Playing For Time

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**Character Checklist**

**Biography**

I was born into an upper class family in France. Both of my parents came from money and we never went without. When I was 12, my family relocated to Germany because my father got a job with the Berlin Opera. He was a professional violinist and my mother a full time homemaker. My mother spent a lot of time with me although I much preferred to be with my father listening to the orchestra practice and admiring all the musicians. My father was away a lot on different musical ventures, which gave me a ton of time to practice the violin so when he came home I would have new things to show him. Being as I was in a new place with a new language I immersed myself in my violin rather then make new friends. That is not to say the language was completely foreign to me, my father is German and my mother French so I grew up learning both. I just never really felt I belonged anywhere except with violin, which please my father as I became quite good at it and stayed out of trouble.

I have an older brother who is a university professor with a focus on Science. He is quite opposite to me and we have troubles understanding each other. He moved away when I was 14 and he was 18, to go to university over seas. I have heard how he is doing often from my mother and the odd letter he has written but we never really got close nor stayed in constant contact.

I attended an all girls’ boarding school until I was 18 with a keen focus on my violin playing. I was quite competitive with my older brother, who kept me on my toes in regards to academics however, my passion and focus was always my music. While my peers were worrying about dances and relationships I was more concerned with the latest composer and how to, as a woman, get notice for my talent.

After completing high school and excelling in both academics and music I was accepted into Universitat der Kunste Berlin. Where I studied music and eventually became a conductor.

**Physiology**

I am a 38 year-old Jewish female. I am 5’7, 110 pounds with shoulder length dark brown hair, dark brown eyes and pale white skin. I stand tall and confident, shoulders back, back straight, and head tall.

I have never been overly confident with they way I look but I play the part well. My insecurities are masked deep behind my violin and I am able to impress and gain respect through my musical talent and intelligence. I always keep a keen eye on my surroundings and learn all that I can about as much as I can so I can stay sharp and not be caught off guard.

Outwardly I appear to have all the confidence and self esteem in the world, I take care of myself and ensure that people do not have much reason to say anything about me. I do not try to be over the top and call attention to myself however I do want to be remembered.

**Sociology**

I grew up in a practicing Jewish home and was still a practicing Jew until I was place in Auschwitz where my faith was stripped away from me. I have many fond memories of Tu BiShvat, Purim Kata during leap year, Chanukah, fast of Tevet and Rosh Hashanah. But these are all but memories now. In this place there is no allowance for the Jewish Religion as it is punishable by death. After all I am in this place because I am a Jew.

Before being arrested and thrown into Auschwitz, I was a conductor for a woman’s orchestra and a professional violin player. I was slowly gaining recognition around the world for my talents when I was forced to flee Germany. I fled to Amsterdam where I was later arrested and sent to Auschwitz. Once I arrived in Auschwitz, and my identity and talent was discovered, I became the conductor for the women’s orchestra.

I attended an all girls’ boarding school in Germany until I was 18. After school I went off to Universitat der Kunste Berlin in order to continue my studies in music.

Before being placed in Auschwitz, I enjoyed my life as a single lady although I will admit I had days where I longed for my own family. But my priorities were always music. I lived comfortably and was well respected. I also had a comfortable life growing up with my family and never went without. My parents were tough but fair and I did my best to please them.

As it stands at this moment I have no interest in political beliefs. My main goal is to survive; I know what is happening is wrong and the political system is beyond flawed, but what am I to do except stay alive. To think any other way would be death.

I am Caucasian. My mother is from France and my father from Germany. They met through friends in France when my father was playing in a string quartet.

I grew up well off in an upper class family. I maintained a well to do lifestyle through out my life until placed in Auschwitz. Here I have nothing except my violin. Although I must admit that in Auschwitz I am a little better off in comparison to other prisoners. I have more clothing and a place to create and conduct music.

**Psychology**

In Auschwitz, I have no sex life. I must focus on music, living each day and doing what I can to stay alive. I have no time to neither think about sex nor want too.

In regards to morale standing, I do what I think is right. I have a strong moral compass thanks to my Jewish upbringing and will do the best I can to be the best person I can.

I am extremely frustrated that Fania and the others in the orchestra do not understand my methods. They do not seem to understand what needs to be done in order for all of us to survive. I am frustrated that I cannot do more, and that at any moment I can be taken and killed. I do not like the loss of control of my own life and am frustrated that there is no one to help and not a dam thing I can do.

**Scene Preparation**

**Tone**

The overall tone of the play is dramatic, distressing and desperate. In the beginning of the scene the tone is harsh with Alma attempting to explain, in a matter of fact way, why she hits the musicians in the orchestra. Alma also tries to get Fania to understand how desperate their situation is as she states if they do not play well “anything is possible” as “Dr. Mengele is a violently changeable man”.

**Relationship**

Alma and Fania met in Auschwitz when Fania was brought to Alma as a fellow musician to join the orchestra. They had never met before this point and the only thing they seem to have in common is their music.

From the get go there is tension between Alma and Fania. They are failing to understand each other and the reasons behind their individual actions. Fania cannot understand why Alma uses slapping as a method of punishment when a fellow musician is playing wrong and Alma fails to see why slapping is a bad thing. This is stated when Alma explains that “in Germany it is a perfectly traditional thing” and “Furtwangler did so frequently, (Hit musicians when they were wrong), and his orchestra idolized him”. Alma cannot understand why Fania is not supporting her decisions for the orchestra as Fania is a professional and should know better. This conflict in their relationship prevents them from being able to move forward and only builds as the scene develops.

Through out the scene Alma plays the more dominant role in the relationship. She often leads the conversation and is constantly re-assessing ways to get her point across to Fania. Their relationship is not so much one of friendship but one of teacher and student. The pair is still in the process of getting to know each other and understanding each other.

The dynamic of the relationship changes when, at the climax, Fania sticks up for herself in an effort to fight back. This forces Alma to step back from her dominance and realize that Fania is demanding some control. In the end their relationship does not improve and becomes even more strained once Fania walks out of the room and Alma realizes she is not in control.

**Characteristics**

Alma is a strong, intelligent and independent woman. This is evident in the way she carries herself through out the scene and is constantly re evaluating her conversation with Fania. Her strength has allowed her to live this long and allows her to continue to change in her environment. Alma is also manipulative, which is also evident in the way she keeps on re evaluating her conversation with Fania and changes her methods in order to get what she wants from Fania.

Alma has the ability to look at herself, admit her mistakes and move on from it. This is evident in her reflection of her marriage in her music, violin, and her first husband. She is able to acknowledge why she got married to a “man who only wanted her fathers name to open doors for him”, because she pitied herself, showing her strength in her character. In her current situation she is a realist and refuses to get caught up dreaming of a future, something that could get her killed.

Alma is very controlling. She is not able to deal with losing that control very well. This is evident with how she dominates the conversation and shifts the conversation when she begins to lose that control.

\*\*\*\* For the *why’s* of each line please see the attached script.\*\*\*\*

**Scene Analysis**

**Objectives**

Based on the words exchanged between Alma and Fania it is safe to say that the pair do not know each other very well and have very different objectives. As Fania, I feel my main objective in this scene is to get Alma to help me with the fellow musicians in the orchestra. I am very aware that Fania has a connection with them that I do not have. As a result it is imperative to me that Fania sees and understands why I act the way that I do, and supports my methods. I feel as a fellow professional she should know how the process works and should back up my demands.

As the play progresses, and Fania does not seem to understand my needs, another objective is brought to light, my objective to live. This is the main underlying objective for me. While I still need Fania to understand my methods I need her to understand what is a stake even more. If we do not play well, we will die, and this is not something I will give up on easily.

**Discovery**

In the beginning of the play I am trying to get Fania to understand my methods through stern words and strict focus. I remind her that she is a professional and knows a “conductor must be respected”. When she replies with, “ But I feel she can be loved too”, I discover that we are not on the same page. I do not understand how someone can be loved if they are not first respected. Her words make little sense to me and as a result, as the scene moves forward, I discover that we have very different ideas on how to be successful with the orchestra. This is evident when I try to explain to her that my methods are traditional in Germany and Furtwangler frequently hit his musicians and yet his orchestra idolized them. Her lack of agreement with my reasoning allows me to discover just how different our beliefs are. She clearly does not agree with my methods and thinks poorly of what I am doing, as a result I must try to reason with her in a different way.

Another area of discovery for me is when I attempt to ask Fania for help and she shuts me down by stating she does not know how much more she can take. It is here that I discover that there is more to Fania then I had once thought. She is failing to see the bigger picture of survival and seems more focused on herself. I will have to somehow remind her what is at stake and why she needs to support me.

When Fania beings to fight back, and sticks up for herself I discover that she is not as much of a push over as I had once thought. I may have been able to dominate the conversation but she is not easily persuaded to change her feelings. I need to keep redirecting her thought process to my objective because I want to live!

When I block Fania from looking out the window, I realize that she really does not understand me and her opinion of me is all wrong. She has painted me to be the villain when all I am trying to do is help all of us live through this awful time. It is here that I realize I must show her I am a person who is capable of more then who I am in Auschwitz.

Alma’s snotty response of “ Because you are so German?” at the end of the scene make me realize that she has not bought my stories nor have I gotten through to her. I try once again to make her understand that “in this place she will have to be an artist and only an artist” but she cuts me off and exits the room. Leaving me to feel as though I have failed in my quest for understanding and with it my chances of survival have shrunk. This is a devastating blow.

**Complication**

In the beginning of the play the main complication is the fact that Fania and I have very different ideas on how to properly conduct the orchestra. I feel that tough love and hitting is an effective way to get results whereas Fania believes in a more loving and kind method without hitting.

Another complication that is introduced to the scene is the fact that my father is famous and I myself am somewhat famous. This adds a level of superiority to my character as I justify my actions.

The fact that Fania resents me so much is a major complication to the scene. This resentment does not allow much room for compromise, listening or understanding.

The last complication introduced to the scene is the fact that I have been married before and the fact that I was almost in love when I was arrested. Fania has never married nor had the opportunity to be in love as she had married her art, something that I pointed out to her. This revelation was meant to be way of letting Fania know I was human however it back fired and became yet another reason for her to resent me. I have lived so much more of a life then her.

**Crises**

The first crisis Fania and I encounter is in regards to me slapping the musicians. I feel my actions are justified as I have grown up in an environment where the behavior was not only ok but also recommended by professionals. Fania does not understand nor see my point of view as she feels this behavior is unwarranted and unexcitable. It is obvious to me that Fania, in her professional musical career, has not encounter such methods.

The next crisis occurs when Fania decides to let me know why she resents me. I do not understand her reasoning and as a result feel it necessary to remind her that without me we will all die.

**Climax**

The climax occurs when Fania yells “But what will be left of me madam?” in response to my lecture on her playing her best regardless of who she is playing for. I realize at this time that there is more on the line then life to Fania. She is afraid of losing herself and it seems to scare her more then death. This I do not understand and as a result I feel lost in my quest for help from her. This climax forces me to yet again, change my tactic as obviously nothing I have said thus far has made the impact I desired. However, I refuse to give up on my desire to live, and so long as she is in the room speaking with me, I have hope.