

GLOUCESTER MEETINGHOUSE FOUNDATION

10 Church Street, Gloucester, MA 01930 | gloucestermeetinghouse.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY PROGRAM: FEATURING WORLD PREMIERE PERFORMANCE OF “THE GRIP OF EVIL: THE ENDURANCE OF HOPE,” IN GLOUCESTER, MA, SUNDAY, MAY 1, 2022

In a partnership, the Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation and Temple Ahavat Achim of Gloucester present a Yom HaShoah program, marking Holocaust Remembrance Day, on Sunday, May 1, at 3:00 p.m. at the Gloucester Unitarian Universalist Church, Middle and Church Streets, Gloucester.

The program features the world premiere of a specially composed work for strings, piano, clarinet, and vocalists, *The Grip of Evil: The Endurance of Hope*, by American composer and lyricist Leslie Steinweiss, commissioned for the occasion by Temple Ahavat Achim with the support of sponsoring donors.

The program also presents a second new work for solo bass clarinet by Stephen Bates, “Liberation Day,” along with klezmer music, and an original composition by Abigale Reisman with Rebecca Hallowell on viola and Anna Seda on cello.

Narration and stories by storyteller Judith Black, and readings of Holocaust-era poetry and prose by youth of TAA’s Sylvia Cohen Family Learning Project, complete the afternoon.

EVENT DESCRIPTION

This production for Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, begins at 3:00 p.m. at the Gloucester Meetinghouse, corner of Middle and Church Streets, downtown Gloucester. Tickets are \$45 for preferred seating, \$30 general, \$10 students with ID, free under age 12. Tickets are available online at www.gloucestermeetinghouse.org or at the door.

The featured work, “The Grip of Evil; The Endurance of Hope,” was written for this occasion by American composer Leslie Steinweiss, whose work has been performed in numerous chamber-music, film and theater productions, including an award-winning musical, “Rachel Calof: a Memoir with Music”. In it, Steinweiss says, he has sought to both capture “the horrific feeling of what was going on there, while ultimately presenting the feeling of hope – that out of sacred ashes comes hope.”

The program also presents two other original works, a bass-clarinet solo, “Liberation Day,” composed and played by Stephen Bates, an artist and musician who was associated with the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC for 36 years and now resides in Manchester-by-the-Sea, and a string composition, “Gedanken,” (Yiddish for “thoughts” or “meditations”), by Abigale Reisman, music director of Temple Ahavat Achim and local klezmer musician.

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Reisman explains: “I wrote my *gedanken* about the sadness in our world and the sometimes helplessness we feel as thoughts of the news and horrible events bounce around our minds.” Bringing together memory of the Holocaust experience and the current warfare in Ukraine, she says, “I turn to spirituality and love to counter the sadness. I turn to art guarding our humanity and our goodness.”

Throughout the program, noted storyteller Judith Black will intertwine the music and readings with her own poignant stories based on Holocaust themes. Youth from TAA’s Sylvia Cohen Family Learning Project will be reading poems written by children in the Terezin concentration camp 1942-1944 and letters from a mother to her daughters during the Holocaust.

YOM HASHOAH

The observance of Yom HaShoah began in the 1950s to remember the approximately six million people who lost their lives in the Holocaust and the many acts of heroism and bravery that occurred during this time. In Israel, the observance begins and ends with the sounding of a siren for two minutes. Traffic and activity comes to a halt during this solemn moment. The date of Yom HaShoah varies in the Gregorian calendar but this year falls on April 27, five days before this concert.

Multiple funders have underwritten this program: Sponsors of the Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation’s 2021-22 Concert and Event Series, The Paulson Fund, and TAA donors to the new commissioned Steinweiss piece that is the centerpiece of this concert.

ABOUT THE GLOUCESTER MEETINGHOUSE FOUNDATION

The Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation provides a permanent support base to preserve one of Gloucester’s most admired historic buildings, built in 1806 for the first Universalist church in America and housing a Unitarian Universalist church since the 1950s. The Foundation is an IRS-recognized 501(c)(3) entity modeled on a similar nonprofit that supports Boston’s famed Old North Church.

ABOUT TEMPLE AHAVAT ACHIM

Temple Ahavat Achim is a 117-year-old Conservative Synagogue that is the center of Jewish Life on Cape Ann and surrounding communities. After a fire in 2007 burned to the ground, the historic building which housed the synagogue, a new modern temple was built on the same downtown site, just two blocks from the home of the Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation.

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FOR MEDIA -- NOT FOR PUBLICATION . . For additional media information contact -- Charles Nazarian, Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation. c.nazarian@gloucestermeetinghouse.org; Cell: 978-821-5291 OR -- Susan Quateman, Temple Ahavat Achim, susiequateman@gmail.com; Cell: 978 430 9534