Josima Feldschuh’s musical life resides in a notebook that contains her neatly handwritten manuscripts of 17 piano miniatures, texts dating back to 1940 and composed during her imprisonment within the Warsaw Ghetto. The daughter of Revisionist Zionist leader Dr. Reuven Feldschuh (Ben-Shem) and Perla Feldschuh, Josima was also a cousin to writer Rachel Auerbach (Rokhl Oyerbakh), founding Director of Yad Vashem’s Department for the Collection of Witness Testimony and a surviving member of Emanuel Ringelblum’s *Oneg Shabbat*. Josima’s musical performances during this catastrophic time earned her the title, “Prodigy of the Ghetto.”

My study of Josima Feldschuh’s music, life, context, and musical experiences during the Shoah appears to be the first such inquiry and re-introduces Josima’s work and life to the world’s attention. Importantly, Josima’s narrative and music connect profoundly with CDIME’s conference theme, #1: “inclusion and exclusion in music education (gender, religion, spirituality, class, ethnicity, nationality).” As a young Jewish girl trapped within the Warsaw Ghetto who perished due to Nazi state-sanctioned policies of terror and murder, Josima’s life, creativity, and musical experiences exemplify inclusion and exclusion in music education as a direct result of institutionalized antisemitism. In this paper, I will share emergent findings from my historical analysis and interpretation of Josima Feldschuh’s music and the socio-historical-political context that framed her all-too-brief life. These findings indicate that music creativity and the musical experience can exist in extreme traumatic contexts, that spaces were – and can be – carved out for children’s music-making. However, the findings also reveal
that certain conditions must be present in order for the musical experience to exist: music teachers and models, access to music-making materials, and adequate nutrition. The data from which these findings emerge include, among others, Josima’s music notebook that resides in Rachel Auerbach’s own files in the Yad Vashem archives, conversations with Josima’s family, and evidence obtained from key Polish sources that have been recently translated into English.

My inquiry demonstrates that Josima Feldschuh’s life illuminates the human cost exacted by the Shoah and makes manifest what subsequent generations – we – have lost. Yet from the musical life of this child, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of the rich, musical lives that were led by those who are lost to us. The re-discovered musical voice of Josima Feldschuh encourages our becoming attuned to the memories of the Silenced and the contemporary struggles of those whom we construct as Other.