



**WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE ©**

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## **WATTOL NEWSLETTER**

**OCTOBER 2021**

**Jackie Gmach**, Founder and Creative Director

**Clint Burkett**, Founding Team Member

**Hollie Kahn**, Founding Team Member

**Richard Kahn**, Founding Team Member

**Alan Markowitz**, Founding Team Member

### **Contents:**

**1. ABOUT US**

- *Our Founder Jackie Gmach and the creation of WTL*
- *About our **WATTOL** Creative Production Team*

**2. Now Available: **WATTOL** Documentary "CARRY ON"**

**3. Previous Virtual Events**

- *SEARCHING FOR THE LOST MUSIC*
- *WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE: CARRY ON" PREVIEW SCREENING*
- *JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH COMPOSERS OF THE HOLOCAUST*
- *TRANSCENDING REALITY*
- *THE DANCES OF THE HOLOCAUST*

**4. Future Events**

- *SONGS OF THE GHETTOS (coming soon)*
- *UNESCO HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY - January 27, 2022*
- *INAUGURALHOLOCAUST SURVIVOR DAY - June 26, 2022*

**5. SPECIAL THANKS**

## 1. ABOUT US

### OUR FOUNDER JACKIE GMACH - AND THE CREATION OF **WATTOL**

Our founder is Jackie Gmach. Jackie has dedicated her life to the furtherance of Jewish culture. Born in Tunisia, and until the age of 14, she was learning-challenged, unable to read or write with her only desire to be a tomboy. A teacher changed her life by saying: "If you want, YOU CAN," and these words became the inspiration of her life, as she opened doors to the world of knowledge while sharing this compassion with others.

Jackie is one of the Project Directors for the USC Shoah Foundation Institute, and she previously curated several Jewish events in San Diego, including the renowned San Diego Jewish Book Fair. Jackie has authored several books, including "From Bomboloni to Bagel: A Story of Two Worlds" and the upcoming novel, "The Antiphony of Love: The Call of The Scroll."

The concept of We are the Tree of Life emerged from her response to the massacre at the Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue on October 27, 2018. She was horrified as she read about Rose Malingier, the oldest, 97-year-old victim of this tragedy. She then realized; WE are ALL Rose Malingier!

Jackie saw a strong connection between the synagogue massacre and the Holocaust realizing that both tragedies contain both, the stain of virulent antisemitism, along with tremendous moral courage and perseverance of the victims. In the concentration camps and ghettos, many victims survived by producing remarkable works of art, music, literature, and dance with stories that needed her help, to be told to the world.

Jackie's vision for the organization, "WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE®," is to support this mission and demonstrate the important lessons of moral courage and perseverance, and to emphasize the role in which cultural expression nurtures respect, acceptance, and peace.

### - ABOUT THE **WATTOL** ORGANIZATION

WELCOME TO WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE®! We are the Tree of Life (WTL) is dedicated to education on the Holocaust through music and the performing arts. The mission of WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE®,

encouraged by the "WE ARE," is to support Holocaust education in a distinctly new way – using the Arts.



This goal is to both, instruct students, and inspire teachers harnessing the educational properties of the in-house created films with the message of PEACE, UNITY, and LOVE that includes life stories and lessons from people who never gave up hope, under the most trying of circumstances.

Showcase the astonishing creativity of Shoah composers, artists, and writers, despite the brutality and inhumane conditions under which they produced their work.

The goals of WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE® (**WATTOL**) are:

- Give voice to those silenced, Shoah artists, enabling them to be heard today.
- Honor our Holocaust survivors through this unique programming.
- Offer this project as a model for others to adapt and emulate.
- Transmit the lessons of the Shoah from the generations who still live in its shadow, to future generations.

Through the inspiration of the arts and culture created during the Holocaust, we aspire to teach the LESSONS OF MORAL COURAGE to further the goals of RESPECT, ACCEPTANCE and PEACE within and across global communities, as a world of unity and LOVE. *This vision seeks to assist in building a world in which all people flourish through the respect and value of every individual and group.*

## - ABOUT OUR CREATIVE PRODUCTION TEAM

**WATTOL** is grateful to have a team with world-class production experience to support its high-quality creations and learning tools:

- **Clint Burkett**, Producer. As a multi-award-winning documentary filmmaker, Clint started as a production assistant and music supervisor in Hollywood, and at 18, working on psychic phenomena documentaries. Now, with over 30 years working in television and as a documentary filmmaker, video producer and editor, Clint enjoys telling stories that involve music, art, and history. He spent ten years editing local TV News and nine years editing magazine format shows. Some of his most recent work includes a short documentary about a Dutch Resistance fighter in WWII, the life story of singer-songwriter, Steve White, and a short documentary about Hawaiians from Maui healing the town of Parkland Florida. . He’s also worked for Soka University on concert documentaries with many Jazz legends, in an effort to preserve Jazz music. His work has been seen locally and internationally.

- **Alan G. Markowitz**, IMAX® Filmmaker/VFX Producer. As an award-winning industry veteran, with over 40 years of film production experience, Alan specializes in “Giant-Screen” documentaries. His work can be seen in more than 200 film productions exhibited on IMAX® screens, destination cinemas, theme parks, and in special venues around the world. With a long list of successful IMAX feature film credits, Alan has set the bar for achieving & maintaining the “Gold-Standard” caliber of filmmaking that is essential for the giant-screen experience. Alan is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Art & Sciences Tech-History Sub-Committee, a charter member of the Giant Screen Cinema Association (GSCA), and Charter Member of the Visual Effects Society, (VES)



Clint\_Burkett



Alan Markowitz

2. NOW AVAILABLE: **WATTOL** Documentary, “CARRY ON”

# PLEASE WATCH IT AND SHARE IT



To preview the CARRY ON feature and trailer, click the links below:

## Documentary Feature

<https://vimeo.com/490944805/2535bb2934>

## Documentary Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/503705234/8dc1a0ee31>



This new **WATTOL** documentary, "CARRY ON," offers compelling testimony, and highlights captivating works of literature, visual arts, music, and dance by people who were confined in concentration camps and ghettos during the Nazi period, yet whose creative spirit exemplifies the power of courage, resistance, and resilience under the most horrific conditions.

The film also features present-day performers and institutional leaders who are carrying on the legacy of those who, although tragically succumbed to the Holocaust, left behind a treasure-trove of cultural production, which continues to inspire and uplift the human spirit.



The featured cast includes:

- Stephen D. Smith, Executive Director of the USC Shoah Foundation
- Lauren Bairnsfather, Director, The Holocaust Center, Pittsburg
- Peter Yarrow, Singer, Songwriter Activist
- Francesco Lotoro, Istituto di Letteratura Musicale Concentrazionara
- Eileen Wingard, Violinist, San Diego Symphony
- Monique Kunewalder, Pianist
- Aimee Ginsburg Bikel, Author, Activist

- Vince Brook, UCLA Professor, Author
- Tammuz Dubnov, Dance and Choreographer, ZUZOR
- Pepe Romero, World Renowned Guitarist
- Lynn Kebow, Artist, Activist
- Jacqueline S. Gmach, Creative Director
- Clint Burkett, Documentary Producer
- Susie Meltzer, Community Leader
- Yael Gmach, Singer and Composer

**After you have watched it, please:**

**Discover and incorporate your own mission/vision into this innovative project into your curriculum.**

**Consider sharing this initiative with your colleagues**

## 2021 WATTOL VIRTUAL EVENTS

The following virtual events were presented by WTL in 2021:

### April 30 “WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE: CARRY ON” PREVIEW SCREENING

The event showcases art created during the Holocaust and features Dr. Edith Eva Eger along with her life story as a dancer. Following her segment, this event includes a dialogue between the Director of the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh Lauren Bairnsfather, the Executive Director of the USC Shoah Foundation Institute Dr. Stephen Smith, and Dr. Eger. They discuss the history of the performing arts during World War II, as well as the missions of their institutions and the efforts being made today to educate the masses about the Holocaust.



Viewing Link: <https://youtu.be/bRf98-7Ak4s>

### May 27 SEARCHING FOR THE LOST MUSIC

With an opening message from Finci-Viterbi Executive Director Stephen Smith, musicologist Francesco Lotoro, and actor & playwright, Ali Viterbi, discuss Jewish composers of World War II. Their conversation will focus on L’dor V’dor and address the question: How do we transmit this knowledge to future generations?



Access to the video of this event is available upon request



**JUNE 1**

**JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH**

**COMPOSERS OF THE HOLOCAUST**

Nuvi Mehta and Kate Hatmaker draw upon their roles as musicologist and musicians in a conversation and presentation of musical scores of Jewish and Non-Jewish composers of the Holocaust.

Viewing Link: [https://youtu.be/xt6JNJM\\_To8](https://youtu.be/xt6JNJM_To8)



**JUNE 2**

**TRANSCENDING REALITY**

Jacqueline Gmach and Guri Stark lead a virtual exhibit on the artistic works of Helga Weissova and Samuel Bak. The presentation included “Notre Combat,” a collective workshop project by Linda Ellia, with the message of universal peace.

Viewing Link: <https://youtu.be/RhkJogFqU8w>



**JUNE 23**

**THE DANCES OF THE HOLOCAUST**

**– THE ART OF SILENCE**

Israeli American dancer, Tammuz Dubnov, founder and CEO of ZUZOR, performs choreographed dances from the Holocaust. Dubnov will explain his choreography between pieces, which include a sequence portraying the story of Marcel Marceau, and be in discussion with Julliard pianist Father Timothy Nolt.

Viewing Link: <https://youtu.be/B6albpVu5mg>



### **3. FUTURE EVENTS**

#### **a. Date to be announced – Fall 2021 – MUSIC OF WW2 GHETTOS**

SONGS OF THE GHETTOS will be performed in a concert. The LA Jewish Symphony, The Jewish Community Chorale, Conductor Noreen green, and pianist Daniel Vnukowski, will perform a selection of Songs expressing through lyrics and melodies the life of those who were in Ghettos and Concentration Camps. This concert is currently scheduled to be performed in Los Angeles, but efforts now are being made to also have it in San Diego and in Palm Springs. The Los Angeles Jewish Symphony is dedicated to the performance and preservation of orchestral works of distinction, which explore Jewish culture, heritage.

#### **b. JANUARY 27, 2022 - UNESCO HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY**

WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE® will be joining The UNESCO Holocaust Day of Remembrance, as partners with USC SFI and Francesco Lotoro’s Instituto di Letteratura Musicale Concentrazionara, Holocaust Music & Found and The Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh. And an

honor to be a part of this project, which will debut the San Diego Community-wide on this global project achieving the goals of partnership with the USC SFI for National Events on Music.

Over the last year, WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE is honored to have worked diligently with its partners to support the search for Lost Music composed in Concentration camps. Stephen D. Smith, Viterbi Endowed Executive Director of the USC Shoah Foundation, together with Francesco Lotoro who has committed to share their network along with their collective archives that continually expands music works written between 1933 and 1945.

More details will be released as we get closer to the event.

#### **a. JUNE 26, 2022 - INAUGURAL HOLOCAUST DAY**

WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE<sup>®</sup> is thrilled to announce the Inaugural Holocaust Day event, with Michael Berenbaum, Director of the Sigi Ziering Institute at American Jewish University, and Jonathan Ornstein, JCC Krakow Executive Director, who published an op-ed in The Jerusalem Post / Jpost.com calling for the creation of Holocaust Survivor Day. In their words, “Holocaust survivors deserve a day of joy, a day of celebration. Survivors represent the best in all of us, the best of the human spirit. They are our treasure and our light, and we must shine that light into every dark corner of our world.”

We call on the world to join us, and to celebrate the inaugural Holocaust Survivor Day on June 26th. More details will be released as we get closer to the event.

#### **4. SPECIAL THANKS TO:**

- LEICHTAG FOUNDATION
- FJCC ARTS & IDEAS
- DR. EDITH EVA EGER
- USC SHOAH FOUNDATION
- HOLOCAUST CENTER OF PITTSBURG
- ISTITUTO DI LETTERATURA MUSICALE CONCENTRAZIONARA
- PETER YARROW
- ADL SAN DIEGO
- JEWISH FEDERATION OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY
- THE DEFIANT REQUIEM
- ART OF ÉLAN
- ZUZOR
- SEACREST VILLAGE
- THE BUTTERFLY PROJECT
- UCSD HOLOCAUST LIVING HISTORY WORKSHOP Int
- MARCH OF THE LIVING
- HILLEL SAN DIEGO
- MOSCOW JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL
- MURRAY GALINSON SAN DIEGO-ISRAEL INITIATIVE (MGSDII)
- SAN DIEGO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
- THE USD HILLEL TOGETHER WITH THE USD DEPARTMENTS OF THEOLOGY, RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND THE HUMANITIES CENTER
- A San Diego Community-wide Initiative

#### **FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION A STORY FROM MY CHILDHOOD**

**A story from my childhood** helps illuminate my passionate commitment to the WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE<sup>®</sup> project: Until the age of 14, I remained a learning-challenged child, unable to read or write, or maybe even think! My only desire was to be a tomboy. Then a teacher addressed me saying, “Jacqueline, *Si tu veux, tu peux.*” If you want, you can. These wise words from my teacher long ago became the leitmotif of my life, opening doors to a world of knowledge and compassion for others. They also eventually became the basis for WE ARE THE TREE OF LIFE<sup>®</sup>, in expanded form: *Si nous voulons, nous pouvons.* **If WE want, WE can!**



## INSPIRATIONAL LOGO

After the massacre of The Tree of Life Synagogue of Pittsburgh, I was horrified. And immediately, I decided to educate my Granddaughter Yvette Ballantyne, then 9 years old, about the Holocaust.

After several phone conversations, Yvette presented me with THE TREE.

- "Grandma, is this what you are talking about?"
- "It's so beautiful."
- "Mémé, do you see the butterflies, and the musical notes? You know, Mémé, the roots are very dark because they are very strong. If you take care of a tree, it will be fine."
- "Oh, yes, I do understand. And what are all the circles, are they the leaves?"
- "Grandma, of course they are the leaves. That is what a tree has on its branches. Doesn't it?"
- "Why are they circles?"
- "Look Grandma, sometimes, when I have a difficult time at school, I go home, and being with my mom, my brother, and my sister, I feel better. It is like a circle - You go around, and things are better."
- "Oh, I see!"
- "Isn't it what you are talking about? The circle is that bad thing and good things go around. It is like surviving."

