

Oswaldo Golijov

# Yiddishbuk

*Inscriptions for String Quartet*

(full score)

YITALIANNA MUSIC PUBLISHING

*Yiddishbbuk* was written for the St. Lawrence String Quartet:

Geoffrey Nuttall, Barry Shiffman, violins,  
Lesley Robertson, viola, Marina Hoover, cello

Commissioned jointly by the Tanglewood Music Center  
and the Fromm Music Foundation.

Winner of the “Paul Fromm Award.”

Premiered by the St. Lawrence String Quartet at  
the Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music,  
July 27, 1992

### **Program Note**

“A broken song played on a shattered cymbalon.” Thus, writes Kafka, begins *Yiddishbbuk*, a collection of apocryphal psalms, which he read while living in Prague’s street of the alchemists. The only remnants of the collection are a few verses interspersed among the entries of his notebooks, and the last lines are also quoted in a letter to Milena: “No one sings as purely as those who are in the deepest hell. Theirs is the song which we confused with that of the angels.” Written in Hebrew characters and surrounded with musical notation, marks similar to those of the genuine texts, the psalms’ only other reference to their music is: “In the mode of the Babylonian Lamentations.” Based on these vestiges, these inscriptions for string quartet are an attempt to reconstruct that music.

The movements of the piece bear the initials of persons commemorated in the work. The first movement commemorates three children interned by the Nazis at the Terezin: Doris Weiserova (1932–1944), Frantisek Bass (1930–1944), and Tomas Kauders (1934–1943). Their poems and drawings appear in the book “...I never saw another butterfly...”, published by the US Holocaust Museum. The second movement bears the initials of the writer Isaac Bashevis Singer (1904–1991), and the last movement the initials of Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990).

### **Performance Notes:**

#### **Movement IA:**

This movement represents a howl shattered into thirteen fragments. Each fragment is indicated by a small circled number and the “leader” is printed above the violin staff in bold type. Dashed barlines indicate a connection between the fragments; solid barlines indicate the next fragment should begin “clean” without any note(s) holding over from the previous section. A double barline (e.g., no. 10) indicates a slight pause.

#### **Movement IB:**

This movement represents 12 strokes on a bell made of ashes. The length of each stroke should be felt, rather than counted.

It is very important that there is no pause between movements 1B and 1C.



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D.W. 1932–1944

1A

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(\* 1960)

♩ = ca 250

Vn. I

① *ppp* *ff*

② III sul tasto, non vib. → sul pont. Vc.

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

*ppp* *ff* *f* *fff* *sfz* *sfz*

sul pont.

col legno batt., with irregular accents

do not synchronize with Va.

col legno batt., with irregular accents

do not synchronize with Vn. II

gliss. V gliss. V

Vn. I

Vn. II

③ *fff* *sfz* *sfz* *f*

④ *fff* *sfz*

*sim.* *fff* *IV* gliss. gliss. gliss. gliss. *sfz*

*sim.* *f*

col legno batt., with irregular accents

do not synchronize with Va. or Vc.

col legno batt., with irregular accents

do not synchronize with Vn. I or Va.

gliss. V+



# 1B

o = ca 20-30 appena pressando

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥

*ppp* *p* *pp* *ppp*

*ppp* *p* *pp* *pp*

*ppp* *p* *pp*

*ppp* *pp* *ppp*

(pressando) Tempo I

⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩ ⑪ ⑫

*pp* *ppp* *mf* *ppp* *pp*

*pp* *ppp* *mf* *ppp* *pp* *ppp*

*pp* *ppp* *mf* *ppp* *ppp* *pp*

*pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *ppp*

attacca