



For Immediate Release

April 2010

**WORLD PREMIERE OF LORI LAITMAN'S
ORATORIO
"VEDEM"
May 10, 2010**

*"Vedem was the home for what we wrote
and read aloud on evenings when we gathered.
Vedem was our poetry and prose
Vedem was how we weathered life inside the walls."
(David Mason)*

For the second time, acclaimed American composer **Lori Laitman** has been commissioned by **Music of Remembrance**, the Seattle-based organization whose mission is to celebrate and perpetuate the musical voices the Holocaust tried to silence. Laitman's undeniable gift has made her one of the most sought-after contemporary composers of vocal music. She has again joined forces with award-winning American poet *David Mason* to craft this new oratorio, a lasting tribute to the boys of the Terezin concentration camp and their tender, poignant poetry. This moving homage to the endurance of art and beauty triumphant over grief and despair carries the name of the boys' clandestine 800-page journal, *Vedem*, produced for two years, hidden away by one of the survivors and retrieved when war ended.

Vedem, the oratorio, is an integral part of an ambitious project which includes a documentary film by renowned filmmaker John Sharify and a CD release on the Naxos label. Four of the surviving six boys, now in their 80s, will attend the oratorio's world premiere on May 10th, 2010 in Seattle, WA at Benaroya Recital Hall.

Lori Laitman's impressive oeuvre includes over 200 art songs set to classical and contemporary poetry; a chamber opera (*Come To Me in Dreams*), and a full-length opera (*The Scarlet Letter*).

Her songs, widely performed and admired around the world, include a unique body of music commemorating the Holocaust. For this new commission by Music of Remembrance, Laitman, always faithful to the text, drew

instant inspiration and a clear vision from the boys' astounding poetry:

"I began by reading the poems from Vedem, and these poems immediately touched my heart. The poetry was so mature, it seemed impossible that children could have written these words. Yet, these were not ordinary children — they were robbed of their families and their childhood and suffered unimaginable horrors. David Mason's brilliant libretto, entwining his own poetic verse drama with six of the original poems, allowed me to capture not only the tragic aspects of the boys' lives, but also their true humanity: their little worries, their spirited response to adversity, their yearnings and their humor. His imagination fired my imagination, leading to a range of musical nuances — lyrical, comical, satirical, tragic and hopeful. For the choir of boys, I fashioned melodies appropriate for children to sing. I employed leitmotifs to unify the score and underpin the dramatic action, and reserved the more vocally intricate sections for the adult soloists."

David Mason, who wrote the libretto to Laitman's full-length opera *The Scarlet Letter* in 2008, is one of America's most decorated poets. His verse novel, *Ludlow*, named the Best Book of Contemporary Poetry by Contemporary Poetry Review in 2007, is an epic and searing story of the immigrant rebellion which culminated in the infamous Ludlow Massacre of 1914. Mason received the prestigious Thatcher Hoffman Smith Creativity in Motion Prize in 2009, allowing him to embark on yet another collaboration with Lori Laitman, as he adapts the novel to a new opera libretto.

Asked about work on the *Vedem* libretto, Mason had this to say: *"When confronted with stories from the Holocaust, one is tempted to give in to total despair. The difficulty in making new art out of these events is in not succumbing to what have become clichés of suffering—to bring these inconceivable things to a human level, where they can be felt with the full weight of sorrow and amazement they deserve. The libretto for our oratorio, Vedem, makes use of poems by several of the boys at Terezín, linked by my own verse drama about the coming of the Germans, the transports to the walled town that would become "home" to many Jews before, in most cases, deportation to more infamous camps like Auschwitz... I wanted the libretto to carry not only images of grief for what happened to these boys (and so many others), but also a sense of their imaginative lives, their hopes and dreams...what it really means to want to live in spite of everything. The libretto gives my friend **Lori Laitman** room to shift musical tones from the comic and biting satirical to more lyrical moments and moments of true tragic weight—a full emotional range, such as we might feel in life."*

Vedem: A Concert to Commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day, will be performed on Monday, May 10th, 2010 at 8:00 pm, with a Pre-Concert “*Meet The Composer & Librettist*” at 7:15 pm. Also on the program, works by Schwarz and Pavel Haas.

Place: Iilsley Ball Nordstrom Recital Hall, Benaroya Hall, 200 University Street, Seattle, WA 98111

Performers:

Ross Hauck, tenor

Angela Niederloh, mezzo soprano

Mikhail Shmidt, violin

Laura DeLuca clarinet

Walter Gray, cello

Mina Miller, piano

The Northwest Boychoir

Conductor: Joseph Crnko

Tickets: \$36

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Online: www.musicofremembrance.org

Source:

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