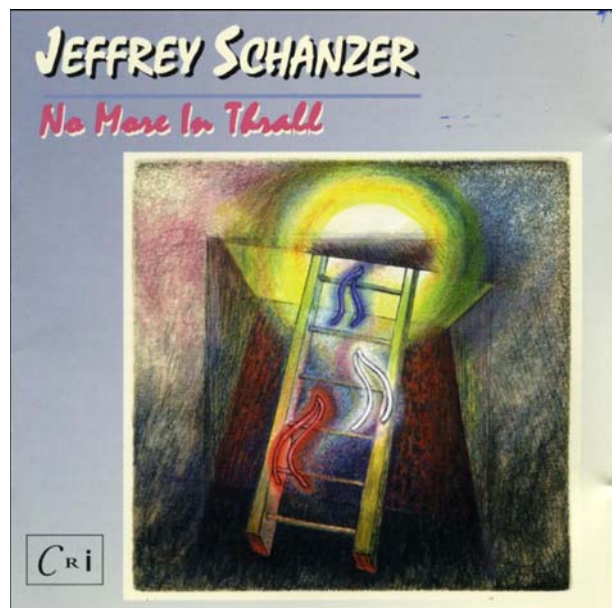


NWCR748

Jeffrey Schanzer

No More in Thrall



No More in Thrall

For String Quartet and Percussion (1995)..... (46:05)

1. I. Red Army Song (8:51)
2. II. Shlof in der Ruikeit (12:35)
3. III. Which Side Are You On? (9:34)
4. IV. Traurige Čerheni (7:34)
5. V. The Internationale (7:31)

The Sirius String Quartet: Laura Seaton, violin; Mark Feldman, violin; Ron Lawrence, viola; Mary Wooten, cello; Kevin Norton, percussion

Total playing time: 46:05

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Notes

“First they [the Nazis] came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”

—Martin Niemöller

On April 11, 1945, armed resistance fighters from among the prisoners of the Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald took control of the camp, capturing the remaining S.S. guards as well as sixty demolition experts who were under orders to blow up the camp barracks with the remaining prisoners still in them. The U.S. Army arrived later that day.

From its inception, Buchenwald was the main destination for the deportation of political prisoners. The leadership of the German Communist Party, as well as members of the Social Democratic Party, Trotskyists, trade unionists, gays, and others inhabited the camp. The prisoners themselves established resistance cells during the earliest days of the camp. The Nazis segregated the prisoners in “Blocks” or barracks along ethnic, national, and political lines. The Buchenwald resistance had contact with the German underground and carried out many heroic acts of sabotage, particularly in the armaments works where many of the prisoners labored. The resistance cells planted many of their members in key administrative posts of the camp and were thus able to sabotage S.S. orders to liquidate the camp, saving thousands of lives.

My composition *No More in Thrall* is a tribute to the political resistance of the prisoners at Buchenwald. Each movement of the work is based on an existing folk or traditional melody, reflecting the ethnic and political diversity of the camp. The

work commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the Buchenwald camp and is dedicated to all martyrs in the struggle against fascism.

Red Army Song

The first movement commemorates the Red Army prisoners, who were singled out for barbaric treatment usually reserved only for Jews. On April 8, 1945, the Nazis attempted to “evacuate” the Red Army barracks. The soldiers fought back fiercely, and even with their overwhelming military advantage, it took the S.S. all day to destroy the barracks and kill most of the soldiers. This Red Army song dates from the (Russian) Civil War that followed the Russian Revolution in 1917. It is probable that this song, at least in its original version, was not sung in Buchenwald because the lyrics include mention of the Red Army’s founder, Leon Trotsky. By the time of the Second World War, Trotsky and many others who remained true to the original principles of Bolshevism had been purged from the Party and army by Joseph Stalin.

Shlof in der Ruikeit

In the early years of Buchenwald, thousands of German and Austrian Jews were killed in mass executions. Only 350 Jews, mostly skilled workers and political prisoners, survived and were segregated in their own barracks. Buchenwald had no gas chambers and thus was not used for the mass extermination of Jews as was the Auschwitz camp. From 1941 to 1943, no new Jewish prisoners were sent to Buchenwald. Emil Korbach, the Block Leader of the Jewish Block, was a German Communist and one of the three main leaders of the Buchenwald underground resistance. As the Allied armies drove the German army back, the Germans “liquidated” the camps in occupied territories by marching their prisoners to Germany (many died en route) and blowing

up the camps in an attempt to cover up their atrocities. Since Buchenwald is in Germany, near Weimar, it became one of the main destinations of these death marches. Many of the Jews arriving at Buchenwald were Hungarian, and were soon taken by train or truck to work destinations near Buchenwald, and then killed when they had completed their work. On April 6, the Jewish prisoners were the first to be singled out to be “evacuated” in death marches from Buchenwald. My father, Jacob Schanzer, survived one of these marches.

Shlof in der Ruikeit (“Sleep in Peace”) is taken from a Yiddish lullaby from Vilna (Vilnius), a city that also had a heroic history of armed resistance to the Nazis. The song was originally sung to children whose fathers were off fighting in the Spanish Civil War, to tell them that their fathers would return. After the Nazi occupation of Vilna and the sealing of the Jewish ghetto, the lyrics changed and the child was told that their father was taken by the Nazis and would never return.

Which Side Are You On?

On November 3, 1979, several cars full of members of the American Nazi Party and Ku Klux Klan drove up to a black housing project in Greensboro, North Carolina, where an anti-Klan rally organized by the Communist Workers Party was taking place. They calmly took out weapons, opened fire on the rally, and then drove off, having killed five people and wounded several others. Edward Dawson, a “former” paid FBI informer, drove the lead vehicle, while Bernard Butkovich, an undercover agent of the Justice Department’s Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms who had infiltrated the Nazi chapter, provided advice on how to bring guns to the rally. Despite the fact that this murderous attack occurred in broad daylight, and was videotaped and broadcast on television, the murderers were acquitted. Also troubling was the lack of response to this outrage from many of those who often proclaim that we must never forget the lessons of the Holocaust—people who, like Martin Niemöller, did not speak out because the victims were socialists and they were not.

“Which Side Are You On?” is an American trade union song that originated in the struggles of mine workers. This movement of *No More in Thrall* is dedicated to César Cauce, Michael Nathan, Bill Sampson, Sandi Smith, and James Waller, the five civil rights and union activists who were murdered by fascists in Greensboro.

Traurige Čerheni

The Roma and Sinti (Gypsies) were considered “inferior” races by the Nazis, who set out to exterminate them. Heinrich Himmler, in an order of November 15, 1943, proclaimed: “(1) Sedentary Gypsies and part-Gypsies are to be treated as citizens of the [occupied] country. (2) Nomad Gypsies and part-Gypsies are to be placed on the same level as Jews and placed in concentration camps.” After the reunification of Germany, the German government has repealed some of its favorable immigration laws and has begun to deport Roma and Sinti.

Traurige Čerheni (“Sad Star”) is taken from a Roma melody sung in the concentration camps. The lyrics are:

A sad star high up in the sky
I can’t stay in my house
they came and took me from my bed
and I had to leave my wife and the children.
A sad star high up in the sky
they came and took me from my house
and they brought me to the concentration camp
where they burnt me to ashes.

The Internationale

By 1938, the Buchenwald resistance had placed its members in many of the key administrative positions in the camp. Thus, they had foreknowledge of S.S. plans to have the camp liquidated, starting with the Jews. Emil Korlbach was able to warn the Jewish prisoners that the *Appel* or role call for Jewish prisoners on April 6 meant certain death. Also, Marcel Beaufrère, a Belgian Trotskyist, organized many of the political prisoners to sabotage the *Appel* by giving Jews their red triangle emblems to replace the yellow Star of David emblems worn by Jewish prisoners.

The “Internationale” is the anthem of the international socialist movement. The title of my work is taken from its lyrics: “Arise ye slaves no more in thrall.” The “Internationale” is the only melody that is used in its full and original form. This movement, and, in large part, this entire work, was inspired by the account of Eugene Weinstock, a Hungarian-born Jew and Belgian resistance fighter, who was sent to Buchenwald in 1943:

“Toward the end of January [1945] a number of Marxists among the prisoners, anxious to express their defiance of fascism and their belief in their coming liberation, talked about holding a secret celebration of Lenin Memorial Day...Eighteen prisoners, including a Block Leader, made plans for the celebration in one of the barracks. They found a young man who played the violin in the camp orchestra who agreed to play for them...The young man played the ‘Internationale’ on a muted violin. But when the violinist returned to his own Block, an S.S. guard intercepted him and demanded to know where he had been with his instrument. I do not know the details of what happened after that, but the eighteen men disappeared and we never saw them again.”

—Eugene Weinstock, *Beyond the Last Path*

According to Weinstock, on the day after liberation, a band played the “Internationale” and “Twenty thousand of us found voice to sing in twenty languages.”

—Jeffrey Schanzer

Jeffrey Schanzer is a composer and guitarist involved in a wide variety of music, ranging from the fully notated to the fully improvised. He studied composition with Morton Feldman and Anthony Davis. Schanzer performs and records with his wife, composer/pianist Bernadette Speech, in the Schanzer/Speech Duo, and leads his own ensemble, which has included musicians such as Leroy Jenkins, Bobby Previte, and Ned Rothenberg. He is a supporter of the Partisan Defense Committee, which has initiated a number of successful antifascist mobilizations across North America.

Performances by the **Sirius String Quartet** represent a fascinating synthesis of musical styles, informed both by the raw energy of rock and roll and the precision of classical music. The group’s four musicians are all skilled improvisers and capture the imagination of audiences and critics alike with their kinetic stage presence, affinity for blues and jazz, avant-garde experimentation, and use of electrified instruments. Allan Kozinn of the *New York Times* described a Sirius performance as “eloquent” and “committed,” while the *Village Voice’s* Kyle Gann wrote that the quartet “ground out the scrunchy noises and ‘virtuoso freak-outs’ [of John Zorn’s quartet] with mischievous glee.” Sirius is much in demand as an ensemble that performs new works. The group recently premiered and recorded William Thomas McKinley’s *Crazy Rags*, a concerto written for Sirius and the Concordia Orchestra. Other premieres include *Home* and *Burning Meditation* by Somei Satoh, *The Silence* by Richard Einhorn,

Hunger's Moon by Michael Levine, and *Mini-Series* by quartet member Laura Seaton.

Kevin Norton is a percussionist who loves the challenge of playing in ensembles featuring nontraditional combinations of instruments. His goal as a performer is to help bring a wider pallet of sounds and rhythms to jazz and new music. He has

written for and recorded with his own ensemble, the Kevin Norton Trio, and also with Framework, Phillip Johnston's Big Trouble, and Ankle to Nose. He also has performed and recorded with musicians as diverse as Milt Hinton and Fred Frith, and currently is playing creative percussion with Anthony Braxton.

Production Notes

Produced and engineered by Judith Sherman.

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