

Finding the city of light

Tamiera Vandergrift, Contributing Writer Published 2:08 p.m. ET April 21, 2016



(Photo: Courtesy of Danielle Wirsansky)

“The most powerful weapon on Earth is the human soul on fire.”

These are the words of Ferdinand Foch, a character from Senior Danielle Wirsansky's *City of Light*, a tale as old as time of human courage, strength and the war between hate and love.

At the center of it all is Chavivah and Ori, two young Jewish children who have just fled a French internment camp and are seeking refuge in the famous city of light, Paris. Unfortunately, they've found themselves in the wrong city, a decoy created by an Italian electrician in order to protect the real city from invading Germans. The situation becomes more hopeless as Nazi Germany begins its invasion and occupation of the real city of France.

City of Light gives life to an event in history that we're all familiar with, but perhaps don't understand the gravity of. It's easy to see the numbers, statistics and written records of the lives lost and the atrocities that took place, but giving those statistics a voice and a face brings the history of The Holocaust to life in front of our very eyes.

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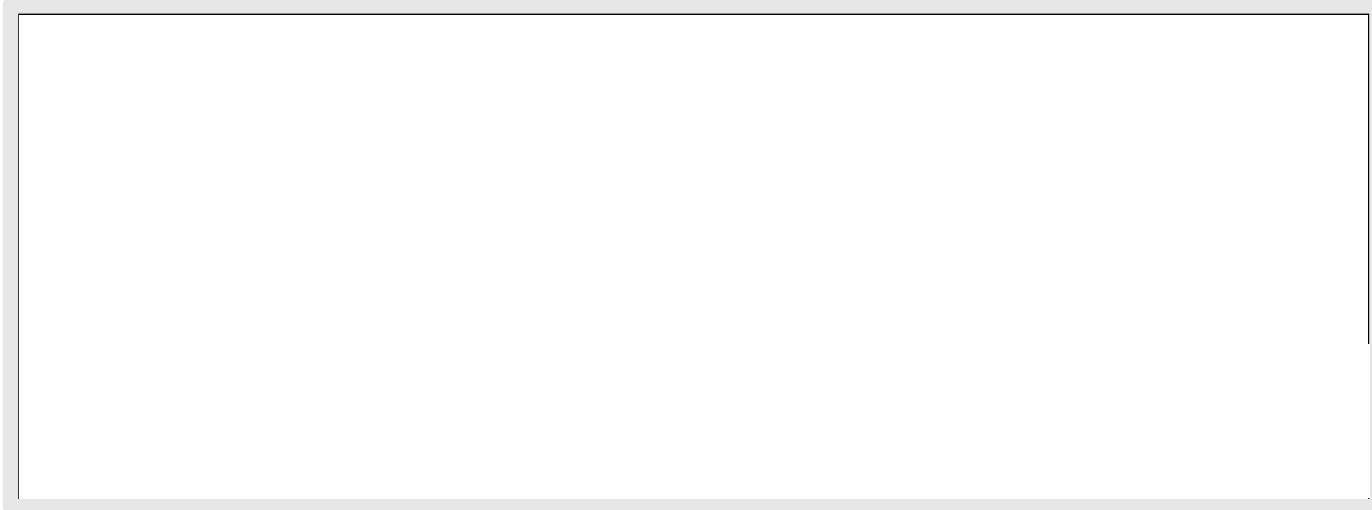
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Chavivah is an example of a female character written almost perfectly. She's strong and independent, but like any human, shows weakness at some points. She can present herself as cold, but with good reason. She's brave and willing to do anything to protect her brother Ori, but isn't perfect. Sophomore Madeleine Childers played Chavivah on stage. With every breath she takes and every note she sings, Childers lives the tragedy of a child scarred by adversity made to grow up too fast. She breaks your heart with her tears and mends it again with her resilience to survive.

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Ori is another wonderful character and a lot of fun to watch. Actress Jaclyn Neidenthal captures his childlike innocence and spirit, but also his strong devotion to his sister and staying alive through the peril of wartime Europe.

Both actresses were powerful and brought wonderful life to their characters. The supporting cast was strong as well. They're all original and three-dimensional. The antagonist of the story does not just exist to be an antagonist. We never get to see the antagonist, instead he exists as an authoritative voice through a radio speaker. His cause is to protect the real city of Paris and he will do anything to do so, including manipulation, framing and even planting a bomb.

He wants to keep the real city intact and the differences out, refuting the theme of the musical performance—that we're all the same and we're all human. Fearing those who are different only breeds hate and in turn breeds the most unimaginable of actions. It's something we've seen throughout history with The Holocaust and even continues to this day as we struggle with immigration law and the continuing threat of terrorism from other countries. City of Light couldn't have come around at a better time.

Overall, City of Light brings light to the shadows of a history we'd like to turn away from, but shouldn't, as it's the history we remember that will keep us from making the same mistakes again and again.

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