

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



Slowianska Street

by Noëlle Janaczewska

EXTRACT

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PRODUCTION NOTES

The script contains only music, pauses and spoken words. Layout and punctuation are used to suggest rhythm and delivery. My personal preference is for simple staging and an uncluttered production that allows a focus on the play's emotional text as well as on the pulse and textures of the language and the interplay of music, speech and silence. Beyond asking the director and actors to bear in mind that this is a play where language is dramatic action, I leave it to them to discover everything else.

Music is a vital element in *Slowianska Street*, and should integrate with the spoken text, which is scored as a kind of speaking choir. I've suggested Gorecki's *Symphony No. 3 - The Symphony of Sorrowful Songs for soprano and orchestra*, because its haunting chordal and harmonic structures not only add a resonant emotional quality, but also fit so well the whole notion of a requiem. Other musical suggestions are Arvo Part's *De Profundis* and Andrej Panufnik's *Sinfonia Sacra*. Further music and sound may also be added.

CHARACTERS/CASTING

The script is scored in four parts - as a kind of speaking choir. The roles can be all female, or a mix of male and female voices. Although scored for four voices, the play also lends itself to performance by a larger cast.

Music: the beginning of Song No. 1 – Lento, sostenuto tranquillo ma cantabile from Gorecki's Symphony No. 3 – The Symphony of Sorrowful Songs for soprano and orchestra. This music weaves in and out of the dialogue; beginning very softly, building in volume and intensity, and then fading gradually away to leave only the voices.

- VOICE 1 Adam Dwornik, born 1922, died 1943.
- VOICE 2 Anna Judita Lepik, born 1925, died 1944.
- VOICE 3 Anton Gabor, 1912 to 1939.
- VOICE 4 Janina Bortnowska, 1918 to 1939.
- VOICE 3 Tobiasz Metzner, 1879 to 1940.
- VOICE 4 Jan Miroslav, 1923 to '41.
- VOICE 2 Katya and Maria Miroslav, 1936 to '41.
- VOICE 1 Joshko Kovacs who studied physics in Berlin
Before the First World War,
- VOICE 2 And his wife whose sparrow hands smelled
Of sage and sorrel.
- VOICE 4 Izabela Becker wore a lilac apron
And threw away eggs with fertilised yolks;
- VOICE 3 To eat them would bring bad luck, she said.
- ALL Slowianska Street:
- VOICES 1 AND 4 Buildings stories high
- VOICE 4 Where games of chess could last for days.
- Music.*
- VOICE 1 Hannah Slaska, born 1909, died 1943.
Karl Andreyev, 1898 to 1939.
- VOICE 4 Boris Janevski, 1927 to '44.
- VOICE 2 Mariusz Teller who tipped over one morning
On his way to work.
- VOICE 3 Lilia Fischer, the jeweller's mistress.