

Marianka (Marianne) Zadikow May was born in Prague in 1923 and spent the years 1944-1945 at transit camp Theresienstadt, a 50 year old fortress at Terezín, Czechoslovakia. The creative Jewish talent of Prague were forced to live in this ghetto, but their creative spirit continued and gave them purpose and hope.

from the *New York Jewish Week*

"I was in the chorus since its beginning in the fall or winter of '42," Marianne said. "We sang some Mozart operas, including 'The Marriage of Figaro'. Since it was a necessity to work eight, 10 or 14 hours, it was much appreciated that we did not have to think of what tomorrow will bring if tomorrow brought a rehearsal."



Marianne Zadikow May



Scan for more information on Marianne Zadikow May's book

R

afael Schächter, was a brilliant young Czech opera-choral conductor who was sent to Terezín in 1941. Under the most brutal of circumstances, he sustained dignity, humanity, and hope with his fellow prisoners. With an abandoned piano he found in the basement, he recruited and taught 150 prisoners Giuseppe Verdi's Requiem by rote, after grueling days of forced labor. Marianne was one of the chorus members.



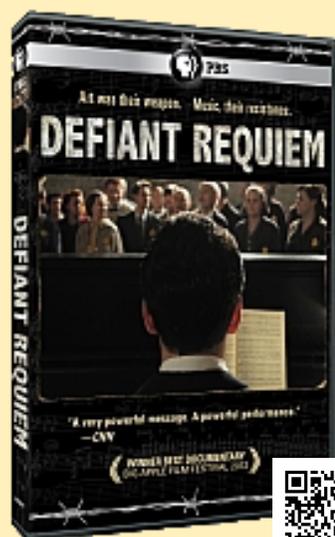
Rafael Schächter

They performed on 16 occasions for fellow prisoners, with the last, most infamous performance on June 23, 1944, in front of high-ranking SS officers from Berlin and the International Red Cross. The Requiem expressed to their oppressors what they thought of them, absent of having firearms for armed rebellion. Marianne said, "This wasn't in our capabilities - but there was still a way to show that we can preserve human dignity. Perhaps the Germans did or did not get the message - but it did help the inmates."

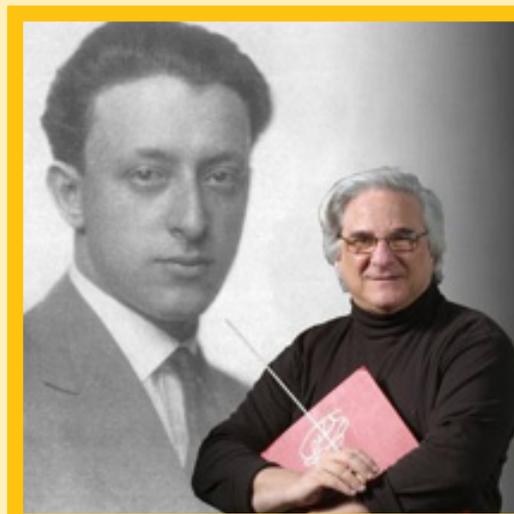
Rehearsals for the 150-member chorus were generally every other day, but there were the transports that regularly shipped prisoners to Auschwitz. By the time the chorus was ordered to perform Verdi's Requiem for the International Red Cross and high ranking SS officers in June 1944, its membership was down to 60.



Scan for thoughts from Terezín



Scan for more information about PBS' Defiant Requiem



Murray Sidlin

On the 75th anniversary of Yom HaShoah, PBS aired Defiant Requiem that reenacted the musical choral piece at the site of Terezín and practiced as the prisoners had in the cold damp basement. Conducted by Murray Sidlin, his journey led him to Edgar Krasa and Marianka May, survivors of the camp, who participated in the choral singing to the Red Cross and the SS officers.

Scan for more information on Verdi's Requiem

