

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

By Lally Katz

BACK STORY AND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PLAY

WHO IS THE PLAYWRIGHT LALLY KATZ?

Lally Katz has an original voice and writes for theatre, film and television. In 2013 Lally's one-woman show, *Stories I Want To Tell You In Person*, played to packed audiences at Belvoir and Malthouse Theatres. Lally's work for television includes adult one-hour dramas *Wonderland*, *Wentworth* and *Spirited* and children's series *The Elephant Princess*. *Starchaser*, a wonderful new play for children, was produced by Arena Theatre in 2012.

In 2011 Lally had three world premiere plays programmed in Australia; *A Golem Story* at Malthouse Theatre, *Neighbourhood Watch* at Belvoir and *Return To Earth* at Melbourne Theatre Company. *Neighbourhood Watch* was nominated for four Sydney Theatre Awards, including Best New Australian Work, Best Mainstage Production, Best Actress in a Leading Role in a Mainstage Production (Robyn Nevin) and Best Actress in a Supporting Role in a Mainstage Production (Kris McQuade).

The play was also nominated for an AWGIE, a Helpmann Award and a NSW Premier's Literary Award. *A Golem Story* won the Victorian Premier's Literary Award and *Return To Earth* was recently nominated for a NSW Premier's Award. Lally participated in the attachment programme at the Studio of the National Theatre in London in 2009 and won a British Council 'Realise Your Dreams' grant for 2010. Lally was a Churchill fellow in 2010 and was appointed a Writer In Residence at Melbourne University in 2011.

In 2012 Lally won InStyle Magazine's Women Of Style Award in the arts category and in 2013 she was the inaugural recipient of an Australian Writers' Foundation Playwriting Grant.

BACKSTORY TO NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Inspired by a neighbour of hers, Lally Katz began writing this around a funny conversation she briefly had with legendary Australian Actor Robyn Nevin. She said, she wanted to write a play for Robyn, Robyn said "Sure, that would be lovely!" *Neighbourhood Watch* is the result!

It's 2007 and the play takes place in the year between Kevin Rudd's election as Australian Prime Minister and Barack Obama's as US President. Everything was changing in the

Western World and for a brief time anything seemed possible. Against this backdrop we meet Catherine, a young woman stuck in suburbia, waiting for her life to change as monumentally as the world around her is. Into her life comes Ana, an elderly Hungarian immigrant carrying the weight of the twentieth century on her shoulders. As their unlikely relationship develops, Catherine's life is transformed by Ana's stories of an almost forgotten world: through her new friend's eyes she witnesses the traumas of war, the desolation of the refugee experience, and the struggle of settling in foreign land.

It's a common tale in our country, but one that's all too foreign to middle-class Australians like Catherine. In meeting Ana and hearing her stories, Catherine is given the rare opportunity of learning from someone who has survived the unthinkable – the ravages of War. The courage this gives her in dealing with her own past is Ana's gift to her. In turn, Ana is granted one last great friendship at a time when the journey to her life's end was looking to be a lonely one.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

WORLD WAR II

1939 - Hungary joins Anti-Comintern Pact of Germany, Japan and Italy. At the outbreak of World War II Hungary remains neutral.

1941 - Germany invades the Soviet Union. Hungary declares war on the Soviet Union. A large part of the Hungarian army is destroyed fighting alongside the German Army. Hungary declares war on the United Kingdom and the United States.

1944 – German backed Hungarian officials depose PM Horthy and install a puppet regime after Horthy asks advancing Soviet Union troops for an armistice. Hungarian Jews and gypsies are taken to labour camps for protection, as the advancing Soviets were brutal in moving into Poland and Hungary.

1945 - Soviet forces violently drive the Germans out of Hungary by early April. The Soviet forces leave nothing in their wake, they pillage, burn and destroy everything, including raping all women. Many Hungarians are put in temporary "Camps". Many flee. Large parts of Budapest are reduced to rubble by the fighting. New Hungarian government is installed aligning to Soviet Union ideology.

1947-48 - Communists consolidate power. Hungary aligns itself more with Soviet Union Communism.

1949 - A new constitution makes Hungary a workers' and peasants' state. In other words, The State owns your land, your produce, everything. Industry is nationalised, agriculture

collectivised and a wave of police terror launched, thousands of Hungarians are arrested for inciting "anti-Soviet" sentiment. They are either killed or shipped off to the Russian Gulags.

NATIONAL UPRISING

1956 - Protesters demand the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Imre Nagy becomes prime minister. Nagy announces plans for Hungary to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and become a neutral power. Soviet forces crush the rebels, thousands are killed. Nagy takes refuge in the Yugoslav embassy, from where he is abducted by Soviet agents who torture him to near death. Janos Kadar becomes head of government.

1958 - Announcement is made that Imre Nagy has been executed for high treason by PM Kadar.

HUNGARIAN MIGRATION

World War II resulted in physical devastation, economic collapse and gradual takeover by a communist dictatorship in Hungary. Australia welcomed about 18,000 refugees officially termed Displaced Persons recruited from the International Refugee Organisation's refugee camps, mainly in Austria. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 against Soviet occupation and communism was crushed by Soviet Union troops reoccupying the country. Once more Australia welcomed about 15,000 migrants following a mass exodus of 200,000 Hungarians from their own country.

FORCED LABOUR CAMPS

Young Hungarian girls in a labour camp Russian invasion of Hungary 1956 were not treated well and many women were raped. In *Neighbourhood Watch*, Ana talks about being sent to 'camps'. The topic of forced labour of Hungarians in the Soviet Union in the aftermath of World War II was not researched until the fall of Communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. While exact numbers are not known, it is estimated that up to 600,000 Hungarians were captured altogether, including an estimated 200,000 civilians. An estimated 300,000 citizens perished. It was part of a larger system of the usage of foreign forced labour in the Soviet Union. The Gulag System.

In addition, an uncertain number of Hungarians were deported from Transylvania to the Soviet Union in the context of the Romania-Hungary Transylvanian dispute. In 1944, many Hungarians were accused by Romanians of being "partisans" and transferred to the Soviet administration. In early 1945, during the "de-Germanisation" campaign all Hungarians with German names were transferred to the Soviets in accordance with the Soviet Order. Most were executed.

'GYPSIES'

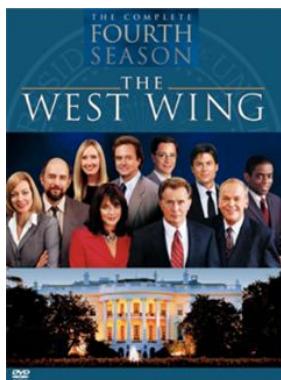
In *Neighbourhood Watch*, the character of Ana believes she has 'sixth sense'. She tells Catherine that when she was a young girl, a Gypsy appeared one night outside their house in Budapest, Hungary and sang a love song but one she felt boded ill fortune. The next day Ana's father died on his way to work. In the production Ana is constantly reminding Catherine not to trust too soon and to not be 'the baby horse'. In other words, be a puppy, and trust someone based on appearances.

In World War 1 Hungary lost 71% of its territory, and 58% of its population. During World War Two it suffered significant damage and casualties. Hungary came under the influence of the Soviet Union, which contributed to the establishment of a four-decade-long communist dictatorship (1947–1989). The country gained widespread international attention regarding the Revolution of 1956 and the opening of its previously-restricted border with Austria in 1989. With the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Hungary again became a democratic parliamentary republic.

THE WEST WING:

In *Neighbourhood Watch*, The West Wing is referred to on several occasions by Ken and Catherine. The series' main character, President Jed Bartlett, is seen as a beacon of hope, much as the newly elected Kevin Rudd, then one year later, Barack Obama. The West Wing is an American serial political drama television series created by Aaron Sorkin that was originally broadcast on NBC from September 22, 1999 to May 15, 2006.

There were seven series of the program all set primarily in the West Wing of the White House, where the Oval office and offices of presidential senior staff are located, during the fictional Democratic administration of Josiah Bartlett (played by Martin Sheen). The West Wing, like many serial dramas, stretches over several episodes or entire seasons. In addition to these larger storylines, each episode also contains smaller arcs that usually begin and end within an episode.



GOVERNMENT ELECTIONS:

Kevin Rudd was elected Prime Minister of Australia on November 24, 2007.

Barack Obama was elected to the Presidency of the United States on November 5, 2008.



WORLD OF WARCRAFT:

World of Warcraft is an online game where players from around the world assume the roles of heroic fantasy characters and explore a virtual world full of mystery, magic and endless adventure. Games such as World of Warcraft are commonly referred to as MMORPGs which stand for Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing games.

Role-play means that you play the role of a character living in the game's fantasy world. How much or little you role-play is up to you. Some players construct entire background histories of their characters and adopt unique mannerisms when 'in character'.

World of Warcraft thrusts you into a central role of an ever-changing story. You and your friends will be active participants in events that are steeped in the rich lore of its fantasy universe. Fight for either the Alliance or the Horde, and experience a fully-realised fantasy world.

