

IMPRINTS
**ESSAYS ON CZECH MUSIC
AND AESTHETICS**
JAN VIČAR

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The most remarkable artistic feat was the three separate productions of Verdi's profoundly Christian *Requiem*, which paradoxically now expressed the suffering of Jews. The conductor was one of Terezín's most active artists, Rafael Schächter. Our knowledge of the premiere 1943 performance comes from the recollections of one of the soloists, Karel Berman:

"Rafael Schächter sat behind a large harmonium on a small stage. The soloists were standing on a riser in front of him, and the choir stood on other risers behind them. Thus our largest performance—Verdi's *Requiem*—was produced. The first evening's performance, which took place in a small hall which had once been the meeting room of the Town Hall, was fabulous. A mixed choir of 150 people was on the stage. In front of them were the soloists: Marion Podolier, Hilda Aronson-Lindt, David Grünfeld, and myself. Under the stage were two pianos, with Gideon Klein at one and Edith Kraus at the other, and in front of us all on a small box was Rafael Schächter, who knew the complicated score perfectly and conducted it from memory. This production was an incomparably revolutionary, pugnacious act. The *Requiem* had to be staged three times, because after each performance the majority of the choir was deported 'eastwards'."

Rafael Schächter did not live to see the end of the war. He died during a death march after the evacuation of Auschwitz.⁵

Composers in Concentration Camps

Many significant composers passed through Terezín during the Holocaust: Viktor Ullmann, Hans Krása, Pavel Haas, Karel Reiner, and Gideon Klein. They created many remarkable pieces of music there. Viktor Ullmann's chamber opera *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* (CD 2) has achieved international fame. This opera, which protests against the war and all tyrants with aspirations to world conquest, was completed in Terezín in 1943. A performance was also prepared there, but the opera was not performed until 1975, in Amsterdam.

Other distinguished composers from the Czech lands were also sent to concentration camps. After 700 days in Prague's Pankrác prison, one of the last pupils of Antonín Dvořák, Rudolf Karel, who was arrested for resist-

⁵ Karel Berman, "Erinnerungen," in *Theresienstadt* (Wien: 1968), p. 256.

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