

**Message from James Conlon**

**Honorary Chairman - ARC (Artists of The Royal Conservatory)**

After 1945, those who performed, wrote or taught classical music worked in a culture scarred by omissions. These were not of their making but were part of the legacy of the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany. With its racist ideology and systematic suppression - particularly (although not exclusively) of Jewish musicians, artists and writers - the Third Reich silenced two generations of composers and, with them, an entire musical heritage. Many, who perished in concentration camps and others, whose freedom and productivity were curtailed, were fated to be forgotten after the war. Their music seemed to have passed with them, lost in endless silence.

However, more lost music has survived than was at first thought. It has taken decades of dedicated work to recover and publish it. Also, many composers were forced to flee for their lives and the lives of their families, arriving in strange new lands with only their skills as currency. We must now mitigate a great injustice by working to revive the music of those whose only "fault" was that they were Jewish, or that they were opposed to or deemed offensive by an authoritarian regime.

But that is not the only reason to restore these works. I believe that the spirit of this "lost generation" now needs to be heard. The creativity of the first half of the 20th century is far richer than we have been taught. Alongside Stravinsky, Strauss and other major and more fortunate figures, the varied voices of composers from Berlin, Vienna, Prague and Budapest, whether Jewish, dissident or immigrant, reveal much about the musical ferment of their time. Their music, I believe, is accessible and relevant. Further, our own American heritage owes an enormous debt to those who emigrated to Hollywood and Broadway, bringing their distinctive personalities with them, and creating a style that has since become distinctly American.

The cliché "there are no lost masterpieces" reveals our own ignorance. Entire civilizations, along with their masterpieces, have been destroyed by war since the beginning of human history. Various forms of censorship have repeatedly affected artists and works, and continue to do so.

The suppression of these composers and musicians caused the greatest single rupture in what had been a continuous seamless transmittal of German classical music. This centuries-old tradition, dating from before Johann Sebastian Bach, was passed on from one generation to the next. It was nourished by the free expression of an often contentious creative exchange between conservative traditional artistic modes

of expression and competing currents of innovation and iconoclasm. The policies of the Third Reich destroyed the environment in which this could flourish, murdering an entire generation of its greatest talents, uprooting a garden with its creative polemics and dialectics, forcing those who survived to scatter where there was no comparable artistic milieu in which to live and create. This immense self-destructive act seriously damaged its most cherished tradition, killed its caretakers, and buried a "lost generation" and its spirit within.

There are three aspects to be taken into consideration: moral, historical and artistic. Undoing injustice, when one can, is a moral mandate for all citizens of a civilized world. We cannot restore to these composers their lost lives. We can, however, return the gift which would mean more to them than others: to play their music. Our perspectives on the history of 20th-century classical music are incomplete because an enormous quantity of works has remained unplayed, and the lives of its composers largely ignored. History is not only made by its "big names", its warrior kings, dictators and most famous artists, but by the collective action of all of those artists who lived in a given era. The 20th century needs to be rescrutinized after we acquaint ourselves with the voluminous music cast out by the Nazi suppression.

Neither moral nor historical considerations would be reason enough for revival were it not for the artistic quality of what was lost. This cannot be judged by a single hearing of tokenistic or uncommitted performances. Judgments, if indeed they must be made, can only be made after those performing and listening over the course of years have given the spirit of that era sufficient time to be fully digested. By keeping alive this music and that of other victims of totalitarianism, we deny those past regimes a posthumous victory. The revival of this music can also serve as a reminder for us to resist any contemporary or future impulse to define artistic standards on the basis of racist, political, sectarian or exclusionary ideologies.

For these reasons, and many more, the work of Simon Wynberg and the Artists of the Royal Conservatory of Canada is vitally important. Through their remarkable dedication to the music of these composers, along with the scholarship, discussion and historical context provided by this series, the stories of these composers are brilliantly illuminated. With their committed, outstanding performances, in North America and all over the world, this organization gives an active meaning to the concept of "tikkun olam", repairing the world, work that can never be fully completed.

I am honored to serve as Honorary Chairman of the organization, and I welcome all who hear these concerts and attend these events in the hope that the voices of these and other suppressed composers will never again be silenced.

James Conlon, Honorary Chairman  
ARC - Artists of the Royal Conservatory, Canada