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Dramatic Publishing

ANGEL IN THE NIGHT

A Play
by
JOANNA HALPERT KRAUS

Based on a true story



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

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JOANNA HALPERT KRAUS

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(ANGEL IN THE NIGHT)

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National-Louis University, Evanston, Ill., world premiere production.
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This play is a combination of fact and fiction.
It was inspired by the true story of
Marysia Pawlina Szul
a young Polish-Catholic woman, who saved
the lives of four Jewish people
during the Holocaust.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ANGEL IN THE NIGHT premiered at the Edward B. Weinstein Center for the Performing Arts, National-Louis University, Evanston, Ill., in 1991. The production was produced by The Honor of Humanity Project and was directed by René Alexander Roy. It included the following artists:

Domicela MARY GIN HARRINGTON
Marysia Pawlina TAMMIE GOLDMAN
Golda Schachter JENNIFER MARRIOTT
Freidza MANDY RIEFF*, LARISSA NIKOLA-LISA*
Mundek MARK ABYRAND-MEISTER
Hanka LIZA PELOW
Henryk/Otto/Guard R. REESE ANDERSON
Tadeusz CHRISTOPHER PTACK
Mania CELESTE BAZÁN
Ernst DON CORNELIUS II
Bruno DAVID KNEZZ
Luther/Stanislaus CLARK RILEY

Understudy for Tammie Goldman LIZA PELOW
Understudy for Mary Gin Harrington AMY MUEHLEIP
Understudy for Mark Abyrand-Meister BEN ROY

***Alternating performances**

Scenic and Lighting Design KEVIN D. WALL
Costume Design KATHERINE SCHIMMELPFENNIG
Musical Direction FRED KOCH
Original Music Sound Track . . FRED KOCH, ELLIOT DELMAN,
and RENÉ ROY
Vocal Music THE LIRA SINGERS
Fight Choreography CHARLES COYL
Sound Effects JON ROBERT COBB

AUTHOR'S NOTE

At the edge of the city of Jerusalem in Israel there is a center for research on the Nazi Holocaust and a memorial to the lives lost. Yad Vashem was established in 1953.

Beyond its somber walls is a tree-lined avenue commemorating the bravery of those who helped to save others. They were called Righteous Gentiles. Among them were leaders of nations and menial laborers. Each Righteous Gentile had to be recommended by survivors and proof presented. A tree was then planted to honor the individual and a medal presented with the following inscription, "Whoever saves a single soul, it is as if he had saved the whole world."

Outside of Chicago there is a similar Avenue of the Righteous Park located in Evanston, Illinois. It was dedicated in 1987.

In both parks a tree was planted in Marysia Pawlina Szul's honor.

ANGEL IN THE NIGHT

A Drama in Two Acts

For 4 men, 4 women, 1 girl, minimum with doubling
(may be expanded to 9 men, 7 women and 1 girl)

CHARACTERS

MANIA (in the present)	mid-60s
MARYSIA PAWLINA (in the present)	late 60s
FREIDZA (in the present)	late 50s
MARYSIA PAWLINA (in the past)	a young Polish woman, 18
DOMICELA	her mother, 48
GOLDA	a Jewish fugitive, 27
FREIDZA (in the past)	her daughter, 8
MUNDEK	her baby son
HANKA	her former Polish neighbor
HENRYK	her husband
TADEUSZ	a Polish neighbor, 22
MANIA (in the past)	a Jewish fugitive, 14
BRUNO	a German soldier, 37
ERNST	a German captain, 23
OTTO	a German officer
LUTHER	a German soldier
KURT	a German prison guard
WALDO	a German prison guard
STANISLAUS	a Polish guard in a German prison, 50s

TIME

The Epilogue and Prologue occur in the present.

The Play takes place during World War II, 1942-1944.

PLACE

The Epilogue and Prologue occur in a Chicago suburb.

The action occurs in Southeast Poland near the city of Zoborow.

PROLOGUE

SCENE: *Mania's living room. An affluent Chicago suburb. The present. The tea table is set with a fresh linen cloth, silver tea service, tall glasses in metal holders and a banquet of Polish pastries.*

AT RISE: *MANIA is adjusting her centerpiece of fresh flowers. PAWLINA appears in the interior doorway.*

PAWLINA *(from the doorway)*. Stop fussing!

MANIA *(without turning)*. But I haven't seen her in years. She's... so... successful.

PAWLINA *(enters room and parades in her new outfit)*. How do you like it?

MANIA *(turns, inspects and impulsively hugs her)*. Perfect! Pawlina, the blouse is perfect on you. It goes with your suit. It goes with your eyes—

PAWLINA *(breaks in laughing)*. You picked it out. But, Mania, are you sure this is what they wear to plant a tree?

MANIA. You don't have to plant it. You just have to stand there. Someone else will do the digging. You're our celebrity, remember?

PAWLINA. I'd rather do the digging. *(They look at each other. SOUND: Doorbell. MANIA crosses, glances in the mirror and stops to fix her hair.)* Answer the door!

MANIA. She's here. Oh, I wish I hadn't gained so much weight. *(SOUND: Doorbell again.)*

PAWLINA. Go! *(MANIA exits to open the front door. PAWLINA crosses to the table. In Polish:)* Ummmmm. *Herbat-*

niki!¹ (*PAWLINA takes a tiny pastry from the pyramid.*)

Bezy!² (*She swallows it appreciatively and selects another.*)

Piernik Wyborny!³ (*She savors the taste of the teacake.*)

MANIA'S VOICE (*offstage*). Freidza!

FREIDZA'S VOICE (*offstage*). Mania!

BOTH VOICES (*offstage*). You look WONDERFUL!

(*FREIDZA and MANIA enter. PAWLINA and FREIDZA look at one another, then embrace.*)

FREIDZA. Panna Pawlina.

PAWLINA. Little Freidza. (*They sit.*)

MANIA. Did you have trouble finding the house?

FREIDZA. No. I had a long-distance conference call. A buyer from Tokyo. It's hard with the time difference.

MANIA. Sure.

FREIDZA (*looks at tea table, astonished*). Mania, who's coming?

MANIA. I want there should be enough. In my house there should be enough.

FREIDZA. If the whole city of Chicago comes, you've got enough. What'd you do, buy out the Polish bakery?

MANIA. I made them! (*Rising.*) Come. It's a long drive.

FREIDZA. Relax. They can't dedicate the park without the star.

PAWLINA. Star! I'm not a star. Mania, why such fancy cakes? We only had those at Christmas—or christenings.

MANIA. We wouldn't be here without you. There's no name for what you did.

FREIDZA. There's a name (*Takes newspaper from briefcase.*) Right here on the front page. "Righteous Gentile."

¹ Tea cakes.

² Similar to a meringue.

³ Similar to a fruitcake.

PAWLINA. Freidza, Mania. What does that mean? I only did what was right.

FREIDZA. It means most people didn't.

PAWLINA. You know the proverb. It was my mother's favorite.
(*In Polish.*) *Przyjaciół w domu jest bóg w domu.* A guest in the home is God in the home.

FREIDZA (*slowly*). We weren't exactly guests. And your mother didn't want us. (*Rises.*) No one wanted us. No one in the whole country wanted us.

MANIA. Freidza, it's late. We really should go.

FREIDZA. I remember running through the hayfields trying to hide. It was autumn.

PAWLINA. It was spring, Freidza.

FREIDZA. No. Fall. Harvest time. The hayfields were taller than I was.

PAWLINA. What do you know? You were eight years old.

(*LIGHTING: fades on women as they exit. SOUND: Polish folk music. OTHER ACTORS set up haystack and a suggestion of Domicela's house and barn. When the stage is set, a young FREIDZA dashes on anxiously looking around. It is May, 1942. FREIDZA tears off her white armband with the blue Star of David, flings it aside and darts into the haystack. SOUND: Rifle shots in the distance, bloodhounds howling.*)

ACT ONE

SCENE: *A field in rural southeast Poland. It is late afternoon, towards the end of May, 1942. At the edge of the field is a high mound of hay. SOUND: Distant church bells.*

AT RISE: *PAWLINA sings to herself, filling her apron with wildflowers (poppies, daisies). She crosses to put them in the water pail. Suddenly the haystack moves. PAWLINA stops in her tracks. She crosses herself. A pair of frightened eyes are now visible. Then a hand grabs PAWLINA's skirt. A desperate face follows.*

GOLDA has lost her husband, her home and all that they owned. She has fled from the ghetto with two small children. Her Polish has a Yiddish accent.

GOLDA (*softly*). Don't be frightened, Panna Pawlina.

PAWLINA (*looks closer*). Paniusia Schachterova!!!

GOLDA. Sh-h. We escaped.

PAWLINA. From the ghetto?

GOLDA (*nods*). Freidza's with me too. (*FREIDZA's scared face appears.*)

PAWLINA. Hello, Freidza. Is your husband with...

GOLDA. No. Murdered.

PAWLINA. Oh, my God!

GOLDA. We've been hiding for three days.

PAWLINA. You have to get away from here. It's not safe.

(FREIDZA's face disappears.)

GOLDA. Nowhere is safe, Panna Pawlina. I have to talk to you.

PAWLINA. It's too dangerous. Someone might see us.

GOLDA. Just keep picking flowers. *(PAWLINA bends down near the haystack and picks wildflowers.)* My baby's going to die if we don't get some water. He's only a few weeks old. Please, just some water.

PAWLINA *(demeanor changes)*. A baby. I didn't know. I didn't see him. *(She reaches down and touches the baby's head in the haystack.)* He's burning up!

GOLDA. Mundek's been like that all day.

PAWLINA *(sings softly)*. Hello, Mundek.

GOLDA. Just some water, Panna Pawlina. Water. Please.

PAWLINA. As soon as it's dark, slip around to the barn. I'll bring you water. And bread. And then, Paniusia Schachterova, go where they don't know you.

GOLDA. Bless you, Panna Pawlina. Bless you. *(Her face disappears. PAWLINA starts to run off forgetting her flowers. She runs back to scoop them up and drops one by the haystack.)*

PAWLINA *(whispers)*. For you, Mundek. *(Haystack is silent.)*

SCENE TWO

SCENE: *Outside DOMICELA's thatched-roof farmhouse. Twilight.*

AT RISE: *A soldier attaches a notice to the side of the barn. PAWLINA is pumping water. On the ground is a yoke with buckets. Under her apron is a round loaf of dark bread.*

DOMICELA. Why so much water?

PAWLINA. For the animals.

DOMICELA (*looks at her suspiciously*). One horse! One cow! And there's a bread missing.

PAWLINA (*innocently*). Maybe a neighbor came in.

DOMICELA. Tadeusz would have told me.

PAWLINA. Was Tadeusz here?

DOMICELA. Repairing the roof. He hung around waiting to see you all afternoon.

PAWLINA. When did he leave?

DOMICELA. When I had to get dinner for your brother and sister. Why were you so late? (*DOMICELA crosses to PAWLINA, pulls the bread from her apron and waits for an explanation.*)

PAWLINA. It's for Paniusia Schachterova...from the next village.

DOMICELA. Are you crazy? What good do you think one loaf of bread will do?

PAWLINA. It's terrible what they're doing...behind that barbed wire fence.

DOMICELA. Who told you to look? When you take the cart to market, go a different way!

PAWLINA. Mamusia! I could hear the women screaming. And then...I saw a baby...at the end...of a bayonet. You wouldn't kill a sick animal like that.

DOMICELA. There's a war going on, Pawlina. Stay away from there. It's not safe. Not with all those soldiers around. For a pretty girl like you, there's worse things than being killed. You can't save Paniusia Schachterova.

PAWLINA (*quietly*). She's in our barn.

DOMICELA. Mother of God! Do you know what they'll do if they catch you helping a Jew? (*Crosses to poster and reads.*) "Anyone caught helping or hiding Jews will be

punished by death.” (*PAWLINA doesn’t answer.*) They’ll shoot you, Pawlina. And then they’ll shoot me. And then your brother and sister. And then maybe they’ll throw in Krasula the cow for luck!

PAWLINA. What if we were in trouble, Mamusia?

DOMICELA. We’re not Jews. We’re Poles. Pawlina, I have nothing against Paniusia Schachterova. But it’s her neck or mine. Her family or mine.

PAWLINA. Mamusia, you always said we’re all the same. In the eyes of God we’re all the same.

DOMICELA. It’s not his eyes I’m worried about! It’s the eyes of those Nazi soldiers. They took most of our food.

PAWLINA. Mundek’s so tiny he doesn’t eat solid food.

DOMICELA. Who’s Mundek?

PAWLINA. Her brand new baby. He’s ill.

DOMICELA. Ill! Mother of God, what if he cries? Tiny, sick babies have strong lungs. There’s no sure way to keep a baby quiet.

PAWLINA. The Nazis found a way.

DOMICELA. Marry Tadeusz and have your own baby. Forget about this one. (*Sighs.*) To be born into a world like this.

PAWLINA. Mamusia, just let them hide in the barn until he’s better.

DOMICELA. No!

PAWLINA. Then at least until they’re rested. They’re worn out.

DOMICELA. I know you! When you were little you brought in birds with broken wings and fussed over them until they flew. Who else is out there?

PAWLINA. Her little girl, Freidza. Mamusia, she hasn’t eaten in three days!

DOMICELA (*pause. Sighs and gives her bread*). Here! When you milk Krasula, give them half. (*PAWLINA looks at her still waiting.*) All right, all right. Let them rest in the barn. Oh my God, I wouldn't want to be in her shoes with one in her arms and one at her skirt. (*Firmly.*) But before sunrise, Pawlina, they go! (*PAWLINA kisses her mother. She places the yoke across her shoulders. SOUND: In the distance, soldiers shouting excitedly—in unintelligible German. Howl of bloodhounds.*)