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Golden Boy - ZŁOTY CHŁOPAK: A Review

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Abstract

This feature is a story woven from the lives of two people: Abraham, the son of a tailor from Łódź, and Kasia Michalak, who's also from Łódź and whose grandfather was a tailor. How do you present Abraham Tuszyński without pigeon-holing his story as yet another tragic Holocaust narrative – particularly since the programme-maker wanted to avoid making a strictly historical feature? Where and how to find excitement, tension, heat and feelings in material that is by nature informational, objective, cold and factual? Despite posing a huge risk, the collision of the two stories, or realities, creates a new perspective, a heightened quality. This is the approach Kasia employed to construct the story of Abraham Tuszyński in the feature entitled "Golden Boy".

The assistance of Simon Elmes in translating from French to this English version of the review is gratefully acknowledged.

1. TRANSCRIPT in ENGLISH/POLISH and AUDIO LINK is in WORD DOC BELOW.
2. ORIGINAL REVIEW in POLISH is in WORD DOC BELOW

Keywords

radio documentary, audio feature, Abraham Tuszyński, Holocaust

Golden Boy/ZŁOTY CHŁOPAK

Written and directed by: Katarzyna Michalak

Cooperation: Lou Browers Deutschlandfunk

Sound editor: Jarosław Gołofit

Produced by: Polskie Radio Lublin, 2013. 42mins

Review by Anna Sekudewicz

Feature-making. For Katarzyna Michalak, it's an author's subjective, highly personal statement, a particular story or event filtered through their own experiences and life. Kasia (as she prefers to be known) says that this is the only way she is able to express herself, to convey something in an intriguing manner, and so she is therefore more or less destined to make features which are, by nature, also stories about herself. This does not in any way mean that she forgets about the focus, the heroes of her features. Pursuing the truth is, after all, of utmost importance, but following your own passions is equally important. So, in creating a feature, Kasia juxtaposes two stories, her own and that of the main character.

Despite posing a huge risk, the collision of the two stories, or realities, creates a new perspective, a heightened quality. This is the approach Kasia employed to construct the story of Abraham Tuszyński in the feature entitled "Golden Boy".

The focus is a man, a Jew from near Łódź, in Poland, who in accordance with family tradition, was predestined to become a tailor once he turned 20. Abraham broke with tradition and decided to emigrate. He settled in the Netherlands where he built a cinematic empire including the most amazing cinema palace, the "Theater Tuszynski" in Amsterdam. Every idea Abraham came up with was a success and his business forged ahead. War brought it all to an abrupt halt, and altered his life. Although he could have done so, he didn't flee to the United States and, in the end, he died in a concentration camp.

How do you present Abraham Tuszyński without pigeon-holing his story as yet another tragic Holocaust narrative – particularly since the programme-maker wanted to avoid making a strictly historical feature? Where and how to find excitement, tension, heat and feelings in material that is by nature informational, objective, cold and factual? The hero and his relatives are dead; there are no witness-accounts of any of the events that transpired. All that remained were [Dutch] archive recordings, made available to the feature-maker, for this co-production with Netherlands radio.

The feature is a story woven from the lives of two people: Abraham, the son of a tailor from Łódź, and Kasia Michalak, who's also from Łódź and whose grandfather was a tailor. The author begins to identify with the hero, and for a moment she becomes Abraham. She begins to wonder if this is permissible and whether drawing a parallel between her memories and Tuszyński's story is not overstepping the mark. However, it is precisely this juxtaposition that allows this particular story to move to another level; to achieve a profound level of meaning; and to present Abraham Tuszyński not only as a victim of the Holocaust, but as a man who was not afraid to dream. In a way, he becomes a kind of

symbol for all the dreamers of the world, for those who walk to the beat of their own hearts, regardless of the consequences.

In the last scene of the feature we hear, not the clatter of wheels of the train transporting Abraham to Auschwitz, but the sound of an old sewing machine – a sound that bears a striking resemblance to the sound of a modern film projector. This sound carries with it light, and hope

This feature is a journey from Brzeziny near Łódź to Amsterdam. It's a journey in space, but also in time. Fragments of radio dramas in the style of the pre-World War II cinematic tradition take us on a trip back to the past. The search for universality in this drama is also determined by the choice of material. It's really more a fairly loose set of sequences than a linear, chronological message.

AUDIO LINK At END OF PROGRAM TRANSCRIPT – see Word Doc.

ANNA SEKUDEWICZ:

From her very beginnings at Polish Radio Katowice, Anna has worked on radio documentaries. She is the laureate of many important prizes and awards, among them the highest distinction for radio journalists in Poland – the Golden Microphone and title of Master of the Radio. In 1990 she received a Special Mention at the Prix Italia. In 2004 she won the Prix Italia award. In 2005 she also received Platinum Laurel “Ambassador of Polish Affairs” (with Vaclav Havel, Tadeusz Mazowiecki) and was awarded “Reporter of the Year.” From 2003-2009 she represented Polish Radio Broadcasting in the EBU Radio Documentary Project Group. Her radio documentaries are archived at the Lincoln Center Library in New York.

