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St. Cloud group to perform Holocaust piece at Nazi site

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ST. CLOUD, MINN. - A delegation of college students and faculty from the St. Cloud area will perform a Holocaust oratorio at a former Nazi concentration camp this summer.

The trip to Natzweiler, France, which is being led by St. Cloud State University Prof. Joseph Edelheit, comes as the campus deals with a series of incidents in which swastikas have appeared.

"Here we are, a campus that is unfairly noted for swastikas. And we're taking a choir and a symphony orchestra and we're going to a concentration camp," Edelheit said. "What does that say? Does that say this campus is insensitive, that somehow we're disconnected to the issues of that sign, that symbol? No. I think we're connected at a cosmic level."

Edelheit, a rabbi, said hearing musicians sing and play instruments at the concentration camp will be a special moment. "I will feel that I'm in a sacred place," he said.

Students and faculty from St. John's University and the College of St. Benedict will join St. Cloud State in performing "To Be Certain of the Dawn." The oratorio was composed by Stephen Paulus with a libretto from poet Michael Dennis Browne. It was commissioned by the Rev. Michael O'Connell, rector of the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis, as a gift to the Jewish people, Edelheit said.

The oratorio will be performed April 25 in Ritsche Auditorium at St. Cloud State University before the musicians travel to Europe.

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