

ESSENTIAL VOICES USA

Judith Clurman, Music Director and Conductor

REMEMBER, REVERE, REJOICE

Albany Records (TROY1939)

TRACKS

- I Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern** 3:09
(Under Your White Stars)
composer: Avrom Brudno (deceased)
text: Avraham Sutzkever (important poet if we can list some way)
arr. Bill Cutter
Essential Voices USA
Judith Clurman conductor
James Cunningham piano
- II To Be Alive** 3:22
composer: Mark Broder
arr. Bill Cutter
Essential Voices USA
Judith Clurman conductor
James Cunningham piano
- III Adonai Roi** 3:47
composers: Daniel & Nina Faia Mutlu
Essential Voices USA
Judith Clurman conductor
James Cunningham piano
- IV Winter Is Past** 2:12
Joseph N. Rubinstein
Essential Voices USA
Judith Clurman conductor
- V Dodi Li** 3:43
composer: Steve Sher
arr. Brant Adams
Essential Voices USA
Judith Clurman conductor
James Cunningham piano
Coleman Itzkoff cello
- VI Siman Tov** 2:14
Traditional, arr. Bill Cutter
Essential Voices USA
Judith Clurman conductor
James Cunningham piano

Notes and Translations
by Judith Clurman

REMEMBER, REVERE, REJOICE is a collection of six works that embrace a range of emotions experienced in Jewish life - the Holocaust (Remember), a psalm setting (Revere), and love poetry and joy (Rejoice).

REMEMBER (Holocaust)

**Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern
(Under Your White Stars)**

composer: Avrom Brudno

text: Avraham Sutzkever

arr. Bill Cutter

Essential Voices USA

Judith Clurman conductor

James Cunningham piano

During World War II, the Nazis established a ghetto in Vilna, the capital city of Lithuania. When permitted, artists - musicians, painters, writers, and performers - did their best to remain creative while in the ghetto. Composer Avrom Brudno composed musical revues for this ghetto. One of those pieces was a setting of Avraham Sutzkever's poem, "Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern." Brudno perished in the Estonian concentration camp Klooga, but Sutzkever (1913-2010), whom the New York Times referred to as "The greatest poet of the Holocaust," survived the war. He escaped the ghetto in 1943, joined a partisan fighter's unit, and took refuge in freezing waters and in the forest. In 1946, he was called as a witness at the Nuremberg Trials and in 1947, he emigrated to Israel, where he continued to write in Yiddish and champion the Yiddish language. He was the first Yiddish writer to win the prestigious Israel Prize for literature. The poem of "Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern" is a description of the poet's agony. He describes the murder around him and talks directly to God, asking where God is. The choral arrangement, by Boston based composer/arranger Bill Cutter, was commissioned in 2022 by Essential Voice USA.

Unter Dayne Vayse Shtern

by Avraham Sutzkever

Translation © by Zachary Baker

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*Unter dayne vayse shtern
shtrek tsu mir dayn vayse hant.
Mayne verter zaynen treern,
viln ruen in dayn hant.*

Under Your white stars
Extend your white hand to me.
My words are tears,
Wanting to rest in Your Hand.

*Ze, es tunklt zeyer finkl
in mayn kelerdikh blik.
Un ikh hob gornisht keyn vinkl
zey tsu shenken dir tsurik.*

See, they twinkle very darkly
As I glance from my cellar.
And I have no place
To give them back to you.

*Un ikh vil dokh, Got getrayer,
dir fartroyen mayn farmeg.
Vayl es mont in mir a fayer
un in fayer may-ne teg.*

And I want to, dear God, my true one,
To entrust my worldly goods to you.
For in my heart there grows a fire
And my days are in that fire.

*Nor in kelern un lekher
veynt di merderishe ru.
Loyf ikh hekher, iber dekher
un ikh zikh: vu bistu, vu?*

I run over cellars, in holes
The murderous stillness weeps,
I run higher, over rooftops
And I search: Where are You, where?

*Unter dayne vayse shtern
shtrek tsu mir dayn vayse hant.
Mayne verter zaynen treern
viln ruen in dayn hant.*

Under Your white stars
Extend Your white hand to me.
My words are tears,
That want to rest in Your hand.

To Be Alive (Birdsong)

composer: Mark Broder

arr. Bill Cutter

Poem: Anonymous 1941

Essential Voices USA

Judith Clurman conductor

James Cunningham piano

"To Be Alive (Birdsong)," by Mark Broder, was originally written as a solo song, for soprano and piano. The choral arrangement, commissioned by Essential Voices USA, was written by Bill Cutter in 2022. Composer Mark Broder writes: "When we were students at The Juilliard School, my friend Judith Clurman brought the collection of poetry called 'I Never Saw another Butterfly,' poems written by children in Terezin concentration camp, to my attention and suggested I set some of the poems to music. As I read through the book, I was deeply moved by the simple, heartfelt expressions of these children who lived under appalling conditions, most of whom would be put to death. Despite their dire circumstances, the children often affirmed their belief in the goodness and beauty of life and their innocent trust that they would eventually return to their homes. I was especially moved by the poem 'Birdsong' and I thought it lent itself to a musical setting because I could hear a melody in my mind as I read it."

Poem: Anonymous 1941

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He doesn't know the world at all
Who stays in his nest and doesn't go out.
He doesn't know what (the) birds know best
Nor what I want to sing about,
That the world is full of loveliness.

When dewdrops sparkle in the grass
And earth's aflood with morning light,
A blackbird sings upon a bush
To greet the dawning after night.
Then I know how fine it is to live.

Hey, try to open up your heart
To beauty; go to the woods someday
And weave a wreath of memory there.
Then if the tears obscure your way
You'll know how wonderful it is
To be alive.

REVERE (a psalm setting)

Adonai Roi

composers: Daniel & Nina Faia Mutlu

Essential Voices USA

Judith Clurman conductor

James Cunningham piano

Psalm 23 is one of the psalms of consolation, traditionally sung at Jewish funerals and memorials. The Hebrew text ascribed to King David, utilizes pastoral symbolism to portray God as our protector and caretaker, even in the valley of the shadow of death. Composers Daniel Mutlu and Nina Faia Mutlu have written: "The 23rd Psalm remains one of the most comforting texts to those who are afflicted with pain, loss and grief. We wrote a melody that evokes the 'still waters' expressed by the psalmist. We paired the music with an English translation that underscores the main comforting theme in the psalm: overcoming fear despite darkness in our lives."

Psalm 23

English Adaptation by Daniel Mutlu and Nina Faia Mutl

(Sung in Hebrew)

Adonai roi lo echsar. binot deshe yarbitzeini, al mei m'nuchot y'nahaleini.

Nafshi y'shoveiv, yancheini v'mag'lei tzedek, l'maan sh'mo.

Gam ki eileich b'gei tzalmavet, lo ira ra, ki atah imadi.

God is my shepherd; I lack nothing. God lays me down in green pastures;

God leads me beside tranquil waters. God renews my soul,

God guides me in right paths for the sake of God's name.

Though I walk through a valley overshadowed by death, I fear

no harm, for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff – they comfort me.

(Sung in English)

My cup is full,

You are right here,

Walking through darkness,

I will not fear;

You are my shepherd

Holding me so near.

Walking through darkness

I will not fear.

REJOICE (love poetry and joy)

Winter Is Past

Joseph N. Rubinstein

Essential Voices USA

Judith Clurman conductor

Composer Joseph N. Rubinstein writes: "Re-encountering this passage from the Song of Solomon in the summer of 2022, I was struck by its hopeful message. It is about coming out of darkness and into the light, about finding joy after a time of trial. Those feelings felt apt for that summer, following as it did the hard pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. In my setting, I wanted to express a sense of relief and optimism."

from The Song of Solomon 2:10-12

Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

The flowers appear upon the earth,

The time of the singing of birds is come.

Dodi Li

composer: Steve Sher

arr. Brant Adams

Essential Voices USA

Judith Clurman conductor

James Cunningham piano

Coleman Itzkoff cello

Composed in 1979, Steven Sher's "Dodi Li" melody is simple and heartfelt. The text, adapted from The Song of Songs (2:16, 3:6), is a setting of one of the most beautiful Hebrew love texts. The words have been interpreted by the rabbis as love between God and the Jewish people, and the erotic love poetry became a staple of Jewish rituals for the Sabbath and Passover. The song has been performed in concerts and weddings throughout the world, and recorded by the prominent American folk group, Peter, Paul and Mary. Judith Clurman commissioned Brant Adams to write this choral arrangement of Steve Sher's melody for mixed voices, piano and cello, for the wedding of her son Ari Ruben to Alexandra Ross on August 2, 2020, in New York City. She dedicated the arrangement to them in the Hal Leonard choral publication. The COVID pandemic prevented a choir singing so we used Brant's accompaniment and premiered the work with one solo voice. The piece has also been arranged for an SSA voicing.

From The Song of Songs 2:16, 3:6

Dodi li vaani lo, haroeh, bashoshanim dodi li

Mizot olah, min hamidbar, min hamidbar.

Dodi li va-ani lo, haro-eh, bashoshanim dodi li

M'kuteret mor, mor ul'vonah, ul'vonah dodi li.

Dodi li va-ani lo, haroeh, hashoshanim dodi li.

My beloved is mine, and I am his, who feeds among the lilies.

Who is this who comes up out of the wilderness... perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?

Siman Tov

Traditional, arr. Bill Cutter

Essential Voices USA

Judith Clurman conductor

James Cunningham piano

The folk melody "Siman Tov," was written in Eastern Europe in the late 19th century, and performed by Ashkenazic Jews. The song wishes someone well and is primarily performed at life cycle moments like birth, bar mitzvot, and weddings. At these pivotal moments, fraught with potential as well as anxiety, the song invokes the ancient hope for a good omen to ensure that our fate will be positive. This arrangement by Bill Cutter was commissioned by Essential Voices USA.

Siman tov u'mazal tov, u'mazal tov v'siman tov. Y'hei lanu, ul'chol Yisraeil.

May we and all Israel be blessed with a good sign and good luck.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Judith Clurman's **Essential Voices USA** (EVUSA) is one of New York's preeminent choral ensembles. EVUSA boasts a talented roster of seasoned professionals and auditioned volunteers, dynamically fitted to the unique needs of each project. They have appeared at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center and on NPR'S Tiny Desk Concerts. Their recordings include "America at Heart," "Appalachian Stories," "Celebrating the American Spirit," "Cherished Moments," "Cradle Hymn," "Holiday Harmonies," "Rejoice! Honoring the Jewish Spirit," "May You Heal," "Washington Women," "Winter Harmonies," and "Words Matter." Conductor **Judith Clurman** conducts Essential Voices USA, and the Singing Tree Float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Her work has received Emmy and Grammy nominations and she has collaborated with the major classical orchestras and conductors of the world. She was Director of Choral Activities at The Juilliard School for 18 years and a faculty member for the National Endowment for the Arts/Columbia University Institute in Classical Music and Opera. Judith currently teaches private and ensemble voice at the Manhattan School of Music. Her music and arrangements are published by G. Schirmer, Schott, and Hal Leonard, and have been performed by the Detroit, Houston, National, Toronto, and San Francisco Symphonies and the New York and Boston Pops.

The members of EVUSA that sang on these recordings are: Joseph Beutel, Phillip Cheah, Wendy Gilles, Chole Holgate, Elizabeth Lang, Sreven Moore, Nicholas Prior, Gregory Purnhagen, Elisa Singer Strom, Jason Weisinger, and Katherine Wessinger-Bozic; Margery Daley, contractor. The ensemble was accompanied by James Cunningham, piano and Coleman Itzkoff, cello.

Acknowledgments

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@ Samurai Hotel recording Studio, Astoria, New York
Silas Brown, Producer and Engineer
Grady Bajorek, Assistant Engineer

All scores are published by Hal Leonard.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Essential Voices USA www.essentialvoicesusa.com

Judith Clurman www.judithclurman.com

Bill Cutter rb.gy/n4fj7c

James Cunningham

www.pointpark.edu/academics/schools/copa/copadeptsmajors/theatre/faculty/jamescunningham

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