

NOVEMBER 17-18, 2013

# THE MUSICAL WORLDS OF POLISH JEWS, 1920-1960: IDENTITY, POLITICS & CULTURE

AN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY



**CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY:**

Center for Jewish Studies

**WITH SUPPORT FROM:**

Robert & Shoshana Tancer

The Melikian Center: Russian, Eurasian & East European Studies

School of Historical, Philosophical & Religious Studies

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The Center for Jewish Studies and the School of Music at Arizona State University in collaboration with The OREL Foundation welcome you to **The Musical Worlds of Polish Jews, 1920-1960: Identity, Politics and Culture**, an international conference devoted to the musical world of Polish Jews from 1920 to 1960.

For the past three years, the Center for Jewish Studies at Arizona State University has focused on the recovery, study and performance of Jewish music suppressed by the Third Reich. Previously we have featured the music of German-speaking Jewish composers; this conference will focus on Polish-Jewish composers. The goal of the conference is to shed light on the richness of Polish-Jewish music from World War I to the decades after World War II and its relation to the complex problem of identity formation.

At the end of World War I, nearly 3,000,000 Jews from the Russian, German, and Austrian Empires found themselves in the newly re-created state of Poland. In the subsequent two decades, this Jewish community, the largest in Europe, faced the challenge of becoming "Polish Jews." Out of this challenge was born a rich and vibrant culture that deserves more recognition by music lovers and close analysis by scholars. Even under German occupation, the cultural and musical creativity of Polish Jews did not cease but became an important element of camp and ghetto lives. For years after the war, whether in exile or at home, the art of Polish Jews continued to reflect the complex relationship with Polishness and Polish culture.

## Conference Organizing Committee

**Anna Cichopek-Gajraj** Assistant Professor of History  
School of Historical, Philosophical & Religious Studies  
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

**Robert Elias** President  
The OREL Foundation

**Sabine Feisst** Professor of Music History & Literature  
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College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

**Hava Tirosh-Samuelson** Irving & Miriam Lowe Professor of Modern Judaism  
Director, Center for Jewish Studies at Arizona State University  
College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

**Bret Werb** Musicologist & Curator of Music Collections  
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC

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## Conference Program | Day 1

Sunday, November 17 | University Club | 425 East University Drive, Tempe

1 - 1:15 p.m.

**Welcome**

1:15 - 3 p.m.

**Session 1**

moderator: Anna Cichopek-Gajraj *Arizona State University*

**Presence, Absence, Identity, and the Musical Worlds of Polish Jews**

Katarzyna Naliwajek-Mazurek *University of Warsaw*

**“Jewish Composers are the Crowning Achievements of Foreign Nations”:  
Jewish Identity and Yiddish Nationalism in the Writings of Menachem Kipnis**

Julia Riegel *Indiana University*

3 - 3:15 p.m.

**coffee break**

3:15 - 5 p.m.

**Session 2**

moderator: Anna Holian *Arizona State University*

**Jewish Composers of Polish Music in 1943**

Maja Trochimczyk *Los Angeles, California*

**Tadeusz Zygfryd Kassern’s American Years**

Slawomir Dobrzanski *Kansas State University*

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

**reception and dinner** | presenters and invited guests

7:30 - 8:30 p.m.

**Keynote Address**

**Jews in Polish Cultural Life: Between Acceptance and Rejection**

Antony Polonsky *Brandeis University*

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## Conference Program | Day 2

Monday, November 18 | University Club | 425 East University Drive, Tempe

- 9 - 10:15 a.m.      **breakfast** | presenters and invited guests
- 10:15 a.m. - noon    **Session 3**  
moderator: **Bret Werb** *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*
- Moja pieśni tyś moja moc (“My song, you are my strength”): Personal Repertoires of Polish and Yiddish Songs from Youth Survivors of the Łódź Ghetto**  
**Joseph D. Toltz** *Sydney Conservatorium of Music*
- Szpilman, Baigelman, and Barsh: The Legacy of an Extended Polish-Jewish Musical Family on Three Continents**  
**Joel Rubin** *University of Virginia*
- noon - 1 p.m.      **lunch** | presenters and invited guests
- 1:15 - 3 p.m.      **Session 4**  
moderator: **Sabine Feisst** *Arizona State University*
- Singing Their Way Home**  
**Eliyana R. Adler** *University of Maryland*
- The Theft of Culture, Persecution, and the Identity of Wanda Landowska**  
**Carla Shapreau** *University of California, Berkeley*
- 3 - 3:15 p.m.      **coffee break**
- 3:15 - 4 p.m.      **Recital of Music by Wanda Landowska [1879-1959]**
- Introduction and Commentary: Bret Werb** *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*
- Polish Folksongs for Harpsichord and Small Ensemble (1933)**  
    **Kolędy**  
    **Oj chmielu**  
    **Mazur**  
    **Whitsunday polonaise**  
    **Wędrowali krawczycy**
- Berceuse for Piano (1907)**
- Performers from the School of Music at Arizona State University**  
**Jordan Sera** *flute* | **Wilson Harmon** *oboe* | **Ryan Cerullo** *bassoon* | **Oswaldo Zapata Correa** *trumpet*  
**Joshua Coffey** *trumpet* | **Ye Rim Kim** *violin* | **Artur Tumayjan** *violin* | **DaeMin Kim** *viola* | **Sungjin Park** *viola*  
**Elizabeth Weser** *cello* | **Tyler Smith** *double bass* | **Qianyao Zheng** *piano*
- 4 - 4:30 p.m.      **Roundtable Discussion with Presenters**
- 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.    **break**
- 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.    **dinner** | presenters and invited guests
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## Concert Program

Monday, November 18 | Katzin Concert Hall | 50 Gammage Parkway, Tempe

7:30 p.m.

### **Poles Apart: Chamber Music from the Garden of Exile** featuring **The ARC Ensemble of The Royal Conservatory, Toronto**

#### **Sonatina for Two Violins (1947)**

Jerzy Fitelberg [1903-1951]

#### **Piano Quintet on Popular Polish Themes (1945)**

Szymon Laks [1901-1983]

*Allegro quasi presto*

*Lento sostenuto*

*Vivace non troppo*

*Allegro moderato ma deciso*

#### **Intermission**

#### **Piano Quintet, Op. 18 (1944)**

Mieczysław Weinberg [1919-1996]

*Moderato con moto*

*Allegretto*

*Presto*

*Largo*

*Allegro agitato*

#### **The ARC Ensemble (Artists of the Royal Conservatory)**

**Erika Raum** *violin* | **Benjamin Bowman** *violin* | **Steven Dann** *viola* | **Bryan Epperson** *cello*

**Dianne Werner** *piano* | **David Louie** *piano*

*A discussion with Simon Wynberg, Artistic Director, The ARC Ensemble of The Royal Conservatory, Toronto, will follow the performance.*

**This performance was made possible by The OREL Foundation.**



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## Conference Presenters Bios & Paper Abstracts

**Eliyana R. Adler** received her doctorate from Brandeis University. She teaches at the University of Maryland and Gratz College. Her research and teaching focus on the modern Jewish experience in Eastern Europe with particular interest in gender, education and religion. Her current project traces the experiences of Polish Jews who survived World War II in the USSR.

### Singing their Way Home

This presentation examines the role that singing played in the lives of Polish Jews living in exile in the Soviet Union during World War II; the context and content of the singing; as well as its ongoing and shifting commemorative functions. Far from their homes, struggling to survive the deprivations of war and the conditions of Soviet life, Polish Jews nonetheless sang Hebrew, Yiddish and Polish songs. They did so out of longing, but also to articulate a shared identity. At times that identity was patriotic, allowing the Polish Jews to connect with other Polish citizens waiting to return to their country. At other times songs in Jewish languages could bridge the linguistic and cultural gap to forge relationships with Soviet Jews.

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**Slawomir Dobrzanski** is a pianist, and serves as associate professor of music in the School of Music, Theatre and Dance at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas. His most recent accomplishment is the release of the world premiere recording of the complete piano music of the Polish-Jewish pianist and composer Maria Szymanowska (1789-1831).

### Tadeusz Zygfryd Kassern's American Years

This lecture-recital concentrates initially on the post-war life and activities of Tadeusz Kassern in the United States, first as a diplomat, and later as an immigrant. The second part of the presentation is devoted to the general overview of Kassern's piano works from that time. A comparison with compositions from previous decades is included. This allows an insight into his development as a composer and his efforts to find his voice in the American musical environment. The following compositions are included in the discussion (some of them are performed in their entirety): *Sonatina* (1935), *Sonatina no. 2* (1944), *Sonatina Koledowa* (1945), *Piano Sonatina on Stephen C. Foster Themes* (1953-54), *Teen-Age Concerto* (1952), and miniatures from *Candy Music Book* and *Easy Modern Melodies and Rhythms* (1949-1955). Many of these unknown compositions remain unpublished, often only in manuscript form.

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**Katarzyna Naliwajek-Mazurek** is on the faculty of the University of Warsaw Institute of Musicology. The focus of her research since 2006 has been music in Nazi-occupied Poland. For her acclaimed exhibition *Music in Occupied Poland 1939-1945*, she was awarded the Hosenfeld/Szpilman Gedenkpreis at the Lüneburg University (2011).

### Presence, Absence, Identity and the Musical Worlds of Polish Jews

The image of music composed and performed by Polish Jews between 1920 and 1960 forms three distinct epochs characterized by the most extreme discontinuation in the annals of culture, due to the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust. The first epoch (1920-1939), corresponding to the brief period of Poland's independence after more than a century, was the time of presence; in spite of social and political tensions it was filled with effervescent activity in various musical domains reflecting the diversified milieus from which they stemmed. Secularisation, and the ensuing weakening of bonds with Judaism, was characteristic of the generation of intellectuals and artists, born at the turn of 20th century, who studied in Warsaw, then Vienna, Paris or Berlin and felt at the same time Polish, Jewish and cosmopolite co-creators of European culture. The second period (1939-1945) was the time of abrupt exclusion from this very culture. The majority of these musicians were murdered by the Nazis, and the musical worlds of Polish Jews vanished from the shattered territories of Poland, which itself disappeared again from the map of Europe and was transformed by the Third Reich into a place of mass death. The third period (1946-1960) was the time of the survivors' attempts to overcome the trauma and reconstruct their creative powers in Soviet-controlled Poland (or abroad, in the case of émigré musicians). This paper profiles forgotten musicians who shaped musical worlds of the Polish Jews before the war in this historical context.

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**Antony Polonsky** is Albert Abramson Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Until 1991, he was professor of international history at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He is chair of the editorial board of *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, author of *Politics in Independent Poland* (1972), *The Little Dictators* (1975), *The Great Powers and the Polish Question* (1976) co-author of *A History of Modern Poland* (1980) and *The Beginnings of Communist Rule in Poland* (1981) and co-editor of *Contemporary Jewish writing in Poland: an anthology* (2001) and *The neighbors respond: the controversy over the Jedwabne Massacre in Poland* (2004). His most recent work is *The Jews in Poland and Russia* volume 1, 1350 to 1881; volume 2, 1881 to 1914; volume 3, 1914 to 2008 (Oxford, 2010-2012).

### **Jews in Polish Cultural Life: Between Acceptance and Rejection**

Although it began later than the comparable process in the German-speaking lands, the involvement of people of Jewish origin in Polish cultural life, whether in literature, music or painting and sculpture took on large dimensions in the 20th century. It was often resisted by those who saw this phenomenon as debasing Polish culture and introducing foreign 'semitic' elements into it. This lecture examines the nature of the Jewish contribution to Polish literary, musical and artistic life, examines how those who were part of this phenomenon understood their own identity as Jews and Poles and analyzes the hostile responses which they provoked.

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**Julia Riegel** is a third-year history doctoral student at Indiana University Bloomington. Her areas of research interest include Jewish life in interwar Eastern Europe and music during the Holocaust, with particular geographical focus on Poland. Her planned dissertation focuses on music written and performed in the Polish camps and ghettos during World War II.

### **“Jewish Composers are the Crowning Achievements of Foreign Nations”: Jewish Identity and Yiddish Nationalism in the Writings of Menachem Kipnis**

Born in 1878, folklorist, singer, and writer Menachem Kipnis lived and worked primarily in Poland, dying in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942. Kipnis is only mentioned in passing in secondary literature, largely due to his untimely death and the destruction of much of his work during the Holocaust. However, Kipnis was enormously popular during his lifetime, particularly among the ordinary Polish Jews whose songs he collected and performed. This paper examines Kipnis through his published writings, which include several Yiddish song collections; a compilation of *Khelemer mayases* (1930); and *Di velt-berihmte yidishe muziker* (1910), his collective biography of 19th century European composers with Jewish backgrounds. This paper focuses on this last work, which has not received attention in English-language scholarship to date.

Examining *Di velt-berihmte yidishe muziker* with reference to Kipnis' other works, this paper illustrates the balance Kipnis struck between praise for the accomplishments of assimilated Jewish musicians, quasi-nationalist emphasis on their Jewishness, and his work as a folklorist in Poland amongst more traditional, Yiddish-speaking Jews. Focusing on the figure of Kipnis, whose work placed him at a crossroads between Eastern European Yiddish speakers and Western European assimilated Jews, this paper provides insight into the complex, changing lives of Polish Jews in the first half of the 20th century.

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**Joel Rubin** is associate professor at the University of Virginia. He holds a doctorate in ethnomusicology from City University of London (2001). He is co-author of the books *Klezmer-Musik* (Bärenreiter/dtv, 1999) and *Jüdische Musiktraditionen* (Jewish Musical Traditions; Gustav Bosse-Verlag, 2001). His most recent work on klezmer in contemporary Germany will be published in the anthology, *Jewish Music and Germany after the Holocaust* (Oxford University Press). Rubin is also an internationally acclaimed performer of klezmer music and has recorded seven CDs under his own name.

### **Szpilman, Baigelman, and Barsh: The Legacy of an Extended Polish-Jewish Musical Family on Three Continents**

The Szpilmans, Baigelmans and Barshes are an extended family of professional Jewish instrumentalists from Ostrowiec (Opatów District), Poland, active since at least the mid-19th century. During the interwar years and in the aftermath of the Shoah, the family spread out to Łódź, Toronto, Rio de Janeiro and New York City. There they played important roles as performers and composers in genres as diverse as instrumental klezmer, Polish popular song, jazz, chamber and symphonic music, the Yiddish theater and vaudeville, and Brazilian dance music. The most famous member was Władysław Szpilman (1911-2000), whose autobiography formed the basis of Roman Polanski's Oscar-winning film, *The Pianist*.

Little is known today about the contribution of the *klezmerim* of Congress Poland to Jewish and non-Jewish musical culture. Polish klezmerim functioned as important negotiators between tradition and modernity, between the various Jewish communities, and between Jewish and Polish society. They serve thereby as ideal indicators of change within Polish Jewish society as channeled through the transformations which took place in the sphere of music, including the emergence of both an art-music aesthetic and a Yiddish popular entertainment culture.

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**Carla Shapreau** is a lecturer at the University of California, Berkeley. Her teaching and research involve art and cultural property law, as well as music-related losses during the Nazi era. Ms. Shapreau has written and lectured broadly on intellectual and cultural property concerns. Ms. Shapreau is also a violin maker.

### **The Theft of Culture, Persecution, and the Identity of Wanda Landowska**

Wanda Landowska, eminent pianist and harpsichordist, teacher, scholar, arranger, and composer, was the target of one of the most significant musical confiscations by the Nazis in France during World War II. She had amassed an extensive music library of manuscripts, rare printed music, books, as well as an impressive collection of historical musical instruments, which were transported by the Third Reich to Germany.

The threat to material culture in war-torn Europe gave rise to Allied protection efforts, including formation of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives Section of the U.S. Army, which found the first post-war clues to the whereabouts of Landowska's plundered property. In late May 1945 in the Bavarian countryside, U.S. troops discovered "a castle full of pianos, accordions, violins" and other looted musical materials, among which were many of Landowska's possessions. Although these objects were restituted to Landowska, many of her musical materials remain missing today. An inventory of her library and musical instruments was recently discovered in France, which may shed light on still unresolved losses.

The confiscation of Landowska's musical collection was emblematic of material cultural losses sustained by persecuted musicians, composers, music publishers, and others in occupied Europe during the Nazi-era. Landowska's identity is reflected by the content of her collection, her performances, and enduring recordings.

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**Joseph Toltz** is research associate and lecturer at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. His specialty is musical memory and recall in Jewish Holocaust survivors. A former fellow at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, he has presented papers at the 2013 Royal Music Association and Society for Ethnomusicology conferences.

### **Moja pieśni tyś moja moc (“My song, you are my strength”): Personal Repertoires of Polish and Yiddish Songs from Youth Survivors of the Łódź Ghetto**

The city of Melbourne, Australia has one of the highest concentrations of Jewish Holocaust survivors outside of Israel, and survivors have made an indelible imprint on cultural life through Yiddish performance and organizations such as the Dovid Herman Theater, the Kadimah Jewish Cultural Association and the Jewish Labour Bund. The Australian Society for Polish Jews and Their Descendants Inc. was formed to promote dialogue between Jewish and Christian Poles, to bring the communities together and understand the joint tragedy that befell them during and after the war.

Łódź Ghetto survivors make up one of the largest group of survivors in Melbourne. They boosted the Yiddish and Polish-Jewish organizations and also were involved in the blossoming of Australian cultural life, post-war. Yet many kept musical experiences of their time in the ghetto behind closed doors. This paper explores some private musical memories, asking how songs contribute to our understanding of survivor testimony. Why do they remain important and yet so private? Does the medium of listening, performing and perpetuating these songs allow both testifier and testified a different perspective in the immediacy and intimacy of each and every encounter? Is there something in musical performance that allows us to receive and reinterpret subjectively the notion of memory and recall from a time of trauma, resisting ontological assertions of actuality and fact?

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**Maja Trochimczyk** is a music historian, poet and nonprofit director, the author of eight books and other publications. An organizer of the first international conference on Polish-Jewish music (1998), she published articles on composers in California, Tansman, and Szymanowska. At the University of Southern California (USC), she collected manuscripts and published Golab's monograph on Koffler.

### **Jewish Composers of Polish Music in 1943**

Commemorating the 70th anniversary of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, this paper surveys activities of Jewish composers and their place in Polish music history. Not only lives were lost, also music. Whether the composers died or survived, their music was forgotten and neglected for political and artistic reasons. In 1943, Aleksander Tansman (1897-1986)—not Szymanowski—was considered Poland's greatest contemporary composer. A friend of Ravel, Milhaud, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg, he thrived in a colony of artists in Los Angeles. Poland's lone disciple of Schoenberg, Józef Koffler (1896-1944?) was then hiding near Kraków. After surviving the Soviet occupation of Lwów in 1939-41, Koffler went into hiding, to disappear in 1943 or 1944. Władysław Szpilman (1911-2000) was starving in the Warsaw Ghetto; Szymon Laks played the violin in an Auschwitz orchestra; and Roman Palester (1907-1989) spent six weeks at Warsaw's Pawiak prison. He lived through the Warsaw Uprising to join the staff of Free Europe. Tadeusz Kassern (1904-1957) escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943 and lived under a false name in Zakopane; he became a political refugee in 1948 and died in the U.S. Roman Ryterband (1914-1979) survived the war in Switzerland, and later became an American. Jerzy Fitelberg (1903-1951) came to New York in 1938 and lived in obscurity. Film composer Bronislaw Kaper (1902-1983) left Poland for Hollywood in the 1930s. Henryk Wars (1902-1977) fought in Polish Army allied with the British troops in Africa and Italy and ended up in Hollywood.

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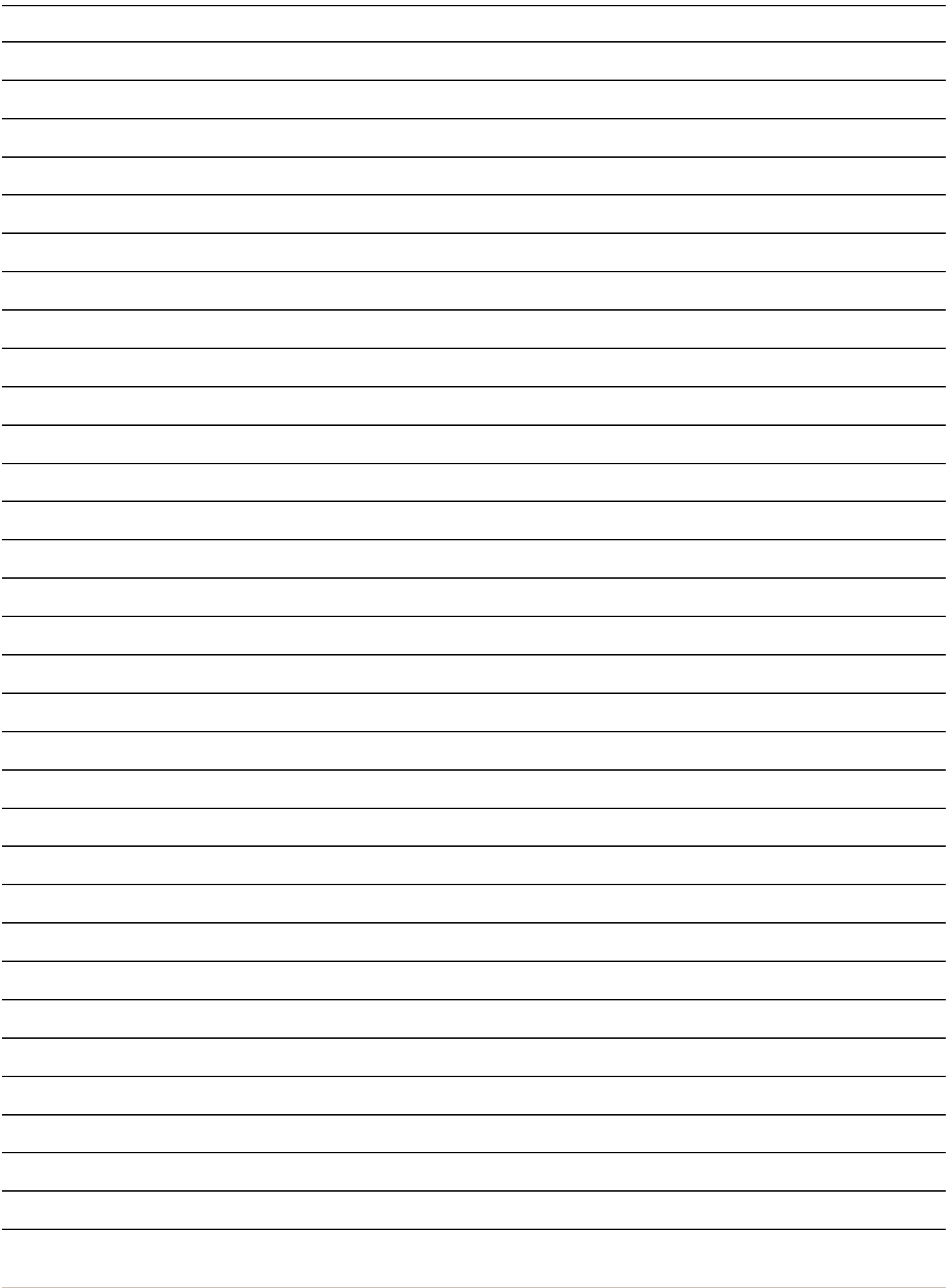
The OREL Foundation for arranging the performance of "Poles Apart: Chamber Music from the Garden of Exile" by The ARC Ensemble of The Royal Conservatory, Toronto.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum/The Shtetl Foundation for providing images from their collections for use in conference publicity.

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Notes

Lined area for taking notes.

