

CONCERT



JOSEF GRABOWSKI - IN MEMORIAM

Nidaros Cathedral
November 30th at 18h00
Entrance kr 160/100

PROGRAMME

Nidaros Cathedral choir presents:

FRIEDE AUF ERDEN,

by Arnold Schönberg

Speech by Dean Ragnhild Jepsen

UrbanKlezmer presents:

JOSEF GRABOWSKI - IN MEMORIAM

Narrator: Knut Andreas Grimstad

Tenor: Jon Kristian Karlsen

Piano: Tor-Petter Aanes

Clarinets: Morten Michelsen

Guitars: Petter Vågan

Double bass: Jo Berger Myhre

HOSTED BY:

Jewish Museum Trondheim, the Falstad Memorial
and Nidaros Cathedral choir

JOSEF GRABOWSKI'S STORY

In October 1942, several dozen men from the Jewish community in Trondheim were arrested and brought to the Falstad prison camp at Ekne, North Trøndelag, Norway. Among them was the Polish cantor Josef Grabowski, who had come to Norway in 1939 as a refugee from Nazi Germany. He had worked for a few years as cantor and religious instructor for the Trondheim Mosaic community, when he once again became subject to the Nazi persecution of the Jews. His arrest and two months of imprisonment at Falstad marked the beginning of a journey which took him back to his home country and, eventually, to his death in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Many ex-prisoners have told stories about the inhuman treatment the Jews received at the hands of the Nazi camp regime. Many of them never forgot the experience of forced labour, torture, and repeated humiliation suffered by Josef Grabowski and his fellow Jews. On repeated occasions the prison guards forced Josef Grabowski to sing for them. One of the songs he performed was "Volgalied" from the operetta *Der Zarewitsch* by Franz Lehár. Both prisoners and guards were captivated by his voice. Many different accounts bear witness to the fact that Grabowski's presence had a powerful impact on his fellow prisoners. Their testimony confirms what a meaningful rôle music can play in extreme situations, with its ability to give strength and to spread joy under otherwise dire circumstances.

Josef Grabowski's story is not just the story of a Jewish cantor and his music. It is also the story of the persecution of the Jews, of Nazism and of discrimination. Following Grabowski's movements during the concluding years of his life takes us on a journey through the different stages of the Holocaust, a journey that reminds us of the ways in which the course of European and Norwegian history had a direct and immediate impact on individual human beings and their lives.

This concert is a result of a collaborative research project involving the Jewish Museum in Trondheim and the Falstad Memorial.



"One of the Jews was an opera singer, probably a Polish refugee. The guards were fond of singing, as most Germans are, and sometimes this singer was called out during evening assembly and ordered to sing. He then had to stand in front of us all and sing whatever the Germans told him, mainly songs from operettas. It was an unforgettable experience for most of us who were present. There he was, a Jew in his worn prison uniform, exhausted after a long day of toil and suffering, singing not only for a crowd of prisoners standing there in perfect lines, but also for their tormentors, the German guards. At times the atmosphere was brutally broken by a German who would rather hear another song. At other times the singer was chased back into position with kicks and shouts."

Frank Storm Johansen, ex Falstad SS-camp prisoner