

Kym Verhovshek: Bridge to Change

by Kirk Borland

Like all children, Kym Baum (Verhovshek) had no sense of “the past” as she grew up in Chicago with her father and grandmother. At times she recognized her family was a bit different from that of most neighborhood kids. There was her grandmother’s very thick Czech accent and those traditional European foods that found their way into the school lunchbox (e.g., a sardine sandwich and poppyseed cookies). Kym also came to understand both her father and grandmother were Holocaust survivors. Kym doesn’t remember ever not knowing that fact, but it was something of a best-kept family secret rarely discussed and with few details.

Time passed. Kym became an accomplished violinist and pianist, entered the corporate world, married the love of her life, moved to Asheville, and adopted Elijah, now 5. In March of 2017, Kym’s cousin sent her a link to the Chicago performance of *Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezín*. Kym recognized Terezín as the Nazi concentration camp where her father was imprisoned from age 9 to age 12, but she knew nothing of the backstory upon which this performance was based.

Kym reached out to The Defiant Requiem Foundation (whose Board included an old friend of her father’s, who was also imprisoned at Terezín), and to the Asheville music, social justice, and faith communities including David Whitehill, Executive Director of the Asheville Symphony, Amy Mandel, Founder of Tzedek Social Justice Fellowship, and Carolina Jews for Justice, whose mission of creating a just, fair and compassionate North Carolina appealed to Kym’s hope that providing education around the Holocaust could speak to issues in today’s world. In less than a year she cemented the myriad of details required to secure a June 1 benefit performance of this moving, multi-media, symphonic and choral event at The Thomas Wolfe Auditorium.

Today, as a mom, Kym sees herself as “the bridge between her father’s legacy and her son’s future”. She is determined that future be one with “more love and less hate”---a lesson that *Defiant Requiem* can help to spread. To learn more about the many ways in which this event will serve as a centerpiece for educating and inspiring both young and old, please investigate the links below:

[Click here to learn more about composer Murry Sidlin](#)

[Click here to learn more about the Defiant Requiem Foundation.](#)

[Click here to learn more about Kym Vershovek and her quest to bring Defiant Requiem to Asheville.](#)

[Click here to learn more about how to support and attend the June performance.](#)