

## **DEFIANT REQUIEM RECEPTION & SHOWING**

President Pescovitz's Remarks

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

- Thank you for attending tonight's showing of "Defiant Requiem," a documentary that communicates with such impressive clarity a story of beauty in the face of brutality, and the wonder and resolve of the human spirit.
  
- Our special appreciation to Cis Maisel and the Cis Maisel Center ,and Michael Pytlik for presenting the documentary and hosting this reception.
  
- Michael does a great job in carrying out Cis' vision for the Cis Maisel Center for Judaic Studies, which is to educate the regional community and beyond about the traditions of Judaism and Jewish culture.
  - The showing of "Defiant Requiem" is another example of our educational outreach, and our mission to elevate public discourse.

- I'd also like to thank and recognize my dear friends Mary Ann Udow Phillips and Bill Phillips.
  - They first approached me with the idea of showing this film to our community. We are so glad you recommended this important film and introduced me to your cousin, Patti Askwith Kenner.
  
- And finally, thank you and welcome to Maestro Murry Sidlin, distinguished conductor and educator.
  - I wish I had known you when I was on the faculty at the University of Minnesota.
  
  - We are so appreciative that you are bringing this work to Oakland University and we are thrilled that you are here in person to help guide us through the making of this film.

- The documentary you are about to see is based on story of a talented and imprisoned Czech composer, Rafael Schacter, who finds the determination to lead a performance of Verdi's "Requiem" inside the Terezin concentration camp.
- That story runs alongside the parallel story of Maestro Sidlin, who, most remarkably, decades later, returns to the camp to perform the piece again.
- The feature-length documentary, "Defiant Requiem," was first performed at the Yad Vaskem: The World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Jerusalem on May 31, 2012, where my mother served as docent.
- In watching the film, I was left with a profound and indelible impression of how music feeds our souls, and how the prisoners were inspired to resist the inhumane conditions of the concentration camp.
- As survivors and truth-tellers, we must always tell the stories of those who showed enormous

courage and died in the horrific genocide at the hands of the Nazis.

- We want to believe that people of good intentions will triumph, but history tells us, and, as we see now in Ukraine, this is not always the case.
  - The lesson we must carry with us is that the struggle for justice and the preservation of our humanity and higher natures continues day after day.
  
- Today, with the rise of hate crimes, including antisemitism, racism and other forms of intolerance and the unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine, we are witness yet again to the perniciousness of prejudice and horrors of war.
  - And again, we are obligated to speak up.
  
  - The memories of those who were held at Terezin and other concentration camps call to us.

- Thank you again for your support for Oakland University, and for supporting the mission of the Cis Maisel Center to educate our communities about Jewish culture.