



*"My inspiration to compose 'Oratorio Terezin' came from reading a book called 'I Never Saw Another Butterfly'- a collection of poetry and art of Jewish children from the time of the Holocaust, who were held in the ghetto of Terezin, Czechoslovakia during the years 1941-1944. As I read the poems I felt what I can only describe as a 'Divine Commission' to take some of the poems and weave them together with portions of the Hebrew scriptures to create a love song of hope in the midst of the darkness. I hope that*

*the Oratorio in some small way portrays God's heart in the midst of the suffering of His People. Ruth Fazal*

### **THE BACKGROUND - TEREZIN GHETTO**

In 1941, the small town of Terezin, northwest of Prague in Czechoslovakia, was converted by the Nazis into a transit concentration camp for Jews. To the outside world Terezin (also known by the German name of Theresienstadt) was a "model Jewish settlement" - a spa resort with stores, a cafe, bank, kindergarten, school, and flower gardens which were built only for propaganda purposes. In reality, Terezin was an overcrowded way-station for the death camps. The transports came regularly to take both adults and children away to what was for most of them death in Auschwitz or other camps. Many died in Terezin itself, as overcrowding bred untold misery and disease. Amongst those who were held as prisoners in this town were many musicians, writers, poets and artists. Yet even the horror of their situation could not totally silence their creativity, which they and their children used to transcend the pain. From 1941-1944 more than 15,000 children were among the thousands of Jews who were held captive in Terezin. Of those 15,000 children who passed through Terezin, only about 100 survived.

### **THE MUSIC- ORATORIO TEREZIN**

Oratorio Terezin is a large work scored for orchestra, children's choir, adult choir, and three vocal soloists. Set in the context of the Holocaust, composer Ruth Fazal took children's poems which miraculously survived the ghetto of Terezin and were later put into a book called "I Never Saw Another Butterfly" and wove them together with passages from the Hebrew scriptures. The poignant innocence of the children's poetry, set against the cry of 'How long will the wicked exult?' causes us to come face to face with the testing of faith, in the context of unspeakable human suffering and deprivation. The musical style is both dramatically intense, and sweetly lyrical. The juxtaposition of the children's and adult's voices, along with those of the Voice of the Prophet, the Voice of God and the Voice of Suffering create the tension found in the midst of feelings of rejection and abandonment alongside the hope deep within the human heart that all will be well.

### **THE COMPOSER- RUTH FAZAL**

Born in England, Ruth Fazal began her musical studies on the piano and the violin, attending Dartington College for the Arts, before going on to graduate from the Guildhall School of Music in London. Further studies on the violin took Ruth to Paris, France. After emigrating to Canada and living in Toronto, Ruth performed as a violinist with all of the major orchestras in the city, as well as being actively involved in many chamber music ensembles. In 2000 Ruth's life took a major turn in a new direction. She explains "I had recently written a song called 'Give me Your Heart Lord' but I don't think I really expected an answer so soon!" The next three years were spent in writing Oratorio Terezin, and consequently

finding herself immersed in the horror of the Holocaust as she searched her Bible, trying to find answers and meaning within her own deep faith as a Christian. "This journey took me deeper than ever before...." says Ruth.

The World Premiere of Oratorio Terezin took place in Toronto in 2003, followed by a European Tour in 2004. In 2005, the Oratorio was performed in Israel to great critical acclaim, filling the concert halls in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Karmiel. It was chosen as the main cultural event in Tel Aviv for Holocaust Memorial Day that year, and over 3,000 people packed the concert hall. Amongst those thousands were hundreds of Holocaust survivors who were received as honoured guests to all the concerts.

Since 2011 Ruth has spent most of her time in Israel, where she takes an active part in the community in which she lives, and plays her violin for Holocaust survivors and other groups. In 2018 Ruth established **Im Emuna** - an Israeli non-profit organisation. The mandate of '**Im Emuna**' (With Faith) is two-fold; to inspire faith and hope through the Arts, and to build bridges between Christians and Jews. Ruth uses all her gifts to cause these things to happen at the highest level.

Ruth Fazal's most recent composition '**Ezekiel Out of Exile**' will be performed in Israel in 2021, in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, with performers from Israel, Slovakia, Canada and the US. Ezekiel's vision of the 'Valley of the Dry Bones' surely saw the beginning of its fulfillment in 1948 when the Jewish people began to return to their homeland.

***"I believe that we are living in critical times, and I feel an extreme urgency for Christians to both understand and acknowledge that God has a People that He has chosen, and that Christians have a unique role to play - to stand alongside the Jewish people and to do all we can to help them to fulfill their destiny. A Christian faith without Israel at its centre is surely going to be shallow and self-centred. May we all cry out to God - 'Give me Your Heart Lord!'"***