



Wolf's SONG

WON'T BE SILENT

Wolf's

S O N G

Can a song recently exhumed from the ashes of the Holocaust, written as a hymn of resistance against the Nazis - become a relevant anthem for social justice?

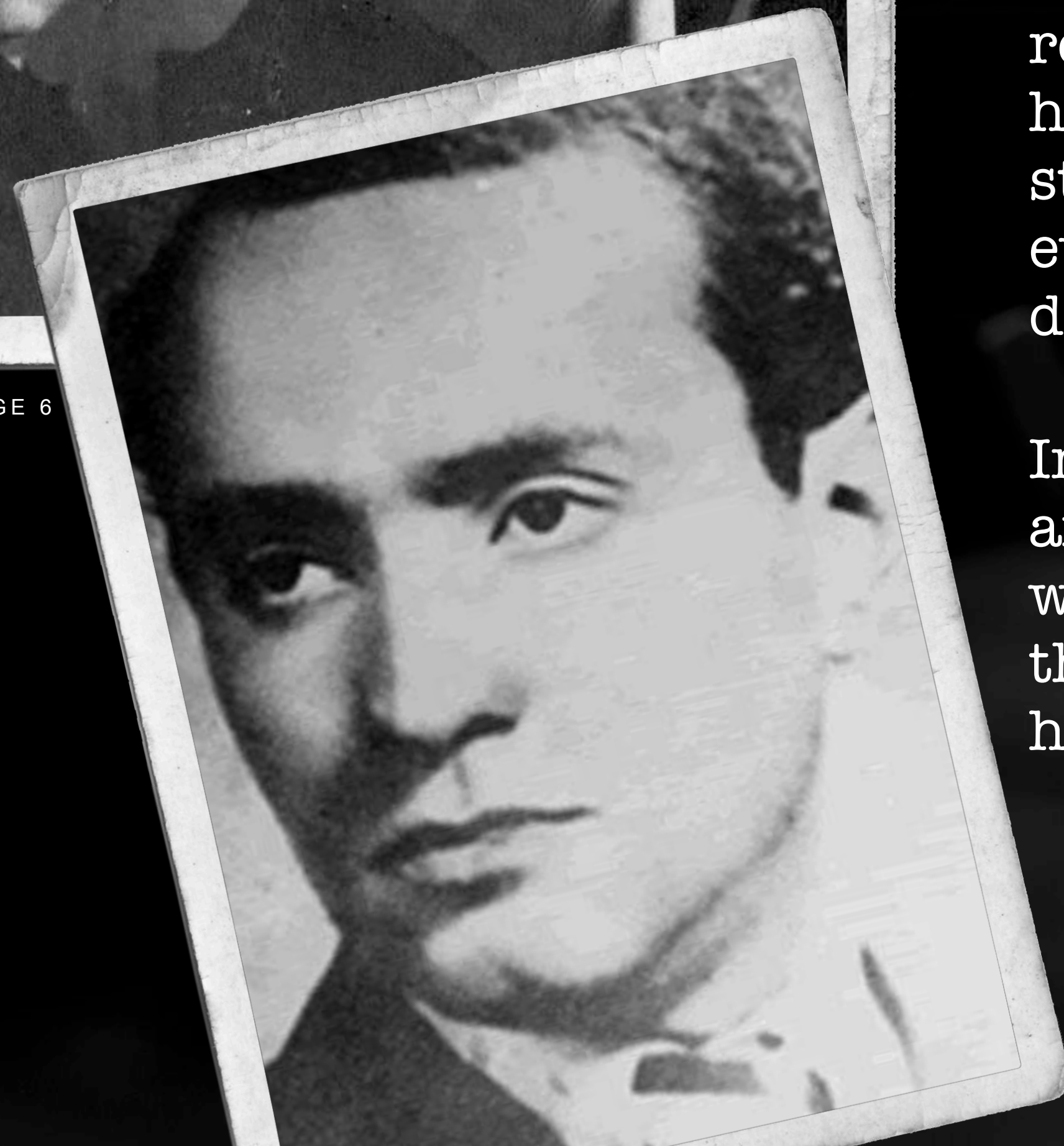
“Lomir Shvaygn” (Stay Silent), an anthem against unspeakable Nazi cruelty, was lost to the ages, a muted testament to hope that was never meant to be heard again. It was buried for over 70 years, along with the memory of its composer,

Wolf Durmashkin who at age thirty, was killed just hours before the Liberation.

This film chronicles the unexpected discovery of “Stay Silent” – the soundtrack to a much-deserved legacy and explores how powerful music, transcending time – can be a clarion call for injustice today.



PICTURED: WOLF AT AGE 6
AND AGAIN AT 25



Wolf Durmashkin was a child prodigy becoming the youngest conductor of the Vilna Symphony Orchestra before World War II. When Wolf's family was thrown into the Ghetto, he received a dispensation to continue conducting the orchestra yet forced to return to captivity nightly. In a heroic effort to keep hope and culture alive, Wolf and his fellow musicians started the Vilna Ghetto Orchestra by smuggling in every instrument – including a piano, which they dismantled and reassembled piece-by-piece.

In 1943, Wolf was sent to Klooga concentration camp and continued to use music as a means of survival. He wrote the music to “Stay Silent”, written as a prayer that became the mantra of resistance to the Nazis for his fellow prisoners.



ABOVE: WOLF'S NEPHEW, ABE GURKO
BELOW: SONGWRITER KARA DIOGUARDI



The journey began when Abe Gurko received a shocking email from the U.S. Holocaust Museum. The email described an obscure piece of music - composed by his uncle Wolf, that had been discovered in a rare book in Israel. What happened next changed Abe's life forever.

Blaring on the news, was the hate-filled rhetoric by American White Supremacists which brought up a deeply hidden rage. Chants of, "Jews will not replace us" stuck like a dagger in his heart. The dichotomous moment inspired Abe to embrace the rare opportunity to give Wolf's song wings. "I knew a movie had to be made."

As an activist, Abe decided to take Wolf's music and modify it into a call-to-action. He called on Grammy-nominated songwriter Kara DioGuardi, asking if she'd take on the challenge to transcribe Wolf's music. Thus, "Lomir Shvaygn" was changed to "Won't Be Silent" inspiring people to speak up about social injustice, demand change, and never forget.

Abe then set about to engage artists in all genres of music, to record their own version of "Wont Be Silent" and embrace the universal message within Wolf's music.



THE RESISTANCE REVIVAL CHORUS

The Resistance Revival Chorus was chosen as the first group to record “Won’t Be Silent.” This diverse group of women met at the Women’s March in Washington DC in January 2017. They best represented the intention of how Wolf’s song should be introduced to the world. Their mission to use their voices to speak up and sing out about civil rights against oppression was most fitting.

He worked with R&B artist and environmentalist Antonique Smith and recorded a fresh interpretation of “Won’t Be Silent” with emerging urban producers. She communicates Wolf’s message to a younger, diverse audience currently advocating social and environmental change calling for solutions to improve water quality, pollution, and landfill waste that disproportionately impacts low-income areas.



ANTONIQUE SMITH



JAIME KOHEN

When the kids were being put into “concentration camps” at the U.S. Border, hearing those words used by the media infuriated Abe. He sought to translate the song in Spanish and was serendipitously introduced to pop-singer Jaime Kohen, a Jewish, gay, Iranian who emigrated to Mexico City. His poetic rendition reminds us that “we are all immigrants”.

The expanding corps of performances is making Abe's wish for Wolf's legacy a reality. A solemn moment was when The HaZamir Youth Choir performed the song at Yom HaShoah Gathering in NYC at Temple Emanu-El.



The most emotional tribute so far has been when the Bavarian Symphony Orchestra unexpectedly invited Abe to Munich for their Spring Gala honoring Wolf. The stunning performance by more than 100 German musicians and vocalists—many being descendants of the Third Reich—was a seminal moment for the project.

The outbreak of Covid shut down several key planned performances that will be revisited when the comfort of travel resumes. However, during lockdown, the message of Wolf's song was kept very much alive when Abe worked with the Voting Rights Alliance in Washington DC. He created a social media campaign, using the music to engage young people of color to register and vote. What better way to say "I won't be silent" than by voting? The success of that platform will continue through the next few election cycles while the film gets back into production.





Moving forward, Won't Be Silent will be "brought to church" with a gospel choir, performed by hip-hop artists, interpreted at a spoken word poetry slam, sung by a Nashville artist, set to movement in a dance performance and interpreted by First Nation/ Indigenous artists.

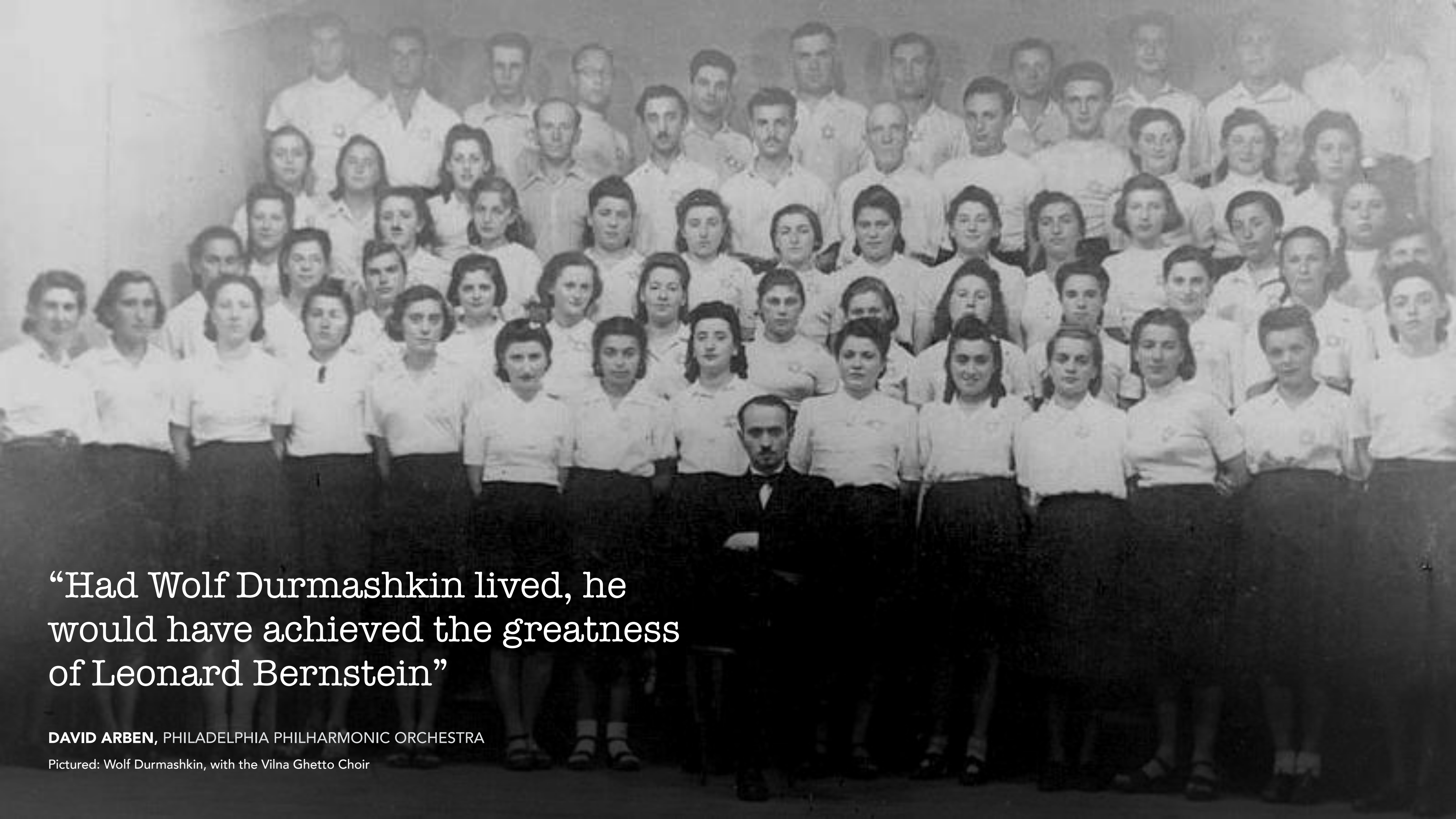


Abe will travel to Vilna to connect with the Wolf's spirit and inspiration where his creative resistance began. Abe will visit the family home that still stands. He will walk to the theater where Wolf conducted 35 concerts with the Vilna Ghetto Orchestra. The goal is to re-enact one of the Wolf's major performances, Schubert's Unfinished Symphony.



A symbolic moment will be when Abe goes to Klooga concentration camp and brings Wolf's song back to him where a solemn string performance of the song will complete the hero's journey of the song.

As the credits roll, a live concert featuring several artists will perform at a fundraiser for a newly established Wolf Durmashkin Music Education Program.



“Had Wolf Durmashkin lived, he would have achieved the greatness of Leonard Bernstein”

DAVID ARBEN, PHILADELPHIA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Pictured: Wolf Durmashkin, with the Vilna Ghetto Choir



Wolf's

SONG

WON'T BE SILENT

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