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Press Release:

Kristallnacht unity concert to be held at synagogue for the first time

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Over a single night in November 1938 over 200 synagogues were burned in an orchestrated anti-Jewish violence campaign in Germany. Known as Kristallnacht, the event marks not only the destruction but also the resilience of Jewish life and it will be commemorated on 10 November in the annual Kristallnacht concert featuring music associated with the Holocaust.

This year, in light of the 15 March terror attacks in Christchurch, the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand has chosen a theme of Unity for the commemorative Kristallnacht concert. By bringing together different religious, ethnic and minority groups, the Centre aims to remember such days and nights of terror, but to also impress upon those gathered how important it is to never stop fighting and hoping, however unattainable it may sometimes feel, so that days and nights like 15 March and Kristallnacht, will become a thing of the past.

The concert is a joint project of the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand and Te Kōkī New Zealand School of Music of Victoria University of Wellington, and for the first time, will be held in the Wellington Beth El Synagogue in Webb Street.

The programme will open with the winners of the 2019 NZCT Chamber Music Contest, Sixteen Strings, made up of four students from different schools in Wellington. They will play *Five Pieces for String Quartet* by Erwin Schulhoff (1894-1942), a Czech Jewish composer who died in the Wülzburg concentration camp. These pieces charm and entertain, with spontaneous humour and enough of the avant-garde to stimulate the ear.

The Te Kōkī Trio of the New Zealand School of Music (Martin Risely, Inbal Megiddo and Jian Liu) will play Mieczyslaw Weinberg's *Trio, Op. 24*. Weinberg (1919-1996) was a prolific composer, only recently rediscovered and recorded. Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) was his friend and mentor, and considered him one of the greatest Russian composers of his era. Born in Poland, Weinberg fled to Russia and his parents and sister died in a concentration camp. His musical language combines contemporary and traditional forms with Jewish, Polish and Moldavian influences.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897-1957) was considered a prodigy in Vienna. His opera *Die Tote Stadt* (The Dead City) attained international success when Korngold was only in his early twenties. In 1934, after the Nazis came to power he moved to America where he became an influential composer in Hollywood. A haunting aria from *Die Tote Stadt*, a reminder of European Jewish culture under threat by the Nazis, will be sung by Margaret Medlyn with the New Zealand String Quartet and Jian Liu, piano.

Nigun is a wordless prayer used in Jewish liturgy. Boris Pigovat is a contemporary Israeli / Russian composer and his *Nigun* expresses the style and spiritual atmosphere of the ancient tunes. It will be played by a viola quartet of Xin Liu, Sophia Acheson, Grant Baker and Donald Maurice.

In the midst of darkness and gloom, music was a form of resistance. Mark Donlon and Lauren Nottingham will perform cabaret and jazz music from the Westerbork concentration camp revues, and the Tango that was popular in Auschwitz - music that laughs in the face of tragedy and is a symbol of Jewish resilience.

The Holocaust is not just a historical event that happened on the other side of the world - it also had a huge impact on New Zealand. In acknowledgement of this, the New Zealand String Quartet and Ruby Solly will perform contemporary New Zealand composer Gareth Farr's *He Poroporoaki* (A Farewell), a song forever associated with the emotion of saying goodbye.

This exciting and varied concert will offer a broad range of moving and stimulating music, most of which has never been played in New Zealand before. Hearing these performed in the synagogue in Wellington will be something special.

Tickets can be purchased on [Eventfinda](https://www.eventfinda.co.nz). Doors open at 6.30pm and the concert starts at 7pm.

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