



COUNTERPOINT: 1806

Some gifts cannot be conscripted.

Written by Berl Kaufman, Atlanta GA

October 2026

Prepared for THE SCRIPT MARKET — Cannes Script Festival

bhkaufman@gmail.com

A prodigy forbidden to compose finds her father in her own music

1798, Colmar

Napoleonic conscription tears pianist Karl St. Claire from his wife Liesel and their four-year-old daughter Hanna.

1806, Freiburg

Orphaned at thirteen, Hanna is indentured to a convent that forbids secular music, public performance, and composing.

The premiere

When Karl returns among the wounded, Hanna's forbidden lullaby becomes the work she conducts before Beethoven himself.

Eight years of silence end in one sustained note

1798 - Conscripted

Napoleon's officers come to conscript Karl; he clasps a Star of David around Hanna's neck as he is taken: a heritage she will wear without understanding.

1806 - The Cathedral

In the Freiburg Munster, Hanna, now 13, impresses the kapellmeister with her musical talents and is pressed into joining the convent and apprenticing as the new organist.

The letter

Karl's blood-stained battlefield letter surfaces after eight years, begging his friend Ernst to rescue Hanna and teach her who she is.

The reunion

A wounded French prisoner follows a familiar lullaby through moonlit convent corridors. The necklaces recognize each other before the faces do.

1811

Five years later, Hanna lights the Shabbat candles openly, surrounded by the family that chose her.

1806: when the old world cracked

Revolution's aftershock

The French Revolution's aftermath feeds Napoleon's wars. The Jourdan-Delbrel conscription law steals Karl in the opening scene, and the wars later deliver the wounded, the field hospital, and Karl's return as a prisoner.

Institutions under strain

Army, church, and conservatory are all cracking under the era's pressure, which is why the story's moral center is the adult who breaks the institution's rule.

Music's hinge moment

The Classical order gives way to Romantic fire. Mozart is the old world of the intact family and certainty; Beethoven is the new world of the artist as hero, and he is in the film workshopping his Fifth Symphony. Hanna herself is the hinge in human form: a girl composing and conducting her own music is the Romantic artist being born.

Hanna St. Claire composes in secret because silence would erase her

- **A prodigy with perfect pitch.** She transcribes Beethoven's Romance in F from a single hearing and writes her own extension.
- **A hidden inheritance.** She wears her father's Star of David under her choir robe, not yet knowing what it names.
- **A loyal heart.** Warm, stubborn, and funny, she risks expulsion to protect her step-sister Colette.
- **An arc into the open.** From a girl forbidden to be heard to a conductor, not yet fourteen, premiering her own lullaby.

The main characters in Hanna's circle

Karl St. Claire

The pianist father, conscripted in 1798 and carried home by his daughter's music eight years later.

Franz Schissler

The tyrannical Kapellmeister who buys Hanna's indenture, then weeps over her scores and advocates for her release.

Hans

Schissler's young violinist assistant recognizes Hanna's necklace and champions her music, while quietly wearing the Star of David himself.

Ernst and Sophia van de Haag

Karl's old friend and his wife Sophia, a celebrated opera singer. Their childless house becomes Hanna's home.

The Reverend Mother

Enforcer of the convent's bans who, when Karl is found alive, voids the indenture herself.



Colette

Hanna's devoted step-sister, dismissed as useless, who finds her own calling nursing the wounded and takes the veil.



The convent forbids her music. It cannot stop it

No secular music. No public performance by girls. No composing. Hanna breaks each rule in turn, building a full lullaby from her dead mother's song.

The Reverend Mother gives her a second chance, but never a third. Expulsion would cost Hanna her only home.

Then the wounded arrive from Jena, and one prisoner follows the forbidden sound through the dark.

Built from moments an audience will carry out of the theatre

1

The conscript cart

A mournful folk flute over a cart of silent young men dissolves into Liesel's Mozart aria at the family breakfast table.

2

The Gloria showdown

Hanna surrenders her score, then proves from memory that she knows the entire Vivaldi Gloria, correcting Schissler's key signature to his face.

3

The Kapellmeister weeps

Schissler discovers Hanna's secret scores and weeps over them — the tyrant becomes her fiercest advocate: "You don't belong here."

4

The midnight reunion

Karl opens the instrument-room door on his daughter at the fortepiano. Two matching necklaces meet before a word is spoken.

5

The premiere

Beethoven introduces a work composed and conducted by Fraulein Hanna St. Claire, not yet fourteen. Her father stands first.

Music is the one thing no institution can conscript

Mozart, Ruhe Sanft. The sound of the intact family in 1798.

Beethoven, Romance in F. Heard once by Hanna, transcribed, and answered with her own extension.

Vivaldi, Gloria. The proving ground where Hanna's gift becomes undeniable.

Liesel's French lullaby. A mother's folk song rebuilt by Hanna for voice, chorus, and strings.

Bach, Little Fugue in G minor. The organ test she masters after one demonstration.

Beethoven's Fidelio. The rescue opera that mirrors Hanna's own liberation.

Everything hidden learning to speak aloud

Themes

The cost of concealment

A hidden faith, a star worn under a robe, a love kept behind a locked door. The film bends toward open speech.

Institutions and genius

Army, church, and conservatory each hold rules that would grind Hanna down. The moral center is the adult who breaks the rule.

Found family

Almost every bond that matters is chosen: a childless house, a devoted step-sister, a quartet, a Shabbat table.

Comps

Amadeus

A prodigy, a mentor who must choose awe over envy, and the period world of European music.

Les Choristes

A choir school, a hard choirmaster, and a gifted child whose music changes the institution.

Copying Beethoven

Beethoven as a living, difficult presence, and a young woman's genius demanding room.



The girl forbidden to be heard ends the film blessing the light

Counterpoint: 1806, a feature screenplay by Berl Kaufman