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MUSIC IN THE DARK

L.A. Jewish Symphony revives musical memories of a conductor interned by Nazis during Holocaust

By Nola L. Sarkisian, Staff Writer

Herbert Zipper could hear music in the bleakest and blackest of hours, when others tried to escape the eerie silence of death by destruction during World War II. He would later impart that gift to children at Crossroads School in Santa Monica as a volunteer music teacher.

Nearly one year after the venerated Viennese conductor died at the age of 92 from lung cancer, the Los Angeles Jewish

Symphony will present today "From Exile to Emigrant," a concert at Hamilton High School featuring Zipper's composition "Dachau Lied," which he penned while interned by the Nazis.

Along with the works of Arnold Schoenberg, Franz Waxman and Lukas Foss, three other composers who escaped from the Holocaust, the goal of the repertoire is to enlighten individuals about the impact of music in Jewish culture and history, founding conductor Noreen Green said.

"We hear so much about

Jews as lambs to slaughter and these pieces represent the spirit of their fight for survival," said the 39-year-old Brentwood resident who assembled the 65-member professional orchestra four years ago.

Through a grant awarded by the Misha and Sonia Yablon Foundation, Green was able to commission composer Lucas Richman to write an extended version of Zipper's seminal work, lengthening the song from four to about 12 minutes.

While in Dachau, Zipper had formed a secret orchestra and

fashioned 11 instruments out of wood and boxes. The musicians would perform in latrines. Zipper's inspiration for his song came from his daily duty of pushing a cart of stones back and forth across the camp. He would pass a sign that read "Arbeit macht frei," or "Work makes you free."

"It's a sarcastic punch in the face of the Nazi work ethic imposed on prisoners," Green said. "It was work without a purpose."

The revised piece will include parts for guest narrator Dennis Prager, the male chorus,

who will sing in German; and the orchestra. The piece has never been performed with a full ensemble.

"It sounds very powerful," Prager said.

The narrator is also a KABC radio host who considers himself a "serious amateur" in music.

"I've been doing guest conducting every year with local orchestras," Prager said. "But little did I know that this speech-singing would be more difficult than conducting. [With] anything that requires a 1/16th note, I shudder."

FYI

♣ **WHAT:** "From Exile to Emigrant" presented by the Los Angeles Jewish Symphony

♣ **WHEN:** Today at 7:30 p.m.

♣ **WHERE:** Norman J. Pattiz Auditorium, Hamilton High School, 2955 S. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles

♣ **HOW MUCH:** \$22 and \$36

♣ **INFO:** (818) 753-6681