Research into the music of the concentration camps aspires to translate an immense tragedy into the greatest opportunity humanity currently possesses to advance art, music, and creative thinking, and to examine the deepest and most unfathomable responses of the human intellect.

Music created in captivity is the product of the most cosmopolitan kinds of creativity; recovering this music is tantamount to rebuilding schools and hospitals destroyed by the war, restoring educational processes that were deemed irrevocably compromised by the war and deportations.

The music that flourished in camps is inestimable in terms of both its quantity and value, and the 8,000 scores that have been recovered so far may turn out to be but a small part of the output of the 20-year period from the first Lager to the last Gulag.

It is necessary not only to recover but also to restore this musical legacy, so that it may be fully returned to humanity and thus regain its deserved place in music history.

There is a force that compels musicians to play when confronted by the abyss of death, like the musicians on the Titanic who continued to play as the Transatlantic liner was sinking; as Europe was sinking, musicians composed and played because they felt a duty to preserve civilization.

We have restored dignity to these musicians and their music written in notebooks, on toilet paper, jute bags, postcards, or learned by heart as people were still on the trains; it was not possible to save the lives of many deported musicians, but we have saved their music, which is tantamount to having saved their life, in the universal, meta-historical, and metaphysical meaning of the word. What JNF UK has enabled me to do with these young people in the last two years is one of the most important steps in such research.

As of now, this music symbolically belongs to the new generations and, not least, it is returning to Eretz Israel - that is, it is returning home.

May this be the beginning of an important, long, and shared musical and existential path.

Francesco Lotoro