

Producer Susanne Reyto, Chair of the Violins of Hope Project (VOHP) in Los Angeles, and herself a Holocaust survivor said, “It is my mission to educate the next generation about the Holocaust in a unique way. The violins are survivors. Their restoration demonstrated our ability to rise from the ashes and succeed. After we are gone, the violins will remain and keep speaking to the world the language of music. The battered/ruined instruments represent the suffering and the restoration represents the survival. Hopefully, people will understand the

importance of music in our lives as well as in the lives of Holocaust victims, where music either saved or prolonged their lives.”

Temple Isaiah Rabbi Jaclyn Cohen, said, “Cantor Tifani Coyot and I will be opening the production with a very special song of remembrance, setting the tone for International Holocaust Remembrance Day and reminding us all of the deeper meaning behind this unique performance. I hope the audience will be moved to continue learning, hearing, and bringing stories of survivors – and surviving musical instruments—into their modern lives.”

The Braid’s Artistic Director and Producer of *Stories From the Violins of Hope*, Ronda Spinak said, “This partnership is exactly what The Braid strives to bring to our community. We are honored and thrilled, in the midst of a pandemic, to have found a way to present this fresh, original, deeply moving work which gives voice to our Jewish heritage in a unique and contemporary way.”

Spinak continued, “The Braid’s Advisory Council member and writer Lisa Rosenbaum’s unforgettable script, enhanced by the beautiful music, offers a soulful way into this moving story and gives a gift to each audience member that will long be remembered.”

Amnon Weinstein agrees, saying, “Every performance with the *Violins of Hope* is a monument to a boy, a girl, a man, a woman who cannot speak anymore. It reminds us that as long as the song of a violin can be heard, there is reason to have hope.”

Tickets for *Stories From the Violins of Hope* begin at \$36. Performance is on Sunday, January 31 at 2pm PST. Visit: www.the-braid.org to purchase tickets and for additional information.

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left to right: A.J. Meijer, Back of Star Violin, Rosie Moss