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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Interviews available upon request

What: *Violins of Hope Fort Wayne*
When: November 9-24, 2019
Where: Multiple locations throughout Fort Wayne, IN
Cost: See violinsofhopefw.org for ticket information

Violins of Hope Come to Fort Wayne, Indiana "Defiance, Resilience, Legacy"

Community Collaboration Of Concerts, Visual Art, Theater, Public Conversation,
Interfaith Dialogue, Readings, And Educational Activities By Over Twenty-Five
Community Partners Centered On The Strings Of The Holocaust

FORT WAYNE, IN — May 6, 2019: The Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne and Fort Wayne Philharmonic will lead over twenty-five organizations from across the community in bringing the historic *Violins of Hope* to Northeast Indiana this fall. *Violins of Hope* comprise a collection of restored instruments played by Jewish musicians before and during the Holocaust. These instruments survived concentration camps, pogroms, and many long journeys and now tell remarkable stories of justice and free expression.

Israeli luthier Amnon Weinstein has spent the last two decades locating and restoring these violins. He dedicates this important work to 400 relatives he never knew, all who were murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust. These instruments serve as a testament to the defiance, resilience, and legacy of the Jewish people, the triumph of the human spirit, and the power of music to lift hearts during even the most horrific circumstances.

After becoming one of the most respected violinmakers in the world, Weinstein determined to reclaim his lost heritage. To do so, he began locating violins that were played by Jews in camps and ghettos, painstakingly piecing them back together so they could be brought to life on the concert stage. Although most of the musicians who originally played these instruments were silenced by the Holocaust, their voices and spirits live on through the violins Weinstein has lovingly restored.

For Jews enduring utter despair and unimaginable evil during the Holocaust, music offered a haven and a sense of humanity. In some cases, the ability to play the violin spared Jewish musicians from more grueling labor or even death. Nearly 50 years ago, Weinstein heard such a story from a customer who brought him an instrument for restoration. The customer had survived the Holocaust because his job was to play the violin while camp guards marched others to their deaths.

Violins of Hope have toured many important cities around the world and will now come to Fort Wayne from November 9–24, 2019. Organized by lead partners, the Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne and the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, a steering committee of prominent local professionals has been formed to work with area partners on a community-wide series of events focusing on these instruments. The sound, presence, and stories of *Violins of Hope Fort Wayne* will drive the creation of music, visual art, theater, public conversation, interfaith dialogue, readings, and educational activities throughout Northeast Indiana. Most importantly, Fort Wayne Philharmonic and Youth Orchestra musicians will bring to life the humanity and stories of those who owned these precious instruments through dozens of local area performances.

To date, commitments have been secured from the following organizations: Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne, Fort Wayne Philharmonic and Youth Orchestras, Fort Wayne Museum of Art, City of Fort Wayne, PBS39, WANE-TV, WBOI - Northeast Indiana Public Radio, Classical 94.1 WBNI, History Center: George R. Mather Lecture Series, Embassy Theatre, Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne, Cinema Center, University of Saint Francis, Fort Wayne Ballet, Purdue Fort Wayne, Purdue Fort Wayne Department of Theatre, Purdue Fort Wayne Music Department, Heartland Sings, Fort Wayne Children's Choir, Genealogy Center at the Allen County Public Library, Trinity English Lutheran Church, Allen County Courthouse, and Northeast Indiana Jewish Genealogy Society.

"*Violins of Hope Fort Wayne* will be the largest and most important community wide collaboration under one theme in the history of this community," said Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne Board Chair and *Violins of Hope Fort Wayne* steering committee member Ben Eisbart. "This is a once in a life opportunity to bring these extraordinary instruments to Northeast Indiana and to tell the remarkable stories of courage of the musicians who played them."

Details about the myriad of programs, events, and details about the project and associated activities can be found at violinsofhopefw.org.

Among the highlights of *Violins of Hope Fort Wayne* will be a major exhibition of the instruments at the University of Saint Francis as well as the Fort Wayne Museum of Art; an opening screening of the documentary *Violins of Hope* and presentation by author Dr. James Grymes and luthier Avshalom Weinstein at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art; a multi genre concert at the Allen County Courthouse; the Klezmatiks at the Embassy Theatre; and a Masterworks concert featuring the Fort Wayne Philharmonic under the direction of music director Andrew Constantine.

Weinstein is eager for the *Violins of Hope* to be played by young people who may not directly know any survivors of the Holocaust. Thus, it is fitting that the Fort Wayne Philharmonic Youth Orchestra will perform one of the very first events on the *Violins of Hope*, November 10. The program will include works by Jewish composers Lukas Foss and Philip Glass, as well as the US Premiere of Erwin Schulhoff's *Menschheit* Symphony. Through the medium of music, the violins should "convey a message to the younger generation: Never again, anywhere," says Weinstein.

Noted education experts have developed three community engagement efforts that will take the story of the *Violins of Hope* to Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana.

High school social studies, language arts, and music teachers will be able to provide their students with the opportunity to learn about the remarkable instruments that comprise the *Violins of Hope* collection by scheduling no-cost presentations in their schools. Each 40-minute presentation will begin with a brief overview of Holocaust history before focusing on the stories of several violins. Background resource materials will be provided to teachers who schedule this presentation for their students.

A presentation designed for community organizations will be offered during September and October 2019. These presentations will include a brief introduction to Jewish culture and Holocaust history combined with stories about the violins, archival photographs, videos, and music. This presentation may be scheduled by social service groups, community organizations, clubs, and religious institutions.

Accompanied by live music performed by members of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic using the violins themselves, ensemble presentations will allow students to become engaged in a study of the Holocaust by experiencing the instruments and their stories. These in-school presentations may be scheduled during the week of November 11-15, 2019.

For additional information and to schedule presentations, please contact info@violinsofhopefw.org.

"I am grateful that the education and community engagement component of *Violins of Hope* will be so extensive. Our community's young people will benefit from the valuable historical lessons offered about the role of music which gave people strength during one of the darkest times in human history," said Fort Wayne Philharmonic Board Chair Chuck Surack.

In addition, a major exhibition of the instruments will be on display at the University of Saint Francis Weatherhead Gallery, and an interactive website has been developed.

The violin has been an important component of Jewish culture for centuries, both as an instrument popular with classical Jewish musicians and as a central factor of social life, as seen in the Klezmer tradition. During the Holocaust, however, the violin assumed an extraordinary role within the Jewish community. *Violins of Hope Fort Wayne* will tell stories from that time. It is hoped that these strings of the Holocaust will leave participants with a sense of purpose, strength, and optimism for the future.

For more information, contact Douglas Dennis at (260) 481-0779, ddennis@fwphil.org, or info@violinsofhopefw.org.

Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne

The mission of the Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne is to support the wellbeing and continuity of the Jewish people in greater Fort Wayne, in Israel, and throughout the world. The Federation was organized in 1921 as a welfare and relief organization to coordinate work and communal fund raising for the entire Jewish community. In subsequent years the Federation developed into a multi-faceted organization serving young and old in the areas of social services, education and cultural programs, leadership development, community relations, and fund raising. The Jewish Federation of Fort Wayne is considered a community leader in the efforts to reduce and eliminate prejudice. For additional information, call 260-456-0400 or log on to jewishfortwayne.org.

Fort Wayne Philharmonic

Now in its 2018-19 75th Anniversary Season, the Fort Wayne Philharmonic's mission is to inspire and foster a lifelong love of symphonic music through performance and education. Music Director Andrew Constantine leads the Fort Wayne Philharmonic. All programming is made possible by the support of community individuals, businesses, corporations and foundations. The Philharmonic is a member of the League of American Orchestras and a funded member of Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne, the Indiana Arts Commission, and National Endowment for the Arts. For additional information, call 260.481.0777 or log on to the website at fwphil.org.