



Gratz Insider, November 2016 - Story Continuation

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Alumni Spotlight on Dr. Lori Shipley: Giving Life to Music Lost in the Holocaust

In the early 1980's, Shipley was deeply moved by the television movie "Playing for Time," which told the story of female prisoners at Auschwitz who received preferred treatment by performing music for the Nazis in a camp orchestra. The movie struck a chord with Shipley, but it wasn't until years later that she took action.

During those intervening years, Shipley earned master's degrees in music and humanities, as well as a doctorate in music education. In 2000, she joined the faculty of Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia, as an assistant professor in the music department. Shipley is a flutist, who performs in symphonies and chamber groups and conducts flute choirs.

She is also a cancer survivor. In 2010, she was diagnosed with Stage IV cancer, which resulted in two eight-hour surgeries and the removal of several organs. After facing her own mortality, Shipley was determined to create a meaningful legacy for herself: she decided then that she was going to breathe life into the musical works of Holocaust-era composers.

Given her area of interest and expertise, Shipley focused on flute music or combined flute and piano pieces. She spent hours researching and scouring databases, including those of [The OREL Foundation](#), which is also committed to generating interest in composers whose careers were cut short by the Nazis. Shipley has since collected between two and three hundred pieces.

With accompanists Benji and Beth Tomassetti, Shipley has been performing some of these pieces in concerts that she calls "Music from the Ashes." In a further effort to promote these lost works, she would also like to write journal articles about them. Before taking on this task, however, she felt it necessary to expand her own body of knowledge about the Holocaust, which is why she enrolled in Gratz's online [master's program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies](#). Although she graduated in May, she still misses the intense conversations on the online discussion boards, and would like to take additional courses at Gratz.

"It takes a special kind of person to study the Holocaust," says Shipley. "There are things that we read that cause nightmares. You have to separate yourself from it a bit if you're going to study it and do something about it."

As a student in the Gratz program, Shipley created a website devoted to [music from the Holocaust](#), which is a useful teaching tool for school programs. The site separates Holocaust music into four categories: Resistance, Camps, Propaganda and Response. It explains how music was used in each of these contexts and provides examples of songs.

Shipley also began construction of a site dedicated to her personal goal of gathering and sharing flute music from composers whose work had been lost to the war, and especially, to the Holocaust. The site's introduction aptly captures her mission:

This site is dedicated to all those who were victims of the Holocaust. Through music, we can hear their voices; voices that were silenced. It is hoped that flutists will begin to add this music to their repertoire, and share the stories of these composers who could not tell it themselves.

Dr. Shipley will be presenting a seminar during Session III of the Holocaust Teach-In at Gratz College on November 13. During this seminar, called [Music from the Holocaust](#), she and her accompanists will be performing some of the pieces by composers who were victims of the Holocaust. She will also share each composer's personal story and discuss how to incorporate music into Holocaust education.

For more information about the master's program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, contact Mindy Blechman at mblechman@gratz.edu or at 215-635-7300, x154.