



They
Played
for Their
Lives

A Film by Nurit Jugend

Discussion Guide

www.TheyPlayedForTheirLives.com

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About The Film



Through intimate interviews and live performances, *They Played for Their Lives* artfully portrays how music saved the lives of young musicians. Playing music in the ghettos and concentration camps not only fostered spiritual strength within themselves and others, but often proved a bargaining tool that spared their lives. The documentary follows the personal narratives of eight survivors. Chaim recounts how he saved his father from beatings, by teaching an SS officer to play the harmonica. Anita, who played cello in the Women's Orchestra in Auschwitz, was spared inhumane forced labor. And little Hellmuth whistled with the band in exchange for extra food and clothing. Each of these unique stories illustrate the power of music to sustain the human soul. At the end of the war their lives unfold in surprising ways, yet music remains at the core of their memory and legacy. Charcoal illustrations, a live piano performance by 106-year old Alice, and a moving reunion of two boys who searched for each other for 66-years, make this compelling viewing.



Illustration by Ari Binus

A Note From The Director



One of the first questions people ask me is why I chose to make this film. By profession, I'm a classical composer and music lecturer at Stanford University. Music has been an essential part of myself since early childhood. I'm also 3rd generation of Holocaust survivors from my mother's side. Most of my family perished in Auschwitz concentration camp and I know very little of their fate. Seven years ago, I found myself in a deep dark place, wondering where one can find hope. It was the trigger that prompted me to embark on a personal journey, and what brought together two significant parts of my life - music and family.



I have often wondered what were my family's last days in Auschwitz like; what did they think and feel? What were their last hopes, wishes or lost dreams? While pondering the fate of my family, it was only natural for me to wonder whether there was any music making in the ghettos and concentration camps. Did people sing or play an instrument while imprisoned? Did composers write new music and songs?

During my research I discovered the rich cultural lives that developed in these places. I was moved to learn, that while very few items were permitted in the ghettos and concentration camps, from all things, some chose their musical instrument. I was driven to discover how people were able to live in such distress and horror, yet find motivation to play music or write a new song. I learned, that for people living under inhumane existence, acts of creativity, such as playing music and composing, provided inner strength, spiritual resistance, and to some even the ability to survive. As a composer, I was impressed by the ability of songwriters and composers to create new music under such circumstances.

The music that arose from the ghettos and concentration camps is an extremely significant and invaluable part of a culture and music history. It's a testament to people's lives, their day to day experience, feelings and hopes. Many of the songs and compositions have a nostalgic or melancholic feel to them - suggesting longing for the past or better times.

To my surprise, much of it felt uplifting and hopeful. And I was especially awed by the beautiful tunes that emerged from what I consider hell. I felt it was essential, to not only preserve and revive, but also recognize this music and its historical context as a valuable musical legacy and testament.

When I met with the survivors in the film, they ranged between ages 80 to 106 years old. I was eager to listen to their testimonials, and learn about an important part of history first hand. As such, I felt an urgency to capture their stories as soon as possible. These survivors endured the unimaginable, yet their drive to live lent them hope and the power, to not only survive, but to also rebuild their lives after the Holocaust, find joy, love and meaning through music.

The film aims to keep the conversation about the Holocaust alive. Though countless lives, cultures and nations may be destroyed through trauma and genocide, their legacies live on in songs, compositions, musical instruments and those who survived. With this film I would like to honor the memory of those persecuted and acknowledge their legacy. I would like to send the message that music is a universal language, which speaks to all mankind. It is one of the more powerful resources available to us all; it can offer people a temporary relief while physically being in horrific circumstances, and has the ability to empower the inherent resilience we as human beings have within ourselves. Music has the power to unite people regardless of faith or religion. It can be utilized to embolden people for tolerance and acceptance of one another.

By screening 'They Played For Their Lives', I would like to inspire hope, to empower and to uplift the human soul. To those who have experienced trauma or the dark side of life, and to all survivors, I would like to send the message that even in adversity one can find light. I hope that this essence shines through the narratives of the people who shared their stories with us in the film, and the music they play.

-- Dr. Nurit Jugend, Director and Producer

Music During The Holocaust



Between 1942-1945 in Nazi Germany, during the years of the 'Final Solution', Jews and various non-Jewish groups were being systematically persecuted and forced to live under inhumane conditions within walled ghettos and concentration camps. They lived with constant hunger, sickness, degradation and fear of death. By forcing such brutal circumstances upon them, the Nazis aimed to physically and psychologically destroy their victims.

It was under these circumstances that some found within themselves inner strength, hope and meaning. By nurturing creativity, education or writing diaries, they found mental shelter from their personal and communal catastrophe that they were thrust into. This kind of survival mechanism is often referred to as 'spiritual resistance'. It was through spiritual resistance that they managed to sustain some semblance of humanity, normalcy, dignity, inner-strength, and ultimately the will to fight for their lives.

The empowerment of 'spiritual resistance' is evident in the rich cultural life that the inhabitants of various ghettos were able to maintain, in spite of the horrific conditions they were forced to endure. The imprisoned community continued to provide education for their children, they cultivated theatre and other stage performances, organized poetry reading, encouraged art and music. Some musicians continued to play their instruments, compose new music and write songs.

In ghetto Terezin (Theresienstadt) the Nazis allowed Jewish leaders to form cultural and educational programs within the ghettos as a front, to quieten suspicions and global criticism about how prisoners were really being treated by the Nazis. By advertising to the world the cultural prolificacy coming from the ghettos, the Nazis were able to claim that no harm was being done to the prisoners, thus strengthening their own propaganda. Music in ghetto Terezin flourished; there were operas, concerts and choirs. Singers, composers, musicians and performers were allotted time to practice. They were released from physical work, and received more food in order to maintain suitable physical condition for their stage performances.

Music was meaningful to both the performers and their fellow inmates. It provided fleeting moments of pleasure, and a degree of emotional comfort, distraction and mental escape from the horrors of every-day life in the ghettos, as well as spiritual resistance and hope: "Music gave us so much, to escape even for a few moments to a 'normal' world," says Greta, who sang in the Brundibár Children's Opera in ghetto Terezin. Even though they could not escape their physical reality, Greta explains that "Music allowed us a complete disconnect and emotional escape from the daily life".

However, in concentration camps, such as Auschwitz, the circumstances of music-making were different. The Nazis used music to their advantage; they rounded up the talented inmates to form groups and ensembles that were intended to entertain the Nazis during holidays, meetings, and parties. At one point Auschwitz had six orchestras. The Women's Orchestra in Auschwitz-Birkenau was made up of thirty-six members and eight transcribers, under the musical direction of Alma Rose - the niece of Gustav Mahler. Similarly, Treblinka, Majdanek, Belzec, and Sobibor camps all had orchestras.

The Nazis valued music highly and often granted special treatment to those who had the skills to play a musical instrument. Their appreciation of music allowed some musicians to acquire better jobs, better living conditions, and more food and clothing for themselves and their loved ones. Additionally, the Nazis liked to have music playing as they marched prisoners to and from work, to ensure order and compliance at concentration camps. As deportation trains, crammed to the brim with new inmates, pulled into the station at the concentration camps, music was played to give the inmates the illusion that they had arrived at a place that valued culture and had civilized conditions.

The travesty for musicians, who were forced to play music in the camps, would haunt some of them for the remainder of their lives. In many cases, musicians were ordered to play as they watched their family and friends march into the gas chambers. For those musicians who possessed musical skills that were deemed "useful" by the Nazis, it was undoubtedly a horrific and traumatic experience, but nonetheless one that often saved their lives: "The cello really saved my life because to be in this orchestra was a way of survival, because as long as they wanted music they would be foolish to put us in the gas chambers," says Anita, who played in the Women's Orchestra in Auschwitz.



Illustration by Ari Binus

The suffering of the victims, under the Nazi regime, was reflected in their music and musical life. Music offered them a way to express their humanity in inhumane conditions, to escape from reality and give voice to their yearning for freedom, as well as to find comfort and hope. Whether it was Auschwitz, ghetto Terezin, ghetto Vilna, or any other concentration camp, the music that was composed and performed by musicians under these circumstances undoubtedly saved lives.

Hosting A Screening



Screenings of ‘They Played for Their Lives’ function to increase awareness and encourage conversation about the complex topic of the Holocaust. Your screening can foster multigenerational understanding and compassion, as well as broaden perceptions of the power of music in our lives. We hope that it will also inspire hope and strengthen human connection. The questions in the Discussion Guide section are crafted to stimulate active and aware viewing and listening.

Prepare For Your Event

LICENSE THE FILM FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

Every screening event, that is open to the public and held outside of a private home, requires a Screening License. In order to obtain a license for your event, please email jugend@TheyPlayedForTheirLives.com or fill-out our online [Screening Request Form](#).

PLAN YOUR EVENT

- ▶ Pick a date and find a venue. Picking the ‘right’ date can have a direct effect on the number of attendees and the success of your event. Some good dates to consider surround International Holocaust Remembrance Day, also known as the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp, on January 27th. Holocaust Remembrance Days and services vary in different parts of the world; in Israel it’s held on April or May 27 (according to the Jewish calendar), in Austria on May 5th, in France on July 16th etc. We also advise to check the local event calendar in your area, in order to make sure that there are no events scheduled for the date of your screening, which may conflict or compete with yours.
- ▶ Book the venue well in advance in order to secure a space that best meets your needs, and is large enough to accommodate all attendees.
- ▶ Make the necessary arrangements to ensure timely delivery of the film and other relevant materials.
- ▶ Be sure to advertise your screening at least three weeks in advance, and allow enough time to promote the event.

IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE AND DETERMINE YOUR GOALS

Screenings of 'They Played For Their Lives', and the post-screening discussion, can be tailored to a variety of audiences and events.

For many, the Holocaust is a highly difficult and emotionally charged topic - whether they are children, adults, survivors themselves or the survivor's families. The screening of the film and post-screening discussion, can facilitate dialogue on this topic and offer a safe environment for people to share their experiences, personal feelings and thoughts.

First, identify the context of your event - is it for education, to commemorate a Holocaust related event, to practice in healing group and therapy, or perhaps to raise public awareness about this topic.

- ▶ **Educational Purposes.** If your event is intended for educational frameworks, such as high schools and colleges/universities, it is important to identify your targeted age group and prepare educational materials accordingly. You may want to consider inviting other teachers and parents, or reaching out to the Jewish Studies Program, the Music, History, Art, or Psychology Departments, as well as specific Medical Schools that focus on trauma and healing.
- ▶ **Commemoration Day.** You may want to screen TPFTL to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust during a National or International Holocaust Remembrance Day event. If you screen the film during such an event, you can reach out to Jewish affiliated organizations such as The Jewish Family and Children's Services, Jewish Community Centers, as well as Hebrew/Jewish schools and synagogues.
- ▶ **Healing group and therapy.** A screening of the film and discussion is highly recommended to Holocaust survivor groups, Holocaust related group support for second and third generation of survivors and their families, and any group support related to trauma and healing.
- ▶ **General public.** Do you want to raise awareness about a significant period in history of WWII and the Holocaust? For the general public you might consider homes for the elderly, community centers, places of worship, and local theaters among others.

Second, once you have determined the context of you event, think about your goals. Examples of such objectives are:

- ▶ Offer students insights about the role music played for survivors during the Holocaust.
- ▶ Understand how music empowers people not only during the Holocaust but also long-after, and how it can play a role for reconciliation.
- ▶ Offer insights about how resilient people can be, despite horrific circumstances in which they can find themselves in, by using the healing power of music.

GUEST SPEAKER

In order to maximize the impact of your screening, consider inviting a guest speaker who best suits your needs. It could be a Holocaust survivor, an expert on the Holocaust or in the fields of Music, History, Psychology, or a significant community member such as a Rabbi or Priest. Please note that the filmmakers of TPFTL are available to speak at your event. They can talk about the filmmaking process and answer the audience's questions. To invite our filmmakers to your event please email jugend@TheyPlayedForTheirLives.com

PARTNER-UP AND PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

Once you decide on your goals and target audience, you can partner with local community organizations, educational centers (schools, colleges/universities), places of worship, or local broadcasts. Partnering with another organization will increase the size of your audience, boost marketing efforts and broaden exposure. Partnering may help merge financial resources and allow for the sharing of other resources such as venue, equipment, marketing expenses, staffing and screening costs, thereby leading to a more successful event.

Many organizations have their own email lists, volunteers and regular employees. Depending on the purpose and target audience of your event, identify individuals you would like to reach out to and ask for their help to spread the word.

CHOOSE A LOCATION

Once you've identified your goals and target audience, select a venue that can best meet your needs. If you plan on having a discussion following the screening of the film, choose a venue that can facilitate conversation and hold the estimated number of people attending your event. Your location should be reserved for the duration of the whole film, and even longer if you plan to hold a post-screening discussion or other follow-up activities.

There are several places that may donate the space for your event: local community centers, Jewish Community Centers, libraries, synagogues/congregations, a local theatre, school auditoriums or other educational centers. Your screening location choice may also be influenced by the organization you are partnering with.

PREPARE EVENT MATERIALS

Once you've identified your audience and goals, prepare the materials you'll need to facilitate discussion. After you license your screening and make payment, we will provide you with a link to our online educational materials and resources. Download material that is relevant and appropriate for your target audience. These resources include a discussion guide with questions, press release template, flyer template, stills and more. You can personalize the materials by inserting your event's date, time,

admission/donation request, venue directions, and partner organizations. You may print this material or send it electronically to your guests, partners, and media. See the Downloadable Material For Your Event page for more detailed information.

MARKET YOUR EVENT

Be sure to advertise your screening at least three weeks in advance and allow enough time to promote the event. Once you've downloaded the relevant material and customized it to your event, you can begin to spread the word around. Post hard-copy posters on public bulletin boards, place flyers and print-outs at local coffee shops, libraries, community centers etc. Use the power of social media to email, announce the event on your Facebook or Twitter pages. Consider opening a Facebook event page, invite all your contacts digitally, and send digital alerts to social media and other venues. Make sure to create a link in your digital material to the film's Homepage and trailer:

<http://www.TheyPlayedForTheirLives.com>. If you are partnering with another organization, request to utilize their marketing resources as well.

TEST YOUR EQUIPMENT

Make sure your venue has the proper equipment to screen the film: a projector, screen, speakers, and DVD/Blu-ray player. Consider microphones for post-screening discussion, depending on the size of your venue. Make sure to test all equipment before the event: make sure the DVD/Blu-ray plays smoothly, the sound levels are adequate, and your projected image is the right shape and size and in focus. If you experience any problems, contact the tech staff at your venue for help.

PREPARE FOR YOUR EVENT

Prepare enough time ahead to ensure that your event creates the most impact and delivers the strongest message. Create a short agenda for your screening so that all partners, volunteers and guest speakers know what to expect, and send it out two or three days prior to the event. Recruit volunteers to help with preparations and ask them to arrive early to set up for the event.

Schedule to meet volunteers at least one hour prior to the event to ensure that everything is in place, such as signage, printed handouts, sign-up sheets at the entrance, name tags, setting-up of the space (chairs, tables), make sure that the equipment is working correctly and in place (audio-visual tools, microphones), refreshments.

Ask your guest speakers to arrive at least thirty minutes prior to the event to ensure that the event begins promptly. Confirm any last minute details and test the microphones.

Collecting feedback is a great way to measure the impact of your event. You may want to consider passing out Audience Evaluation forms at the end. Having concrete data to learn from is helpful when you start looking for funding for future programs. Let your audience members know that TPFTL is available for purchase.

Downloadable Material

Once you have licensed the film for your screening and made payment, we will provide you with a link that will allow you to download the following material from our website and prepare for your event.

PRESS RELEASE

[This document](#) allows you to enter the details of your event and alert the local media.

FLYER TEMPLATE

This pre-designed [flyer](#) allows you to enter the details of your event, print out and hang in public authorized locations, in order to spread the word about your event.

FILM POSTER

This file is available to you for [download](#) in order to prepare handouts, integrate the film's official poster image in a social media posting, an event listing, blog post, or a printable document of your own making.

LOGO

Please download our official logo and include it on your website, blog, event flyer, or social media postings. Make sure to link the logo to the film's official website and trailer in order to increase impact: <http://www.TheyPlayedForTheirLives.com>

AUDIENCE SIGN-UP FORM

Many groups find it useful to have a [sign-up sheet](#) for their audience. It is a great way for you to follow-up with your audience after the event, ask for their feedback, and invite them to any of your future related events that might be of interest to them.

EVENT IMPACT FORM

We would love to hear about your event and experience, and the impact that your screening had on the audience! Please [download this form](#), fill it out, and mail it back to us with your copy of the film.

FILM STILLS

Many press outlets (including newspapers, blogs, and community event calendars) ask for film stills to help promote local events. You can use these stills to advertise your event on your website, social media platforms, or promotional flyers and invitations. [The stills](#) can also be incorporated in a power presentation used during a post-screening discussion, or print out information that you may hand to participants.

The Discussion Guide



This discussion guide aims to facilitate conversation about the sensitive and difficult subject, that is the Holocaust. The 'Discussion Guide' begins with 'The Survivors Featured In The Film' section, which includes a brief introduction and photo of each of the survivors, in order to facilitate conversation after the screening of the film. This section is then followed by a list of 'Suggested Discussion Questions'. The questions in the 'Discussion Guide' are tailored to a variety of target audiences: the general public, high school students, college students, Jewish community centers, and post-trauma therapy groups.

The Survivors Featured In The Film

VICTOR AITAY (1921-2012) - VIOLINIST

Victor was born in Hungary and began playing the violin when he was 6-years old. He survived several labor camps and even a couple of attempted escapes. At the court trial, after one particular escape attempt, the judge learned about Victor's occupation as a musician, and since the judge appreciated music and musicians he decided to spare Victor's life. After the war, Victor immigrated to the United States with his wife, a survivor herself, and settled in Chicago. Now, more than ever, he was determined to pursue a music career as principal violinist in the Chicago Philharmonic Orchestra and fulfill his love for music. There he collaborated with some of the greatest musicians of all times.



HELLMUTH SZPRYCER (B.1929) - WHISTLER

Hellmuth was only thirteen years old when his family was deported to ghetto Terezin. Inside the ghetto Hellmuth whistled with the 'Ghetto Swingers' jazz band. He became a child star overnight and was known as the 'Whistler from Terezienstadt'. Hellmuth continued to perform in Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, for high ranked SS officers such as Eichman Himmler and Mengele, and in return received better food and clothing for his family. He recounts how music provided comfort to his friends and family under unbearable conditions, and how his whistling ability ultimately saved his life.

FRANK (MISA) GRUNWALD (B.1932) - ACCORDION

Frank was born in Prague and hailed from a family of musicians - his parents played four-hand piano together, his brother John played the piano, and little Frank learned to play the accordion. Frank was 11-years-old when his family was deported to ghetto Terezin and from there to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. In absence of their piano and accordion, Misa and his older brother John discovered how to use their body as musical instruments. In ghetto Terezin and Auschwitz concentration camp they whistled and improvised to American Jazz and popular songs: "We loved it. We'd sing songs that we knew...It was a lot of fun, a mental escape, it was wonderful. Whenever you could create some music with yourself, even your own voice, it would be very relaxing, up-lifting..." During the making of the film we captured the powerful and unforgettable reunion of Frank and Hellmuth, who hadn't seen one another since their liberation from Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in 1945.



ALICE HERZ-SOMMER (1903-2014) - PIANIST

Alice was deported to ghetto Terezin with her husband, Leopold, and their five-year old son, Raphael. Witnessing her own mother being deported, and the hardship of having to lug her rucksack on her back, is what drove Alice to learn all twenty-four etudes by Chopin. In ghetto Terezin Alice performed hundreds of piano recitals, while her son Raphael performed with the Brundibár Children's Opera. For Alice and Raphael music played a significant and critical role in their survival. Alice was an immensely strong lady with a warm heart, who continuously shared her endless optimism and love for music until her final days: "Music is the most beautiful thing coming out of mankind". Alice also cherished her son's words: "One of the greatest pleasures of music is to make other people listen to it - to feel, for just a moment, a tiny part of an ideal world in which everything is good, beautiful, with harmony and love".

GRETA KLINGSBERG (B.1929) - SINGER

Greta was born and raised in Prague. She had no musical training prior to her arrival at ghetto Terezin. It was in ghetto Terezin that she discovered her ability to sing and where she performed in several opera stage productions, held by the Jewish Cultural Committee. Greta was 14 years-old when she played the role of Aninka, over fifty-five times, in the



children's opera *The Brundibár*. She vividly recalls the joy of performing: "On the stage, those were hours of normalcy. There we had everything children lacked in the ghetto: ice cream, pets, a large [town] square, school...The death all around, seeing our little friends die, and the diseases, all these disappeared on stage and the characters of the dog and the cat and the bird persuaded us, with their words, that we had to continue to live, to sing. This is the wonderful characteristic of children, their ability to create a world of their own".



ANITA LASKER-WALLFISCH (B.1925) - CELLIST

Anita was fifteen years-old when she joined the Women's Orchestra in Auschwitz concentration camp. She became the orchestra's single cellist. "The cello really saved my life", Anita says, "because to be in this orchestra was a way of survival, because as long as they wanted music they would be very stupid to put us in the gas chambers." After the war, Anita and Alice Herz-Sommer met through their husbands and became friends.

CHAIM REFAEL (1924-2014) - HARMONICA

Chaim Refael was born in Saloniki. As a child he served as a choir boy at his local church. Chaim was passionate about music and taught himself how to play accordion and harmonica. He recalls incidents, during his time in Auschwitz concentration camp, when music saved his life: "One day I saw an SS guard trying to play the harmonica. I told him that I could show him how [to play the harmonica]. The officer liked my playing. He brought me more warm soup and bread. He even ordered to stop the daily beatings of my father by the other guards...Music saved our lives!"



ALEXANDER TAMIR (ALEK WOLKOVSKY) (B.1931) - SONG WRITER & PIANIST



At the age of eleven, while living with his family in ghetto Vilna, Alexander set the words of his father's poem to music. Alex called the song 'Shtilar, Shtilar'. He submitted his song to a music competition in the ghetto and won first prize. The song spread rapidly from one person to another, and from one ghetto to the other, and ultimately became recognized by many as a song of spiritual defiance. 'Shtilar, Shtilar' represents the Jewish music and cultural legacy that arose during the Holocaust. For the people in the ghettos and concentration

camps the song carried the torch of hope, strength and defiance. Alex pursued a career as a pianist and educator. Together with pianist Ms. Bracha Eden, they formed one of the world's most acclaimed piano duo 'Eden-Tamir'.

AMNON WEINSTEIN - VIOLIN MAKER AND RESTORER

Amnon is a violin maker and restorer, who made it his mission to restore violins that were played in ghettos and concentration camps. 'Violins of Hope' is the name of a rare and unique collection of violins. Each of the violins has its own identity, its own extraordinary story of survival, and connection to the Holocaust. Prior to the war these violins were mostly used for Klezmer playing, but in the ghettos and concentration camps they were used to play any possible tune in order to keep their owners alive. By restoring these violins, Amnon contributes to their survival and enables them to be played worldwide. Their restoration signifies hope, which is what the project 'Violins of Hope' embodies.



THE BRUNDIBÁR CHILDREN'S OPERA, BY HANS KRASA

Brundibár is a children's opera written by a Jewish Czech composer named Hans Krása, with a libretto by Adolf Hoffmeister. The Brundibár was performed fifty-five times by the children of the Theresienstadt Concentration Camp. The opera tells the story of siblings, Aninka and Pepíček, who are raised by their mother. When their mother falls ill the doctor tells the children that in order to recover she needs to drink milk. The siblings sing at the marketplace, to earn money to buy milk, but the evil organ grinder Brundibár (who represents Hitler) chases them away. Luckily, with the help of a fearless sparrow, a cat, a dog, and the children of the town, Aninka and Pepíček are able to chase Brundibár away and sing in the market square.

About The Discussion Guide

The questions suggested in the 'Discussion Guide' aim to assist educators and facilitators, who have gathered a group of people to watch the movie, to conduct a post-screening conversation and deeper learning experience. The questions presented in this guide are designed with flexibility to complement a History, English, Social Studies, Music or Art class. They can also provide additional engagement tools to supplement your current Holocaust curriculum, as well as facilitate conversation about trauma, resilience and forgiveness during group therapy sessions or other events. Given the wide spectrum of audience, age-group and forums, that this Discussion Guide offers, we have organized the questions by thematic categories - beginning with 'General Questions', followed by more detailed ones such as 'The Act of Creativity and Music Making' and so on. We encourage you to explore all categories and suggested questions and extract those which best fit your target audience and discussion goals. If you are considering screening the film to children under high school age, please consult with an educator who specializes in that age group.

Suggested Discussion Questions

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. How do you feel after seeing the film? What feelings did the film raise in you?
2. What was the most memorable moment for you in the film? What scene or moment in the film had the greatest impact on you?
3. What is most meaningful to you about this film?
4. Prior to seeing the film, were you aware of the extent of music-making in the ghettos and concentration camps?
5. Has anyone you know been through the Holocaust, or survived a ghetto or concentration camp?
 - a. If so, have they ever shared their experience with you or others?
 - b. Have you ever talked about their experience?
 - c. Did they have a connection to music before, during and/or following the Holocaust?
6. The filmmaker had expected, that after going through the horrors of the Holocaust, some of the survivors would be traumatized to the extent that they would no longer want to have any connection with music. Yet the survivors in the film expressed continued love and even stronger

feelings towards music. How can you explain their growing passion for music, despite their experiences during the Holocaust?

7. Do you relate on a personal level to any of the survivors in the film? If so, why?

THE ACT OF CREATIVITY AND MUSIC MAKING

1. In the ghettos, Partisan brigades often resisted by fighting with weapons. Similarly, the act of making music under such circumstances is referred to as 'spiritual resistance'. Can you elaborate what this means?
2. How did music aid in the survival of the survivors in the film?
3. Do you think that people with music skills had a better chance of survival during the war? If so, why?
4. What do you think the act of making music provided for each of the survivors during their incarceration in the ghetto and concentration camps? What purpose did writing music serve for the composers and songwriters, and for the players?
5. Alex represents one of many composers who wrote music and songs in the ghettos and concentration camps. What do you think that the music composed and songs written during the Holocaust convey?
6. In what ways do you think that music was meaningful for those who heard it first hand - while marching to work, to the gas chamber, or in the café house in ghetto Terezin?
7. The Nazis, who valued music, improved the living conditions of the members of the Women's Orchestra in Auschwitz. This privileged treatment caused resentment and hostility among some inmates. Can you understand why the inmates would feel and react this way?
8. The Brundibár is a children's opera by Hans Krasa. Survivor, Greta Klingsberg, was 14 years-old when she played one of the lead roles (Aninka) in ghetto Terezin. She sang in the Brundibár opera 55 times. In the film, children from the Moran and Gewandhaus children's choirs perform the opera, as do many children choirs across the world.
 - a. How do you think Greta felt while performing in the Brundibár as a young girl in the ghetto?
 - b. What effect can the production of the Brundibár have on the children who performed the opera in the film? What do you think their experience might have been like?

- c. Do you think that a child's participation in a music production about the Holocaust can deepen their understanding of this topic?
 - d. What is the significance of the collaboration between the Moran children's choir from Israel, and the Gewandhaus children's choir from Germany?
 - e. What message did the directors of each choir wish to convey, to the children and to the world, by collaborating on this production?
 - f. In what ways is the meeting between the children and Greta significant?
 - g. How do you think Greta feels when she watches the children perform the Brundibár on stage?
 - h. In what ways is Greta's meeting with the children's choir, who were performing the opera, meaningful for her?
 - i. What might be the significance of producing the Brundibár opera nowadays? What message can it send, might it convey?
9. What do you think it meant, for a boy like Hellmuth, to whistle together with the Jazz band in ghetto Terezin?
 10. What do you think it meant for Frank and his brother John to whistle and sing together American Jazz tunes in Auschwitz?
 11. Anita speaks of those in Auschwitz who loved hearing music, and some who hated it.
 - a. Can you understand each of these emotional reactions?
 - b. Do you empathize with either one?
 - c. How do you think Anita felt about playing in the Women's Orchestra?
 - d. In what ways can the music of the Holocaust be commemorated?

HEALING

1. To some, the act of sharing experience and trauma with others can contribute to healing. In the film, survivors met and spoke with one another: Hellmuth with Frank, Alice with Greta, Alice with Anita. Greta met with the children's choirs, and they all share their stories with the viewers.
 - a. Why do you think the survivors wanted to share their story of music-making during the Holocaust?
 - b. How do you think the act of sharing their stories contribute to the survivor's healing?

- c. What other ways can you think of in which a survivor can find emotional healing?
 - d. What does this movie tell you about the resilience of people when they are faced with adversity?
2. What messages do you think each one of the survivors wishes to convey through their personal narratives in the film?
3. Some of the survivors in the film only began to share their stories and memories from the Holocaust in recent years.
 - a. What reasons might explain why some people chose not to share their story even with their family?
 - b. What reasons might explain why they chose to share their stories later in life?
 - c. Why do you think it's important that survivors share their narratives of something that happened so long ago?
4. Some research addresses how trauma experienced by a Holocaust survivor may be passed on to the 2nd and 3rd generations of their family members.
 - a. How can family members of survivors, and our community, remember the stories from the Holocaust, and learn about multi-generational trauma?
 - b. What are some ways that can help families of survivors deal with passed-on trauma?
5. For the survivors in this film, music continued to play an important and central role in their lives, long after they were liberated from the concentration camps.
 - a. Do you think music played a significant role in their healing? Why?
 - b. Do you think that the meaning of music has changed for any of the survivors, after what they experienced during the Holocaust? If so, why?
6. Some of the survivors in the film state that music saved their lives.
 - a. Did you believe, that music has the power to save a life, prior to viewing the film?
 - b. How has your understanding of music, and its place in people's lives, changed after watching the film?
7. For the survivors in the film, music seems to be a great source of comfort and healing. How can music have a similar effect on survivors of other traumatic events?
8. How do you think that music can play a role in dealing with distress/trauma?

THE SURVIVOR'S CHILDREN

1. Raphael, Anita's son, pursued a career playing cello - the same instrument his mother played in the Women's Orchestra in Auschwitz.
 - a. Do you think that Raphael's career choice playing cello is a coincidence, or do you think that it has a deeper meaning for him?
 - b. Do you think that Raphael's choice of playing the cello is meaningful to his mother Anita?
2. Do you think that the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors play a role in their parent's/grandparent's healing? If so, how?

THE 'VIOLINS OF HOPE' PROJECT

1. 'Violins of Hope' is the name of a rare collection of violins that survived the ghettos and concentration camps. The violins are restored by violin maker, Amnon Weinstein.
 - a. What is the significance of Amnon Weinstein's project 'Violins of Hope'?
 - b. How is the restoration of violins, that were played in the ghettos and concentration camps and that have outlived even their owners, significant?
 - c. What does Amnon Weinstein hope to achieve with his 'Violins of Hope' project?
2. What do you think it means for a violin player to play on an instrument that survived the ghettos and concentration camps?

NAZIS AND MUSIC

1. Why did the Nazis form orchestras in certain ghettos and concentration camps? What purpose did music serve for the Nazis?
2. The beatings that Chaim and his father suffered from the Nazi soldiers stopped after Chaim began teaching an SS officer how to play the harmonica. Once his musical skill was discovered, Chaim benefited from better food, better clothing, and better overall conditions. Likewise, Victor's life was spared when the court judge learned that Victor was a musician. The Women's Orchestra received privileged treatment too, after their talent was made known. Why do you think the Nazis treated Jews who played music differently?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

1. If you were to tell someone, who has not yet seen the film, what it's about, what would you say?
2. What are you learning about music, the Holocaust, the power of human beings and life?
3. What are you learning about people and their ability to survive under adverse circumstances?
4. How did your understanding of the meaning of music change after viewing the film? In what ways might you understand music differently after the screening?
5. Why do you think that the filmmakers chose to include mostly illustrations rather than photos? How do you feel about the illustrations? What is their contribution to the film?

Credits

The Discussion Guide was developed by Dr. Nurit Jugend, Boudewijn Bertsch and Michelle Shabtai.
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They Played For Their Lives

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