

# HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR DESCRIBES THE MUSIC OF TEREZIN CONCENTRATION CAMP -- ILLUSTRATED SCREENPLAY

by Zdenka Fantlova

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[Transcribed from the YouTube video by Tara Carreon]



[Zdenka Fantlova] Terezin, contrary to public information, was not a concentration camp.



Terezin was originally a town, a fortress, which was built -- I don't know -- 17-something, against the Prussians by Maria Theresa, and it had walls. And the Germans decided that it would be a very good place to put all the Jewish population in as a waiting room. And from there, to send them to the extermination camps or whatever.



We didn't know anything about it at all!



So, amongst all the populations ...



especially from Czechoslovakia ...



where original artists, professional artists: conductors, musicians, soloists, actors, writers ...



so they all came in and said, "Now, well since we are here, shouldn't we do something?"



We must use the art. We must perform here. This is terribly important. And it will not be entertainment. We need to create the human nature."



If people are incarcerated, they want to express themselves. The Germans had nothing against it.



"Yes, you go ahead."



We will call it 'Friendly Evenings.'"



Freundliche Abende."

That was a green light.



People immediately started building stage and wooden benches and so on.



The musicians, some of them brought their own instruments, which was [inaudible], started to get organized into a string quartet and later on into a full orchestra.



There were young jazz musicians. So it was a sudden uplift.

There were people who were composers ...



and they took the opportunity and wanted to create new music to express their feelings of the place, and the situation, well, whatever one can express in music. And the result was that the people who came to a concert, or to a play, in that place, suddenly felt human beings.



So all that was allowed ...



but of course, what we didn't know is what the Germans knew, that we were sentenced to death sooner or later.



My personal story is that when the time came most of the artists, whether it was theater or music or anything else,



transport to the East on the train. We had no idea where we were going.



There were old people, young people, children crying, and some people died.



You know, you accept these situations because there is nothing else you can do.



Rafael Schacter, sitting opposite me, suddenly he took out a tin dish ...



a last piece of bread which we got -- ration --



and he had a tin of sardines.



He gives it to me and says, "Zdenka, here is my last ration of bread. I want you to break it up into the tin, put the whole lot of sardines in it, mix it up" ...



and he took a spoon out of his shoe, which he got stuck there ...



"Mix it all up ...



and give it to me. It will be my last dinner.



My last supper. And I thought ...



"Why is he so pessimistic?"



We don't know where we are going. It might not be so bad. Let's see after we get there what happens." And so on.



Man has to have hope!



It was his last dinner. It was his last. When we arrived in Auschwitz ...



of course it was a completely different story what happened.



There were dogs and guards and noise and shouting and barbed wire ...



and you had no idea whatsoever where are you. What is all this? Nobody told us it exists. And there was a selection, but so quick that nobody could understand what it was about. What did it mean. In the middle was one of them ...



with his left hand --



leisurely, without any feeling --



"left, left, left ...



right ...



next, next.



My mother, immediately ...



left leisurely ...



like, you know ...



and me, I was like 19 already, and a spokeswoman, and looked strong, and so I went right, and my sister, Nassi

...



I grabbed her and took her with me.



And that was all!



No idea ...



that who went left went to immediate death ...



in the gas chambers ...



and those with me going right was labor, forced labor and so on, still being given a chance to live.



Until the end of the war ...



I didn't even know where I was or what happened in Auschwitz.