

די
פיאפיריאסן
הענדלער



Di Papyrosn-Hendler

The Cigarette Vendors

A Play in Yiddish

Brandeis Yiddish Theater

December 16 - 20, 1970

Di Papyrosn-Hendler

די פאפיראסן-הענדלער

Children:

Yisrolik/Bolush--the youngest _____ אַברהם אַגוש
Yosl/Kulas _____ שׂרה בערגער
Chanele/Halinka--Yosl's sister _____ רבקה לע ערליך
Wladek--Polish cigarette vendor _____ אַברהם חבֿר
Berl/Bitshek--the oldest _____ יהושע גוטאָף

Adults:

Yosl's mother _____ לעסלי מלמד
Soldier/Blackmailer _____ אַברהם חבֿר
Babtshe--old Polish woman _____ ברכה וויינגראָד
Crazy Daughter _____ שושנה ערליך
Narrator--member of Jewish underground _____ היים השכל

Dancers--German soldiers and citizens of Warsaw: איטשע האָפּמאַן, נעמי וויינגראָד, ביילע זיסאָוו, לעסלי מלמד.

Polish Children: דינה וויינגראָד, אסתר ערליך, יהושע ערליך



Production Staff _____ אריפֿפֿירונג-פּערסאָנאַל

Director/Choreographer _____ דינה ק. ראָסקעס
Stage Manager _____ טובֿה דאָבקיין
Technical Director/Designer _____ ראובֿן האָפּמאַן
Light Designer _____ ראובֿן טשערני
Artist _____ צבורה שרייבער
Technical Crew _____, קלייטאָן אָסטין, דוד גוטמאַן, היים סטאַניסלאָווסקי, מנחם סטאַניסלאָווסקי, פיטער ריינער.

Sponsors: Brandeis Hillel, Jewish Student Projects of Boston, Farband Labor Zionist chapter of Boston, Mr. Jacob Glatstein, Mr. Joshua Rothenberg.

אַ ספּעציעלן דאַנק: דעם בראַנדייס טעאַטער-אַפּטיילונג, דאָגלאַס מאַדאָקס, אדי שומסקער, הרבֿ אַלבערט אַקסעלראָד, שמעון גאָלדמאַן, פֿינטש גראַווירערס, שמואל עפשטיין (עפי) און ראַלף נאָרמאַן.

Synopsis

Act I: Warsaw Ghetto and the "Aryan" side, 1942. The ghetto has been in existence for two years.

Scene One: Street scene in the Warsaw Ghetto. Yisrolik, recently orphaned, earns his living by singing in the streets of the ghetto.

Scene Two: A Jewish home in the ghetto. Yosl, his sister and mother have not eaten in several days. He asks his mother's permission to sneak out of the ghetto in order to buy bread on the "Aryan" side. (Jews found there would be arrested and killed.) In the streets hunger is taking its toll. Yosl asks again and once more his mother refuses. The situation in the ghetto worsens. Finally, Yosl convinces his mother to give him money for food.

Scene Three: Yosl sneaks into the ranks of Jewish workers leaving the ghetto to work on the other side. Once on the "Aryan" side, he buys two loafs of bread, one of which he manages to sell to a Jewish worker. He returns home with one loaf and the same amount of money his mother gave him.

Scene Four: Typhus epidemic in the ghetto. Yosl and his mother are very sick. Chanele, too, is sick, but she knows that they must have food. She sneaks out of the house and crawls through a hole in the ghetto wall. While she scrounges for food on the "Aryan" side, she meets Babshe who invites her in. Inside she is welcomed by Babshe's crazy daughter. Chanele eats her first real meal in many months and goes to sleep in Babshe's attic right afterwards. Meanwhile, Policemen in the ghetto start rounding up Jews by force and breaking into houses, among them--Yosl's house. They drag his mother away but Yosl manages to escape. In the morning, Chanele leaves Babshe's house and returns to the ghetto, only to find her house empty, her mother and brother gone.

Act II: The "Aryan" side of Warsaw. Autumn 1943. The uprising has taken place. The ghetto no longer exists.

Scene One: Plaza of the Three Crosses in the centre of Warsaw. At the centre there is a restaurant for German soldiers. Yisrolik is still singing as he did in the ghetto, but changes his song to keep up with the times. A soldier notices the boy and gives him a harmonica. As Yisrolik runs off, he bumps into Chanele whom he recognizes from the ghetto. The children join forces; Yisrolik lets Chanele be in his "act" and in return, she takes him to Babshe's.

Scene Two: "R.G.O."--a communal kitchen serving food to poor people in Warsaw. Wladek holds Yosl by the coat and calls him a Jew, demanding his money. Bitshek appears in the nick of time and beats up Wladek who then runs away. Yosl is afraid of Bitshek, thinking he is Polish. The older boy reveals his Jewish identity to Yosl and the two of them decide to join forces.

Scene Three: Plaza of the Three Crosses. Soldiers march through the Plaza. Bitshek and Yosl appear and watch Wladek at work, hawking his cigarettes. With Bitshek's backing, Yosl starts selling cigarettes as well, and sells them all to one customer. Encouraged by his success, Yosl goes off to buy more. Meanwhile Bitshek constructs a vendor's box for Yosl to use. The boys learn the trade very quickly.

Scene Four: Plaza of the Three Crosses. Bitshek and Yosl are busy selling their wares when Yisrolik comes singing his song. The boys recognize the song and approach him as he tries to run away. Chanele enters next and is reunited miraculously with her brother. She suggests the four of them go to live with Babshe.

Intermission

Act III: The "Aryan" side. Winter, 1943.

Scene One: "R.G.O." communal kitchen. The Narrator is seated inside eating. Bitshek enters and catches the Narrator's eye. They recognize each other. When the Narrator gets up to leave, Bitshek follows and introduces himself carefully. The Narrator, though eager to befriend the boy, must keep his work for the Jewish underground a secret. Bitshek tells him about the band of vendors and they arrange to meet the next day at the Plaza.

Scene Two: Plaza of the Three Crosses. All the children are busy selling their wares. The Narrator arrives and observes them at work. Later he manages to win their confidence and they arrange another meeting.

Scene Three: Babtshe's house. Babtshe discovers that the children are Jewish and insists that they leave at once. They plead with her and finally bribe her with money. They go to sleep in the attic, but only after the old woman forces them to pay her what they promised--five zlotys (dollars) per person.

Scene Four: Plaza of the Three Crosses. Wladek catches Kulas again and steals all his cigarettes, threatening to reveal his Jewishness if he tries to fight back. Bitshek tries to deal with the Polish boy as before, but Wladek calls the Police and the Jewish children run away.

Scene Five: Babtshe's house. Everyone but Kulas is asleep in the attic. Two well-dressed Polish blackmailers bang on the door, pretending to be soldiers. Babtshe lets them in. They accuse her of hiding Jews. When she denies the charge they search her house. The children hide and the blackmailers do not find them. The men leave, threatening to return. Once outside, they catch Kulas coming home. They try to blackmail him into betraying Jews. Kulas makes a run for it and the men chase after him. Kulas manages to escape and returns to Babtshe's. The children decide to stay through the night and look for a new hiding place the next day.

Scene Six: "R.G.O." communal kitchen. Narrator is seated inside. The children come running to tell him of the latest developments. They insist on getting false documents from him. The Narrator explains how hard this is and gives them 500 zlotys to tide them over for a while. Before they leave, the Narrator reminds them that it is the fourth night of Channukah. All the children except Bitshek return to Babtshe's house. Only the 500 zlotys convince her to let them in--for one more night. The children go up to the attic. Bitshek arrives with potatoes and candles for a home-made Channukah menorah. Bolush sings them a Channukah song which each child acts out. Finally, each of them lights a candle, not only in honor of the holiday, but also in memory of their parents and family who were killed in the war.

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S O V I E T J E W R Y

Eleven professional Yiddish State Theaters existed in the Soviet Union in the 1930's. During the Nazi occupation all but the Moscow Theater and Theater School were destroyed. In 1948 they, too, were closed--the director Shlomo Michoels murdered by the Secret Police. At present every Soviet nationality boasts a State supported theater--except the Jews. Wandering troupes, non-supported, are all that remain. We dedicate our play to the struggle of the Soviet Jews. A collection desk has been set up in the Theater lobby. Proceeds will be forwarded to the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry.