Your families may be watching a new four-part Netflix series called **Unorthodox**. It's a moving and engaging story about Esther Shapiro who leaves an ultra-orthodox community in Brooklyn and runs away to Berlin. With a dialogue that is mostly in Yiddish (a mix of German and Hebrew), the series offers a fascinating insight in to the rituals, lifestyles and attitudes of an extremely traditional Chasidic community. Esther (Esty) is played by mesmerising Israeli actress **Shira Haas** who played Ruchama in the excellent series Shtisel.

The Berlin scenes offer a stark contrast to Esty's previous life in Brooklyn. Exposed for the first time to the freedoms of a secular (non-religious) world, we share Esty's confusion and anxiety but also her sense of wonder.

The choice of Berlin is deliberate with its echoes of the Nazi past, division and persecution. At one point, Esty throws away her wig in the Wannsee lake; this would normally symbolize throwing away her previous identity but here it is more complex as we are in Berlin and the location is near the site of the infamous Nazi conference which decided on the policy to exterminate the Jews. Esty is left, symbolically, with her short hair, another reminder of Holocaust persecution.

The group of classical music students who 'adopt' Esty are multi-cultural, carefree and caring. The mix of characters is significant as Esther discovers an unfamiliar, diverse world. There is an Israeli student who understands the Esty's background, but is a world away from her; there are gay, black and Arab characters.

The series packs a lot into four episodes. When I watched it, the last episode was followed by an auto-loading feature called **The Making of Unorthodox**. This was a fascinating glimpse behind the scenes with interviews with cast and crew. This is when we realise the astonishing detail and painstaking work that goes into productions like this. The Chasidic community is played, not by real ultra-orthodox Jews, but by an army of extras, dressed by English costume designer **Justine Seymour.**

**Year 13 Media Students will be interested to know that the series was co-written and produced by Anna Winger who co-wrote Deutschland 83. The director is Maria Schrader who plays Lenora in Deutschland 83. There are probably other connections too. You can see these talented people being interviewed in The 'Making of' episode.**