

TO ALWAYS REMEMBER

Poems by Yaakov Barzilay

Music by Sharon Farber

“To Always remember”, A song cycle based on poet Israeli/ Hungarian Yaakov Barzilay’s writing, consists of three poems: “To Always Remember, “Also the Ashes”, and” I Turned a Leaf”. When I read Yaakov’s moving poems, I was moved to tears; I could only try to conceive of the horrendous and gruesome sites Yaakov had witnessed, yet, through his poems, I was transformed back to those time and place.

I thought about Yaakov the child at the age of ten, learning to recite KADISH, the Jewish prayer for the deceased, to be said for his dead father, whose ashes were already floating in the river. Can we, who live today, truly comprehend the pain and suffering that others have endured in order for us to live and create freely?

I chose these three poems, as I felt that they were moving from complete darkness into hope and light. In “To Always Remember”, I began by describing the poem’s graveness and anger, but also Yaakov’s sorrow and pain. In the second part of this poem, the rhythm becomes stormy and urgent, when we become familiar with the dreadful things the poet, as a young child, had to observe. The Jewish theme comes to life when we get to KADISH, where everything slows down in time. The end of the song is distressing again, while preparing us for the second movement; a short segment, which starts softly and delicately, but grows into a mourning- like prayer.

The third movement begins solemnly, with frustration and anger for the injustice of it all, but it reaches a simple major chord at the end. This chord, however, is intertwined with a minor, as well as poignant one, as the poet, while ready to turn a new leaf and look for a brighter day, always remembers.

“To Always Remember” was premiered in 2005, at the Main Synagogue of Berlin, as a commission to commemorate 60 years since the end of the war.

From Poet Yaakov Barzilay; “As a survivor of concentration camp Bergen-Balzen, my poems are a mirror of the gruesomeness I’ve witnessed, through writing. Every poem is a story-its seed a truth, its shell -imagination. I left my dad and grandmother behind me in the camp. As there is no grave, their ashes run in the rivers. Every Holocaust survivor is a life prisoner, with no redemption. My poems are a message to the next generation, which will keep on going forever. Every generation must remember.”