

THE SINGING NAZI: REPRESENTATIONS OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM IN BROADWAY
MUSICALS

by

SUSANNE SCHEIBLHOFER

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Student: Susanne Scheiblhofer

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This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the School of Music and Dance by:

Dr. Marian Smith	Chairperson
Dr. John Graziano	Core Member
Dr. Lori Kruckenberg	Core Member
Dr. Loren Kajikawa	Core Member
Dr. Dorothee Ostmeier	Institutional Representative

and

Kimberly Andrews Espy	Vice President for Research and Innovation; Dean of the Graduate School
-----------------------	--

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Susanne Scheiblhofer

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Title: The Singing Nazi: Representations of National Socialism in Broadway Musicals

This dissertation examines representations of National Socialism in American musical theater. *The Sound of Music* (1959) and *Cabaret* use two fundamentally different approaches. Based on the German *Heimatfilm*, *Die Trapp Familie* (1956), the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical is a lighthearted family musical. In contrast, *Cabaret*, which was inspired by Christoph Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* and John van Druten's drama *I Am a Camera*, presents the audience with a political parable, analogizing 1930s Berlin to 1960s U.S. society.

Comparing different international productions of *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music*, I argue that over time staging puts a stronger emphasis on the visual presence of Nazi symbols for different reasons, such as shocking audiences, providing more realistic depiction of the Third Reich and exposing younger audiences without first-hand recollections to the full extent of Nazism.

The character, plot and musical analyses in this study also explore issues of ownership and agency, when protagonists appropriate familiar tunes to further their political causes. In *The Sound of Music*, the Trapp family uses the power of music to express their resistance against the Nazi regime ("Edelweiss"), whereas in

Cabaret the Nazis draw on the same power to demonstrate their unity in a frightening show of force (“Tomorrow Belongs To Me”). The creators of both musicals purposely imitated folk music, which encouraged audiences to fabricate mythologies around these songs, i.e., “Edelweiss” and “Tomorrow Belongs To Me.” The latter example was eventually re–appropriated by White Supremacists as an authentic Nazi song, taking on a life of its own outside its original context in *Cabaret*.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Susanne Scheiblhofer

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
University of Vienna, Austria

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, Musicology, 2014, University of Oregon
Magister philosophiae, Musicology, 2006, University of Vienna

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Musical Theater
Film Music
Reception History

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, 2010–2014
Tutor for Student Athlete Department, University of Oregon, 2008–2011
Assistant Director, Musikfestival Steyr, Austria 2007
Research Assistant, Dr. Edward Nye, Lincoln College, Oxford University,
2006-2007

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

International Cultural Service Scholarship, University of Oregon, 2007–2010
Graduate Research Award, University of Oregon, 2009
Fulbright Scholarship, Austrian Fulbright Commission, 2007

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. ART AS A PROCESS: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is a study of the genesis and reception history of two Broadway musicals, *The Sound of Music* (1959) and *Cabaret* (1966). Specifically, it investigates the treatment of National Socialism in both shows as well as the critical and public response to it. This research is grounded in the presumption that art is more than a mere reflection of society. As the in-depth analysis of both case studies in this dissertation shows, each production has entered a dialogue between art and society, which reflects social, political and cultural trends. Together they form an integrative network, in which political and cultural meanings and identities are continuously negotiated, resulting in many different versions of *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music* but simultaneously negating the possibility of a definitive, finished product.

This critical analysis tries to do justice to the concept of art as a process by looking at the intersection between communities and works from three different angles: First, it examines the society depicted on stage through character analysis. Second, it studies the society in which it was originally conceived and received by detailing the genesis of the musical and the initial critical response. Third, it traces subsequent revivals at home and abroad in the context of political and moral shifts in society. This allows me to explore processes of mediation and confrontation in the portrayal of Nazi characters as well as the staging of Nazism.

For this purpose I have combed through the archives of the Music Division at the Library of Congress as well as the Billy Rose Theater Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, searching for script drafts, song sketches, scores, professional correspondence, newspaper reviews and legal documents pertaining to *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret*. Combined with newspaper clippings and reviews from international productions, especially England, Austria and Germany available through my personal archive collected over many years, I create a multifaceted but naturally incomplete picture of the reception history in my case studies.

This dissertation does not pretend to be an exhaustive investigation on the topic of National Socialism and its representation in Broadway musicals. Nor is it the definitive, all-encompassing case study of politics in *Cabaret* or *The Sound of Music*. It limits itself to the stage versions of both musicals and focuses on major productions on Broadway, the London West End, Germany and Austria – ignoring the movie adaptations for the most part. I have chosen to focus on the stage version because I believe the reception history of the stage versions in the countries where Nazism originated is of particular interest, since it is freighted with cultural sensitivities foreign to audiences in the United States.

1.2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of musical theater scholarship is relatively young in both the musicological discipline and theater studies. Even smaller is the area of research specializing in historicism in musical theater and inquiries into the historical background of musicals with a historical plot are often executed in the margins of current scholarship, leading to the occasional side comments on how a certain show might have or did in fact intersect with historical, political and social trends.

To the best of my knowledge, Jessica Hillman-McCord's book *Echoes of the Holocaust on the American Musical Stage* (2012) is the first study dedicated to representations of National Socialism in American musical theater. Hillman-McCord's greatest achievement is to gather scattered tidbits of scholarship regarding Nazism, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust together in one discussion for the first time. She analyses different productions of *The Sound of Music*, *Milk and Honey*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Cabaret*, *The Rothschilds*, *Rags* and *Ragtime*, and *The Producers* primarily in the context of the Holocaust. One of her conclusions, i.e., the tendency towards grim depiction of reality over the past fifty years, becomes a launching pad for my research in this dissertation. However, where Hillman-McCord foregoes archival research in favor of secondary literature, I ground my dissertation in extensive evidence from primary sources.

Several works from different scholars have been particularly relevant in the process of this study. The following authors provide dedicated research to either *Cabaret* or *The Sound of Music*, offering different readings of the texts or detailed contexts for different productions. For instance, Keith Garebian's *The Making of*

Cabaret (1999) is an invaluable source of insight into the genesis and English-speaking reception history of the show. He provides background information on each of the members of the original creative team, through which a clear picture of all the different artistic influences emerges. The same can be said about Harold Prince's autobiography *Contradictions* (1974) and Foster Hirsch's biography *Harold Prince and the American Musical Theater* (2005). Both books clarify the director's overall approach to theater making and conceptualization of *Cabaret* in particular. Prince's autobiography is an important source because it presents events and processes, such as the reconciliation of artistic vision and audience responses through the perspective of the director-producer. Foster casts Prince in the light of a thoughtful but not infallible theatrical producer and director and discusses Prince's distaste for Brechtian Theater, which is often mentioned in connection to *Cabaret* by scholars and critics.

In *Colored Lights: Forty Years of Words and Music, Show Biz, Collaboration, and All That Jazz* (2003), John Kander and Fred Ebb talk extensively with Greg Lawrence about their creative process, their partnership with each other as well as their collaborations with other creative heads, as for instance Hal Prince. With regards to *Cabaret* they share memories about the origins of specific songs, as for example, "If You Could See Her Through My Eyes" and "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" and subsequent public response to it.

Even though Mitchell Morris concerns himself primarily with the film adaptation of *Cabaret* in "Cabaret, America's Weimar, and Mythologies of the Gay Subject" (2004), he offers an interesting retrospective explanation for why the stage

version's critical acclaim was not universal. Morris notes that Broadway musicals in the 1960s had no real space for dark, decadent, and cynical tragedies without happy endings yet. Furthermore, the historical realism purported by the original production through Lotte Lenya's involvement has to be called into question, since it was used as a promotional tool.

Linda Mizejewski includes *Cabaret* in her discussion the character of Sally Bowles in *Divine Decadence: Fascism, Female Spectacle, and the Makings of Sally Bowles* (1992) She traces the development of the anti-heroine from Isherwood over VanDrueten to Masteroff and Fosse and lays out her transition from third-rank actress to gay icon. Mizejewski presents how changes in society, political shifts, and different social agendas have informed the depiction and interpretation of the Sally Bowles character in the twentieth century. Whereas in the early adaptations of the Isherwood novel the Sally Bowles character shows political ambiguity, she is confronted into choosing sides by Cliff in *Cabaret*. Mizejewski's reasoning that this is related to the political upheaval of the 1960s is supported by Hal Prince's admission that he thought of *Cabaret* as a parabel or metaphor for the 1960s civil rights movement in the U.S. The theoretical framework of "spectatorship," which comes from media studies, offers a useful tool for studying reception histories of musicals as well.

Matt Wolf documents Sam Mendes' period as the artistic director of the Donmar Warehouse in his book *Sam Mendes at the Donmar: Stepping into Freedom* (2003) and talks extensively about the *Cabaret* revival in London and on Broadway.

It illuminates the artistic process of Sam Mendes, as well as the concept of an environmental production, in which the audience becomes part of the play.

Ruth Starkman's article "American Imperialism of Local Protectionism? *The Sound of Music* (1965) fails in Germany and Austria" (2000) searches for reasons why the film adaptation of the Rodgers and Hammerstein show failed so epically in Germany and Austria. After the fairly recent success of the German original *Die Trapp Familie* (1956) and its popular sequel *Die Trapp Familie in Amerika* (1958), neither Austrians nor Germans were particularly interested in seeing the Americanized version. She proposes that the natives cannot identify themselves with the nostalgic depiction of their past and culture, which was targeted at American audiences.

Raymond Knapp's article "History, *The Sound of Music*, And Us" (2004) builds on this idea and recontextualizes the portrayal of "innocent" Austria in the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical as a defense of American values and nationhood rather than a depiction of Austrian culture and nationality. He lists typical American issues, such as a classless society (the marriage between Maria and the Captain) and religious freedom (the nuns defying the Nazi regime). Unfortunately, Knapp's scholarship is that he often conflates stage versions and movie adaptations, but in this case his conclusion applies to both: *The Sound of Music* is less about Nazis and Austria than it is about American ideas and principles. This reading of *The Sound of Music* offers a further explanation for the sluggish response the musical initially received in Austria.

The Sound of Music zwischen Mythos und Marketing, edited by Ulrike Kammerhofer and Alexander Keul (2000) addresses the history of the Trapp family and the dramatizations of their life from an Austrian perspective. Coming from a cultural studies background, this collection of essays tries to reconcile the relatively unknown story of the Trapp family with the world-renowned success of the family abroad. The Rodgers and Hammerstein stage musical and film version are part of this discourse on foreign stereotypes of Austrian culture, and, like Knapp and Starkman, it offers hypotheses for the disinterest in the movie.

Even though the following scholarship focuses on the film adaptations of the musicals instead of their original stage version, Stacy Wolf's feminist reading of *The Sound of Music* in her book, *A Problem Like Maria* (2002), as well as the discourse on fascism and camp in Susan Sontag's *Under The Sign of Saturn* and Terri J Gordon's article "Film in the Second Degree: "Cabaret" and the Dark Side of Laughter" (2008) have informed my discussion of sexuality and camp, especially in context of Sam Mendes *Cabaret* revival.

Furthermore, to gain a better understanding of Broadway and its relationship to World War II, I have embedded my research in general scholarship on American theater during after the war. In his book, *Beautiful Mornin': The Broadway Musical in the 1940s* (1999), Ethan Mordden describes the impact World War II had on The Great White Way. In what Mordden attributes to a patriotic wartime effort, a majority of Broadway productions featured soldiers and sailors and (usually female) characters working in war factories. He calls this the creation

of *Americana*, i.e., the establishment of America, as a topos in musicals during the 1940s.

Even though Beth Genné is primarily concerned with ballet, her article “‘Freedom Incarnate’: Jerome Robbins, Gene Kelly, and the Dancing Sailor as an Icon of American Values in World War II” (2001) corroborates what Mordden writes about the typical settings and characters of Broadway shows in the 1940s. The observations Genné makes about the sailor as an icon of liberation and American values, the image of the sailor-boy as a citizen soldier as much as the boy next door, chasing girls with his sailor buddies in ballets, as seen in *Fancy Free* and *Anchors Aweigh*, hold as much true for stage and film musicals, as for instance, in Leonard Bernstein’s *On The Town* and other shows situated in the 1940s.

Annegret Fauser’s article “Dixie Carmen: War, Race, and Identity in Oscar Hammerstein’s *Carmen Jones* (1943)” (2010) illuminates the rationale behind the creation of an *Americana*. During World War II, Broadway played a key role in creating a national American art form, in an effort to position American culture against European heritage – be it German, Italian or French opera or English theater. Hammerstein’s adaptation of Bizet’s opera, *Carmen Jones*, and its subsequent Americanization are prime examples of those attempts to rally a united American people for the patriotic war effort against the German and Japanese enemy. This article can be connected Hammerstein’s involvement with the anti-Nazi League, and suggests the lyricist took a very firm position against Nazism, which affected his reception history in Germany and Austria.

Mordden, Fauser and Genné's research link back to Knapp's article, where he argues that *The Sound of Music* is really more about America than Austria. Knapp is particularly interested in the utilization of Broadway theater as a means in the formation of national and personal identities. However, he examines this from a broader perspective beyond the formative years of the war period. The strategic positioning of American culture against European heritage during the Second World War is only one aspect of his study, and Knapp focuses on the creation of personal narratives promoting a collective national identity as well as the negotiation of individual identities against the predominant American culture. *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (2005) looks at musical theatre as a distinctly American art form, which has helped shape the creation of an American cultural identity from its early years on through re-imagined pasts. *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* (2006) analyzes how characters position themselves against other characters and thus offer audiences a means for identification or at least assimilation in specific situations and conflicts.

Andrea Most in her book, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (2004), provides insight into how the Jewish background of Broadway and its key players influenced musical theater during the war period and afterwards. Among other things, her book shows how personal and national politics might have informed the treatment of National Socialism for example in *The Sound of Music*.

Finally, I want to acknowledge a few works of general scholarship on musical theater, which are useful to situate my scholarship into larger concepts, such as book musical, concept musical, integrated musical, etc. *Showtime* (Larry Stempel,

2010) is currently the most comprehensive account of American musical theater to date. Stempel studies the genre from multiple angles, including cultural history, specialization of subgenres, and socio-political criticism. Ethan Mordden offers a continuous narrative on the Broadway musical from the 1920s to the 1980s in his series of books.¹ His narrative succeeds at crystallizing major trends and concepts, such as historicism on stage or conceptual staging: for instance, the trend towards historical parodies and social and political satires in the 1920 and 1930s, or the introduction of soldier and sailor characters in the 1940s to reflect the reality of World War II. Geoffrey Block's *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Showboat to Sondheim* includes issues arising from social and political changes in productions, such as *Showboat* and *Porgy and Bess* (political sensibilities), *Kiss Me, Kate*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Carousel* (feminism) as well as *Porgy and Bess* and *South Pacific* (deconstruction of social and racial stereotypes).

Political theorist Benjamin Barber questions the extent to which Broadway can actually be politically activist in his article "Oklahoma! How Political Is Broadway?" for *Salmagundi* 2003. He argues that in recent years, especially, there is a common public misconception that Broadway has become mere spectacle and

¹ Ethan Mordden, *Make Believe: The Broadway Musical in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); *Sing For Your Supper: The Broadway Musical in the 1930s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); *Beautiful Mornin': The Broadway Musical in the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); *Coming Up Roses: The Broadway Musical in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); *One More Kiss: The Broadway Musical in the 1970s* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

entertainment.² He bemoans the weak presence of political theater in the U.S. and the resulting lack of engagement with class warfare, historical and political commentary. At the same time, Barber concedes that some Broadway shows, like *Oklahoma!* or *Pacific Overtures*, deal covertly and oftentimes metaphorically with political themes. Barber seems to neglect the politically charged works of the Federal Theater Project (FTP) era, including Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*, and later Jerry Bock's *Fiorello!* I argue that most Broadway musicals have always had political undertones, dealing with cultural and societal issues in its own way, even if it is not always explicit. Therefore, *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret*, while not overtly activist theater, are part of a longer tradition of political shows on Broadway, which reaches back to *Johnny Johnson* (1936) or *Knickerbocker Holiday* (1938).

American readers might find Margarete Lamb-Faffelberger's article, "Beyond 'The Sound of Music': The Quest for Cultural Identities in Modern Austria" (2003), particularly helpful for my discussion of reception history in Austria. Growing up with Austrian politics, literature and history, I am able to weave reception history into the larger political context in Austria, people less familiar with the political situation in my home country can find a short and compact essay here. Lamb-Faffelberger outlines Austria's troubled relationship with its past and

² Cf. Rob Marshall's statements at the Times Talk on the occasion of *Cabaret*'s return to Broadway in February 2014. Both comments refer to the "Disneyfication" of Broadway which has led to a surge in theatrical gimmicks, pyrotechnics and acrobatics as the main attraction. (cf. Spiderman musical).

recent struggles with the political shift to the right in the 1999 parliamentary elections.

Heidi Schlipphacke's *Nostalgia After Nazism: History, Home and Affect in German and Austrian Literature and Film* (2010) provides additional perspectives on the discourse of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), escapism and nostalgia in both countries. She discusses how these issues have shaped the works of artists, such as Ingeborg Bachmann, Elfriede Jelinek, and Tom Tykwer, among others.

I have purposely kept the discussion of Austrian and German history and the ongoing discourse on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* general, because this is a musicological dissertation and not a historical inquiry in the strictest sense. However, I want to acknowledge at this point the sheer complexity and multiple facets of the discourse, the contradicting opinions, the slow communication, lingering ideology and much more, which goes beyond the purpose of this dissertation. The goal of this dissertation is to suggest the inclusion of musical theater in this discussion as part of our modern culture and society. The reception history of *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret*, I argue in this study, is – at least in Austria – closely linked to the public discourse on politics and image.

1.3. PEAS IN A POD?

In the context of musicals with a historical background, specifically Nazi plots, the *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music* are often and quickly mentioned in one breath. Indeed, at first both musicals appear to be in the same vein: both deal with National Socialism encroaching on society, both provide rough political profiles of society, both feature a main protagonist resisting the Nazi regime, both utilize music as a metaphor for power, and both have strong moral messages directed at their audiences.

The Sound of Music (1959) and *Cabaret* (1966) were written within a short time frame, in a period where Nazism and the Holocaust were discovered as theatrical topics on Broadway. In the same year as *The Sound of Music*, *The Diary of Anne Frank* premiered, and *The Intervention* opened in the same season as *Cabaret* did. Fourteen years after World War II, Broadway posed a daring question to audiences: Is there a place for National Socialism in entertainment, and if so, what kind of a role can Nazis play?

Judging by the overwhelming success of *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music*, the answer from audiences has been a resounding yes. And it is exactly in this question that these two musicals diverge fundamentally. The earlier example, *The Sound of Music* (Chapter II) relegated Nazis to marginal speaking roles. The characters are cartoonish and underdeveloped as if they did not deserve to be humanized. Nazism is treated primarily as a sovereignty issue between Austria and Nazi Germany; the Nazis' cruelty is only vaguely alluded to. It presents a black and white world, in which the Nazis are bad, and the Trapp family are good. The boundaries are clear—

cut; the characters' politics are simple and straightforward. Since there are no Jewish characters in the play, the topic of anti-Semitism and other crimes against humanity are not addressed. As I will show in Chapter II, these were conscious choices made by the creators, most likely in accordance with the concept of *The Sound of Music* as a family show with Mary Martin as its main attractions.

The reception history of *The Sound of Music* (Chapter III) is framed as a comparison between the play's reception in Austria and the United States, or in other words in the original homeland and chosen exile home of the Trapp family. The political potential of *The Sound of Music* is stronger and fuller realized in Austria due to its Nazi past than in the United States. Correspondingly, it is almost impossible to discuss the musical's reception history outside of any political context.

In contrast, *Cabaret* faces National Socialism head on (Chapter IV). Conceived as a political parable to 1960s U.S. society, all the characters in *Cabaret* are deeply entangled in the political environment and morally conflicted. The Nazis are introduced as regular people and the problems of anti-Semitism are expounded in the relationship between a Jewish man and a gentile woman. Weimar Berlin, unlike Salzburg in *The Sound of Music*, is a deeply troubled place where Nazism eventually infiltrates even the last vestiges of escapism, i.e., the Kit Kat Klub.

Chapter V gives a detailed study of critical response to *Cabaret* in the United States and abroad. The discussion of different revivals emphasizes art as a process, showing how the musical was adapted and reinvented for later audiences, taking into account social and political changes. A difference of seven years between the premieres of *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret* has not only repercussions on the

treatment of the subject on stage but also for reception history. Chapters III and V deal with the reception history of each musical individually, from the original production until now, in terms of their political elements, which reveals an overall trend towards stronger representation of Nazi aggressions, confrontational approaches in staging Nazism and gloomier depiction of reality.

Both of these musicals purposely draw on characteristics of folk music to evoke local color. Chapter VI discusses these musical markers and the narrative function of these folk-style tunes. *The Sound of Music* as well as *Cabaret* utilize music as a tool of empowerment, but for different purposes. This chapter also addresses the potential repercussions of such manufactured “folk songs,” when they sound too authentic for audiences and they fabricate mythologies around those tunes or even appropriate them for their agendas, as happened with “Tomorrow Belongs To Me.”

In Chapter VII, I will present my conclusions from this study. I juxtapose *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret* directly, to bring out the similarities and differences in their approach to Nazism. I also summarize the major trends in reception history and discuss avenues for further research and discussion of the topic.

CHAPTER II

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

2.1. FA – A LONG, LONG WAY TO RUN

Early on in *The Sound of Music*, the nuns at Nonnberg Abbey sing “How do you solve a problem like Maria? How do you catch a cloud and pin it down?” These words may very well have gone through the mind of Oscar Hammerstein II, who wrote these lyrics, as he waited for legal representatives to track down the globetrotting Baroness Maria Augusta von Trapp – the historic inspiration for Fräulein Maria. It took producer Leland Hayward eighteen months, between the summer of 1957 and fall of 1958, to chase the matriarch of the Trapp family, in order to secure the rights to her life story before work on *The Sound of Music* could officially begin.

It all started in 1957, when Hollywood approached director Vincent Donehue to adapt *Die Trapp Familie* (The Trapp Family, 1956), a German *Heimatfilm*, for an American audience with Audrey Hepburn in the leading role. Donehue immediately fell in love with the idea, only instead of a movie with Audrey Hepburn, he thought this would create the ideal star vehicle for Mary Martin’s return to Broadway. The actress and her husband, Richard Halliday, were very amenable to his suggestion to turn the German film into a play with music, retaining the traditional songs from the original.

By June 10th, 1957, Leland Hayward, who had worked with Martin, Rodgers and Hammerstein before on *South Pacific*, had watched the film as well and decided

to co-produce with Richard Halliday. He promptly began procuring the rights for a stage version in the United States from the involved parties: Continental Film in Liechtenstein, Divina Film and Gloria Filmverleih in Germany, and Maria Trapp. Little did he know he would embark on a yearlong odyssey. Hayward and his associates spent the better part of the next few months chasing after the Baroness around the globe, communicating internationally through third parties mostly, which led to many failed attempts to connect with the matriarch of the Trapp family in person. In early March, after finally tracking down Maria von Trapp, Leland Hayward had reached the end of his rope when the Baroness delayed the finalization of negotiations because she wanted full approval of the musical. He writes to Annie Capell, who has been mediating between the different parties, recapitulating the exchange so far:

I am certainly not going to come to Munich to argue with the Baroness about her demand for approval. We have a raft of cables back and forth between the Baroness and myself [in which it was clarified that] their [Lindsay & Crouse] approach does not go as far as the movie did, [therefore] the credit should read suggested by not based on because possible changes this way [are] easier accepted.³

The cable from Hayward to the Baroness continues with praise for authors Lindsay and Crouse regarding their work *Life With Father*, which was also based on real people, to put Maria von Trapp at ease. Furthermore, he informs her that he convinced his partners to increase her royalty check to one and a half percent, to

³ Leland Hayward, Letter to Annie Capell, 5 March 1958. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 26.

which the Baroness wired back in January that the terms were acceptable if she received an advance of five thousand dollars when she signed the contract.

In the meantime, Mary Martin had approached Richard Rodgers to take a look at her new project. In particular, she wanted him to contribute a new song for her at the end of the play, but Rodgers was adamant about not mixing different styles of music. Instead, he suggested they turn the play with music into a full fledged musical – provided she was willing to wait until he and Oscar Hammerstein had finished their current project. The more people joined the venture, the more Hayward got under pressure to finalize the deal with the Baroness, as it would become increasingly difficult to keep everyone’s schedules free for the project.

Thus, when the Baroness decided to play hard to get, Hayward’s patience was starting to run out. He turned towards intermediary Annie Capell for help, pouring out his frustrations page after page:

Obviously, the enthusiasm that Miss Martin – Mr. Halliday – Howard Lindsay – Russel Crouse – Richard Rodgers – Oscar Hammerstein, as well as myself, have for the project is based entirely on the motion picture “The Trapp Family” that we have seen, and on reading the Baroness books. We have no intention or desire to make up a new story, or anything of the sort, but it is obviously impossible to give the Baroness Trapp, or anyone else in the world, approval of the book, or the lyrics, or the music.

Forgetting the fact that we would have an enormous sum of money invested in the property, everyone concerned will have invested anywhere from a year to two years of their time. It is unrealistic to suppose that Miss Martin will turn down other plays and do nothing waiting for Lindsay and Crouse and Rodgers and Hammerstein to finish their adaptation, and then have it possibly negated by the Baroness. It is equally impossible to expect that Lindsay and Crouse – Rodgers and Hammerstein would undertake such a job, knowing in advance that the Baroness Trapp could call off the whole venture, because of her dislike of a word, lyric, or note.

We are fully aware (and very sympathetic) with the Baroness Trapp's feelings. No doubt she is nervous about a story on the subject of herself as well as her family. However, we feel that she simply must decide where the group of people who want to do this play have enough taste, ability and intelligence to do it so that she will be pleased. We do not think that she could say that any of the group have ever done anything except in this direction, and putting the whole group together, has resulted in some of the most successful theatrical ventures of all time. [...]

The negotiations for this property have gone on endlessly, because as you know to clear up the Baroness Trapp's rights and Gloria Films rights, was most difficult. Mr. Halliday and I felt that we had been more than generous with the Baroness about royalties – not only about the enormous advance of Five Thousand Dollars, but the fact that we agreed to give her one and one-half percent, instead of one percent. After all, the author of "South Pacific" received only one percent, and it was not a bad play.

We are fearful that all the people involved may very possibly become impatient, and out of impatience go on to other ventures. I am sure the Baroness Trapp realizes that all the people concerned possibly turned down other ventures, but they cannot be expected to do this indefinitely.

As we cabled you the other day, I am perfectly willing to fly over to see the Baroness, but not to argue with her about the approval clause, because none of the parties involved because of all the reasons stated above, could possibly agree to that.⁴

After another eight months of protracted negotiations, all the different parties finally reached a consensus and joined the table to sign the agreement between Leland Hayward and Richard Halliday (the producers) and Maria Trapp, Continental Film Corporation, Divina Film GmbH and Gloria Filmverleih GmbH (the right owners) on November 10th, 1958 – almost to a day a year before *The Sound of Music* opened its doors at the Lunt-Fontanne Theater on November 16th, 1959.

⁴ Leland Hayward, Letter to Annie Capell, 5 March 1958. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 26.

I am including this lengthy discussion because in the past researchers and journalists have pointed out that Maria von Trapp felt taken advantage of, since she had practically signed over all her rights to Continental, Divina and Gloria and did not make a fortune off of the *The Sound of Music's* success⁵. Since this dissertation also addresses matters of historicism and misrepresentations, it is interesting to see Maria von Trapp's self-representation.

While I have not had a chance to study the German contract for *Die Trapp Familie*, I do not believe she was exploited by the producers of *The Sound of Music*. In fact, she exhibited rather business-savvy strategies, demanding a \$5,000 advance⁶ payable upon her signature and stonewalling Leland Hayward with silence in their correspondence; in spite of the difficulties, he managed to persuade everyone else to raise her royalty from one to one and a half percent. Of course, the creators and producers of *The Sound of Music* were profit-oriented businessmen, who tried to

⁵ Ruth Starkman, "American Imperialism or Local Protectionism? 'The Sound of Music' (1965) Fails in Germany and Austria," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 20, no. 1 (2000): 69-70.

Christian Strasser, "'The Sound of Music' - Ein Unbekannter Welterfolg," in *'The Sound of Music' Zwischen Mythos Und Marketing*, ed. Ulrike Kammerhofer-Aggermann and Alexander G. Keul (Salzburg: Salzburger Landesinstitut für Volkskunde, 2000), 285. Strasser also points out that the only member of the Trapp family to profit from the success of *The Sound of Music* was Marian von Trapp. The children never saw a cent of revenue.

Furthermore, I visited an exhibit dedicated to *The Sound of Music* and the Trapp family in Salzburg on 30 July, 2013 where a larger poster called "The Trapp Myth in Figures" lists the zero income the Trapp family children received for their story and the \$9,000 Maria von Trapp received for the rights to her autobiography by German producers in bold. Below that in smaller print the approximate 800,000 Euros from royalties for stage rights are mentioned. Right below that the poster lists the \$220,000 Julie Andrews received for her role in the movie and right next to it visitors are reminded of the \$180,000,000 the movie brought in during its first run. This creates in retrospect the impression that Maria von Trapp was not adequately compensated.

⁶ According to www.usinflationcalculator.com, the modern equivalent would be \$40,881.14 today at a 717.6% cumulative historical inflation rate.

keep the enterprise favorable for them, but as Hayward points out in a letter one per cent was a standard for authors of literary templates (cf. *South Pacific*). In comparison, Lindsay and Crouse, the authors of the book for *The Sound of Music*, received three percent royalties as an entity. Shortly after the general agreement dated November 10th, 1958, the Baroness entered a separate agreement to be compensated as a technical advisor for the staging dated, April 20th, 1959, resulting in another \$5,000⁷ advance and a weekly salary of \$250⁸ for every week a first-class (i.e. Broadway or National Touring) production played in North America (Canada included).⁹ Moreover, she was promised 8.18% of the film rights to the musical, again a little less than the authors (19.82% combined) in the limited partnership agreement, dated April 9th, 1959. Of course, the creators of *The Sound of Music* are profit-oriented people looking to maximize their share of the gross revenue, but they did not take advantage of the Baroness. Even if the Baroness signed away most of her rights with *Die Trapp Familie*, the really big success came with *The Sound of Music*, for which she was compensated according to standard practices at the time. In the beginning *The Sound of Music* was as risky an enterprise as any other Broadway show, and no one could have foreseen the incredible success it would

⁷ www.usinflationcalculator.com: \$40,600.17 (712%)

⁸ www.usinflationcalculator.com: \$2,030.01 (712%). It is unclear from the wording in the agreement whether the weekly \$250 would continue beyond the rehearsal period, which is the stipulated timeframe for the agreement. The \$5,000 advance would cover 20 weeks of rehearsals, i.e. roughly four months, but in reality rehearsals lasted only a total of 12 weeks, tryouts included.

⁹ US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 64, Folder 35. The same agreement was extended to Divina, Gloria and Continental.

enjoy for decades to come. Therefore it is a little absurd to argue in hindsight that the Baroness was exploited because the rights to her story did not make her rich, since at the time she carried no risk at all but received a total of ten thousand dollars in non-returnable advances and a percentage of the revenue later.

2.2. ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Compared to the legal nightmare preceding *The Sound of Music*, the genesis of the musical itself turned out to be a relatively uncomplicated birth. Because Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse had been commissioned with the book for the musical play by the time Rodgers and Hammerstein joined the project, Oscar Hammerstein focused solely on the lyrics for this project. However, looking at various drafts in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts as well as the Music Division of the Library of Congress, I discerned that director Vincent Donehue and Oscar Hammerstein provided considerable input until the final version was completed.

Of the eleven scripts I have compared, seven are housed in the Billy Rose Theater Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. One of the two scripts in the “Vincent Donehue Papers” (*T-Mss 1967-002) is incomplete; the other five drafts are in the “Leland Hayward Papers” (*T-Mss 1971-002). The remaining four scripts can be found in one of the *Sound of Music* boxes as part of the Oscar Hammerstein II Collection at the Library of Congress, which has not yet been officially processed.¹⁰ With the exception of three drafts, respectively dated May

¹⁰ The collection consists of one series of nine boxes (numbered one through nine), one series of three boxes (referred to as Ted’s Box one through three), one singular box called “New Box,” one series of four boxes (ordered A through D), one series of eight boxes

27th, 1959; June 4th, 1959; and November 1st, 1960; the scripts in all three collections are undated. Using handwritten notes by Oscar Hammerstein, as he was working on the lyrics, as well as typescripts of these lyrics,¹¹ many of which often show dates, I was able to create a rough chronology of these undated script versions. The dates are based on the approximate timeframes in which Hammerstein worked on individual songs but are not definite because it is impossible to say if Hammerstein worked on these songs outside the documented timeline. The following table (Table 2.1) lists the chronological order of scripts and assigns them an alphabetical code for easier reference throughout this chapter.

Ordering the available drafts chronologically allows for a better comparison and exposes duplicates in different collections, which are referred to as one entity by the same letter. Draft A in the Oscar Hammerstein II collection is the earliest dated complete script of *The Sound of Music*; however, letters exchanged between the different creators and producers provide additional information on the early genesis of the musical.

(numbered one through eight, skipping number five and instead including one box called “X Box A”) and two boxes dedicated to *The Sound of Music*.

¹¹ The notes and typescripts for *The Sound of Music* lyrics can be found in one of the Sound of Music boxes in the Oscar Hammerstein II Collection as well as Boxes C and D, separated into individual folders according to song title.

2.1. Chronology of *The Sound of Music* Scripts

May 27 th , 1959	Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, dated May 27 th , 1959	A
Late May/Early June	Leland Hayward Papers, Box 63/Folder 2, undated Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, undated	B
Late June ¹²	Vincent Donehue Papers Box 4/Folder 8, dated June 4 th , 1959, incomplete	C
Late July (ca. 24 th)	Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, undated (blue)	D
Mid-August (ca. 15 th)	Leland Hayward Papers Box 63/Folder 1, undated	E
Late October (ca. 26 th)	Vincent Donehue Papers Box 4/Folder 9, dated 1959 Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, undated	F
Early November	Leland Hayward Box 62/ Folder 10, Final Script 1959 Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Final Script, undated	G
November 1 st , 1960	Leland Hayward Box 62/Folder 9, Final Script, dated November 1 st , 1960	H

Originally the title was going to be *The Love Song*; however, after Hammerstein’s lawyer looked into copyright matters, he found that the title had been used literally hundreds of times before, so he urged Rodgers and Hammerstein to “PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE [sic] get a new title.”¹³ Eventually they settled on *The Sound of Music*, which was also the first song that Hammerstein wrote for the musical.

¹² While Elisabeth Elkind who processed the Donehue material dates the draft June 4th, 1959, the inclusion of “My Favorite Things” in the script suggests a later date. Hammerstein’s notes about his work on this particular song at the Library of Congress show that he was still working extensively on the song June 26-29.

¹³ Howard Reinheimer, Letter to Oscar Hammerstein II, 6 February 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box.

Lindsay and Crouse sent Rodgers and Hammerstein the scenes as they became available, so the composer and lyricist could start working on the songs. On April 30th, 1959, Leland Hayward brings Halliday and Martin, who vacationed on their Brazilian ranch, up to date:

Everything progresses very-very well about "Trapp". Buck and Howard are within a scene and a half of finishing the first act. I have read it, and absolutely love it. Dick and Oscar are crazy about it. They feel that the boys have done a wonderful job, because it is witty and funny and amusing, -- not overly sentimental, and all in all the collaboration between the four of them is working out wonderfully. Oscar has finished the lyrics of the first song, and Dick is busy working on the music, and Oscar is off on the lyrics of the second. I believe the first act will be finished by next week, and, of course, we are mailing you one the minute the first act is complete. I like Peter Zeissler¹⁴ very much, and we are going to use him. I have kept in constant touch with Oliver¹⁵, and have told him that he will have the first act next week. I am having lunch today with Vinnie Donehue, and I am not going to tell him I've read as much of the first act as I have, because the boys want him to get the whole first act complete. I think it has every chance in the world of being an enormous success. The interest in parties from the part agents is tremendous. God knows how many Herman has sold! I keep pushing everybody on the time schedule. P.S. No news on the choreographer musical staging fellow yet. We have a couple of ideas, but I will write you in a few days about it.¹⁶

The letter shows everyone's zeal about the new project, which was making strides coming together. Oliver Smith had been hired as the set designer, Peter Zeissler was considered as stage production manager, and the search for choreographer was in full progress, while they were waiting for the script to be

¹⁴ Peter Zeissler was the stage manager for *The Sound of Music*.

¹⁵ Oliver Smith was the set designer for *The Sound of Music*.

¹⁶ Leland Hayward, Letter to Richard Halliday, 30 April 1959. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 11.

completed and the first musical tidbits to be shared. On May 13th, Hayward informed Richard Halliday of the completion of the first act:

I know very little to report to you. I have talked regularly to Vinnie Donehue, Dick, Oscar, Howard, Russell, and Oliver. No music yet to show anyone. The boys finished the first draft of the first act, and did not want to send it to you and Mary until they had had a chance to go over it a second time. It's good, and we all felt pretty much the same about it, that it was a very sound foundation, but needed hy'poing [sic]. I would think that you would be able to have a draft in a week or so. They are all working very hard and very concentrated.

Vincent Donehue makes a lot of sense.

P.S. I have also talked to Eddi Blum several times, who claims to have a lot of wonderful kids lined up to see. He says we are not going to have the big problem on that, that we fancied we would.¹⁷

As Lindsay, Crouse, Rodgers and Hammerstein continued to hammer out the score and libretto, the staging aspects started to take shape as well. Vincent Donehue and Leland Hayward wanted to retain specific parts of the movie *Die Trapp Familie*, most notably Maria's first entrance sliding down a bannister, the children's first entrance marching in line in their sailor suits, and performing a pantomime play for the adults at a Christmas party.¹⁸ The markings of Oscar Hammerstein II in his copy of the letter clearly indicate that, while he took Hayward's other suggestions into consideration, he rejected the movie references with exception of

¹⁷ Leland Hayward, Letter to Richard Halliday, 13 May 1959. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 11.

¹⁸ Leland Hayward, Letter to Howard Lindsay, Russel Crouse, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, cc: Vincent Donehue, 11 May 1959. US-NYp, Vincent Donehue Papers, Box 2, Folder 1. In a later letter, dated 25 May 1959, Donehue explains that Hayward's notes already contained ideas agreed on by both of them.

the children's entrance.¹⁹ By May 28th, Lindsay and Crouse were essentially finished with the script, and the costumes designer and choreographer had been settled, as casting deliberations began:

Most successful production meeting yesterday four authors[,] Donehue[,] Oliver[,] Herman[,] Blum[,] myself. Completed rough first draft end next week. Heard first song sound of music[,] absolutely killing[,] best thing they have written in ten years[,] concept show thrilling[,] Oliver brilliant[,] many decisions reached[,] pending your approval Joe Layton choreography and staging musical numbers[,] all enthusiastic[,] Lucinda Ballard costumes except Mary's[,] everyone's feeling Lucinda dreadful nuisance but untouchable for character work. Marvellous girl Ellen Hansley now replacing Polly Bergen[,] first impressions for Elsa. No other casting even close. Will know middle next week definitely Jay Blacktons [sic] availability one year but ninety percent sure[,] now Dick[,] Oscar[,] myself very anxious for Jay particularly for choral work with kids[,] please cable "Haywire" approval of above.²⁰

Naturally the libretto continued to undergo rewrites and revisions after the first completed draft, but two observations can be made from just looking at the first rough draft (A): Even though *The Sound of Music* was conceived as a family show, and also received as such by audiences, the libretto contains numerous political references and a strong visual presence of Nazism from the beginning. Second, the musical gives a very rough political profile of Austrian society, illustrating different reactions to National Socialism and the issue of state sovereignty. Furthermore, a comparison of the different available versions discloses considerable mitigation in

¹⁹ Leland Hayward, Letter to Howard Lindsay, Russel Crouse, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein, cc: Vincent Donehue, 11 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *Sound of Music* Box.

²⁰ Leland Hayward, Cable to Richard Halliday, 28 May 1959. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 11.

the visual approach of staging Nazi symbols over the course of time, with which the next section is concerned.

2.2.1. THE DE-POLITICIZATION OF THE PLOT

As stated before, *The Sound of Music* is based on a German *Heimatfilm* about the Trapp family. This particular genre in the German film industry flourished after World War II because it provided audiences with a chance for escapism. The plots are typically set in a landscape unmarred by Hitler and war destruction, presenting a simple, intact world, which is, however, full of stereotypes: Age and youth as well as urban temptation and rural purity are frequently pitted against each other among other clichés. Traditionally a love triangle is at the center of the story, with two boys, one of them good and the other one bad, fighting over the same girl. In the case of the Trapp family, of course, it was the other way round: Captain von Trapp was caught between two women.

Notably absent from *Die Trapp Familie* is a visual representation of Nazism, since the topic is usually eschewed in traditional *Heimatfilmen*. However, since it is so essential to the story, *Die Trapp Familie* solved this problem by not showing the *Anschluß* on screen but merely announcing it over radio in a scene. There are no intimidating hordes of Nazis in uniform, just one *Gauleiter* in civilian clothes, threatening the baron and insulting the freshly minted baroness. Nor are there any swastikas or banners, which would have been in all likelihood perceived as too offensive and provocative by German (and Austrian) audiences, who watched the film in theatres in 1956. After all, everyone was trying to move past the atrocities of

Nazi crimes and craving a sense of stability and normalcy after the chaos of the war years.

This decision to let the annexation occur off-screen, however, posed a problem for Lindsay and Crouse because they had to come up with a convincing depiction of the *Anschluss* on stage without any inspiration from the original to follow.²¹ As a result they went for a striking visual demonstration of Nazi power in the first draft to illustrate for American audiences the overwhelming ubiquity of Nazism in Austria during the months before the annexation. In this regard the first rough draft of *The Sound of Music* (Draft A) provides insight into what Americans associated with Nazism most closely, since Lindsay and Crouse would aspire to achieve instant recognition among audiences: Hitler salute, swastikas, storm troopers and the Gestapo. For instance, in Drafts A and B, the jury for the singing contest is comprised of the Ministries of Culture and Propaganda as well as the Gestapo – which prompted Vincent Donehue to make a somewhat incredulous note about the “Gestapo judging [a] singing contest?”²² Oscar Hammerstein II concurred on this incongruity and subsequently changed the Gestapo to Ministry of Interior in Draft D. Eventually this reference was entirely cut, from Draft F onwards (Act II/Scene 5).

²¹ The English translation of the German original in the Oscar Hammerstein II collection strongly suggests that Lindsay and Crouse used it as a starting point for their book adaptation of the film.

²² Vincent Donehue, handwritten notes, undated. US-NYp, Vincent Donehue Papers, Box 2, Folder 1.

For a brief period in July the overall tone of the libretto becomes darker, as the immediacy of the Nazi threat is heightened. A slight change in Rolf's lyrics, when he has a rendezvous with Liesl (Act I/Scene 9), illustrates this shift towards intimidation: In drafts A through D he says that the Nazis are "making plans," which implies that the annexation plans for Austria are still in the early stages. However in draft E, his line changes to "They're pretty mad at those who don't think so. They're getting ready to – well, let's hope your father doesn't get into trouble."²³ This wording suggests that the *Anschluss* is imminent and beyond the planning stage, ready for execution.

Around the same time, Rodgers and Hammerstein began work on the "You Can't Fight City Hall Song," which was one of the many early working titles for "No Way To Stop It."²⁴ According to Vincent Donehue's notes, this song was supposed to have a "bitter and sardonic"²⁵ tone, which resulted in "Play Safe!"

As the title suggests, Max and Elsa appeal to the Captain to take no chances by openly defying the Nazis, should the *Anschluss* come. As the song progresses, the political and moral differences between the Captain and his friends become more and more obvious, which leads to an irreparable rift between him and Elsa. "Play Safe!" is the first and only time *The Sound of Music* addresses the brutality and

²³ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 63, Folder 1: 1-6-32.

²⁴ Others were "Buck The Tide," "I" and "A Thing Called I," as the song took more shape.

²⁵ Vincent Donehue, handwritten notes, undated. US-NYp, Vincent Donehue Papers, Box 2, Folder 1.

Gleichschaltung of the Nazi regime,²⁶ even though it is done under the cloak of cynicism and humor. The song is full of warnings for the Captain laying out the threats to his life he is facing if he continues resisting the regime, ranging from firing squads to concentration camps:

MAX: If you don't want a firing squad to pepper you,
Then see that you behave yourself, you schlepper, you.

[...]

ELSA: Never argue with a pistol when it's hot

MAX: For no matter what a firebrand you are
With a bullet in your belly you are not
A firebrand who'll get very far.

[...]

ELSA: Don't set the world on fire!

MAX: You stout-hearted schnook,
Like a fool you would look,
Walking behind barbed wire!

ELSA: (You wouldn't like it.)
Walking behind barbed wire!²⁷

Instead of being an iconoclast, Max and Elsa argue that it is not the Captain's job to fight for the little man and solve other people's problems. They truly show their selfish colors in this song, expounding the problem that if everyone did as they propose, the world would be a scary place and allow subversive individuals and bullies like the Nazis free reign. Max and Elsa urge their friend to do as they do and do the right thing in their opinion in the refrain:

²⁶ The process of making everyone conform to Nazi ideology in the Third Reich.

²⁷ Oscar Hammerstein II, "Play Safe!" 29 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box C. I do not know whether Hammerstein did this on purpose, but there is a certain irony putting Yiddish words, such as schlepper and schnook, into the mouths of Nazi collaborators Elsa and Max, while they are trying to convince him to switch sides to Nazism, (even if they are not anti-Semitic because they do not really believe in Nazi ideology).

ELSA: Play safe, play safe!
Don't be a hero,
Stay down to earth, be smart!
MAX: Play safe, play safe!
Don't fight the big shots.
ELSA: Don't be a bleeding heart!²⁸

The rapier wit of Hammerstein's lyrics does not obscure the gravity of the moment, as the Captain's conclusion to the song shows:

CAPTAIN: If I understand you –
And I think that I can –
You demand a husband
Who's a practical man.
[...]
Be a unit with the others
As identical as raindrops in a cloud
Only fools are disobedient and proud
To be proud?
Not aloud!
Play safe, play safe
Do what they tell you
Learn how to bow your head
And take all they give
And they may let you live
But I'd just as soon be dead.
MAX: He is a dumkopf!
CAPTAIN: I'd just as soon be dead!²⁹

Elsa and Max sometimes seem to be toeing the fine line between humor and good taste. For instance, at some point Max suggests that the Captain “wear what is stylish, put on a nice brown shirt.”³⁰ In an earlier version of the song, Elsa

²⁸ Oscar Hammerstein II, “Play Safe!” 29 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box C, Folder “Sound of Music.”

²⁹ Oscar Hammerstein II, “Play Safe!” 24 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box, Folder “No Way To Stop It.”

³⁰ Oscar Hammerstein, “Play Safe!” 29 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box C, Folder “Sound of Music.”

recommends to Georg to “Cast your fortune with the leader, he’s a whizz [sic]!” and Max comments in his dry humor, “What a whizz! Knows his biz!”³¹ In the end Rodgers and Hammerstein probably decided that this song did not fit the overall tone of the show and discarded it. “Play Safe!” never found its way into the complete drafts.³²

Technically “Play Safe!” could be construed as making light of something as serious as Nazis, which may have been the reason why Hammerstein moved away from using Nazi violence as a central theme for the number. The next version titled “I” already shifts the focus away from Nazism towards fighting the inevitable. Instead of listing all the possible threats, Elsa and Max now provide a list of futile undertakings to convey to their friend how senseless his opposition is:

MAX: You can’t stop this tidal wave –
[...]
You can’t stop an avalanche [by shaking your fist at it]³³
ELSA: You can’t stop the rain when it starts to fall –
MAX: One can never stop a cop from stopping traffic –
ELSA: You can’t beat the boss!
MAX: You can’t fight City Hall!³⁴

“I” contained already a lot of material used later in “No Way To Stop It,” including the verses about the universe not caring about what people on earth do and the refrain that there is no way to stop it. One difference between “I” and “No

³¹ Oscar Hammerstein, “Play Safe!” 24 July 1959 (approximately). Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *Sound of Music* box, Folder “No Way To Stop It.”

³² No music for this song survives.

³³ This line was added later at an unspecified date instead of “or a herd of elephants.”

³⁴ Oscar Hammerstein II, “I,” 5-6 September 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box, Folder “No Way To Stop It.”

Way To Stop It” is that in the latter Max and Elsa present their arguments stronger as pseudo-scientific evidence than in “I”. This is done in order to substantiate their opinion that it is better to sit tight and wait until the storm blows over, since in those situations nothing one can do will make a difference:

ELSA: Why not learn to put your faith and your reliance
On an obvious and simple fact of science?
A crazy planet full of crazy people
Is somersaulting all around the sky,
And every time it turns another somersault,
Another day goes by!
And there’s no way to stop it,
No there’s no way to stop it,
No you can’t stop it even if you try.
So I’m not going to worry,
No, I’m not going to worry,
Every time I see another day go by.

[...]

MAX: While somersaulting at a cockeyed angle,
We make a cockeyed circle round the sun!
And when we circle back to where we started from,
Another year has run.³⁵

The song puts the political events into a bigger perspective by zooming out from the immediate local situation to a cosmic relevance. No matter what people do to each other in this world, the earth will continue to turn on its axis and keep circling around the sun. As a result, in the bigger scheme of things, it does not really matter what you think or do. Elsa and Max as moral foils for Captain von Trapp. As a result of the changes to this number, the focus also turns the spotlight away from the Captain’s wellbeing to magnify Elsa and Max’s self-absorbed character.

³⁵ Howard Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music* (New York: Random House, 1960), 104.

The “sit tight and wait” approach to Nazism, here endorsed by the Captain’s friends, was not uncommon and was also picked up by the creators of *Cabaret*. However, while in 1932, when *Cabaret* takes place, the idea of Nazism as merely a fleeting ideology was still believable; in 1939, when *The Sound of Music* plays, people should have realized that Nazism was clearly not a passing fad. Max and Elsa’s stance can be explained, however, by the self-deceiving notion of many Austrians that Hitler would leave the neighboring country alone. Once Hitler invaded Austria and annexed it, it would have been clear to any doubters that the Germans were not merely flexing their muscles but setting out on a European, if not worldwide, conquest.

One strategy by Lindsay and Crouse from the beginning was to present the Trapp family as being surrounded and outnumbered by Nazis. For instance, Drafts A through C really emphasize the fact that the Trapp villa has been infiltrated by Nazis. In addition to the trusted butler Franz, who has been portrayed as a Nazi sympathizer from the moment the audience meets him, it turns out that the family’s gardener, Hans Braun is not only a party member but the *Gauleiter*’s lieutenant:

ZELLER: You will take orders from us – and so will the Captain. (To

Frau Schmidt) Where will I find Hans Braun?

FRAU SCHMIDT: In the garden. He’s our head gardener.

ZELLER: He is also my lieutenant [sic]. (He turns to Max and salutes)

Heil!

MAX: Heil!³⁶

³⁶ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box: 2-4-2 – 2-4-3.

However “nothing is done with it,” as Donehue points out in his notes, when he wonders “Does Hans have to be a Nazi?” and so eventually Oscar Hammerstein cut the line in Draft D.³⁷

Even if the Nazis are not personally present, their power is frighteningly displayed with swastika bonfires in early drafts (A-E). While Maria and the Captain sing their love duet, dusk falls and suddenly bonfires in the form of swastikas light up behind them on the mountains (Act II/ Scene 1):

MARIA: Captain, the children want to know whether they can stay up to see the bonfires.

CAPTAIN: The bonfires?

MARIA: The bonfires on the mountain.

CAPTAIN: This isn't St. John's Eve. What bonfires?

MARIA: Someone in the village told them there were to be bonfires on the mountain tonight.... That everyone at this house should watch them.

CAPTAIN: I don't know anything about it – but of course they may stay up.

[...]

(Through the scene dusk has been progressing and it is now quite dark on the mountains. Toward the end of the number several bonfires in the form of swastikas appear on the mountainside, unnoticed by the Captain and Maria. Perhaps just before the number ends Elsa comes out of the house to say good-by to the Captain. She sees the swastikas on the mountainside, looks toward the Captain and Maria, and exits into the house)³⁸

It is unclear whether this scene was realized in rehearsals and the New England tryouts (due to the gap in available scripts between mid-August and late October). However, the typescript of “Notes on Scenic Production” found in the

³⁷ Vincent Donehue, handwritten notes, undated. US-NYp, Vincent Donehue Papers, Box 2, Folder 1.

³⁸ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box: 2-1-11 – 2-1-12.

Leland Hayward Papers does specify for set designer Oliver Smith what the authors and producers had in mind for this particular scene:

Act II, Scene 1: THE TERRACE OF THE VON TRAPP VILLA, THE SAME AS ACT I, SCENE 7.

In this scene we go into twilight, and on the mountains on the backdrop we want the effect of one or more bonfires in the shape of swastikas. This can be on St. John's Eve, June 23, or perhaps the bonfires may be a personal warning to Captain Von Trapp.³⁹

While these notes are undated, the rehearsal notes by Vincent Donehue from early October, dated in the week *The Sound of Music* was playing in New Haven, contain a single undated sheet with the dialogue between Maria and the Captain about the bonfires, indicating that this scene may have made it until try-outs. Unfortunately this is an undated sheet slipped into a stack of other dated revisions, therefore it cannot be verified. The scene is, however, definitely gone by the end of October/early November, as it is missing from Draft F onward.

After the *Anschluss*, the Nazis are originally dressed in uniforms, arriving in groups and outnumbering the Captain in the confrontation scene, when he receives his commission. In Drafts A through D, it is four against two: The Captain and Maria have to deal with *Gauleiter* Zeller, Captain von Schreiber, Herr Oberst, who was also a guest at the dinner party, and a storm trooper. In Draft E, there are only three Nazis, since Herr Oberst is not joining them, but in exchange Captain von Schreiber is promoted to admiral, so he is now outranking Captain von Trapp. Instead of

³⁹ US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 75, Folder 16. Since the *Anschluss* happened in March of 1938, i.e., before St. John's Eve, one must conclude that the meaning of the bonfires are a threat, or at least a warning, from the Nazis for the Captain, as suggested in the scenic description, or a harbinger for the imminent annexation.

Maria, Max is now there as moral support for the Captain – the men are handling matters amongst themselves, so to speak. In Drafts F-H, it is an even ratio between the *Gauleiter* and Admiral on one side and the Captain and Max on the other.

Moreover, there is a strong presence of Nazis on the festival stage in the early drafts (A-E). A storm trooper adjusts the microphone, shortly after an SS officer whispers into Max's ear, and once it becomes clear that the Trapp family is gone, a uniformed soldier rushes across the stage. For the later drafts (F-H) these individual images are conflated into "three men in S.S. uniforms running across stage from L(ef) to R(igh)t."⁴⁰ Additionally, Rolf's wardrobe is unspecified in the finale at the Abbey gardens (Drafts F-G), whereas previously he was all decked out in a storm trooper's uniform. Interestingly enough, Draft H dated November 1st, 1960, which I presume to be the rehearsal script for the *Sound of Music National Tour*, restored Rolf's military clothes.

However, an article in *The New York Times* by Seymour Peck explains that during the tryouts in Boston, the Nazis were relegated to off-stage voices:

Perhaps Lindsay and Crouse succeeded too well in their efforts at realism, for one Boston critic complained that their book, with its strong conflict between the Trapps and the Nazis, was overly "melodramatic." Thus, during the Boston run, an alteration was made. Although the story remains unchanged and still ends with the Trapps leaving Austria closely pursued by the Nazis, "You never see a Nazi." Lindsay said.

"The end result," Rodgers added, "is there's more menace without seeing them than there was when they were on stage in those musical comedy uniforms. Having them offstage exerts more pressure on the situation than seeing them did. But I've heard no expressions of discomfort about our bringing the Nazis into a musical. I think people

⁴⁰ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 136.

are deeply sympathetic toward Georg von Trapp's unwillingness to become totalitarian. Whom are we going to offend, people who like Nazis?"⁴¹

Without any confirmed eyewitness accounts it is hard to ascertain to what extent Nazi symbols and uniforms were present on the stage in the original production.⁴² However, a press release shortly before November 16th, 1962 indicates that at some point Nazi uniforms must have at least been reintroduced during the first three years:

More than 2,000 aspirin, 56,000 yard of thread, 4,500 ladyfingers, and 195 pairs of shoes – those are just a few of the totals racked up by the New York company of "The Sound of Music," which begins its fourth year on Broadway on Tuesday November 16th at the Hellinger Theatre. [...] Four guitar cases have gone by the wayside, a dozen or so bosun's whistles (used by the nautical Capt. Von Trapp) have followed suit, and so has a staircase newel post and four Nazi uniforms.⁴³

Jessica Hillman-McCord, who mentions the curiosity of the uniforms in her book *Echoes of the Holocaust on the American Musical Stage* (2012), poses a much more pressing question than the if and how:

Rodgers' choice of the phrase, "musical comedy uniforms" is particularly fascinating here: what exactly does he mean? Were the costume choices already watered down from the actual Nazi uniform? Or was Rodgers acknowledging a shift in perception when a uniform went from history to the stage, particularly a musical stage? Was he himself questioning the power of figures of evil on the musical comedy stage? The incongruity of the meaning of such uniforms

⁴¹ Seymour Peck, "They Made 'the Sound of Music' /About Those Who Helped Make 'the Sound of Music'," *The New York Times*, 15 November 1959, 3.

⁴² Unfortunately, the photo collection in the Richard Rodgers Papers in the Billy Rose Theater Division at the *New York Public Library for the Performing Arts* contains no images of any of the scenes involving Nazis.

⁴³ Frank Goodman and Ben Washer, "The Sound of Music" Reaches High Statistical Note, undated. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 75, Folder 17.

combined with the associations of the light Broadway musical theatre form may have struck the creative team. Or perhaps it was the contrary, that Nazis embodied on the stage would have been a phenomenologically [sic] strong image, one which had actually not yet been attempted in the post-war climate. In *The Diary of Anne Frank* the Nazis are also kept offstage, indeed this seems to be the preferred stylistic choice of the era. Although Rodgers' argued that absence holds more power to frighten, perhaps the unacknowledged impact of an embodied Nazi offers a stronger explanation. Perhaps Nazis onstage were simply too frightening, too real, in an otherwise light musical about singing children.⁴⁴

I want to add another possible explanation for this conundrum of the Nazi uniforms, which ties it into the larger point I am making, namely the de-politicization of the plot. In 1959, fourteen years after World War II had ended, most of the paying public was old enough to remember the vivid images of Nazi symbolism in weekly newsreels. They needed no visual reminders of what Nazi uniforms, whether SS or storm troopers, looked like in real life, and the black swastika surrounded by a white circle on the red background was likely the first image that came to their mind at the mention of Nazi. When Lindsay and Crouse set out to adapt *Die Trapp Familie* into *The Sound of Music* they felt they had to create an overpowering presence of the Nazis to convey their threat, but over the process of finalizing the libretto, they, as well as Rodgers and Hammerstein, came to realize that less is more. Perhaps audience reaction and critical response in Boston factored into their decisions to tone down the visual presence of Nazism in the staging. However, I believe I have laid out sufficient evidence to suggest that this toning down was simply the logical conclusion to a months-long process of finding the

⁴⁴ Jessica Hillman-McCord, *Echoes of the Holocaust on the American Musical Stage* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2012), 31.

right balance regarding stage presence and dynamics between protagonists and antagonists. The next section, which is concerned with a character analysis based on the main character's interaction with their political environment, will clarify some aspects of how the plot was depoliticized.

2.3. THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

With exception of Max Detweiler, Rolf Gruber and the Nazis, the characters in *The Sound of Music* are based on real people, most notably Georg and Maria von Trapp. As with any dramatization of historical events, facts and real characters have been distorted under the mantle of artistic license. I do not want to concern myself with a comparison of the real people and fictional characters in this section, even though I will occasionally reference the historical situation to clarify a character's actions or contextualize artistic decisions made by the creators.

It is worth noting, however, at this point that, since no Jewish people were involved in the Trapp family's escape from Hitler's claws, *The Sound of Music* does not include any Jewish characters. The creators introduced two entirely new and original characters, Max Detweiler and Rolf Gruber. They could have given either of them a different background and made one Jewish, altering their role in the musical. As a result of this choice, Nazism in *The Sound of Music* is portrayed almost exclusively as an issue of state sovereignty, eclipsing anti-Semitism. The creators also subsequently rely on audience's knowledge of Nazis' brutal crimes against humanity, which are never mentioned and were perhaps considered irreconcilable with a lighthearted, family-oriented musical at the time.

I am primarily interested in each of the main character's response to the changing political environment and the motivation behind their choices. In the case of Maria, her political opinions are never explicitly stated, whereas a large part of the Captain's character is defined by his defiance of the Nazis. Max Detweiler and Elsa Schrader are both Nazi collaborators walking a very fine line between self-preservation and profiteering. Rolf joins the Nazi movement because he wants to be important.

The Sound of Music presents a finished political universe with antagonistic Nazis in non-speaking roles and the heroic protagonists empowered by the force of music. Unlike *Cabaret*, in *The Sound of Music* the characters' relationship to their political environment is simple and straightforward. Even those characters such as Max, Elsa, and Rolf, whose political motivation and affiliation seem questionable at best, downright ugly at worst, are never really conflicted about their choices. Characters are either good or bad in this world, therefore the three categories for my character analysis are: (1) The Good – Austrian Resistance, (2) The Bad – Austrian Nazis and (3) The Ugly – Austrian Profiteers.

2.3.1. CAPTAIN VON TRAPP & MARIA – AUSTRIAN RESISTANCE

In *The Sound of Music*, the audience experiences the political events through the perspective of the Trapp family, who represent the Austrian resistance against encroaching Nazism. The political situation in the musical before the *Anschluss* is purposely kept ambiguous, evoking a happy mixture of monarchy and republic, while in reality the country went through a period of Austro-fascism. With the

exception of the Nazis, references to political entities are avoided. Instead, the focus is on Captain von Trapp's loyalty to Austria.

Captain von Trapp is introduced as a principled, disciplined and resolute man, who runs even his household with military efficiency. In early versions of the script, Max describes him as a man "with enough character for both of them."⁴⁵ One of the first things we learn about the Captain's character is his disdain for the National Socialists, thanks to an exchange between the servants at the Trapp villa:

FRANZ: Well, that's one thing people are saying – if the Germans did take over Austria, we'd have efficiency.

FRAU SCHMIDT: Don't let the Captain hear you say that.⁴⁶

The Captain's loyalty lies with Austria as a country, its culture and landscape, and not government entities. His reputation as a critic of the Nazi regime precedes him and isolates him in Salzburg society. Rolf tries to warn Liesl that her father might get into hot water with the Nazis if he continues to resist them (Act I/ Scene 6). At the gala dinner for Elsa, the Captain's social isolation becomes blatantly obvious when the majority of invited guests fail to appear (Act I/ Scene 11). It does not really bother the Captain that the followers of Nazi Germany have chosen to avoid being seen with Captain von Trapp; he'd rather surround himself with like-minded people, such as Baron von Elberfeld. The party also reveals the deep political and ideological divide in Austrian society, since half of the guests are not speaking terms with the other half. The atmosphere is tense already when Herr

⁴⁵ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box: 1-7-10.

⁴⁶ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 25.

Zeller, an aggressive Nazi, insults Baron von Elberfeld and reminds everyone that the *Anschluss* is imminent and inevitable. The scene sets up Herr Zeller as the direct antagonist for the Captain in the second act, after the annexation of Austria.

The Captain's contempt for the Nazis builds up over the course of the show and culminates with him referring to them derisively as "swine" (Act II/Scene 5). A comparison of different available scripts shows how the character of Captain von Trapp was developed over time. In the earliest draft, the Captain demonstrates uninhibited wrath and contempt of the Nazis, causing him to lose his hot temper and react dramatically to the news of the *Anschluss*. He more or less prohibits Max or anyone else to communicate with Berlin on his premises (Act II/Scene 1), while in later versions he merely indicates his disdain for it.

CAPTAIN: Max, I don't like people talking to Berlin from my house.
MAX: But, Georg, it may be my sister.⁴⁷

Of course, Max has been exchanging frequent phone calls with Berlin, presumably to plan the Kaltzberg Festival and not to keep in touch with his globetrotting sister; however, his innocent response exposes the irrationality of the Captain's desire to cut off contact with Berlin entirely. The authors must have realized this and cut the line, since the Captain had addressed his displeasure with Max's Berlin calls already once in the same scene:

CAPTAIN: Max, this isn't the first call you've had from Berlin.
MAX: Georg, you know I have no political convictions. Can I help it if other people have?

⁴⁷ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959 Draft US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box: 2-1-10.

ELSA: Let's not stir that up again. The Germans have promised not to invade Austria. Max knows that.

CAPTAIN: Then why does he bother to answer those calls from Berlin?

MAX: Because if they don't keep their promise, I want to have some friends among them.⁴⁸

At the news of the *Anschluss*, the Captain cuts his honeymoon with Maria short to return to Austria. As concerned parents, both of them would want to be with their children during the political upheaval, which must be a deeply unsettling experience for the young ones. However, in Draft A, the children appear to be relatively unfazed by the new political regime, more worried about how their father will react to their appearance at the festival while the Captain cannot hide his strong emotional reaction. When a surprised Max welcomes back his friend, the Captain bursts out almost melodramatically:

MAX: We didn't expect you back so soon, Georg!

CAPTAIN (Solemnly): Did you expect me to stay away from Austria at this hour?⁴⁹

In the next drafts, the line is changed to "After what's happened to Austria!" which could give the impression that he is more concerned with the future of the country than his children's well-being. That may have actually been the case during the tryouts in New England and audience reactions may have prompted another change to a more relatable reaction in the form of the final version of the exchange:

MAX: Georg, we didn't expect you back until next week.

CAPTAIN: Max, it's good you're here. There's much I want to know.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 101-02.

⁴⁹ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein Collection II, *The Sound of Music* box: 2-4-4.

Draft E, dated mid-August by me, still has the more dramatic reaction, whereas Draft F, dated late October at the earliest, ergo during the Boston previews, features the final version of the line. Unfortunately there is a gap from mid-August until late October in the scripts available to me, so until this hypothesis can be confirmed against rehearsal scripts from the same time range, this will have to remain a working theory.

Another inconsistency in the Captain's character in early drafts (A-C) is his brief excitement over the latest submarine technology, when he receives the commission (Act II/Scene 5):

CAPTAIN: I can't just wave this aside. I have to confess it would be exciting to have a ship under me again. One of these new submarines - -- one of those incredible U-boats -

MARIA: Georg -

CAPTAIN: It would be a relief and a comfort to give security to you and the children - (He pauses) But it means - (He looks at her) Maria, help me!⁵¹

Granted it is only the briefest of moments, but the usually reserved and stoic Captain von Trapp gushing over those incredible new U-boats is out of character. Oscar Hammerstein II thought so too and cut the line in Draft D. It is understandable that Captain von Trapp would be tempted by the opportunity to command a submarine again. Not only was he forced into retirement when the Austrian Empire fell apart and lost its access to the Adriatic Sea, but also accepting the commission would mean that his family was safe from Nazi prosecution. However, enthusiasm

⁵⁰ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 120.

⁵¹ Lindsay et al, *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box: 2-4-10.

and relief are quickly taken over by repulsion and the Captain turns to his wife to help him make a decision.

This test of his convictions is the logical conclusion to the Captain's vociferous and passionate protestations that he would defy the Nazis should it come to a confrontation (Act II/Scene II). It is one thing to assert one's position theoretically and verbally, yet an entirely different matter to follow through with concrete actions. The Captain and his friends argue about the appropriate response to rising Nazism and the potential annexation. While Max and Elsa choose to collaborate with the Nazis for self-preservation and try to convince the Captain to follow their example, Captain von Trapp emerges only more resolute in his plans to openly defy Nazi power. He becomes a shining example of an Austrian *Widerstandskämpfer*, who will not only resist the Nazis but openly fight them. He cannot compromise his political ideologies and moral obligations under any circumstances, even if it means endangering his family. In spite of Max and Elsa telling him point blank that the Nazis will strip him off his property and come after his children, he is unwavering in his opposition to the Nazis.

ELSA: Georg – if they – if they should invade us – would you defy them?

CAPTAIN: ... Yes.

MAX: Do you realize what might happen to you? To your property?

ELSA: To your children?

MAX: To everyone close to you... to Elsa... to me?⁵²

In an earlier version of this scene, dated July 29, 1959, Max and Elsa in the song "Play Safe!" implore the Captain to rethink his stance and play it safe, listing

⁵² Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 102.

dire consequences, such as concentration camps, firing squads, etc. It is almost as if they want to frighten him into compliance; however, the humorous tone of the lyrics takes the bite out of the threats. The Captain protests Max and Elsa's lighthearted dismissal of the Nazis in "Play safe!" After briefly considering his friends' advice, repeating it aloud to himself, as if that made the meaning of the situation clearer, he comes to the conclusion that he cannot compromise his own beliefs for anyone else, even if it means risking his life and those of everyone he loves.

Captain: Play safe, play safe!
Don't be a hero
Stay down to earth, be smart.
Play safe, play safe!
Don't fight the big shots,
Don't be a bleeding heart!⁵³

"Don't you care who's right?" the Captain confronts his friends, revealing what a deeply moral and principled man he is. Their individual responses to the Captain's questions are revealing of Max and Elsa's characters, respectively. Max admits he does not know who is right and who is wrong, while Elsa suggests no one can decide who is right, not even the Captain. This subtle difference in wording suggests that Elsa is more receptive to Nazi ideas than is Max, who is foremost concerned with his own welfare, careful to avoid conflict and focused on the practical side of things. Indeed, the captain seems to pick up on this slight distinction because he begins to realize that Elsa will not stand united with him if he continues to oppose the Nazis:

⁵³ Oscar Hammerstein, "Play Safe!" 29 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box C, Folder "Sound of Music."

Captain: If I understand you,
And I think that I do
You don't want a husband making trouble for you.⁵⁴

During the course of this song, both Elsa and the Captain realize that their politics and morals are irreconcilable. Elsa is unwilling to risk her life for the Captain's idealism, and the Captain cannot kowtow to someone he loathes. He'd rather die than follow Hitler blindly like a lemming. As a former soldier in the Imperial Austrian navy, he is used to taking orders without question, even if he disagrees. As a captain he still had to follow orders from above and expected his sailors to obey him, so for him to outright refuse now reveals a lot about the fundamental conviction of his stance. His concerns are rooted in the enforced uniformity of thought and behavior and subsequent loss of individuality and discourse (*Gleichschaltung*):

CAPTAIN: March along with all the others in the crowd
Be as much like all the others as you can,
As identical as raindrops in a cloud –
An organization man!
MAX (spoken): Now you're talking!
CAPTAIN: Don't have opinions,
Put all your dreams to bed –
MAX: Be wise and survive.
ELSA: And be glad you're alive –
CAPTAIN (quietly): But I'd just as soon be dead.
MAX (to ELSA) He is a dumkopf!
CAPTAIN (loud and clear and firm): I'd just as soon be dead!⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Oscar Hammerstein, "Play Safe!" 29 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box C, Folder "Sound of Music."

⁵⁵ Oscar Hammerstein, "Play Safe!" 29 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box C, Folder "Sound of Music."

Eventually this song was dismissed in favor of “No Way To Stop It,” as the focus of this scene shifted from the consequences of fighting the Nazis to the futility of fighting a losing battle. Instead of laying out all the terrible things that would befall the Captain if he defied the Nazis, Max and Elsa emphasize the fact that there is nothing he can do to stop them. The Captain listens to them explaining that in the bigger scheme of the universe, they do not matter. The earth will continue to orbit around the sun no matter what, therefore the best one can do is look after one’s own interests. The Captain eventually joins them, but not because they have convinced him but rather to mock them. A handwritten note by Oscar Hammerstein on an undated typescript of the number clarifies the Captain’s involvement in the song:

As the song proceeds, Max does not perceive that the Captain’s participation is ironical and sarcastic. Elsa, however, studies him suspiciously.⁵⁶

During “No Way To Stop It” Elsa and the Captain find themselves on opposite ends of the political spectrum, which is not only expressed in the lyrics but also in the music. The song features the Captain playing the guitar, so even when he is not singing, the instrument represents his views. He begins with a short introduction, strumming the guitar to establish the fast tempo and duple meter of the number with eight notes followed by an eighth note rest on every beat.

Soon Elsa, now also accompanied by the strings, implores her “dear, attractive, dewy-eyed idealist [...] to become a realist.” The instrumentation changes for Max’s line, as the muted brass join and the trombone creates rhythmic unrest

⁵⁶ Oscar Hammerstein, “Act II, Scene 1,” undated. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box, Folder “No Way To Stop It.”

through syncopations. Since Max compares the Captain to a herring fighting a shark, the trombone probably symbolizes the sudden shark attack and the looming Nazi threat that can annex Austria any second simultaneously.

The guitar accompaniment changes every few measures, as if to challenge the establishment of any rhythm, reflecting the Captain's inner conflict. Sometimes the guitar drops out completely or is used to emphasize particular words with chords, such as the Captain's "bow" and "despise," as well as Elsa's "learn," "reliance" and to a lesser extent "obvious" and "science."

The duple meter of the song evokes the image of Elsa and Max marching to the beat of Hitler's drum as much as it suggests the invariable, unstoppable continuous motion of the orbiting earth. However, frequently the guitar creates the impression of alternating between emphasizing backbeats, offbeats and downbeats, suggesting the Captain's refusal to follow Nazi marching orders. It could also be seen as a challenge to throw Elsa and Max off their rhythm. The use of brass instruments and piccolos in the instrumental interlude especially further alludes to the marching-band nature of the song.

At the end of the number Elsa imitates opera singers, when she belts out her final "I" as long as possible, which was at one time probably suggested by Oscar Hammerstein.⁵⁷ It imputes divaesque behavior to Elsa's character, and in connection

⁵⁷ In the previous version of this song called "I", Hammerstein instructs Elsa to "sing 'ah' obbligato, obviously aping a Viennese prima donna" against a passage sung by Max, which never made it past the development state. (Oscar Hammerstein, "Musical Scena" 9 September 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound Of Music* Box, Folder "No Way To Stop It.").

with this particular song it only solidifies her self-centeredness. She is not only a political but also a moral mismatch for the Captain, who would also not like to hand over the reins to his wife. Their breakup after this song becomes inevitable, and the Captain is free to pursue the governess of his children.

Maria never clearly and explicitly states her political convictions, although it can be assumed, through association with the captain's character, that she opposes Nazism. In "Play Safe!" (Act II/Scene 1, July 29, 1959), Maria enters the stage as the direct foil to Elsa's character. She keeps in the background so the characters do not know she is there, but the audience can see her and receive a visual reminder that Maria is the perfect romantic, moral, and political match for the Captain. Having the two contrasting women next to each other on the stage in "Play Safe!" only reinforces what the audience has known all along since the first encounter between Georg and Maria.

When the captain briefly considers in the song Max and Elsa's advice to lay low for the duration of the Nazi menace, "Maria looks on in despair, terrified that Georg will take the path of least resistance."⁵⁸ However, when the Captain resolutely declares he'd rather die than cooperate with Hitler at the end of it, "Maria looks as if she would like to applaud him [and] her face is beaming now with relief."⁵⁹ Without the use of words, Maria's political affiliations have been conveyed to viewers.

⁵⁸ Oscar Hammerstein, "Play Safe!" 29 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection Box C, Folder "The Sound of Music."

⁵⁹ Oscar Hammerstein, "Play Safe!" 29 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection Box C, Folder "The Sound of Music."

Lindsay, Crouse, Rodgers and Hammerstein initially carried this quiet disclosure of Maria's political opinions into "No Way To Stop It" but ultimately cut it out.

In the final stage version, the revelation of Maria's politics is delayed until after the *Anschluss* has already happened. Even though she uses words this time, she does not express her views explicitly, but instead provides what appears to be the diplomatic answer of a wife supporting her husband:

CAPTAIN: Please, Maria, help me

MARIA: Georg, whatever you decide, will be my decision.

(THEY kiss)

CAPTAIN: Thank you. I know now I can't do it.

MARIA: Of course not.⁶⁰

However, there is much more to extrapolate from this dialogue than a diplomatic answer. This simple statement reveals a few fundamental truths about Maria's character and her relationship to her political environment: Not only has she been against Nazism all along but it is the conviction with which she says it, that discloses that Nazism goes against everything she stands for. There was never any question about it, never any temptation to follow their ideology for her. However, at the same time, she is willing to compromise her own beliefs for the welfare of the Captain and the children, the very thing the Captain himself struggles with and cannot bring himself to do – after all, if he had decided to accept the commission, she would have supported him. This simple exchange between them reinforces the ideal match Maria represents for the Captain. Where Elsa was unwilling to stand behind her man or find a compromise for their opposing views, Maria readily offers both.

⁶⁰ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 126-27.

2.3.2. MAX & ELSA – AUSTRIAN PROFITEERS

Max Detweiler and Elsa Schrader are arguably the most complex characters in *The Sound of Music* when it comes to politics. Even though they do not believe in Nazi ideology, they willingly collaborate with the Germans. They know how dangerous the Nazis can be, even though it is not spelled out in the dialogue immediately preceding “No Way To Stop It.” The audience initially understands that Max and Elsa’s decision to cooperate with the Germans is fueled by practical considerations, whereas the Captain cannot imagine betraying his ideals, even when people remind him of what could happen to him, his children or his friends.

CAPTAIN (*Rising*): Well, what will you do if they come?

MAX: What anyone with any sense would do—just sit tight and wait for it all to blow over.

CAPTAIN: And you think it will?

MAX: One thing is sure—nothing you can do will make any difference.

ELSA: Don't look so serious, darling. Take the world off your shoulders. Relax.⁶¹

Of course, neither Max nor Elsa believes that Nazism is just a passing phase in German politics, for in 1938 Hitler has been flexing his muscles next door to Austria for five years. And the Captain calls Max out for his empty platitude. (The discussion of *Cabaret* in Chapter IV shows that in 1933, before the Nazis took over in Germany, Germans went through similar motions.) No one in this scene doubts for one second that the *Anschluss* is around the corner, it is not a question of if or when, but only days away. So when Max comes to the obvious conclusion that the

⁶¹ Ibid., 102-03.

inevitable will happen no matter what one says or does, it could and should be a devastating moment.

Instead, the scene switches to levity and a lighthearted, albeit deeply cynical song about the futility of fighting losing battles. All of a sudden the real motivation behind Elsa and Max's cooperation with the Nazis is revealed. While there is undoubtedly a common sense of self-preservation running underneath their compliance, it goes beyond simple survival. Elsa and Max are exposed as selfish, self-centered characters, who believe that the world revolves around their egos.

MAX and ELSA: No, there's no way to stop it
If the earth wants to roll around the sun!
You're a fool if you worry
Over anything but little Number One!

CAPTAIN: That's you!

ELSA: That's I.

MAX: And I.

CAPTAIN: And me!

That all absorbing character!

ELSA: That fascinating creature!

MAX: That super-special feature—

ALL: *Me!* [...]

That as long as I'm living,

Just as long as I'm living,

There'll be nothing else as wonderful as—

ELSA: I!

ALL: I-I-I

Nothing else as wonderful as I.

ELSA (Speaking) I ... I ... I ...⁶²

The primary motivation for their support of the Nazis is that defying them would be detrimental to the lifestyle that they have indulged in so far. They choose the path of the least resistance because it is the one most convenient for their

⁶² Ibid., 104-06.

personal needs. Max even readily admits that he has no political convictions, which implies he also has nothing to believe in and defend or fight for. As a result, he does not treat the situation with the gravity it deserves, making jokes instead:

MAX: Georg, you know I have no political convictions. Can I help it if other people have?

ELSA: Let's not stir that up again. The Germans have promised not to invade Austria. Max knows that.

CAPTAIN: Then why does he bother to answer those calls from Berlin?

MAX: Because if they don't keep their promise, I want to have some friends among them.

ELSA: Naturally.

CAPTAIN: Oh, you agree, too?

MAX: (*Rising*) Georg, this is the way I look at it. There was a man who was dying. They were giving him the last rites. They asked him, "Do you renounce the devil and all his works?" and he said, "At this moment, I prefer not to make any enemies."⁶³

Captain von Trapp himself does not quite understand why he finds the Viennese impresario so endearing and keeps his company in spite of his questionable character (Act II/ Scene 9):

CAPTAIN: I am an Austrian—I will not be heiled!

MAX: Georg, why don't you look at things the way I do? What's going to happen is going to happen. Just be sure it doesn't happen to you.

CAPTAIN: Max, it's a good thing you haven't any character, because if you had I'm convinced I'd hate you.

MAX: You couldn't hate me. I'm too lovable.⁶⁴

In earlier drafts (A-F), the Captain says his line about Max's lack of character with amusement, to which Max replies that Georg has enough character for both of them. The men laugh fondly and all is well. However, Oscar Hammerstein II did not

⁶³ Ibid., 101-02.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 63.

like this line and first cut it in Draft E, before it was replaced with the more flippant response quoted above.

This small change is a symptom of a larger reconfiguration of Max Detweiler. In early scripts, Max is positioned more strongly as a concerned friend who looks out for the Captain whether it regards his friend's love life or his resistance to the Germans. However, the song material provided by Rodgers and Hammerstein ("How Can Love Survive" and "No Way To Stop It") reshaped Max into a more shallow and self-absorbed character. Accordingly, his portrayal in other scenes changed, as the quick comparison of Act II/Scene 5 excerpted below in Table 2.2 illustrates.

The dialogue changes in this scene are so subtle one could easily miss them. Individually they do not appear to fundamentally alter the character of Max but if the succession of changes is put into the larger context, they demonstrate how Max Detweiler's concern for Captain von Trapp recedes. In the final version of the script he comes across as a shallow opportunist who is only interested in his personal gain. Now he enrolls the children in the Kaltzberg Festival for selfish reasons, while previously he partially did it to protect his friend. If the Trapp children perform at a festival sponsored by the Nazis, the family could pretend that the Captain stopped fighting the Nazis. Max' character flaws are easier to digest when his worry about Georg is more tangible.

2.2. *The Sound of Music*, Act II, Scene 5, Max Detweiler Comparison

May 27, 1959 (A)	June–August (B–E)	October–November (F–H)
<p>MAX: We didn't expect you back so soon, Georg! CAPTAIN: Did you expect me to stay away from Austria at this hour? MAX: Georg, it's happened peacefully. Let's be thankful for that. CAPTAIN (scornfully) Thankful. (THEN) But I'm glad you're here, Max. There's much I'll want to know. [...] MAX: Georg, this is for Austria. (THE CAPTAIN stops and turns) CAPTAIN: There is no longer any Austria. (He exits)</p> <p>MAX: Maria, you've got to talk to him. What he does now may be important. You've got to convince him that he has to adjust to these conditions today.</p> <p>MARIA: I can't ask Georg to be less than what he is. MAX: Then I have to talk to him. (He starts out) If these children don't sing in the Festival – well, it would be a reflection on Austria, it could be damaging to Georg – and it wouldn't do me any good. (He exits)</p>	<p>MAX: Georg, we didn't expect you back so soon. CAPTAIN: After what's happened to Austria! MAX: Georg, it's happened peacefully. Let's be thankful for that. CAPTAIN (scornfully) Thankful. (THEN) But I'm glad you're here, Max. There's much I'll want to know. [...] MAX: Georg, this is for Austria CAPTAIN (He turns) What Austria? There is no Austria. (The CAPTAIN exits)</p> <p>MAX: Maria, you've got to talk to him. He's got to pretend to work with these people. I admire the way he feels – but he's got a rope around his neck. Maria, you've got to convince him, convince him he has to compromise. MARIA: That I can't do. MAX: Maria, you have to. MARIA: I can't ask Georg to be less than what he is. MAX: Then I have to talk to him. (He starts out) If these children don't sing in the Festival – well, it would be a reflection on Austria – and it wouldn't do me any good. (He exits)</p>	<p>MAX: Georg, we didn't expect you back until next week. CAPTAIN: Max, it's good you're here. There's much I want to know. [...] MAX: Georg, it's for Austria. CAPTAIN (Going up steps): There is no Austria. MAX: But the Anschluss happened peacefully. Let's at least be grateful for that. CAPTAIN: Grateful? To these swine? (He exits on balcony MAX: Maria, he must at least to pretend to work with these people. I admire the way he feels – but you must convince him, he has to compromise. MARIA: No, Max, no. MAX: Maria, you must. MARIA: I can't ask Georg to be less than what he is. MAX: Then I will talk to him. If these children don't sing in the Festival – well, it would be a reflection on Austria – and it wouldn't do me any good. (He exits)</p>

Tracing the development of Max's character in various script versions and scene drafts available, I would argue that his reliance on humor is his defense mechanism, which has gotten a little bit lost in the final stage version. As a result he

appears more quirky and aloof in the end version. Max hides behind hyperbole and his humor in overwhelming situations, which comes out wonderfully in the lyrics of “Play Safe!” when he warns the Captain:

If you go on behaving like Sir Lancelot
Somebody’s going to kick you in the pants a lot.
(The Captain responds with some protest from the guitar) ⁶⁵

Therefore, when he occasionally misfires in an attempt to lighten up the mood as illustrated above, he is readily forgiven. This is the reason why the Captain is friends with him, he knows there is no malice behind Max’ actions.

Max Detweiler is the kind of character who wants to be friends with everyone and avoid making enemies. In earlier script drafts (A-E), Elsa even explains it was the reason why she took over Max’s job because “He likes everybody and wants everybody to like him.”⁶⁶ Another predecessor of “No Way To Stop It” called “I” shows that Max indeed eschews conflict and passionate convictions, which allows him to adapt quicker to changing circumstances:

While strong men fight
Through thick and thin
I’ll stand aside and save my skin.
I’ll be polite to those who win,
And to hell with the smaller fry!⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Oscar Hammerstein, “Play Safe!” 5-6 September 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box, Folder “No Way To Stop It.”

⁶⁶ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, Undated (Blue.) US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box.

⁶⁷ Oscar Hammerstein, “Musical Scena,” 9 September 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound Of Music* Box, Folder “No Way To Stop It.”

He may tell himself and others that he has no character or convictions, since it allows him to form alliances with winners more easily. Unlike the captain who is defined by his convictions, Max Detweiler has adopted the survival strategy of a chameleon. For Max this is the most practical approach to tackling the difficulties life throws at you:

I keep out of trouble just as much as I can.
I am no crusader, I'm a practical man.⁶⁸

As long as Max continues to convince himself that he has neither character nor convictions he can continue to collaborate with everyone. As a result his character comes across as shallow, cocky and opportunistic. One might even say he is a profiteer, since he rises through the ranks from third secretary to first secretary of the Ministry of Education and Culture in the new regime (Act II/Scene 5). In the end, of course, his self-deception betrays Max's true character because he comes to play an instrumental role in the Trapp family's escape from the Nazis. He does have character, after all, and he does know right from wrong, and even though he gave the impression he would sell his mother for a quick buck or two, he does, in fact, not sell out his friends – knowing there may be repercussions waiting for him, should the Nazis ever find out.

He finds a clever and sly way to let the Trapp family know they are under observation by the Nazis. Using his position as organizer of the festival, he makes an

⁶⁸ Oscar Hammerstein, [Play Safe!], 24 July 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box, Folder "No Way To Stop It."

announcement that allows him to warn his friends that the minute the concert is over, the Captain will be taken into custody:

MAX (Entering): Thank you ladies and gentlemen. Thank you.
(FAMILY starts offstage) Just a moment. I have an announcement that concerns you. [...] and while we are waiting I think there should be an encore. It seems this may be the last opportunity the Von Trapp Family will have to sing together for a long long time. (MARIA and the CAPTAIN exchange a glance) I have just been informed that Captain Von Trapp leaves immediately after the concert for his new command in the naval forces of the Third Reich. A guard of honor has arrived to escort him directly from this hall to the naval base at Bremerhaven. (MAX looks offstage, indicating the presence of the guard of honor) And now ladies and gentlemen, the Family von Trapp again.⁶⁹

Thanks to his warning Maria and the Captain can orchestrate their escape around their “Farewell” number: one after another, each family member disappears without causing any suspicion; it is, after all, part of the performance. In previous drafts (A-E) Max buys them even more time for their escape and stalls the announcement of the final winner by elaborating on the background of the judges:

MAX: Ladies and gentlemen, I have here the decisions of our distinguished judges. (He holds up the paper) Perhaps at this time I should tell you who these gentlemen are. For the first time in the history of the Kaltzberg Festival we will have the honor of hearing the judgment of three high officials from Berlin – representing as they do – the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Propaganda, and perhaps most important, the Ministry of the Interior. I know you will agree with their decisions. (Then with a note of urgency in his voice) I know you will applaud their decisions.⁷⁰

Elsa Schraeder and Max Detweiler are right on the cusp between opportunistic profiteers and *Mitläufer*, as they would be referred to in German in

⁶⁹ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 133.

⁷⁰ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box: 2-5-2.

post-war Austria, when the Allied Forces sorted out the guilty from the innocent. At the top of the list were the *Hauptschuldigen*, the primary perpetrators of Nazi crimes, who were prosecuted and executed quickly after the war (cf. the *Nürnberger Processes* in Germany). Those were followed by explicit supporters and profiteers (*Belastete*) as well as Nazi sympathizers (*Minderbelastete*) who were tried and sentenced appropriately after the war. The final category before the clearly innocent is the group of *Mitläufer*, people who did not subscribe to the Nazi ideology but were either coerced or at least felt coerced – often through peer pressure or the perceived threat to their lives and those related to them – to participate in Nazi crimes. They usually distinguish themselves from *Minderbelastete* in that they did not pursue an active role but took part passively by not opposing, preventing and condoning what was going on around them.

Elsa's approach to Nazism is pragmatic at best and opportunistic at worst. She chooses the path of the least resistance because it presents the least inconvenience to her comfortable life. She does not really feel coerced into collaborating but makes a conscious choice, since she has the means to relocate abroad. Granted, this would mean she has to give up some of her wealth and the lavish life she is used to. In "I," the predecessor to "No Way To Stop It," Elsa's convenience is pitted directly against the Captain's resistance:

Elsa: So you
Can stew
And fret
And fight,
Attack
The wrong,
Defend

The Right,
While I
Engage
In pleasures light
Until
The day
I die.⁷¹

Nothing she says at any point in the musical indicates that she truly buys into the Nazi ideology; however, she is guilty by association. She not only condones their politics, but she is willing to work together with them, should they take over Austria. It is not disclosed in the libretto what kind of company she owns, but in previous versions both Elsa and Max are bankers, which would suggest that they would end up financing Hitler and his war machinery after the annexation – if they haven't already indirectly done so before the *Anschluss*.

Elsa is introduced to the audience as a calculating, diplomatic, business-savvy woman from Vienna who feels a little misplaced in the countryside. She tries to like it because the Captain does, but their interactions and small talk seem contrived sometimes (Act I/Scene 9). She makes every effort to fit into the Captain's life in Salzburg, while clinging to her lifestyle:

ELSA: I'd like to meet him [Baron Elberfeld]. I'd like to meet all of your friends here. Georg, why don't you give a dinner for me while I'm here? Nothing very much – just something lavish.

CAPTAIN: I wouldn't know whom to invite. Today it's difficult to tell who is a friend and who's an enemy.

ELSA: This isn't a good time to make enemies. Let's make some friends.⁷²

⁷¹ Oscar Hammerstein, [I], 5-6 September 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box, Folder "No Way To Stop It."

Elsa's optimistic response to the Captain's brooding statement foreshadows the conflict that will arise between the lovers in "No Way To Stop It" (Act II/ Scene 2). She genuinely cares for the Captain and is concerned for his emotional and physical wellbeing. She even understands his passion to defy the Nazis to some extent although she does not support it. She respects his views and character enough to not try to change him. However, she is also not willing to meet him halfway and get involved into politics. Since "No Way To Stop It" marks the exit cue for Elsa to make way for Maria in the Captain's heart, Elsa's compliance with the Nazis is hardly detrimental. The audience was never supposed to completely warm up to her as Maria's rival. Her character remains stiff and static throughout the first act, showing hardly any development. She is more willing to work with the Nazis than oppose them together with her future husband. Whether this is out of genuine fear or simply convenience never becomes quite clear.

Elsa is used to a certain lifestyle in Vienna, which includes a vibrant social circle. She is unwilling to do without her lifestyle if her marriage to the Captain should isolate her politically and socially. Even though she is not class conscious the way Max Detweiler is – she openly chastises him for his royalist attitude when he protests a servant's (i.e., Maria) presence at the gala dinner table (Act II/Scene 11) – she maintains a lifestyle befitting her means. Her attempt to establish a social circle in Salzburg fails due to the locals eschewing the Trapp villa because of the Captain's controversial stance against the Nazis (Act I/Scene 11).

⁷² Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 59.

To summarize, while she is not after the Captain for his money, she does give the appearance she only considers him a viable marriage candidate because of his rank and status in society. They do not know each other very well and they seem rather distant with each other, when we meet Elsa. In fact, the scene reeks of arranged marriage, even though she has yet to reel in the Captain (Act I/Scene 9). Her lifestyle includes a vibrant social life and her attitude suggests she would not sacrifice that aspect of her life if her marriage to the Captain should isolate them in society due to his political resistance.

This is proven when she feigns a headache to escape the disastrous dinner party, as Brigitta astutely observes: “I knew all along. Frau Schraeder didn’t have a headache. She just wanted to get out of the party. She was faking.”⁷³ In previous versions, Elsa confesses to Max that she used the headache as an excuse to withdraw from the guests:

ELSA: Oh, no, Max. This isn’t a gala. It’s a disaster! Half the guests Georg invited didn’t come, and half of the half that came aren’t speaking to the other half. I’ve been upstairs with a convenient headache. I must say Georg is behaving beautifully.⁷⁴

What redeems her character’s concern with wealth and appearances (“How Can Love Survive”) is her welcoming approach towards the children. She does not seem to be the driving force behind sending the kids to boarding school she rather enjoys their company and is touched by their welcome gifts (“The Sound of Music”

⁷³ Ibid., 79.

⁷⁴ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*. Undated (Blue). US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box.

reprise and presentation of an *Edelweiß* flower). Of course, spending a little time with children and raising them are two entirely different matters; she may very well be only pretending to like them to win over the Captain. However, the libretto never directly makes her out to be the bad one. She simply cannot compete in comparison to the colorful, approachable governess. Even though she feels threatened by the presence of another young woman, whose rapport with the Captain's children is so good, she does not plot against Maria. Elsa is not a malicious character; in fact, she bows out rather graciously when she and the Captain break up their engagement.

2.3.3. ROLF & HERR ZELLER – AUSTRIAN NAZIS

The Nazis in *The Sound of Music* are the least fleshed out characters, since they are not meant to be humanized (cf. Ernst Ludwig in *Cabaret* who is a three dimensional character compared to Rolf or Herr Zeller in *The Sound of Music*). They only play a marginal role in the overall plot, even if Nazism has severe repercussions for the protagonists' lives. Represented by Rolf Gruber and Herr Zeller, the Austrian Nazis are portrayed as men who compensate their inferiority complexes with the authority bestowed on them by the Nazi party. In early drafts (A–D), this matter is addressed in an argument between Nazi followers and supporters of an independent Austria:

BARON ELBERFELD: I resent that! I resent it!

ZELLER: Resent and be damned!

BARON ELBERFELD: I take pride in being an Austrian.

(BARONESS ELBERFELD circles the group to take her stand beside her husband)

BARONESS ELBERFELD: Karl! Not here!

ZELLER: And I take pride in my German blood.

(FRAU ZELLER and FRAU OBERST hurry out to the terrace)

OBERST (more reasonably): Baron, why should we remain a defeated,

poverty-stricken country?
BARON ELBERFELD: We're still a country which has honor.
ZELLER (nastily): Honor! With the Anschluss we'll have power. I warn
you – and everybody like you. And that goes for our – (He
starts to point toward the terrace. FRAU OBSERT comes
hurrying into the window
FRAU OBSERST: Sh-h-h!⁷⁵

Eventually this dialogue was changed, but indeed, the nation of Austria suffered from a deep inferiority complex, as many – from politicians to cabdrivers – questioned the viability of the small country after the collapse of the *Donaumonarchie*. Austrians were used to living in a large, multicultural empire with considerable political, diplomatic and economic power in Europe; they did not believe that *Deutschösterreich* could survive without the crown lands, where most of the industry (Bohemia) and agriculture (Hungary) was located. Therefore many Austrians sought unification with Germany, which would strengthen the weak position of the small country (*Rumpfstaat*), even though the allied forces explicitly denied that in the treaty of St. Germain. Even though these aspirations precede National Socialism, they provide a historical context for *Gauleiter* Zeller's obsession with power.⁷⁶

In Draft E, the tone of the spirited argument turns more aggressive. Herr Zeller's cues in this script always include the instructions to say his lines in a really nasty manner, not just in this particular scene. He is much more belligerent than in

⁷⁵ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box: 1-8-1 – 1-8-2.

⁷⁶ For more information on this topic, cf. Tim Kirk, *Nazism and the Working Class in Austria. Industrial Unrest and Political Dissent in the National Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

the previous versions, which leads to a more defensive and insulting response from the Baron:

BARON ELBERFELD (angrily): I don't want to be told by you what I should think.

ZELLER (nastily): You have German blood, haven't you?

BARON ELBERFELD: I'm an Austrian and I'm proud of being an Austrian

BARONESS ELBERFELD: Karl! Not here!

ZELLER: We're one people – we should be one nation!

(FRAU ZELLER and FRAU OBERST hurry out to the terrace)

OBERST (more reasonably): Baron, why should we remain a defeated, poverty-stricken country?

BARON ELBERFELD: We're still a country which has honor, and that's something you can't say –

ZELLER (nastily): Honor! With the Anschluss we'll have power. I warn you – and everybody like you. And that goes for our – (He starts to point toward the terrace. FRAU OBERST comes hurrying into the window

FRAU OBERST: Sh-h-h⁷⁷

The juxtaposition of honor and power is very revealing in this exchange. It implies that the Austrian Nazis like Herr Zeller care more about power than honor and one way to restore the former power of Austria is by uniting it with Germany. Simultaneously it establishes Baron Elberfeld and the Captain as honorable characters who value integrity. Eventually, the argument is reduced to a simple and quick threat from Herr Zeller towards Baron Elberfeld:

ZELLER: You have German blood, haven't you?

ELBERFELD: I am not a German. I'm an Austrian.

ZELLER: There's going to be Anschluss, I warn you and everyone like you – and that goes for our –

FRAU ULLRICH: Shhh.

CAPTAIN (Entering through the French windows and sensing a situation): It's much more pleasant on the terrace.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, undated. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 63, Folder 1: 1-10-6 – 1-10-63.

After the *Anschluss*, Herr Zeller advances to *Gauleiter*, which means that he is the head of the Nazi Party in the Salzburg region.⁷⁹ One of his first actions is to pay the Trapp Villa a visit and order them to fly the Nazi flag. With the Captain gone, Herr Zeller confronts Max, who is duly unimpressed by the *Gauleiter's* authority:

FRAU SCHMIDT: Herr Detweiler, can you help me please? The Gauleiter is here. He wants to know why we aren't flying the new flag.

(HERR ZELLER, the Gauleiter, enters from terrace. MAX rises)

ZELLER (Saluting Max): Heil!

FRAU SCHMIDT: I tried to explain –

ZELLER: Keep quiet. When is Captain Von Trapp returning?

MAX: Who knows? When a man's on his honeymoon –

ZELLER: These are not times for joking! It's been four days since the Anschluss. This is the only house in the province that is not flying the flag of the Third Reich.

BRIGITTA: You mean the flag with the black spider on it?

MAX: Brigitta!

ZELLER: Do you permit such remarks in this house? Who are you?

MAX: I am Maximilian Detweiler, first secretary of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

ZELLER: Oh, yes, I know the name. But that was in the old regime.

MAX: In the old regime I was third secretary. Now I am first secretary.

ZELLER: Good! Then you will order them to fly the flag.

FRAU SCHMIDT: Captain Von Trapp wouldn't – I mean I can take my orders only from Captain Von Trapp.

ZELLER: You will take your orders from us – and so will the Captain.

(To Max) Heil!⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 73.

⁷⁹ The term *Gau* in German refers to a region. After the *Anschluss* Austria was renamed *Ostmark*, since it lies east of Germany, and divided into different *Gaue*. Since the federal republic of Austria ceased to exist, *Bundesländer* (federal states) such as *Oberösterreich* (Upper Austria) and *Niederösterreich* (Lower Austria) had to be renamed *Oberdonau Gau* (Upper Danube Gau) und *Unterdonau Gau* (Lower Danube Gau). A *Gauleiter* presided over each *Gau*.

⁸⁰ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 117-19.

In this battle of wills Max keeps the upper hand, so Zeller leaves barking a few more orders, only to call in the reinforcements: In early drafts he returns not only with Herr Oberst and Captain von Schreiber in tow but also with a storm trooper. When the Captain introduces the men to his new wife, Herr Oberst and Herr Zeller reply, while Captain von Schreiber bows like a gentleman. In later drafts Captain von Schreiber advances to Admiral von Schreiber from Berlin headquarters, who exhibits a much more reasonable and pleasant behavior than the overeager and overzealous Austrian *Gauleiter* (Table 2.3.).

Even after the Admiral from Berlin has accepted Maria's explanation and tries to arrange for the Captain to participate with his family in the festival, Zeller does not give up. He gets suspicious when he takes a closer look at the program, which neither lists the Captain's name nor does it give any song titles. As a result he orders the whole family to sing, as if he were letting puppets dance for him. Zeller relishes any kind of leverage he can find against the Captain so much, one has to wonder if there is more to their personal history than their disagreement over Nazism.

Rolf is a young man who desperately wants to be acknowledged as a grown-up man. He likes the way Liesl looks up to him, as if he has hung the moon. Her admiration gives him the feeling that he is important and relevant, and there is nothing more that he longs for than to matter in the world. Rolf is not his own man; he still works for his father at the post office, delivering telegrams, where he has access to all kinds of information. However, at his clandestine meeting with Liesl (Act I/ Scene 10) he shows that he is not ready to shoulder the responsibilities and

be trusted with important information, when he lets slip the secret about Colonel Schneider staying in Salzburg.

2.3. *The Sound of Music*, Act II, Scene 5, Herr Zeller Comparison

Drafts A–B	Drafts F–H
<p>CAPTAIN: Will you sit down?</p> <p>ZELLER (NASTILY) We are here on business.</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER (He looks at Zeller) If you don't mind. (He means "shut up." He turns to the Captain) Captain Von Trapp, a telegram was sent to you three days ago. (The CAPTAIN is still holding it)</p> <p>CAPTAIN: I received it only a few minutes ago. I've been home only half an hour. My wife and I have been on our honeymoon.</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER: Congratulations, madame. We in the Navy hold your husband in high regard. (To the Captain) Having no reply to the telegram, the Ministry of the Navy decided to act. I am here to present you with your commission (He hands him an official looking envelope)</p>	<p>CAPTAIN: This way, Admiral, we can talk in here. Admiral Von Schreiber, may I present Herr Detweiler.... Max I think you know Herr Zeller. Would you gentlemen care to sit down?</p> <p>ZELLER: We are here on business.</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER: Captain von Trapp, a telegram was sent to you three days ago.</p> <p>CAPTAIN: I have just received it. I've been away. I've only been home half an hour.</p> <p>MAX: Captain Von Trapp has just returned from his honeymoon, sir.</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER: Congratulations, Captain.</p> <p>CAPTAIN: Thank you, sir.</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER: Your record in the war is very well remembered by us, Captain.</p> <p>CAPTAIN: It's good to hear you say that, sir.</p> <p>ZELLER: Let's get to the point.</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER (To Zeller): If you don't mind. (To Captain) In our Navy we hold you in very high regard. That explains why I am here. Having had no answer to our telegram, the High Command has sent me in person.</p> <p>CAPTAIN: That's very flattering, Admiral. But I've had no time to consider – (MARIA enters on balcony)</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER: I am here to present you with your commission.</p>

Table 2.3. Continued

<p>CAPTAIN: Well, if I could be allowed to explain –</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER: And your orders to report immediately to the naval base at Bremerhaven. (During this scene the CHILDREN have been gathering unobtrusively around their parents. LEISL has come down stairs. MAX has entered and stands in the background)</p> <p>MARIA: Well, not immediately, sir – I’m afraid that’s impossible.</p> <p>ZELLER: Impossible! Are you questioning our authority?</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER (To Zeller): I hope you’re not questioning mine. I’m in command here.</p>	<p>CAPTAIN: I am deeply conscious of the honor, sir, but –</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER: And your orders to report immediately to the naval base at Bremerhaven –</p> <p>MARIA (Coming downstairs): Immediately? Oh, I’m afraid that would be impossible for you, Georg.</p> <p>CAPTAIN: Admiral, may I present my wife, the Baroness Von Trapp, Admiral Von Schreiber.</p> <p>VON SCHREIBER: Madame!</p>
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His position at the post office, however, makes Rolf useful to the Nazis, they very likely recruit him to keep them informed about everyone. What seems in act one like innocent boasting in front of his girlfriend, who practically thinks he is omniscient, turns into creepy surveillance in act two, when the Nazis know and seem to anticipate the Trapp family’s every move. In his desire to feel important and leave his mark on the world, Rolf does not realize that the Nazis are probably exploiting him.

At first it appears that Rolf has fallen victim to mass psychology and joined the movement because everyone else around him is doing so. He is an impressionable youth who gets caught up in the wheels of Nazi propaganda and war machinery without thinking through his actions fully. It may very well be that he himself is still trying to figure out if he believes in their ideology.

Being a member of an organization like the Nazi Party gives Rolf a sense of control and power. When he gets flustered or insecure, he simply reverts to the

Hitler salute, as if that could solve the problem. He likes to hide behind the power of a group of bullies. When the Captain catches him sneaking around the bushes looking for Liesl, Rolf gives a Nazi salute to him – knowing how much further it would only aggravate his girlfriend’s father, who is a well-known opponent of Nazism, – because it helps him regain his self-composure (Act I/ Scene 9):

ROLF (*Startled*): Oh, Captain . . . I didn't see, I mean, I didn't know ... er, uh, ... Heil!
(He holds his hand up in salute)⁸¹

After the *Anschluss*, Rolf flourishes in his new role as a storm trooper in the new regime. He no longer needs Liesl’s adoration to bolster his self-esteem. He is a man now, doing important things and does not have time to dally around with a girlfriend. In the first draft by Lindsay and Crouse of the book for *The Sound of Music*, Rolf is downright mean to her, which prompted director Vincent Donehue to make a note that “Rolf doesn’t have to be rude to Liesl!”⁸²

(ROLF enters, tentatively. FRAU SCHMIDT exits. ROLF is ill at ease because he knows he is the bearer of bad news) [...] (ROLF avoids shaking her [Maria’s] hand by holding up the telegram)
ROLF: I have a telegram for Captain Von Trapp. (In a tone that brooks no denial) I know he’s back.
LIESL: Maria, Rolf knows everything that goes on around here.
ROLF: This telegram came three days ago.
LIESL (Disappointed) And you didn’t even try to deliver it?
ROLF (Evasively) I’ve been busy -- I’ve got more to do than just deliver telegrams.⁸³

⁸¹ Ibid., 63.

⁸² Vincent Donehue, handwritten notes, undated. US-NYp, Vincent Donehue Papers, Box 2, Folder 1.

⁸³ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box: 2-4-7.

He refuses to give the telegram to anyone but the Captain but finally relinquishes it to Franz, a fellow Nazi. He continues his caddish behavior towards Liesl, even making fun of her for crying:

ROLF: Yes, even Franz! (He turns on Liesl) Even me! Even everybody in Nonnberg except the great Captain Von Trapp! Who does he think he is? If he knows what's good for him he'd better stop being so damn stubborn.

LIESL: Rolf, don't talk like that!

ROLF: He'd better come over to the right side. And if he doesn't he'd better get out of the country – and he'd better get out quick! There are things that happen today to a man like that. (LIESL, sobbing, starts to run up the stairs. ROLF shouts after her insistently) Cry all you want to, but remember what I said. And keep on remembering. It's still not too late. (LIESL exits at the top of the stairs. HE turns on Maria) Did you hear me?⁸⁴

For all intents and purposes, Rolf appears to have been indoctrinated by Nazi ideology, when he calls their side the “right side”. However, Maria, with her people skills and knowledge of human nature, sees what Liesl cannot:

MARIA (Calmly, almost kindly): Yes, Rolf, I heard you.

ROLF: Good! (He turns to go)

MARIA: Rolf! (HE stops) Thank you!

ROLF: Thank me for what?

MARIA: For the warning.

ROLF: What do you mean – warning?

MARIA: You weren't threatening us, Rolf. You were warning us.

ROLF (Starting to bluster): What do you mean, warn – what's the idea – what are you talking about? (HE weakens) I don't know what you mean – I don't – (He drops all defenses) How did you know?

MARIA: These people don't tell you to get out – they don't even let you get out. You were warning us, weren't you?

ROLF: I'm not going to admit I was warning you – but don't tell anybody.

MARIA: Can't I tell Liesl?

ROLF: No. Don't tell anybody. And I didn't do it for her anyway.

⁸⁴ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 125.

Working in the post office sometimes I find out what's going to happen before it happens.
MARIA: Then you're in danger, too.
ROLF: Never mind me.⁸⁵

Suddenly it becomes clear that Rolf's harsh behavior has been an act and that he actually has come to warn the family, since he knows that the telegram contains the Captain's commission from Berlin. Donehue reasoned that having Rolf simply ignore Liesl as if she did not matter to him would suffice to keep up appearances without him being downright rude. Therefore his character was toned down and the lines "And I didn't do it for her" subsequently cut in the next drafts (B-E). Eventually, Rolf's character becomes more ambiguous as the exchange between Maria and Rolf is cut and simply replaced with Maria's vague musing that maybe Rolf was trying to warn them when she comforts Liesl:

ROLF: And if he doesn't, he'd better get out of the country – there are things that happen today to a man like that. He'd better get out quick. (LIESL runs to Maria) Cry all you want, but just remember what I said before it's too late. (To Maria) And you remember too. (HE exits[...])
MARIA: Liesl – don't cry.
LIESL: How could he turn on Father that way?
MARIA: Liesl – maybe he wasn't threatening your Father – maybe he was warning him.⁸⁶

Rolf's sudden change in attitude towards Liesl calls his previous behavior into question. Even though he has not fully been corrupted by the Nazis and helps the family in the only way he can, he does not have to be mean to Liesl. Suddenly his slightly patronizing and condescending behavior towards Liesl in "Sixteen Going On

⁸⁵ Lindsay et al. *The Sound of Music*, 27 May 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, *The Sound of Music* Box: 2-4-9.

⁸⁶ Lindsay et al., *The Sound of Music*, 126.

Seventeen” appears in new light. If he were truly in love with her, he probably would not turn on her like that, even if he was acting, so perhaps he was simply using her and manipulating her.

With the father being constantly gone from the villa and leaving the raising of his children to an endless chain of nannies, Rolf practically becomes a substitute for the Captain. Rolf lavishes Liesl with the attention and affection she is missing from her absentee father. He is Liesl’s first love and she quickly defers to him and his experience as the older one between them in “Sixteen Going On Seventeen.” If Maria had not shown up and reunited the father with his children through the power of music, who knows if Liesl could have been manipulated into following Rolf and joining the Nazis. She would not be the first, nor last, teenager to make terrible decisions blinded by love.

However, watching Maria interact with her father as a married couple in the second act also opens Liesl’s eyes as to what real love is. It seems only fitting, then, that Maria “steals” Rolf’s melody and sings the reprise of “Sixteen Going On Seventeen” with her stepdaughter. Thanks to Maria, Liesl gets now the affection and attention from her parents which she previously sought from Rolf. Of course, this does not mean that she falls out of love with Rolf, or that parental love replaces the teenager crush but it takes the sting out of Rolf’s (perceived) betrayal. Maria has earned the rights to the melody of “Sixteen Going On Seventeen” as much as Rolf forfeits his one to sing, when he becomes a Nazi.

The reason Rolf’s behavior in this scene is so made ambiguous in the later scripts (F–H) is to heighten the suspense of the finale. Now all decked out in

uniform, Rolf searches the Abbey with other SS-officers for the Trapp family. In the early versions, the scene culminates in a melodramatic moment between Liesl and Rolf, when they make eye contact. The audience knows because of Rolf's exchange with Maria that he will not betray the family's hiding place to the other storm troopers therefore there is not really any conflict. However, in the later scripts the suspense is kept up until the very end, leading to a climactic moment when Rolf has to make a spur-of-the moment decision (Table 2.4):

Table 2.4. *The Sound of Music*, Finale, Rolf Comparison

Drafts A-E	Drafts F-H
<p>(LIESL turns to start back and then stands frozen as she sees the door open. In the shadows of the doorway we see a STORM TROOPER in uniform. He steps out into the garden, the open door concealing the family from him. We see it is ROLF. As he turns to go back he sees the family. He stops. He and LIESL look into each other's eyes for a long moment. He seems to go through a moment of indecision. Suddenly a STORM TROOP OFFICER appears in the doorway. ROLF starts quickly for the door, raising his arm in salute, comes to attention in front of the officer. The OFFICER returns the salute) ROLF: No one out here, sir.</p> <p>OFFICER: All right. Come along.</p>	<p>(LIESL, D.R., starts to cross C. as ROLF enters U.L., playing flashlight across stage and holding pistol) ROLF (Seeing MARIA and the CAPTAIN in the flashlight beam): Lieutenant! (Footsteps approach) No one out here, sir.</p> <p>OFFICER: All right. Come along.</p>

Tracing the development of the characters from the early stages to the finished script helps in some cases to clarify the protagonists' as well as the antagonists' motivation (Maria, Max or Herr Zeller) and sometimes even offers alternative readings of a character (Captain or Rolf). In the case of Maria, the physical reaction to the political situation proved to be superfluous and was subsequently folded into her relationship with the Captain. In contrast, the Captain's

character evolves from a stiff and cryptic patriarch into a more relatable stoic idealist. Rolf permutes several different reactions from rude and condescending over cold but helpful to confused and conflicted. Previous script versions also illuminate the power-hungry depiction of Herr Zeller, which is an expression of a general sense of political inferiority plaguing Austria in the interwar period. Overall, the preceding character analyses reveal finer nuances to an otherwise black and white world where good and bad are pitted directly against each other.

CHAPTER III

***THE SOUND OF MUSIC* RECEPTION HISTORY**

Every few months for the past five years—every few weeks, it would seem of late—I have gone to something or other on Broadway and come back downtown babbling to myself: This is it, this is the end, the theatre is finished. Well, a little venture called – “THE SOUND OF MUSIC” has just set up business at the Lunt-Fontanne with an advance sale of \$2.5 million firmly stashed away in the bank, and it’s [Broadway] all over now, brother, kaput, done, terminated, concluded, stone cold dead in the market place.⁸⁷

Jerry Tallmer’s diatribe in *The Village Voice* on how *The Sound of Music* had killed Broadway, nay, theater altogether, within a week of the show’s premiere is cause for amusement fifty-five years after he wrote it. Broadway and theaters around the world are still very much alive with the sound of music, after all. The offender itself has become one of the most successful, widely known and hugely popular musicals, one that took the world by storm. This chapter concerns itself with the reception history of *The Sound of Music* in the United States as well as the homeland of the famous Trapp family. For all its global triumph, the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical has only recently begun to appear in Austrian theaters regularly.

The goal of this chapter is to analyze *The Sound of Music*’s reception history in terms of its political content. Even though the musical was primarily marketed as the new “Mary Martin show” initially, several critics commented on the peripheral stage presence of Nazis, which was still relatively new, though it did not draw the

⁸⁷ Jerry Tallmer, "Emptor Caveat," *The Village Voice*, 25 November 1959.

same attention for political discourse as *Cabaret* would seven years later. However, subsequent revivals of *The Sounds of Music*, in Austria as well as New York, exhibit a clear trend towards a stronger emphasis on the Nazi elements in the musical.

3.1. AMERICAN RECEPTION HISTORY

When *The Sound of Music* celebrated its premiere at the Lunt-Fontanne Theater on November 16th, 1959, revenue from advance ticket sales had already surpassed the two million dollar mark. Lines at the box office were winding around several blocks and a pair of tickets for the new Mary Martin show was the hottest commodity for Christmas stockings that year. The paying public proved to be undeterred by the mixed critical reception, which centered on complaints that the musical was too sentimental and melodramatic since.

Many critics grappled with the transition from the sweet, domestic tone to political drama in the second act. Hobe from *Variety* describes his impressions as follows:

“Music” is a heavy show, not so much in the size of the cast and physical production, but in content and manner of treatment. It’s primarily a singing show, though there are no rousing numbers. There’s practically no dancing, and no outright comedy, but only the sort of gentle humor that brings smiles or possibly chuckles. The characters are real and winning, and the domestic scenes, particularly those with Miss Martin and the enchanting youngsters who play the seven Trapp children, are delightful. The somewhat melodramatic plot segments, involving an opportunistic concert manager, a rich Viennese lady playing for the Captain’s hand and, after the off-stage Anschluss, the Nazi bullyboys strutting and threatening, seem stiff and awkward.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Hobe, "The Sound of Music," *Variety*, 18 November 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder "Sound of Music."

Similarly, Cyrus Durgin from *The Boston Sunday Globe* noted already in Boston the imbalance between first and second act, even though he did not consider it too detrimental for the show's overall appeal:

Only the approaching anschluss [sic] of Austria with Hitler's Third Reich shadows the family, who, at the end, escape over the mountains into Switzerland. The first act, accordingly, is a Tyrolean idyll, altogether of charm and beauty. The story does sag a little in the second act, for various technical reasons, but I think this will be quite overlooked because of the magic which prevails.⁸⁹

Some critics felt the change in tone exacerbated the sentimentality and melodrama of the show, while others felt that the circumstances called for the treatment of the subject matter in this fashion. For instance, Elinor Hughes from *The Boston Sunday Herald* argues that the historical context requires an atmospheric shift from comedy into tragedy:

There have been a few comments made about the contrast in mood between the first and second acts, and some persons with whom I have talked are disturbed that in the latter portion of the show the story turns serious, verging almost on the tragic. True, it does just that, but the Anschluss was a tragedy for many; those who left Austria and their homes and friends, and those who stayed. In the end the Trapps made a new life for themselves elsewhere but their departure was a sorrowful as well as a dangerous one, and I don't very well see how it could have been prettified.⁹⁰

Jack Gaver (*United Press International*) concurs that "Obviously the political aspect has to make the second act somewhat heavier than the first, but the songs

⁸⁹ Cyrus Durgin, "Rodgers and Hammerstein Musical Weaves Enchantment," *The Boston Sunday Globe*, 18 October 1959. US-NYp, Richard Rodgers Papers, Box 37.

⁹⁰ Elinor Hughes, "'Sound of Music' a Lovely Musical," *Boston Sunday Herald*, 18 October 1959. US-NYp, Richard Rodgers Papers, Box 37.

keep matters from getting too dreary.”⁹¹ And Alta Maloney from the *Boston Traveler* even concludes that since “there are politics to consider, and the impossibility of compromise, and ultimately the disconcerting pressure of Storm Troopers,” these are “not times to inspire singing.”⁹²

Richard Watts, Jr. and Thomas R. Dash thought that National Socialism was staged appropriately and tastefully in *The Sound of Music*. For Richard Watts, Jr. from the *New York Post*, the creators had struck just the right tone to incorporate the evil necessity into the overall tone of the show:

It might seem odd to say that any show dealing with the arrival of the Nazis and the flight from them of an entire family was charming, but that is one of the striking things about “The Sound of Music.” These scenes have their suggestions of menacing evil, but they manage it reticently and without interference with the gracious mood of sentiment and the quiet, winning humor of the rest of the narrative. All of this is admirable, but what gives the evening its strongest appeal is the winning quality of the songs and the attractiveness of the people.⁹³

Dash’s review for *Women’s Wear Daily* suggests that the stage presence of the Nazi characters was fairly unobtrusive before it was further toned down for New York audiences:

While the Nazi menace begins to assert itself and vaguely permeates the second half of the show, the matter is treated almost casually without bringing in too much of a distasteful experience. Captain

⁹¹ Jack Gaver, "Broadway," *United Press International*, 17 November 1959. US-NYp, Richard Rodgers Papers, Box 37.

⁹² Alta Maloney, "'The Sound of Music' Opens at Shubert," *Boston Traveler*, 15 October 1959. US-NYp, Richard Rodgers Papers, Box 37.

⁹³ Richard Jr. Watts, "A Musical Play of Warm Charm," *New York Post*, 17 November 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder “Sound of Music.”

Trapp and his new wife refuse to compromise with the invaders and choose exile and loss of fortune to capitulation.⁹⁴

George Oppenheimer (*Newsday*), who also enjoyed the second act, was delighted by the play's conclusion: "The last portion of the play is both ingenious and exciting as the Trapp elude their enemy."⁹⁵ Similarly, Elinor Hughes (*Boston Sunday Herald*) and *Saturday Review* singled out "No Way To Stop It" as an underrated gem in the second act:

I'm impressed by how effective those latter scenes are, especially by the one in which Theodore Bikel, as Capt. Von Trapp, argue [sic] with his friend the concert manager, Kurt Kaszmar, and the handsome widow, Marion Marlowe, whom he is planning to marry the pros and cons of getting with the Nazis, Mr. Bikel makes his guitar hum and buzz with the anger seething inside of him and exploding into words, and when the song, "No Way To Stop It," is over, the relationship between these three people is irrevocably changed. This is not romantic and tuneful Rodgers and Hammerstein, but it is tough-muscle drama and highly skilled writing. The romantic and tuneful songs are there, and as filled with sunshine and happiness and good will as a summer day, but the composer and lyric writer have surprises for us, too.⁹⁶

While Hughes emphasizes the artistic versatility behind the score and libretto of *The Sound of Music* in the above quote, the reviewer for *Saturday Review* finds fault with the delivery of the song:

While it doesn't come off very well, there is one interesting trio in which three people sing of their own approach to the problem of facing the Nazi invasion. It is titled "No Way to Stop It," and it permits the Baron to show an admirable anger against those who compromise.

⁹⁴ Thomas R. Dash, "'Sound of Music' Has Aura of Endearing Charms," *Women's Wear Daily*, 17 September 1959. Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder "Sound of Music."

⁹⁵ George Oppenheimer, "My Favorite Things," *Newsday*, 25 November 1959. Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder "Sound of Music."

⁹⁶ Hughes, "'Sound of Music' a Lovely Musical."

Unfortunately, this anger seems to come less from humanism than from a fierce national pride.⁹⁷

The reviewer for *Saturday Review* is among a select few, together with John Beaufort from *The Christian Science Monitor*, who address the simplistic and distorted version of history in *The Sound of Music*. While almost every critic commented on the historical background of the musical, and some acknowledged the fictionalization of events matter-of-factly, Beaufort calls out the librettists for the “disconcerting” historical inaccuracies of the book:

Yet critical reservations will not subside. They persist because “The Sound of Music” was inspired by the true story of a gallant Austrian family which preferred exile to Nazidom, and which converted an amateur talent for group singing into a profitable international concert career. Working with this authentically romantic material, Howard Lindsay and Russell Crouse have created a sentimental libretto whose elements seem closer to immemorial Ruritania than 1938 Austria. Notwithstanding their undoubted efforts to avoid conventionality, “The Sound of Music” dilutes and diminishes the source of its inspiration. It is wholesome but artificial.⁹⁸

Even Walter Kerr, who had otherwise grumbled about the bountiful presence of tots and sucrose on stage, considers the melodramatic turn in the second act an improvement:

I can only wish that someone had not been moved to abandon the snowflakes and substitute cornflakes. Before “The Sound of Music” is halfway through its promising chores it becomes not only too sweet for words but almost too sweet for music. Somehow I don’t feel that this is the fault of librettists Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse. When it is time for a moment of

⁹⁷ "Stalemates in the Broadway Musical Theatre," *Saturday Review*, 5 December 1959. US-NYp, Richard Rodgers Papers, Box 37.

⁹⁸ John Beaufort, "'The Sound of Music' and Its Disconcerting Counterpoint," *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 November 1959. Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder “Sound of Music.”

melodramatic plotting, the spine of the evening straightens abruptly and we feel considerable tension as a principled family finds itself surrounded and cut off by bootlicking Nazis. When Miss Martin is handed a speech with some spunk in it, as she is in a quick contrempeps with a too-strict father, our ears and our hearts perk up.⁹⁹

Leslie D. Epstein from the *Yale Daily News* has the strongest reaction, opining that the political and domestic matters in *The Sound of Music* were completely mismatched and disconnected:

A serious fault of the play is that while the first act deals rather touchingly with the Father's reconciliation with his family and Miss Martin, the second act is full of some entirely unrelated nonsense about the Germans, from whom the Daddy, his new Mommy (Miss Martin) and the seven little ones flee, barely managing to escape with the aid of some nuns, singing like all get out. The charm of the first act is lost in this absurd melodrama and because the play is really a musical comedy, incongruities arise. For instance, in the nunnery, I was almost sure that Daddy was going to leer at Miss Martin and sing, "Getting Into the Habit With You."¹⁰⁰

In contrast, Frank Aston who wrote for the *N.Y. World Telegram* finds the Nazis in *The Sound of Music* dramaturgically quite useful and relevant:

The Mother Abbess (Patricia Neway) sends the postulant as governess to the home of Georg Von Trapp, a widower, sea captain, father of seven. The captain (Theodore Bikel) and the girl fall in love. It looks as if a rich, totalitarian dame (Marion Marlowe) will get him. But the Nazis, otherwise loathsome, are a big help fixing up this detail.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Walter Kerr, "'The Sound of Music'," *New York Herald Tribune*, 17 November 1959. Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder "Sound of Music."

¹⁰⁰ Leslie D. Epstein, "'The Sound of Music'," *Yale Daily News*, 6 October 1959. US-NYp, Richard Rodgers Papers, Box 37.

¹⁰¹ Frank Aston, "Rodgers-Hammerstein Return...In Top Form," *N.Y. World Telegram*, 17 November 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder "Sound of Music."

Aside from the melodramatic staging, critics brought up the Nazi elements in *The Sound of Music* most often when they discussed character portrayals. For example, Brooks Atkinson writes in the *The New York Times*:

The cast is excellent throughout. Theodore Bikel as the serious, high-minded Baron von Trapp, Kurt Kaszmar as a witty, animated friend of the family, who accepts the Nazis, Marion Marlowe as a stunning lady of wealth who sees no point in resisting the invaders—they are all well cast and they bring taste and skill to the production.¹⁰²

In contrast, Beaufort and Norton address the clichéd allocation of character parts and tropes, which in Norton's opinion lead to a critical logical pitfall in the conceptualization of the main protagonist. In his review for the *Boston Daily Record* Norton argues:

Here, there is nothing but truth and beauty—except in the character of the Baron, who is theatrically stern and for almost all the rest of the evening theatrically false, a cut-out, a stereotype of melodrama. So is the rich young woman he is to marry till he falls in love with Maria. So is his friend, called Max Detweiler, who is played like a stereotype by Kurt Kaszmar. So are the heiling Nazis, who come stamping suddenly into the action towards the end.¹⁰³

A few days later he follows up on his discussion of the Baron's portrayal in the *Boston Sunday Advertiser* and clarifies:

When he later rebels against the Nazis—as Captain von Trapp did in real life—you are apt to wonder why. For in his own home, in those early scenes, he seems the very model of a heel-clicking, heiling tyrant.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Brooks Atkinson, "Show About a Singing Family Arrives," *The New York Times*, 17 November 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder "Sound of Music."

¹⁰³ Elliot Norton, "'Sound of Music' Songs Full of Beauty, Wonder," *Boston Daily Record*, 15 October 1959. US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder "Sound of Music."

¹⁰⁴ Elliot Norton, "'Sound' Can Be Great Show," *Boston Sunday Advertiser*, 18 October 1959. US-NYp, Richard Rodgers Papers, Box 37.

Beaufort from the *Christian Science Monitor* implies that the stereotypes in *The Sound of Music* might have been tailored to the strengths of the show's main attraction:

Here is the poor but delectable governess who captivates initially her young charges and ultimately her widowed employer. Here are the comic impresario, the slightly fatale femme for romantic complications, and the necessary stage villains—in the nasty persons of minor Nazis. Here, above all, is an entertainment measured and made to order for Mary Martin, its irresistible star.¹⁰⁵

Whitney Bolton from the *Morning Telegraph* puts a very positive spin on what Beaufort and Norton criticized as typical melodramatic stereotypes, further illustrating that one man's sentiment is another man's sentimentality:

Literally, not one device to wring the heart and dampen the eye is absent from this generous outpouring of modern day musical making: the stern and widowed father ordering all that is joyous out of his house; the naïve young governess seeing only sweetness and light in a forbidding world; the rich woman who threatens her romance, the stealthy, implacable approach of a dictator's cruelties; nuns with human wisdom; engaging children who learn happiness from their governess; the flight from peril just when love reaches bloom.¹⁰⁶

This brings the discussion of the critical response to the original production full circle, returning to Tallmer (cf. the opening quote of this chapter) who probably blamed any future tooth decay on the sweet and sentimental concoction he was forced to endure when he saw *The Sound of Music*. Indeed, the rest of Tallmer's review reads like a sugar-induced hyperactive rant, which circumvents the actual purpose of a theater critic. Without ever actually providing information about the

¹⁰⁵ Beaufort, "'The Sound of Music' and Its Disconcerting Counterpoint."

¹⁰⁶ Whitney Bolton, "'Sound of Music' Stirring, Melodic," *Morning Telegraph*, 18 November 1959. Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder "Sound of Music."

production he is supposed to review, Tallmer details the destruction of the legitimate stage by charlatans Rodgers and Hammerstein:

What a bore! What a bore! I mean honest to goodness gracious holy mackerel, tonstant twitic [sic] likes his spongecake as much as the next one, chocolate syrup an all, but when you take everything that Leo McCarey ever did to movies and everything that Shirley Temple ever did to movies (I like old Shirley, as it happens), and add, by way of shortening, just a whiff of what Jimmy Stewart and Margaret Sullavan did to movies as they were skiing down those old Alps to get out of the clutches of those old Nazis—when you take all these things that were done to *movies* and put them together and mush them around and serve them up again, without so much as a fare thee well, in what is supposed to be the realm of the legitimate and living stage, why then that's exactly what it isn't, any more.¹⁰⁷

But in the end, Melvin Maddocks' opinion at *The Christian Science Monitor* puts Tallmer's tirade into Aristotelian perspective: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Even if *The Sound of Music* may appear to be a random pastiche of seemingly incompatible narrative elements at first, it is the achievement of Rodgers and Hammerstein to weave them together into good entertainment:

All sorts of things have been absorbed in the pudding, including a religious discussion in the abbey, a touch of political drama with Baron von Trapp as an adamant anti-Nazi, and a few stretches of Molnar comedy, featuring bright, cynical, fashionable conversation on a terrace. [...] The special genius of Rodgers and Hammerstein is to produce a whole that is far better than its pieces.¹⁰⁸

The Sound of Music had its first Broadway revival on March 12th, 1998 under the direction of Susan H. Schulmann, who "wanted to deal with the subject in a more authentic way":

¹⁰⁷ Tallmer, "Emptor Caveat."

¹⁰⁸ Melvin Maddocks, "New Rodgers and Hammerstein Musical Acclaimed on the Shubert Stage," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 15 October 1959. US-NYp, Richard Rodgers Papers, Box 37.

In the 50s, nobody wanted to upset anybody—especially in a musical. World War II was still very real for many people. There was a fear about musicals dealing with such heavy subjects matter. [...] Our costumes are very 30's, the hair styles very 30's. I want to evoke the way the people in Salzburg thought at the time. Up until the morning the Germans arrived"—on March 11, 1938, 60 years and one day before this week's opening night—"nobody thought the invasion, the Anschluss, would happen. Everyone was avoiding the dark side. Families were divided—parents against children, husbands against wives, nationalists versus Nazis. The show introduces Nazism a little bit at a time, as it was introduced in Salzburg, very insidiously, like bacteria—one little flag, then it grows and grows.¹⁰⁹

Therefore she increased the visual presence of Nazi symbols, such as swastikas, flags, which received mixed reactions from critics. Ben Brantley from *The New York Times* sees the Nazi symbols as a sort of stenotype for fairytale battles between good and evil:

The director does underscore the threat of Nazism in the show, which is set in Austria during the Anschluss. Swastikas and outside Third Reich flags are conspicuous before the evening ends. But this mostly registers as just shorthand for indicating evil against the forces of light embodied by the show's good characters. Indeed, it's worth noting that while the actors playing Nazis tend to be dark and angular, the virtuous von Trapp Family Singers are apple-cheeked and predominantly blond. This is not the imagery of politics, but of fairy tales.

The feeling that what's being portrayed is, after all, a fairy tale land in which sweetness is destined to triumph is underscored by Heidi Ettinger's sets. A vista of Austrian Alps is conjured through layers of scrims that bring to mind those trick postcards that give the illusion of three dimensions. It's slightly cheesy-looking, to tell the truth, but that isn't inappropriate.¹¹⁰

For Fintan O'Toole from the *Daily News*, Schulmann's production is still not enough in terms of realistic treatment of National Socialism on the stage: "Without

¹⁰⁹ Mervy Rothstein, "In Three Revivals, the Goose Stepping Is Louder," *The New York Times*, 8 March 1998, 4.

¹¹⁰ Ben Brantley, "Sweetness, Light and Lederhosen," *ibid.*, 13 March, E1.

great singing, spectacular staging or any attempt to connect with the reality of Nazism, we are left with some good tunes and lots of charm.”¹¹¹ Greg Evans from *Variety* thinks that Schulmann had carefully integrated the Nazi symbols to avoid upsetting the cheery overall tone of the show:

The revival plays up the Nazi threat by having the final concert recital performed in front of three stage-to-ceiling Nazi flags, a striking visual gambit undermined by the cheery performances of the von Trapp Singers. Little, if any, nervous tension is suggested by a family performing under the watchful eye of armed Nazis, as if the director didn't want anything to interfere with "The Lonely Goatherd." And frankly, Schulman's approach is an understandable one in terms of protecting this musical. Nothing—not dramatic credibility, and certainly not the horror of history—should interfere with a lineup of songs that is by far the best thing the show has going for it. This is, after all, "The Sound of Music," not "Schindler's List," and "Maria," "I Have Confidence," "Edelweiss" and, of course, the title song—all well staged and performed here—make much else on stage forgivable. Even "Climb Ev'ry Mountain," a second-rate rehash of "You'll Never Walk Alone" from "Carousel," takes an undeniable hold on the audience.¹¹²

In Rothstein's article for *The New York Times*, he addresses the stronger accent on Nazi elements in three revivals, which all returned to Broadway the same season: *Cabaret*, *The Sound of Music* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. He quotes Daniel Jonah Goldhagen (*Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, 1996): "My impression is that there has been a change in the way some people produce theater pieces and films, because they have a greater sense that they shape the way the public perceives history."¹¹³

¹¹¹ Fintan O'Toole, "'Sound of Mu-Zzz-Ic' Is Fa from Original," *Daily News*, 13 March 1998.

¹¹² Greg Evans, "'Sound of Music'," *Vairety*, 16 March 1998, 74.

¹¹³ Rothstein, "In Three Revivals, the Goose Stepping Is Louder," 4.

Rothstein also reasons that musicals like the original *Cabaret* production or Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* had paved the way for a darker and more realistic depiction of life on stage:

Now "The Sound of Music" is back -- it opens on Thursday at the Martin Beck Theater in its first Broadway revival -- and so are the swastikas, on armbands and on large, shocking banners. Their return, said Susan H. Schulman, the director, is part of an attempt to add a touch of sober realism to the cheerfully optimistic tale.

The topic of darker, more realistic staging broached in Rothstein's article does not only hold true for Broadway productions. As the remainder of this chapter and Chapter 4 will show, the trend towards darker, even more confrontational staging of Nazism in musicals is emerging outside the United States as well.

3.2. AUSTRIAN RECEPTION HISTORY

Until, the premiere of the first fully stage production of *The Sound of Music* at the *Wiener Volksoper* in 2005, the musical remained largely unknown in Austria. Considering that an estimated 300,000 visitors come to Salzburg every year to visit the shooting locations of the movie and create roughly one million Euros in local business revenue,¹¹⁴ it is surprising that Austrians have not taken note of the successful musical and film over the last half of the 20th century. The original movie musical ran only for a few days in local cinemas in 1966 before it disappeared into oblivion as far as Austrians were concerned. This section seeks to explain these "lost years" where the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical was absent from theater repertoire and television screens in Austria.

¹¹⁴ These numbers are provided on a large fact sheet titled "The Trapp Myth in Figures" at the end of an exhibit about the Trapp family and *The Sound of Music*, which I toured in summer 2013 at the Salzburg Museum.

Many scholars attribute the prolonged gap in performance and reception history of *The Sound of Music* in Austria to the country's complicated relationship with its role in the Third Reich. In a time after the war, when Austrians conveniently wanted to forget their recent past, the musical about the Trapp family was an unwelcome reminder of a difficult time, no matter how positively the portrayal of the country was either on film or on stage.

Cultural historians, as well as those Austrians who have seen either the film or stage version, are eager to point out that the sentimental and melodramatic portrayal of the matter, both on stage and on film especially, is at odds with the historic reality and the self-perception of the Austrian people. This argument is of course not new; already after the Broadway premiere, several critics felt as if they had overdosed on sweet, sentimental melodrama. Where *The Sound of Music* represents for thousands of Americans nostalgic childhood memories through years of enculturation, the same is met with incomprehension in Austria.

However, documents in the Billy Rose Theater Collection at the New York Public Library suggest that there is more to the disappearance of *The Sound of Music* in Germany and Austria than mere disinterest. For there was interest in the stage rights for the musical by German publishers and impresarios at the beginning, however tentative it was due the long-standing policy by Rodgers and Hammerstein not to allow German-speaking productions of their works. "The "lost years" of *The Sound of Music* must therefore also be understood in the context of an overall gap in the reception of Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals in Germany and Austria in general.

Even before the official Broadway premiere, a German publishing company expressed interest in acquiring the stage rights to a German-speaking production of *The Sound of Music*. The *Kurt Desch Verlag* in Munich, which had already obtained the license for Lindsay and Crouse's play *Life With Father*, contacted the authors at the beginning of November:

I have recently taken over the agency in the United States for the Kurt Desch Verlag in Germany, with whom you have successfully worked in the past.

The Kurt Desch Verlag is of course most interested in your new production, *THE SOUND OF MUSIC*, and I should appreciate it very much if you could let me know who is handling the sale of the production rights for Germany.

Thank you very much for your courtesy in helping me with this information; I hope that we shall be able to conclude another successful arrangement.¹¹⁵

Toni Milford, the German publisher's New York representative, was given the run around before she eventually got in touch with Leland Hayward on December 21st, 1959:

As I told you in our recent telephone conversation, the Kurt Desch Verlag of Munich, Germany, which I represent in this country, is very much interested in the production rights to *THE SOUND OF MUSIC* for the German language area in Europe.

As you will see from the enclosed copy, I originally wrote Mssrs. Lindsay and Crouse on 5 November 1959. They, after some delay, referred me to the Rodgers and Hammerstein office, and they in turn referred me to you.

I hope that you will take the original date of my request into consideration in drawing up the list of priority when you are ready to enter into negotiations for these rights.

Mssrs. Lindsay and Crouse have had very pleasant and mutually profitable arrangements with the Desch Verlag in the past, but I'll be

¹¹⁵ Toni Milford, Letter to Russel Crouse and Howard Lindsay, 5 November 1959. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 11.

very glad to give you any additional information in which you may be interested. I hope to hear from you in the near future.¹¹⁶

Two days later, Herman Bernstein informed everyone involved with the project of the interest in the foreign rights. Howard Lindsay replied to Bernstein's notification with a note that "they handle *Life With Father* and have been unfailingly prompt in reporting royalties due and sending their check. It has been a pleasure to do business with them."¹¹⁷ However, despite their previous beneficial partnership with Lindsay and Crouse, nothing really came of it, and one can only speculate about the reasons. The creators of *The Sound of Music* may have rejected the offer on financial grounds or concerns regarding transparency, exhibiting eerie presentiments for things to come. For in the 1960s the once renowned *Kurt Desch Verlag* became entangled in numerous litigations due to their embezzlement of royalties, which ultimately led to its ruin.

However by the summer of 1961 there were two new contenders for the German license: Lars Schmidt, a Dutch impresario, looked into acquiring the German-speaking as part of a package deal with the Dutch ones, while Josef Weinberger, whose company was situated in London, was specifically asking about the German rights only. Weinberger's letter is quoted by Reinheimer, Hammerstein's estate manager, in a message to everyone involved in the

¹¹⁶ Toni Milford, Letter to Herman Bernstein and Leland Hayward, 21 December 1959. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 11.

¹¹⁷ Howard Lindsay, Letter to Herman Bernstein, 30 December 1959. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 1.

production, and its contents are of extreme value, since they illuminate the Rodgers and Hammerstein reception history in Germany and Austria in general:

We are aware of the fact that Messrs Rodgers and Hammerstein have never been particularly interested in productions of their works in the German language. However, should they wish, in the case of this show, to consider making an exception, I should like to say that my Company would be interested in acquiring the German-speaking stage rights. Having seen the London production we think that the German theatres would be much better placed to cast and produce this work effectively than any other American musical.

If Weinberger's words suggest a discrimination perceived by German publishers, Reinheimer's letter confirms it as fact:

In the past it was the policy of Messers Rodgers and Hammerstein not to permit German presentations of their plays. However, in view of the many parties involved in SOUND OF MUSIC it would seem advisable to obtain the opinions of all concerned as to whether we should proceed with endeavoring to get a German production, and if so, with whom we should deal. Please let me have your thoughts.¹¹⁸

In light of this information, scholars have to re-evaluate their assumptions regarding the "lost years" of *The Sound of Music* in the larger context of a rather complex Rodgers and Hammerstein reception history as the result of the author's express decision. Indeed, with exception of *The King and I* (Munich, 1966), the majority of German premieres of their work took place in the 1970s: *Carousel* (Wiener Volksoper, 1972), *Oklahoma!* (Münster, 1973), *The Sound of Music* (Hildesheim, 1982), and finally *South Pacific* (Hildesheim, 1999). To the best of my knowledge, neither *Flower Drum Song* nor *Pipe Dream* nor *Me and Juliet* have been

¹¹⁸ Howard E. Reinheimer, Letter to Donald Seawell, Esq., Richard Rodgers, Dorothy Hammerstein, William Hammerstein, and Fitelson & Meyers, 17 August 1961. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 11.

translated and staged in German.¹¹⁹ Since also works by Rodgers and Hammerstein respectively outside their partnership are missing from German repertoire in postwar years, this is more than a sudden trend in the early 1970s when Germans and Austrians suddenly discovered Rodgers and Hammerstein as part of their general increased enthusiasm for musical theater (For a list of German premieres of Broadway musicals see Appendix B.)

In his article, “Der Inbegriff des Musicals greift nicht. Zur Wahrnehmung von Rodgers & Hammerstein in Deutschland” (2012), Elmar Juchem describes the troubles surrounding the first fully-staged West-Berlin production of *Oklahoma!*, which resulted in William Hammerstein, Oscar Hammerstein II’s son, firing the director, Wolfgang Zörner, and supervising the production himself to ensure quality standards of his father’s work. This premiere was preceded by legal complications in bringing *Oklahoma!* to Germany after World War II in the first place.¹²⁰

In connection with the staging of *Oklahoma!* In Berlin, Juchem mentions the German premiere of *The Sound of Music* in Hildesheim (1982), which did not fare much better and caused a rumor that the rights for further German productions had been rescinded, a rumor which appeared in the German magazine *Die deutsche*

¹¹⁹ This also extended to musicals beyond the Rodgers and Hammerstein partnership: Most of Rodgers’ musicals with Larry Hart and other lyricists remain unstaged in German, with the exception of *The Boys from Syracuse* (Pforzheim, 1971), *On Your Toes* (Stuttgart, 1990), and Hammerstein’s classic *Showboat*, which was first performed in 1971 at the *Volksoper Wien*.

¹²⁰ Ernst Juchem, “Der Inbegriff des Musicals greift nicht. Zur Wahrnehmungsgeschichte von Rodgers & Hammerstein in Deutschland.” In: Nils Grosch and Juchem Elmar, eds., *Die Rezeption Des Broadwaymusicals in Deutschland*, vol. 8, Veröffentlichungen Der Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft Dessau (Münster; New York: Waxmann, 2012), 73-76.

Bühne in 1982.¹²¹ Juchem notes that he could not corroborate this report with concrete evidence; however, in light of the letters I have examined in the Billy Rose Theater Collection, this turn of events is not surprising. Indeed, this rumor can now be more fully explained in light of the letters I have studied in the Billy Rose Theater Collection. Specifically, these letters show that Rodgers and Hammerstein opposed performances of their works in German-speaking lands.¹²²

Of course, further research is required on the legal matters, but my conclusion is that Richard Rodgers had a change of heart late in his life (he died in 1979), which opened up the possibility for German and Austrian theatres to stage Rodgers and Hammerstein from 1971 onwards. The premiere of *The King and I* as well as the inquiries mentioned in this dissertation proves that the German interest in *The Sound of Music* was there before 1970, and the rapid succession of Rodgers and Hammerstein productions in German and Austrian theaters between 1971 and 1973 hint at this as well.

While the foreign licenses for *The Sound of Music* were distributed for productions all over the globe, negotiations regarding German rights stagnated in the 1960s. Even though Floria Lasky (from Halliday's legal team) recommended to Leland Hayward the exploitation of German rights, a response by Lindsay and

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹²² According to Juchem, Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals did not return to German theater repertoire until the mid-1980s when Dorothy Hammerstein, Oscar Hammerstein II's widow, urged the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization to oversee German-speaking licenses to guarantee an appropriate quality in German stagings of her late husband's works.

Crouse a couple of months later shows that the situation had not yet been resolved. Lasky's choice of words and her reasoning are of particular interest, because they indicate a general resentment against post-war Germany among the creators of the musical play as well as a possible desire to profit from the Germans' interest in *The Sound of Music*, pending the legal interpretation of the word "exploit" in the context of the letter:

I spoke with Dick Halliday about it and he feels as I do that the German production rights should be exploited. Obviously, Rodger's and Hammerstein's feelings about not being interested in German productions understandably emanated from all of our feelings about Hitler, Germany during World War II, etc. Inasmuch as the Anti-Nazi sentiment is so clearly expressed in the play, Rodgers and Dorothy Hammerstein might reconsider that decision. Under the circumstances, if you agree, I will convey the producers' desire that arrangements be negotiated by the owners of the play for German language productions abroad.¹²³

If the word "exploit" is simply a legal term, meaning that the royalties resulting from a German production should not be disregarded on moral grounds, then it would imply German licenses were to be treated like any other foreign rights. However, if the intention of "exploit" here is to profit and take advantage of Germans, as if a late war retribution, then it could also explain the delayed reception history. Since neither Rodgers nor Hammerstein particularly cared about monies from German productions, the rights for German-speaking productions could have been sold at a higher price than others, as a deterrent at the liberty of the rights owners.

¹²³ Floria V. Lasky, Letter to Leland Hayward, cc: Richard Halliday, Howard Reinheimer, Donald Seawell, 30 August 1961. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 11.

With the exception of the *Volksoper Wien*, all the German theaters that produced Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals in the 1970s were smaller regional theaters, which are unable to afford expensive licenses. The discussion of *Cabaret's* reception history in Chapter V will further delve into the situation. Thus, high-priced licenses may have deterred German theaters from applying as much as the preceding reputation of Rodgers and Hammerstein's lack of interest, even outright refusal of German productions in the past.

At the end of the year 1961, the discussion of German rights becomes buried in other negotiations. A representative of Lindsay and Crouse addresses the sluggish process in November:

I talked with Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse and they advise me they had heard nothing from you or anyone else about the Belgium, Holland, and German rights on 'THE SOUND OF MUSIC', except the correspondence last summer regarding Lars Schmidt.¹²⁴

As a result, Reinheimer contacts Lars Schmidt, with whom Rodgers and Hammerstein had done business in the past, so his interest took precedence over Weinberger's:

As to Germany, we are waiting to hear from you as to your ideas. P.S. In accordance with our conversation I gather that your interest in Scandinavia will depend upon your response in Germany.¹²⁵

This is the last communication regarding the foreign rights for Germany I have been able to locate so far. Further research is required to confirm my theory

¹²⁴ Letter to Howard Reinheimer, cc: R[ichard] R[odgers], H[oward] L[indsay], R[ussel] C[rouse], R[ichard] Hall[iday], [illegible], D[onald] Seawell, H[erman] Bernstein, 28 November 1961. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 11.

¹²⁵ Howard E. Reinheimer, Letter to Lars R. Schmidt, 7 December 1961. US-NYp, Leland Hayward Papers, Box 61, Folder 11.

that legal obstacles prevented or discouraged German productions in the 1950s and 1960. However, other communication with Lars Schmidt indicates that the topic of Germany was dropped from the discussion of Dutch rights. Eventually it appears that Lars Schmidt lost interest in Germany and was unable to follow through with his interests in Scandinavia and the Netherlands as well.

While I limit the focus on the stage versions of *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret* due to the typical time and space constraints of a dissertation, I do need to briefly address the film adaptation by Robert Wise in this chapter, since it presents the only evidence for the argument that neither Germans nor Austrians showed neither particular interest nor fondness for the *Sound of Music*. This inclusion is necessary because much of the scholarship on *The Sound of Music* in Austria has been carried out before the new millennium, which is when the reception history of the stage version in Austria began, and thus primarily based on the film.

It all begins with the butchered premiere of *The Sound of Music* in Munich where an overzealous sales director cut out any Nazi references in 1966. This event has spawned a rumor that the film has never been shown in its entirety in Germany and Austria.¹²⁶ Ruth Starkman in her article “American Imperialism or Local Protectionism” was among the first in 2000 to finally dispel this fabrication, when she cited the following article, which appeared in *Variety* only a few days after the premiere:

¹²⁶ As late as 2005, Richard Bernstein claimed in his article “The Hills are Alive With the Sound of Remembrance,” which appeared in *The New York Times* on March 24th, that *The Sound of Music* “never got a theatrical release in this country [Austria].”

Wolfgang Wolf is out as German sales director for Fox. It was via his okay that the anti-Nazi segment had been spliced off of *The Sound of Music*. The repercussions from this knuckling under to lingering local Hitlerian tendencies cause 20th [Century Fox] technicians to work through the night to get the expurgated footage back into the five local cinemas in its original unabridged version.¹²⁷

According to further reports in *Variety* the film's director, Robert Wise, threw a fit in Twentieth Century Fox's New York headquarters when he learned of what Wolf had done, and assaulted him verbally.¹²⁸ According to Starkman the film ran in West Germany three to four weeks, and only for a few days in Austria,¹²⁹ while Christian Strasser narrows it even further down to three days in the hometown of the Trapp family itself.¹³⁰ It is unclear whether the reels in Austria were affected by Wolf's cuts but they had most likely been retracted by the time the original footage was restored. Whether in full length or in the shorter, Nazi-cleansed version, – *The Sound of Music* simply did not attract an audience in Austria or Germany.¹³¹ Many

¹²⁷ "Cutting of 20th "the Sound of Music" to Appease Neo-Nazis Costs Wolf His Job," *Variety*, 22 June 1966, 15.

¹²⁸ "Wise Hits High-Handed 20th Staffer Who Slashed Nazi Footage from "the Sound of Music"," *Variety*, 1 June 1966. As cited in: Ruth Starkman, "American Imperialism or Local Protectionism? 'The Sound of Music' (1965) Fails in Germany and Austria," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 20, no. 1 (2000)
"Wise Shocked by Munich's Nazi Cuts," *Variety*, 8 June 1966, 13.

¹²⁹ Starkman, "American Imperialism or Local Protectionism? 'The Sound of Music' (1965) Fails in Germany and Austria," 64.

¹³⁰ Strasser, "'The Sound of Music' - Ein Unbekannter Welterfolg," 283. Strasser also points out that the cinema in Salzburg was one of four in Austria that were technologically capable of playing the reels.

¹³¹ For a critical study of the film's response in Germany and Austria and a list of reasons for its failure see Ruth Starkman's article "American Imperialism or Local Protectionism" in the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* (2000); and Christian Strasser's essay "The Sound of Music – Ein unbekannter Welterfolg" in *The Sound of Music zwischen Mythos und Marketing* (2000), 267-295.

theater impresarios might have factored in the lack of a response to the movie into their decision to not apply for German-speaking rights for years. However, as I will show later, the Austrian dislike of *The Sound of Music* applies solely to the film and once theaters began to stage the musical, it has played to full houses.

The immediate post-war years in Austria were characterized with the self-perception as Hitler's first victim. The Anschluss in 1939 was oftentimes referred to as the "rape of Austria", and the already difficult double role of victim and perpetrator became indistinguishably blurred. In light of this socio-political environment, it seems like a paradox that *The Sound of Music* was met with such ill fate in the Trapp family's country of origin. One would expect Austrians to embrace their story as one of their own and identify with the other victims. Yet, the very opposite happened neither the musical nor the film musical found its way to a larger audience until the new millennium.

Perhaps Austrians chose to look forward instead and the portrayal of Austria in *The Sound of Music* was not appealing to them because it focused on the very thing they wanted to forget: the time before the war. The fact that all Nazis in the movie are Austrians must have been very unsettling to them, as it threatened their constructed reality, where Nazism did not really exist before the war. Austrian nostalgia usually goes as far back as the monarchy, skipping over the years of Austro-fascism in the 1930s. Therefore, building on Starkman's theory that *The Sound of Music* was simply not the way Austrians wanted to see themselves and remember their past, I want to present an argument that Austrians had rather not be reminded at all of their darkest history.

Emboldened by the Moscow Declaration, which supported the portrayal of Austrian victimization, Austrians began to abandon the discussion of the Third Reich. The *Zweite Republik* (Second Republic) was a time marked by reconstruction and moving forward rather than dwelling in the past, which makes sense psychologically. Nobody wants to be constantly reminded of their victimhood. The post-war familial discourse of Nazi involvement in Austrian family often amounted to a “pact of silence,” which played out to varying degrees according to the family’s level of involvement and the descendants’ willingness to sever ties and bring emotional turmoil upon the parties concerned. Therefore the majority of descendants chose not to ask and parents or grandparents omit these years in the family history.

Austria’s selective memory sufficed until the outbreak of the Waldheim Affair in 1986. During Waldheim’s run for presidency, he was accused of sugarcoating his past. Confronted with international criticism and allegations of a large-scale hush-up maneuver through Austrian authorities, Austrians were forced to re-evaluate this chapter in the country’s past, as the role of victims and perpetrators become reversed.¹³² These years mark the beginning of the process of searching for truth and coming to terms with Austrians’ involvement in war crimes and the Third Reich. Suddenly artists embraced the topic of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past). In 1988, Thomas Bernhard’s dramatic indictment of lingering Nazism

¹³² For more information on the correlations between Austrian politics and Nazi Past, read Ruth Wodak and Anton Pelinka, eds., *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009). The introduction in particular addresses the Waldheim affair and its consequences for the political landscape in Austria.

in the Austrian population *Heldenplatz* caused a public scandal. The author was denounced as a *Nestbeschmutzer* and he retreated entirely from public life. The term *Nestbeschmutzer* (the closest English comes is the term “whistle blower”) implies that the person in question dirties his or her own nest, which in this case was the whole nation of Austria, which was still grappling with the aftermath of the Waldheim Affair. Bernhard’s fate set an example of the kind of public backlash Austrian artists exposed themselves to if they staged critical works on the topic of Austria’s role in the Third Reich.

However, once Pandora’s box had been opened, there was no going back. Undeterred by Bernhard’s example, numerous artists since the 1980s repeatedly used their medium to criticize Austria’s past and present politics regarding Nazism and the Holocaust. Conversely, others have demonstratively affirmed their loyalty to Austria the country independent of its political regimes, very much in the style that Captain von Trapp exhibits in *The Sound of Music*. In any case, the artistic landscape in Austria concerned itself with the image of Austria internally and abroad more than ever.

It is in this context that the first staging of *The Sound of Music* at a Viennese theater in 1994 must be read. Under the direction of Hans Gratzer and Barbara Spitz, the *Wiener Schauspielhaus* presented a slimmed down parody of the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic. Despite Gratzer’s reassurance that they would refrain from turning the musical into a full-fledged mockery, the word “persiflage” comes to mind. However, it is not so much the story itself that is being satirized here, but rather the clichéd and distorted portrayal of Austria, Austrian culture and Austrians

in foreign countries: Instead of beautiful mountain vistas, the audience gets white walls and purple cows.¹³³ The set design evokes pop art by Warhol and Lichtenstein. Instead of dirndls and lederhosen, costumes are in the style of the 1960s. The children are played by adults with red cheeks and instead of a full orchestra the score has been reduced to two pianos and a guitar. For large parts, the ensemble sings a cappella. This reduces the sentimental value of the musical play considerably.

Strasser lists cultural misrepresentation as one of the biggest factors in the timid response to *The Sound of Music* in Austria. At the top of his list are the movie's ending and the culinary offense of combining schnitzel with noodles. Any Austrian is keen to point out to American tourists that if you followed the Trapp family's route over the Unterrichtsberg into supposed freedom, you would actually end up on Hitler's doorstep, at the Führer's lair in Berchtesgarden. Gratzner's production at the *Schauspielhaus* is a tongue-in-cheek response from Austrians for Austrians who are tired of being reduced to stereotypes abroad. Naturally the locals championed it and the small ironic production was sold out for its entire run (February 27th–June 26th, 1994). It would be another ten years before the *Volksoper Wien* would produce the first serious, full-scale production of *The Sound of Music* in Austria as part of its 2004/5 season dedicated to "rediscovered music," i.e. works by composers who were deemed by the Nazis to be *entartete Musik* (degenerate music).

¹³³ The purple cow is an allusion to the Milka trademark. The German Milka chocolate bars come in purple packaging, which features a purple cow with the company's name in white lettering against a purple mountain vista.

In the meantime, the next political earthquake in Austria came in form of federal elections in fall 1999, when the liberal party of Jörg Haider with its ties to right wing extremism and Nazism formed a coalition with the conservatives. A diplomatic ice age and EU sanctions ensued and marginalized the country internationally for several months. Nationally the debate of coming to terms with the past and restitutions efforts emerged anew.¹³⁴ The Austrian Broadcasting Cooperation (ORF) chose this time of political upheaval to broadcast *The Sound of Music* for the first time ever on Christmas Day 2000 – in its original length, i.e., they did not expunge the last minutes of the movie, as had been done before. Since then it has only been repeated once, in the summer of 2003.¹³⁵ According to internal ORF data, the film’s ratings achieved a market share of a little over 2% on both occasions, compared to 3% for the umpteenth rerun of *Bedknobs & Broomsticks* in 2002 – another film from which the Nazis were unceremoniously purged for Austrian and German audiences.¹³⁶ Needless to say, *The Sound of Music* never achieved the same kind of status as in U.S. television programming, where *The Sound of Music* is a fixed star of Yuletide activities.

¹³⁴ For further information on this situation, read: Margarette Lamb-Faffelberger “Beyond “The Sound of Music”: The Quest for Cultural Identities in Modern Austria.” in *The German Quarterly* (2003, Vol. 76, No.3): 289–299 as well as the aforementioned book by Wodak and Pelinka, *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*.

¹³⁵ The timeslot and programming (Saturday 14.20 on station ORF 2) for *The Sound of Music* chosen by the ORF is traditionally reserved for nostalgic films, such as *Heimatfilme* and *Musikkomödien* (music comedies), suggesting the target group of children and older audiences.

¹³⁶ To this day *Bedknobs & Broomsticks* has not been restored to its original form and continues to be shown without Nazi references in Germany and Austria.

Although, of course, one must be cautioned not to read too much of a political message into this choice of programming, the timing of the ORF remains noteworthy. Indeed, in light of the change in political climate, which left many Austrians wanting and disillusioned, Austrians felt the need to overcompensate the international image of Austria abroad with an emphasis on the Austrian resistance in the Third Reich and finally embrace *The Sound of Music* as a tale of such occurrence. The ORF pointed the way, and the civic opera in Vienna finally delivered the first sincere and large-scale production of *The Sound of Music* in Austria in 2005.

As part of an announcement for the upcoming centennial season, the director of the *Volksoper Wien*, Rudolf Berger, named the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical alongside pieces such as Schrekker's *Ireeloh*e and Kalman's *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (The Duchess from Chicago) – both of which were blacklisted as *entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) by the Nazis. The emphasis on the rediscovery of degenerate music made it impossible not to view the choice of *The Sound of Music* as a political statement. For 2005 marked not only the centennial anniversary of the civic opera in Vienna, it also commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the Moscow Treaty, through which Austria regained its independency after years of occupation, first by Nazis then by allied troops.

In an interview with *Der Standard*, conductor Erich Kunzel clarified that he dealt with the material as history, not politics, in the orchestra pit of the *Volksoper*. He mused that the delayed arrival of the musical in Vienna may be due to the fact that many Nazis were still in positions of authority, since Vienna was especially welcoming to the *Anschluss*. He recalled the advice he received from the youngest

Trapp son, Johannes, during a visit to Stowe, Vermont the preceding September: “Be careful with regards to the press in Vienna. There could be some who will turn the story into a political issue due to the Nazi theme.”¹³⁷

For the most part, Renaud Doucet’s production at the *Volksoper* followed the original. The libretto required a few adjustments in the translation based on cultural differences. “Schnitzel with noodles” becomes “Gulasch mit Nockerln,” so Austrian audiences can indeed count it among their favorite things. Similarly, “Do Re Mi” becomes “C-D-E,” since solfège is not as widespread as an instructional tool as in the United States. The biggest difference between the American original and the Austrian version was the strong stage presence of the Nazis. In the finale, Doucet literally let the SS loose in the auditorium, searching with flashlights for the elusive Trapp family among the audience. While it is not uncommon for Viennese theatergoers to experience interactive staging (cf. Chapter V), director Doucet still sent shivers down the audience’s spine. Richard Bernstein from *The New York Times* describes the finale for American readers as follows:

There is, for example, that moment near the end, clearly designed to remind Austrian audiences of the worst moment of their 20th-century past: a giant swastika rises up in the middle of the stage; no-nonsense German soldiers in olive-green combat helmets take up positions in

¹³⁷ Andreas Felber and Erich Kunzel, “Trapp-Familie Mit Nudeln Zum Schnitzel,” *Der Standard*, 25 February 2005. “Als der Anschluss kam, wurde er vor allem in Wien sehr begrüßt. Ich denke, dass hier in den Nachkriegsjahren immer noch viele Nazis das Sagen hatten, weshalb man vielleicht Scheu hatte, mit dem Musical nach Wien zu kommen.[...] Ich behandle den Stoff als historischen, nicht als politischen.[...] Ich habe im September das jüngste Mitglied der Trapp-Familie, Johannes, in Stowe, Vermont, besucht. Er sagte mir auch: Sei vorsichtig hinsichtlich der Presse in Wien. Weil es einige geben könnte, die die Geschichte aufgrund der Nazi-Thematik zum Politikum machen.” Unless otherwise noted, all translations are by me.

the aisles; searchlights sweep the audience. Meanwhile, Captain Georg von Trapp and Maria, his governess-turned-wife, escape over misty mountains from Nazi-occupied Salzburg, leading their seven children to freedom.¹³⁸

When I saw the production, the moment the doors to the stalls opened and the uniforms appeared, a ripple of anxious murmur went through the auditorium. Nobody walked out, but you could notice the level of discomfort rise in the older audience members, those who looked old enough to have served in World War II. It did not help matters that, in a fortunate coincidence, a rumble caused by an underground train – the theater is located above a major subway line and stop – could be felt in the stalls around the same time.

According to Rudolph Berger, who is quoted by Bernstein in his *New York Times* piece, the overall public response was overwhelmingly positive in contrast to reactions by Viennese critics:

In fact, the critical reception of the Volksoper's "Sound of Music" has been mixed at best, but the audience response has been very welcoming. Berger cited one critic who charged that there is not a single memorable melody in the whole production, "in contradiction to the views of about 50 million people," he said, no doubt thinking of such songs as "Climb Ev'ry Mountain," which is so famous that many people do not even know that it originated in this musical. The critic of *Die Presse*, one of Austria's serious national daily papers, called it a "boring two and a half hours." Another paper, *Kurier*, complained that "Edelweiss," one of the show's signature numbers, "is an insult to Austrian musical creation." This leads some of the musical's defenders to wonder if the old resentment against the Rogers and Hammerstein rendition of Austria in the troubled 1930s does not still generate resentment.

¹³⁸ Richard Bernstein, "In Austria, 'The Sound of Music' Is a Curiosity," *The New York Times*, 24 March 2005.

"I can't really prove it," Berger said, "but I think some of the reviews, which were not very positive, reacted to the fact of doing it rather than to what was on stage."¹³⁹

In contrast, Ljubisa Tomic from *Der Standard* gave the production a glowing review and wondered why such a wonderful musical had remained absent from Viennese stages for so long:

On the one hand it is strange that this work has found its way to Vienna at the *Wiener Volksoper* so late, since the premiere had already taken place on Broadway in 1959.[...] But then again, perhaps it is not so strange that it took so long for this work to visit – this Georg von Trapp is after all here a figure of political resistance amidst Edelweiß-kitsch. Neither internally nor externally does he want to partake in the annexation of Austria to Nazi-Germany –the political reasons for which remain unclear. He eludes the Nazi commission to command a U-boat by escaping with his family first to Switzerland, then to America.

Perhaps this historically established part of the musical is responsible for the fact that one had waited so long to present the flawless, classic musical by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II. It could not be the quality of music. It is built around hits and shows clean craftsmanship at the level of *Kiss Me, Kate* and *My Fair Lady*. Without a doubt, first class.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ljubisa Tomic, "Das Glück Ist Eine Dur-Tonleiter," *Der Standard*, 28 February 2005. "Es ist einerseits seltsam, dass dieses Werk sich so spät nach der Uraufführung, die ja immerhin 1959 am Broadway stattfand, nun nach Wien an die Wiener Volksoper verirrt hat.[...] Dann aber ist es vielleicht doch nicht so seltsam, dass es so lange gedauert hat mit dem Werkbesuch - dieser Georg von Trapp ist ja hier inmitten des Edelweißkitsches auch eine Figur der politischen Standhaftigkeit. Den nahenden Anschluss Österreichs an Nazideutschland will er - aus welchen politischen Gründen, wird nicht klar - weder innerlich noch äußerlich mitvollziehen; dem Naziauftrag, ein U-Boot zu übernehmen, entzieht er sich durch die Familienflucht in die Schweiz, und dann nach Amerika. Womöglich ist dieser ernste und historisch verbürgte Teil des Musicals dafür verantwortlich, dass man so lange zugewartet hat, dieses tadellose klassische Musical von Richard Rodgers und Oscar Hammerstein II einmal vorzustellen. An der Musikqualität kann es nicht liegen. Sie ist mit ihren um einen Hit gebauten, handwerklich sauber gearbeiteten Ideen auf dem Niveau von *Kiss Me Kate* und *My Fair Lady* angesiedelt. Also zweifellos erste Liga.

Following the success of *The Sound of Music* in Vienna, the smaller regional theaters in the capitals of the different Austrian *Bundesländer* dared to bring the Rodgers and Hammerstein into their smaller houses. The most attention focused on the *Salzburger Landestheater* on October 23rd, 2011, since it marked the return of *The Sound of Music* to where the film was shot and the historic Trapp family lived. Accordingly, the national and international media interest was disproportionately big for a regional theater. Even *The Associated Press* picked up the news story and *The New York Times* could not resist to comment in their online blog *ArtsBeat*, either:

But the production of “The Sound of Music” that began performances at the Salzburger Landestheater (or Salzburg State Theater) on Oct. 21 has been greeted, for the most part, as if it were raindrops on roses or whiskers on kittens. “Kitsch?” a theatergoer named Helmi Popeter said to the A.P. “I was afraid that would be the case. But once you see it, you realize that’s not so.”

The musical’s depictions of swastikas and characters in Nazi uniforms has previously been a point of contention in Austrian productions — and caused some walkouts when “The Sound of Music” was presented in Vienna in 2005. The A.P. said — but Andreas Gergen, director of the Salzburg production, said, “I think that this is truly the right moment in time, when Austrians are actually ready to deal with their past.”¹⁴¹

The director of the *Landestheater Salzburg*, Carl Philip Maldeghem, had promised a new approach to the Rodgers and Hammerstein, when he announced it as part of the upcoming 2011/12 season in June 2010:

The work is a complete in-house production, and the dialogues will be in German in any case, Maldeghem pointed out. “We are not buying anything from outside here, but preparing the piece from beginning to end completely anew by ourselves. What we do not aspire to is a long-term run as for instance on Broadway,” emphasized the impresario. In any case, “The Sound of Music” shall not become a

¹⁴¹ Dave Itzoff, "How 'the Sound of Music' Became One of Salzburg's Favorite Things," *The New York Times ArtsBeat Blog*, 23 November 2011.

purely commercial enterprise. The target groups will be subscribers, people from Salzburg and Bavaria, but also tourists.¹⁴²

And completely reinvent they did! The production under the direction by Andreas Gergen and Christian Struppeck positions the musical play in a stronger Nazi context. Christian Weingartner from *Der Standard* was surprised by the lack of kitsch and pathos in the production and attributes it back to the directors:

The essentially sentimentally told Trapp family story appears at the *Landestheater* surprisingly without kitsch and pathos. This is partially due to Andreas Gergen and Christian Struppeck, who did not disregard the political background of the Nazi period.¹⁴³

Gergen and Struppeck tell *The Sound of Music* as a flashback from Rolf's perspective and open the evening with the simulation of an air strike and sirens blasting through the auditorium. Gerhard Knopf, editor of *Musicals*, a professional German magazine published by and for musical fans, describes the scene in detail in his review:

The date of the year 1945 is projected onto the screen, loud war noise fills the stage. Young Rolf is standing there alone, glistening white spotlights blend into the audience. An uncomfortable atmosphere, anything but kitsch. Then the story, which began seven years ago, develops in a flashback.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Christian Weingartner, "Umjubelte Rückkehr Der Familie Trapp," 25/26 October 2011. "Die an sich durchaus rührselig erzählte Trapp-Familiengeschichte kommt im Landestheater erstaunlich unkitschig und unpathetisch daher. Das liegt zu einem Gutteil daran, dass Andreas Gergen und Christian Struppeck den politischen Hintergrund der Nazi-Zeit nicht außer Acht lassen."

¹⁴³ Reinhard Kriechbaum, "Gespräch Mit Dem Regisseur Von "Sound of Music", "*Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 20 October 2011.

¹⁴⁴ Gerhard Knopf, "The Sound of Music," *musicals*, December 2011/January 2012 2011, 18. "Projiziert wird die Jahreszahl 1945, lautes Kriegsgetöse füllt die Bühne. Der junge Rolf steht allein da, gleißend weiße Scheinwerfer blenden ins Publikum. Eine ungemütliche Atmosphäre, ganz und gar nicht kitschig. Dann entwickelt sich die sieben Jahre vorher beginnende Geschichte als Rückblende."

Gergen explains in an interview with the *Oberösterreichischen Nachrichten* that he wanted to “show the *Anschluß* of Austria more dangerously, more authentically.” Even though the international licenses leave little wiggle room for new and different approaches, Gergen emphasized that his obligations lay first and foremost with the audience, not the Rodgers and Hammerstein Organization:

It takes the same sensibility required to tell the story to the young singers of “Do-Re-Mi” for the adults, ergo the audience. Gergen does not want to “indict” the people but bring them “with sensitivity” closer to a story, which he deems of a “European dimension.”¹⁴⁵

Perhaps Gergen raised expectations too high in his talk with Reinhard Kriechbaum, for when the critic reviewed the musical for his newspaper he wholeheartedly disagreed with the political conceptualization:

Despite the slimmed down version, which is mostly free of kitsch, several things appear more directly and clearly in the English version, as for example the anchoring of the plot in the period of the *Anschluß*. The menace for the protagonists is more tangible in the English original. Perhaps the rejection of “The Sound of Music” in German-speaking countries can also be traced back to linguistic marginalization.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Kriechbaum, “Gespräch Mit Dem Regisseur Von “Sound of Music”.” “Da will Andreas Gergen einhaken und in der Aufführung von „Sound of Music“ im Salzburger Landestheater beispielsweise „den Anschluss Österreichs umso gefährlicher, authentischer zeigen“.

Die Rechte bei Musicals sind oft bis ins Detail festgeschrieben. Ist ein freier Umgang mit dem Stoff überhaupt möglich? „Wir sind den Lizenzgebern verpflichtet, aber wir lassen uns nicht versklaven“, sagt Gergen. „Wir machen das Stück für das Publikum, nicht für den Lizenzgeber.“ [...] Das gleiche Fingerspitzengefühl, das er brauche, um den jungen Sängerinnen und Sängern des „Do-Re-Mi“ die Geschichte zu erzählen, brauche es auch für die Erwachsenen, das Publikum also. Gergen will die Leute „nicht anklagen“, sondern sie „mit Sensibilität“ heranzuführen an eine Geschichte, die er als eine „mit europäischer Dimension“ einstuft.“

¹⁴⁶ ““The Sound of Music” in Salzburg: Edelweiß - Sei Der Heimat Ein Segen,” *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 25 October 2011. “Trotz der von Kitsch weitgehend entschlackten Fassung kommt auf Englisch manches direkter, wird die Verankerung der Handlung in der Zeit des Anschlusses deutlicher, die Bedrohung der Protagonisten

If Kriechbaum had seen the original on Broadway in 1959 he probably would have reconsidered his comparison. Indeed, I find the translation and staging in Salzburg among the politically most poignant. Knopf provides more details in his review:

During the course of the evening, the rising Nazi menace becomes visibly apparent again and again: For instance, when telegram-delivery boy Rolf tears open a letter curiously and a portrait of Hitler flashes up in the background, or when snippets from the “Deutschen Wochenschau” with marching brown shirts and Hitler’s propaganda clamor can be seen. Most impressive is the scene, in which the victims of the Nazis scrub the streets while the “Halleluja” of the nun choir sounds in the background.¹⁴⁷

Kriechbaum references the same scene in his review, describing them as Jews sweeping the streets, which highlights a very important distinction: The Salzburg production introduces Jews into *The Sound of Music* for the first time. Overall, however, Kriechbaum concludes that the Salzburg production is less politically direct and clear than the original, which is surprising, considering the inclusion of Jewish characters. Kriechbaum points out that this indirectness comes especially across when one compares the German translation with the English original projected as supertitles. I cannot comprehend his reasoning, since for example, the German translation of “No Way To Stop It,” “Kein Mensch kann es

greifbarer. Vielleicht ist tatsächlich die „Sound of Music“-Verweigerung in deutsch sprechenden Landen auch auf sprachliche Marginalisierung zurückzuführen.”

¹⁴⁷ Knopf, “The Sound of Music,” 18. “Im Laufe des Abends wird die heraufziehende Bedrohung durch die Nazis immer wieder deutlich sichtbar, etwas als der Briefträger-Bursche Rolf neugierig einen Brief aufreißt und im Hintergrund ein Hitlerporträt aufblitzt oder wenn Ausschnitte der “Deutschen Wochenschau” mit marschierenden Braunhemden und Hitlers Propaganda-Geschrei zu sehen sind. Besonders eindringlich gelingt die Szene, in der, während aus dem Hintergrund das “Halleluja” des Nonnenchors ertönt, die Opfer der Nazis die Straße schrubben müssen.”

ändern,” evokes images previously discarded by Hammerstein for the same song.

Max’s advice to the Captain is an obvious reference to the Hitler salute:

CAPTAIN: I will never knuckle under this ideology

MAX: It’s enough to briefly lift your arm!¹⁴⁸

However, Kriechbaum’s review is, like the rest of the critical response, much more positive about the Salzburg production than the *Volksoper* one. Perhaps this is indeed because of the direction by Andreas Gergen and Christian Struppeck, as Christoph Lindenbaum from the *Kleine Zeitung* concludes:

Together with designer Court Watson, they did not eschew the mortifying Nazi-scenes between civil pop and hit parade. They broke the atmosphere of the intact world and shoved the cruelty and arrogance of the Nazi right under Salzburg’s nose – and with that their [Salzburg’s] own history.¹⁴⁹

Gergen and Struppeck never use Nazi symbols for shock value or provocation. Where Schulmann had the Trapp family appear on the concert stage in front of large red Nazi banners with swastikas, Gergen and Struppeck project a yellow swastika on a cold blue background. Even though Austrian law would allow the use of accurate Nazi symbols in the context of the show, the directors decided to spare the audience the discomfort of seeing the black swastika surrounded by a white circle on a red background. The yellow swastika on a light blue circle

¹⁴⁸ Richard Rodgers and Oscar II Hammerstein, *The Sound of Music. Live Aus Dem Salzburger Landestheater* (HitSquad, 2012), 66836. “Kapitän von Trapp: Für die Ideologie geh’ ich nie in die Knie. Max: Du, es reicht doch schon, ganz kurz den Arm zu heben!”

¹⁴⁹ Christoph Lindenbauer, “Viel Edelweiß Für Salzburg,” *Kleine Zeitung*, 24 October 2011. “Mit Ausstatter Court Watson haben sie sich zwischen Bürgerpop und Hitparade auch nicht um beschämende Nazi-Szenen gedrückt, die Heile-Welt-Stimmung gebrochen und Salzburg die Härte und Arroganz der Nazis - und damit die eigene Geschichte - ganz nahe unter die Nase gehalten.“

communicates the situation and its implications just as well without aiming for a cheap effect. Similarly, the SS officers do not storm the auditorium in this production. While the doors to the stalls and boxes are opened and guarded by uniformed soldiers, they do not disrupt the audience physically the way they did at the *Volksoper* in Vienna.

The highlight of the evening for Kriechbaum was the breakdown of the Captain during his performance of “Edelweiss.” In this production, the actor goes beyond what the libretto prescribes and sings the song with a thin voice from the beginning and then tears up completely and snuffles while Maria and the children have to take over for him. In the context of the original production, this would have only exacerbated the melodramatic quality of the finale; however, according to Kriechbaum, it was the most powerful moment, “der Knüller,” of the evening:

It says “Edelweiß,” which is considered a real Austrian folk song worldwide, “shall be a blessing for the homeland,” and Uwe Kröger sings this passage directed to the address of the Nazi fat cats, lurking in the box. The way he lets his voice break – that is artistic creation, which rings true and takes away any sentimentality from an otherwise problematic passage.¹⁵⁰

Gergen and Struppeck’s production comes full circle, when in the final scene Rolf comes face to face with the Trapp family. Torn between right and wrong, personal desire and duty to the fatherland, the young actor who plays Liesl’s boyfriend could give Kröger a run for his money. With tears in his eyes, it looks for a

¹⁵⁰ Kriechbaum, “The Sound of Music” in Salzburg: Edelweiß - Sei Der Heimat Ein Segen. “Und der Knüller: „Edelweiß“, das man weltweit für ein echtes österreichisches Volkslied hält „... sei der Heimat ein Segen“ heißt es da, und Uwe Kröger singt diese Passage an die Adresse der in der Loge lauernenden Nazi-Bonzen. Wie er die Stimme da brechen lässt – das ist sängerisches Gestalten, das einer durchaus problematischen Passage jeden falschen Ton, jede oberflächliche Rührseligkeit nimmt.”

minute as if Rolf considers joining the family, then chokes out that nobody is there to his friends. The audience feels empathy for the young man, and few eyes remain dry during the climactic moment when Rolf reaches for Maria's hand but cannot quite reach it:

The musical ends with escape of the Trapp-Family, who hide among the nuns in their garden from the Nazis, before they can begin their march over the mountains. Rolf, who has been recruited by the new political powers in the meantime, discovers them there but does not give them away. Even though it seems unlikely that he does not return to his new friends and the search troop withdraws without him, it facilitates an anxious scene: Maria extends her hand to Rolf, who is rooted to the ground. However, he cannot bring himself to grasp her hand and flee with them. He is left behind crying. A strong image. After that it feels almost liberating, when after the final applause the perky songs are intoned again.¹⁵¹

The history of *The Sound of Music* in the United States and Austria in its stage version reveals a few commonalities and a fundamental disparity. While the critics in both countries found it hard to digest the sentimental and sometimes melodramatic aspects of the musical, Austrian theaters had to navigate the additional obstacle of national sensibilities. This extends from the obvious intense emotional response regarding Austria's past to the equally strong reactions to stereotypical depictions of Austrian culture abroad. The Salzburg production proved

¹⁵¹ Knopf, "The Sound of Music," 21. "Das Musical endet mit der Flucht der Trapp-Familie, die, ehe sie ihren Marsch über die Berge beginnen kann, noch von den Schwestern im Klostergarten vor den Nazis versteckt wird. Dort entdeckt sie der inzwischen von den neuen politischen Machthabern rekrutierte Rolf, doch er verrät sie nicht. Dass er nicht zu seinen neuen Freunden zurückgeht und der Suchtrupp einfach so ohne ihn wieder abzieht, ist eher unglaublich, ermöglicht aber eine beklemmende Szene: Maria reicht dem wie angewurzelt dastehenden Rolf die Hand. Er schafft es jedoch nicht, sie zu ergreifen und mit ihnen zu fliehen. Weinend bleibt er zurück. Ein starkes Bild. Danach wirkt es fast befreiend, dass zum Schlussapplaus nochmals die flotten Songs angestimmt werden."

that it was possible to strike the right balance between family show and political drama with *The Sound of Music*, appeasing critics and public alike.

CHAPTER IV

CABARET

On the first day of rehearsals for *Cabaret*, director Hal Prince showed the cast a “centerfold from *Life* magazine of August 19, 1966, of a group of Aryan blonds in their late teens, stripped to the waist, wearing religious medals, snarling at the camera like a pack of hounds.”¹⁵² When Prince asked the cast to guess the place and date of the image, they placed it in Germany sometime before or during the Third Reich, given the musical’s theme. In reality however, the photographs had been taken recently in Chicago, where white supremacists were forcefully protesting the desegregation of a local school.¹⁵³

This little anecdote from Harold Prince’s autobiography, *Contradictions*, exemplifies the conceptual premise of *Cabaret* as a metaphor for contemporary politics and society. Unlike *The Sound of Music*, which was primarily a family show and only happened to deliver an anti-Nazi message on a secondary level, *Cabaret* was always intended to be a political show. Ideally, *Cabaret* would not only demonstrate to audiences the process by which a whole nation could become morally and politically corrupt but also remind them that what happened in 1930s Berlin could happen again at any time, in fact, *might* be happening right here and now in the United States in 1966.

¹⁵² Hal Prince, *Contradictions. Notes on Twenty-Six Years in the Theatre* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1974), 125.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 126.

To meet these great expectations of establishing a correlation between Berlin and the United States, Prince relied on a collaborative process with author Joe Masteroff, lyricist Fred Ebb, composer John Kander, set designer Boris Aronson, lighting designer Jean Rosenthal and costume designer Patricia Zipprodt – all of whom shaped Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* and John van Druten's *I Am a Camera* into *Cabaret*. Together they pursued several strategies to transfer Prince's conceptual idea successfully onto the stage. First, the literary templates necessitated an increased politicization of the plot, which can be traced through a chronological comparison of different script drafts by Masteroff. Second, they decided to promote the character of Cliff from a passive observer into a candid critic to serve as a focal point for the audience's accountability. Third, in contrast to *The Sound of Music*, which vilified the Nazis from the onset, the Nazi characters in *Cabaret* are introduced as normal, likeable people to emphasize the allure and dormant dangers of political ideologies. Fourth, the characters operate in a big, morally grey area, mediated between personal hedonism and social responsibilities, to reflect the choices each and every one has to make between right and wrong every day. Last but not least, Prince helps himself to elements of Brechtian epic theater in the staging of *Cabaret* in order to unsettle audience members every time they might fall into complacency.

4.1. ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Before *Cabaret* opened at the *Broadhurst Theater* on November 20th, 1966, it had a turbulent gestation period. According to Joe Masteroff, he and Prince began discussing turning John van Druten's play, *I Am a Camera*, into a musical as early as 1963, and quickly reached the consensus that the character of Sally Bowles did not yield enough to carry an entire show. It was the same year that newly minted Alabama governor George C. Wallace declared perennial segregation, and African-American protestors, including Martin Luther King Junior, were attacked and arrested in Birmingham. Later in the year King delivered his "I have a dream" speech during the March on Washington, followed by the bombing of a Birmingham Baptist church. Sam Cooke was arrested for his attempt to sleep at a hotel for white customers only and Malcolm X took the stage. The turbulent year of 1963 came to a jarring and shocking climax with the assassination of President Kennedy. The solution to Prince and Masteroff's problem, i.e., how to frame the Isherwood stories as a musical, emerged and was only reinforced by the political upheaval characterizing the sixties: *Cabaret* had to become a double metaphor.

After six months, it occurred to us—there was something we could say in contemporary terms, if we used 1929-30 Berlin. There were parallels. This musical could say something about the responsibility of people to commit themselves to issues that they might comfortably avoid, but that would ultimately come home to roost. In other words, the gentile who looked the other way in 1930 Germany was no different from the white man in the U.S. who looks the other way... We were interested in telling the story of four people, only one of whom wakes up to his responsibilities, the American, Cliff, the other three went down the drain. (Hal Prince)¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Leo Lerman, "Something to Talk About: Cabaret," 1966.

On the one hand, *Cabaret* was a clear adumbration of the socio-political milieu in Weimar Berlin, which represented the decadent, self-centered, hedonistic lifestyle preferred by its citizens. On the other hand, *Cabaret* came to symbolize the contemporary struggles for social equality, civil rights and an end to racial segregation, which divided the United States into reformers and reactionaries. Of course, the white supremacists did not rid the country of African-Americans in the highly organized way with gas the Nazis did with Jews, gypsies, political dissidents and homosexuals in gas chambers in the concentration camps. However, they used the same second-class citizen argument to suppress an ethnic group and terrorized the people with lynch mobs among other things. This aspect of homegrown terrorism in the south of the United States, organized into the Ku-Klux-Klan, resembles the early years of Nazism, as depicted in *Cabaret*, before they became an officially recognized political party and then the only political party and voice of authority in Germany.

For this double metaphor to work, i.e., the analogy of the Kit Kat Klub to both Weimar Berlin and 1960s United States, Masteroff had to take the action out of the small room Sally and Cliff share in Fräulein Schneider's boarding house, where it was confined to in van Druten's play. He transferred the plot to the streets of Berlin to confront the characters with the economic, social, and political problems plaguing Berlin in the early 1930s – just before the Nazi takeover. However, he maintained van Druten's characterization of Cliff and Sally in his first draft, which unintentionally created an obstacle in the development of *Cabaret* because Cliff's passivity makes his character aloof and unmotivated and thus more inaccessible for

audiences. This problem would not be successfully resolved until the Boston try-outs, when the authors and producers fundamentally changed their approach to Cliff's character from that of passive observer to active participant.

By his own account, Masteroff wrote about a thousand different versions of the script, which is undoubtedly an exaggeration but the collection of *Cabaret* drafts found in the archives of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts does give researchers a taste of the many rewrites, tweaks and changes the script underwent between 1963 and 1966. There are a total of twelve scripts available for the original production of 1966 (cf. Table 4.1): eight are part of the Fred Ebb Papers (LPA Mss 2005); and one early draft is in the Harold Prince Papers (T*-Mss 1986-006); one rehearsal script is in the Boris Aronson Papers (T*-Vim 1987-012); and there is one blocking and stage manager script, respectively, from the Ruth Mitchell Papers (T*-Mss 2001-023) and Ed Aldridge (Fred Ebb Papers).

Table 4.1. Chronology of *Cabaret* Scripts

Version	Collection	Date	Reference
First Version	Fred Ebb Papers	Early undated	Draft A
Second Version	Hal Prince Papers	05/19/66 ¹⁵⁵	Draft B ₁
Second Version Rewrites	Fred Ebb Papers	05/19/66 or later ¹⁵⁶	Draft B ₂
Second Version With Notes	Fred Ebb Papers	05/19/66 or later	Draft B ₃
Revised Second Version	Fred Ebb Papers	08/01/66	Draft B ₄
Rehearsal Script	Fred Ebb Papers	08/18/66	Draft C ₁
Rehearsal Script	Boris Aronson Papers	August 1966	Draft C ₂
Rehearsal Script Try-outs	Fred Ebb Papers	September – October 1966	Draft C ₃
Final Script	Fred Ebb Papers	11/20/66	Draft D
Ed Aldridge's Stage Manager Script	Fred Ebb Papers	11/20/66	Draft E ₁
Cabaret Blocking script	Ruth Mitchell Papers	Undated [1966]	Draft E ₂
Stage Manager Script	Ruth Mitchell Papers	Undated [1966]	Draft E ₃

The transformation from literary/dramatic template to musical can be grouped into four major phases, as it becomes evident from the table above. While the early draft in the Fred Ebb Papers (Draft A) has no date, its contents fit by and large the description Keith Garebian gives of the first version of the script completed

¹⁵⁵ This table is an attempt at a chronology, but different drafts often have the same date, making it impossible to know which one actually comes first. The pages of the script in the Hal Prince Papers are continuously numbered, unlike those in the Fred Ebb Paper, suggesting Prince's copy are the original and Ebb's are later rewrites. Also Prince's copy refers to Cliff smuggling a "suitcase," which is later changed to briefcase.

¹⁵⁶ The viewing aid for the Fred Ebb Papers says this draft is dated May 5th 1966, which seems a little bit unlikely given that it contains rewrites of the Second Version, which is dated ten days later (May 19th, 1966).

in the summer of 1963: “full first act and the outline of the second.”¹⁵⁷ However, Draft A has the first four scenes of Act II fully developed, making it likely a revision of the original first draft. It is unclear whether the rest of Act II got lost or if this is how far Masteroff had gotten at the time. A handwritten note on the page where Act II begins could be read as “Feb 12” but unfortunately no year is given. The separation of “Willkommen” as a prologue to the book story about Sally and Cliff but the lack of other Kit Kat Klub numbers suggests that this draft might be dated around February 1964.

The second phase (Drafts B₁–B₄) in *Cabaret*’s genesis lasts roughly from May–July of 1966. There seem to be two variations of the Second Version, B₁ and B₂. B₃ is really the same script as B₁, with notes on how to tighten the plot, grammatical corrections of the German used. The third phase encompasses the rehearsal stage and Boston try-outs from August until October (Drafts C₁–C₃). The fourth phase comprises the final version of the script (Draft D) as well as blocking scripts and stage manager scripts (E₁–E₃) dated with the premiere of November 20th. To avoid confusion, the different drafts will be referred to by the alphanumerical codes provided in Table 4.1 instead of their long and complicated version names.

¹⁵⁷ Keith Garebian, *The Making of Cabaret*, *The Great Broadway Musicals* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Mosaic Press, 1999), 26.

4.1.1. THE POLITICIZATION OF THE PLOT

As mentioned above, Masteroff modeled Cliff and Sally after their dramatic originals in *I Am a Camera* in Draft A, which resulted in the plot being heavily dominated by the blossoming romance between the romantic leads. However, parallel to that runs a political background depicting the milieu of Berlin. The two storylines run independently of each other, though occasionally they converge for the effect of dramatic irony, as for example in Act I, Scene 8.

In this scene, Sally and Cliff meet Ernst at a local Brauhaus. When a group of workers at another table break out into song, Ernst and his friends feel provoked and get into a competitive sing-off. When some of Ernst's friends put on swastika armbands, it becomes clear that there is some form of political rivalry going on between the two groups, suggesting Ernst's opponents might be communists. Sally suggests as much to Cliff as well. As the atmosphere around them takes a turn toward the violent, the young couple gets ready to vacate the premises:

“The YOUNG MEN start banging their steins on the oak tables to drown out THE WORKING MEN – who do likewise. SALLY and CLIFF are gazing at one another – anticipating their affair. Finally CLIFF pulls her to him and they kiss – It is the sort of kiss that can only lead to one thing [...] A beer stein flies through the air. Suddenly the Brauhaus erupts into a free-for-all, with fists flying and steins soaring. The patrons either participate in the fight or hide under the heavy tables. As for CLIFF and SALLY, they're too pre-occupied with themselves to notice. They drift -- hand-in-hand -- up the stairs as the scene ends.”¹⁵⁸

The two plot points are introduced as two separate entities, completely detached from each other, so that one does not influence the outcome of the other.

¹⁵⁸ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. Early, undated draft. US–NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 1, 1-42a – 1-42b.

Even though the outbreak of the brawl prompts Sally and Cliff to leave, they are so caught up with each other they kiss first. There is not really a point to the political element in this scene, because neither Cliff nor Sally seems to be particularly bothered by finding out about Ernst's Nazi ideology. On the contrary, they are so self-absorbed with their kissing, they practically ignore the implications of this revelation.

However, things change completely at the engagement party for Fräulein Schneider and Herr Schultz (Act I/Scene 12), when the main protagonists' lives become entangled in Berlin's political climate. Most of the guests are Fräulein Schneider's friends or acquaintances of Sally and Cliff, such as Ernst Ludwig and Otto the director, who immediately takes over as a party planner. He instructs people to dance with each other and where to stand as if he were blocking actor's movements for one of his movies. Fräulein Kost, unsure whether she is invited, needs a little extra encouragement from Fräulein Schneider, but brings along her gramophone and records to play some music.

Ernst Ludwig arrives wearing a swastika armband, which everyone but Herr Schultz notices before Ernst takes it off. Afterwards he congratulates Herr Schultz, shaking hands with the Jew.

Fräulein Schneider approaches Ernst Ludwig about his political convictions:

FRL S[CHNEIDER] (To ERNST): You are a National Socialist. I did not know.

ERNST: I am a German. Weare [sic] both Germans. Someday - - Fraulein - - we will march side-by-side. (FRL S[CHNEIDER] shakes her head) You will see. I promise you.

(HERR SCHULTZ brings ERNST a schnapps. HE toasts them.

Meanwhile, FRL KOST- - with her eyes on ERNST- - has put a record on the gramophone: "Tomorrow Belongs To Us". She starts to sing it, then signals for HIM to join in. HE does. Then, little by little, other guests join in the singing. They form a sort of group around ERNST)¹⁵⁹

Since the song title is not printed all in caps in the script, which is how the original numbers by Kander and Ebb are usually marked, it may actually refer to a real Nazi song by Hans Baumann called "Es zittern die morschen Knochen." The chorus contains the line "Denn heute gehört uns Deutschland/ Und morgen die ganze Welt," which translated roughly into "Because today Germany belongs to us/ And tomorrow the whole world."

Fräulein Kost brought the record to the party without knowing Ernst would be there, suggesting not only that she stands by her Nazi convictions openly but also that she expects other Nazis to be at the party. Moreover it raises the question if, unlike Ernst who doesn't live at Fräulein Schneider's, Fräulein Kost may not be aware of Herr Schultz's Jewishness, even after living under the same roof with him day in and day out. Or, she may very well have brought the record along to make Fräulein Schneider, with whom she does not get along with well, and Herr Schultz uncomfortable.

In a rather frightening move, the Nazis burst out into a Nazi song at the slightly morose engagement party for Fräulein Schneider and Herr Schultz. Essentially everyone at the party except for the two romantic couples is exposed as a National Socialist. This revelation is all the more surprising given that there had been no visible reaction from the party guests earlier when Fräulein Schneider

¹⁵⁹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 1: 1-71.

casually revealed Herr Schultz's Jewish background. Masteroff continues the dramatic irony with regards to Cliff and Sally's obliviousness, which he established with the Brauhaus scene. Sally and Cliff are fighting while the Nazis gather in a group around them. Cliff's jealousy rears its ugly head, because Otto, whom he considers an old flame of Sally's, invited them to the Club Lorelei, where they have "two naked girls dancing with a gorilla."¹⁶⁰

(Meanwhile, all the guests have joined in the singing of "Tomorrow Belongs To Us." FRL SCHNEIDER and HERR SCHULTZ stand alone and apart. Little by little, FRL S[CHNEIDER] starts drifting away from HERR SCHULTZ and toward the others[.]¹⁶¹

Sally and Cliff continue to argue; Sally tells Cliff unequivocally that his dullness is suffocating her just as the singing ends. Not to be outdone, Herr Schultz, completely oblivious to what has just transpired, launches into a comic song about a "Meeskite" peppered with Yiddish words, such as "meeskite" (ugly person), "chader" (Hebrew school), "zayda" ("grandpa"). Ernst Ludwig tries to slip out quietly, but is noticed by Fräulein Schneider, Cliff and Sally. We do not learn of the reaction of other party guests to Herr Schultz's outing because the script leads us away from the party in Draft A, when Sally and Herr Schultz dance into Cliff's room, where the older gentleman falls asleep.

Sally and Cliff's ignorance shows when Fräulein Schneider questions the continued loyalty of her friends, if she married Herr Schultz. Since they did not pay

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 1: 1-72

attention to the other guests, who were engaged in the rousing singing of the Nazi tune, Sally and Cliff have a hard time understanding Fräulein Schneider's concerns.

SALLY: If you marry?

CLIFF: I don't understand.

FRL S[CHNEIDER]: How could you? You are a stranger in this country.

SALLY (With forced brightness): Let's not talk about it! You're just – over-wrought. How well I know that feeling. (SHE glances at CLIFF – as if in remembrance of their recent difficulties. To FRL S[CHNEIDER])

But we all have our little troubles and misunderstandings. – And really – - how dreadfully unimportant they are[.]¹⁶²

Sally begins a cheery, upbeat song about enduring misunderstandings in life and relationships: "It'll All Blow Over". While this song may be directed at Fräulein Schneider's situation, Sally really sings it more for Cliff's benefit to make up for their earlier quarrel. Even though this song did not make it into the final stage production, it was recorded in 1966 along with the rest of *Cabaret*. In 1998, Columbia Records re-released the original soundtrack recording of *Cabaret* with seven previously unreleased titles, which were mostly numbers cut from the original production. Among them is "It'll All Blow Over" from the Act I finale, which perfectly exemplifies Sally's obliviousness and the dramatic irony of the early drafts. The song is introduced on the recording with the following brief description:

Frau Schneider is terribly upset at what has happened at the party. Sally, however, cannot see that anything calamitous is afoot. She sings this song to both Cliff and Frau Schneider. Eventually she draws a very reluctant Cliff, and a very reluctant Frau Schneider into the song and the curtain falls as all three of them sing together.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US–NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 1: 1-78.

¹⁶³ John Kander, "It'll All Blow over Intro," in *Cabaret. Original Broadway cast recording* (New York, NY: Columbia Broadway Masterworks, 1998).

It is an up-tempo, jazzy number that compounds the dramatic irony and creates a strong counterpoint to the prevailing somber mood after the musical confrontation between the Nazis and Herr Schultz. They are figuratively running away from their problems, Cliff and Sally from their relationship problems and Fräulein Schneider from the Nazi menace. The subtext, of course, suggests in light of what happened just minutes earlier at the party that Nazism, too, will all blow over eventually. As if to convince themselves and each other, the characters finish the song repeating the line “It’ll all blow over” four times.

Act II of Draft A deals with the fallout from the party. Otto invites Sally and Cliff to drinks but leaves them with a rather large bill. Ernst bails them out and explains to Cliff that he made a mistake inviting him to the party. And later, in a continuation of irony, Sally and Cliff decide to get married just when Fräulein Schneider calls off her engagement. Draft A ends here abruptly with Fräulein Schneider returning an engagement gift to Sally and Cliff.

The Second Version *Cabaret* scripts (B₁-B₄) continue to introduce scenes in which Sally and Cliff are confronted – more or less against their will – with the political reality of Berlin, building up to a fusion of the political background action with the romantic foreground plots. There are two variants of the Second Version, Draft B₁ and Draft B₂. B₃ is essentially the same as B₁ but with notes. B₄ is the revised script of B₂. The Brauhaus scene (B₁) is cut in the next draft (B₂), probably because the revelation of Ernst’s political affiliation so early in the game does a disservice to the dramatic arc. The big revelation that Ernst is a Nazi is pushed back to the end of the second act as part of the engagement party scene, when Masteroff

changes the structure from a two-act play into a three-act one with the B scripts. This becomes a necessity because the concurrent storylines about Sally and Cliff's as well as Fräulein Schneider and Herr Schultz's romances are interspersed with little cabaret numbers, whose conceptualization will be discussed more in depth later.

Masteroff spends the first act of Draft B₁ establishing the characters and their relationships, eclipsing, for a large part, the political hotbed that is Berlin. Act II begins with the song "A Mark In Your Pocket" by the Emcee and a group of Berliners, for which, unfortunately, no music survives. The number is a short narrative about the consequences of capitalism:

Your stomach is grumbling for food
You wish you were friends with the grocer
You can be friends with the grocer
If you've got
A mark in your pocket¹⁶⁴

When you starve in poverty, being friends with a grocer would be convenient. As a businessman, the grocer is only interested in you if you are a paying customer. The irony is, if you had that mark in your pocket to pay for what you want, you would not need to be friends with the grocer in the first place. Similarly, the second stanza is a criticism of corruption often found in people with authority. It is implied that the protagonist of the first strophe stole food and was arrested.

They take you in front of the judge
You're hoping his honor is lenient
You'll find that his honor is lenient
If you've got

¹⁶⁴ Masteroff et al., *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 40, Folder 4: 2-1-1.

A mark in your pocket¹⁶⁵

The song is built around the irony that money can get you practically out of any kind of trouble and allow you to ingratiate yourself with the right people, but most people would not even get into the kind of trouble they do if they had money. This sets the tone for the second act of Draft B₁: Fräulein Kost argues with Fräulein Schneider about paying the rent, if the latter forbids her to bring sailors to her room. Herr Schultz woos Fräulein Schneider with expensive fruits. Moreover, Masteroff moves the scene with Sally, Cliff and Otto at the café from after to before the engagement party, and changes its outcome: Cliff becomes indebted to Ernst, who paid the bill for Sally and Cliff, after Otto runs out on them. However, Ernst offers Cliff to pay off the debt by taking a trip to Paris for him. Through this decision, Cliff becomes directly involved into politics, whether he wants it or not, and has to live with the consequences of his actions when he finds out at the engagement party whom he really supported through the favor he did for Ernst Ludwig.

Masteroff also makes slight adjustments to the engagement scene in Draft B₁ due to continuity. For instance, now there is continuity in his characterization of the party guests because they *do* show a reaction and exchange looks this time when Fräulein Schneider mentions there will be no rabbi. Instead of arguing about Otto's invitation, Sally and Cliff argue about his unwillingness to work for Ernst and Sally's desire to return to her career as a nightclub singer at the Kit Kat Klub, while Fräulein Kost, Ernst Ludwig and the other party guests sing "Tomorrow Belongs To

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

Me.” Unlike in Draft A, this song is original material by Kander and Ebb and sounds familiar to audiences who would likely recognize it from Act I where it was sung by a group of schoolboys. What was introduced as a pastoral folk song with an optimistic message by innocent looking school children has to be re-evaluated as a covert Nazi theme. Youthful optimism and perseverance become nationalistic war undertones:

The sun on the meadow is summery warm
The stag in the forest runs free
The heart as a shelter defies the storm
Tomorrow belongs to me
The branch of the linden is leafy and green
The rage has deserted the sea
The world holds a promise that fights unseen
Tomorrow belongs to me
The babe in his cradle is soundly asleep
The blossom embraces the bee
And love like a valley lies wide and deep
Tomorrow belongs to me¹⁶⁶

In Act III the political situation begins to directly affect the relationships of the primary and secondary couples. Fräulein Schneider has been intimidated by the display of Nazi power at the party into breaking off the engagement with Herr Schultz. Sally watches in shock and incomprehension as Cliff tears up leftover bills from Ernst, which is blood money to him.

CLIFF: Didn't you listen? Didn't you hear what Fräulein Schneider was saying? There's something – monstrous – going on here. And who's behind it? Our good friend Ernst.
SALLY: But that's not our fault!
CLIFF: Nothing is ever our fault!! We've been living here like two careless children – doing all kinds of damage...

¹⁶⁶ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 40, Folder 4: 2-7-37.

SALLY: So you tear up perfectly good money. Really, Cliff – I don't think I will ever understand...¹⁶⁷

While Cliff is waking up from his daydreams and realizing he is caught in the middle of a nightmare, Sally continues to live without a care in the world. This fundamental difference in political opinion causes a deep rift in their relationship and unravels all the other problems in their relationship, which eventually leads to their break up.

Since the political action is crowded in the last third of the storyline of Draft B₁, Masteroff writes a new opening for Act II in Draft B₂, which establishes a longer arc chronicling Cliff and Sally's attention to politics. After a night of partying, Sally and Cliff need to take a rest on a bench. One after another, a cripple, a prostitute and a uniformed man – all of who are looking for handouts – approach the couple. The harsh economic reality of Germany quickly bursts the young couple's love bubble. More than anything, Cliff and Sally appear to be inconvenienced by the repeated interruptions. Indeed, the lovebirds turn every charity-seeker away, not only because they are broke but also because they feel disconnected to the socio-economic circumstances in Berlin and not responsible for the Germans in need. When confronted by the uniformed man about their lack of love and loyalty to their country, Cliff's explanation that neither he nor Sally are German feels like a convenient excuse at best. Both foreigners make a conscious choice not to engage with their environment.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.: 3-3-14.

With this scene, Masteroff taps deeply into Prince's desire to confront contemporary audiences with their own culpability. How many times in a single day does one simply hurry by a homeless person on the street or avert one's eyes to be left alone by beggars? Watching Cliff and Sally acting so self-absorbed on stage might have made audiences feel guilty about their own selfishness and lack of empathy for less fortunate people.

The background action tops off this scene. A non-denominational orator attracts a small crowd with his populist speech. The language is purposely ambiguous, which allows the substitution of different political ideologies:

[...] And what is the Government doing about it? Nothing! Because they know – they know very well – that the truth must be suppressed! They are afraid of us, my friends! They are afraid of telling us the truth! [...] And I ask you, what good is the Mark? Today it is worth something, but what will it be worth tomorrow? We all know what can happen to the Mark – the good, reliable German Mark... The decline of Germany – the decline of Europe – the decline of England [...] until blood flows in the streets and this filth is cleared out – burned out – stamped out – wiped out [...] And this city will rise up! This nation will rise up! The entire world will rise up! [...] And you will see a new day – a new day for the worker – a new day for his family – a new day for the world... And you will see it soon – do you hear me? Soon! Soon! Soon!!!¹⁶⁸

An angry mob attacks them, again suggesting some kind of political rivalry. Masteroff continues with the dramatic irony of the previous drafts, when he has the exhausted lovebirds sleep though the tumult.

Handwritten notes in the margin are added to the orator's monologue and expand his diatribe more:

¹⁶⁸ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 2-1-2 – 2-1-7.

Wake up you son + you daughter
Wake up tomorrow won't wait
Wake up and see the new order
Wake up before it's too late.¹⁶⁹

Wake up and look to the chancellor
Teaching an army of sheep
Open your eyes to the chancellor
Trying to put us to sleep.¹⁷⁰

Masteroff purposely kept the orator's politics ambiguous to show the mechanics behind populist propaganda. This becomes even clearer when he revises the scene for Draft C₁. Instead of one orator, there are now two competing against each other, one national socialist and one communist:

FIRST ORATOR: And what are we doing about it? Nothing! It's time to save the **Fatherland** from the **mongrels** who wish to destroy us.
SECOND ORATOR: And what are we doing about it? Nothing! It's time to save the **workers** from the **capitalist bloodsuckers** who wish to destroy us.¹⁷¹

Masteroff's script shows in this exchange where both pontificators use the exact same rhetoric, substituting the appropriate buzzwords (in bold, emphasis mine) for their respective following. The rivalry between communists and National Socialists has been a recurring theme in all script drafts of *Cabaret*, but was never directly addressed until this draft. The orators are accusing each other; the Nazi orator is blaming "the red scum" for the death of Horst Wessel, while the

¹⁶⁹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 2-1-2.

¹⁷⁰ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 2-1-3.

¹⁷¹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 6: 2-1-2 – 2-1-3. (emphasis mine)

communists are accusing the Nazis of “Six fascist murders this week!”¹⁷² Eventually the communist crowd attacks the Nazi speaker. As in the previous drafts B₂ and B₄, none of this registers with Sally and Cliff, who are sleeping it off after partying all night.

In order to intertwine the personal lives of the characters even more closely with the political undercurrents, Masteroff falls back on the pregnancy trope for B₂. Whereas in Draft B₁ it was mostly a question of honor and male pride for Cliff to pay Ernst back the money by doing him a favor, Cliff now actually *needs* the money with a baby on the way. He has just talked Sally into keeping the baby and proposed marriage to her.

SALLY: Seventy-five marks! Cliff – it’s a gift from Heaven!

CLIFF (Nods): By way of the Communist Party.

ERNST (Angrily): You think I am a Communist? But how could you believe this?¹⁷³

However, Cliff insists that Ernst keeps his political affiliations to himself because he does not want to get involved in politics. He is only smuggling the suitcase to prove to Sally and himself that he can take responsibility and be a provider for their future family. This turn of events also allows Cliff’s character to act passive-aggressively towards Ernst at the engagement party, when Cliff realizes for whom he smuggled the suitcase. Whereas in Draft B₁, Cliff only handed over the suitcase reluctantly, his character can now refuse to take the money, since it was a business deal and not a simple favor. Knowing how desperately Cliff and Sally need

¹⁷² Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 6: 2-3-21.

¹⁷³ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret* US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 2-3-26.

the money, this small and quiet act of defiance is actually a rather loud and powerful statement.

ERNST (To CLIFF): You have the briefcase?

(CLIFF points to the swastika arm-band questioningly. ERNST obviously did not realize HE was wearing it) Oh – I come direct from the meeting. (HE takes his coat off and puts it on a chair. HE is wearing a regular business suit underneath) I am sorry, Clifford. – Since you did not wish to know my politics. However – (HE shrugs) The briefcase, please. (CLIFF noticeably hesitates) You have it?

(SALLY points to the briefcase)

SALLY: Right there.

(ERNST gets the briefcase)

ERNST: I am pleased with you, Clifford. (HE takes an envelope out of his pocket and extends it to CLIFF) Here is my gratitude. (CLIFF doesn't take it) Something is wrong?

SALLY: Of course not. (SHE takes the envelope) Thank you, Ernst.¹⁷⁴

There is a significant change to the finale of Act II in Draft B₂ because “It’ll All Blow Over” is replaced by “The End of the Party.”¹⁷⁵ Cliff and Sally do not have a quarrel while the Nazis sing “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” and are therefore fully aware of what is going on. Fräulein Kost prefaces the rendition of the Nazi hymn with the following words that make the Nazi undertones unmistakably clear: “Ladies – Gentlemen –quiet, please! Every party must have a serious moment! So now – in honor of our beautiful country – (SHE looks at ERNST)... and the brave men who will restore it to greatness...”¹⁷⁶ Moreover, when Herr Schultz finishes his song, all the guests show their disapproval with silence, except for Sally, Fräulein Schneider and Cliff who applaud. The lights suddenly go out and when they come

¹⁷⁴ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 2-6-46 – 2-6-46a.

¹⁷⁵ Draft B₂ does not give the lyrics for “The End of the Party.”

¹⁷⁶ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 2-6-46.

back on, all the guests have left the party and Herr Schultz is passed out. Sally and Cliff help Fräulein Schneider clean up after the party.

They all ignore the elephant in the room and prefer to make idle chit chat about the party. Fräulein Schneider voices her disappointment with her friends and their early departure subtly, but Sally reassures her that they probably left so early because it is a weekday. Cliff's mood turns sour when he sees the mess the guests have left, but Sally looks for a silver lining as always.

CLIFF: That's the way it is – at the end of a party.

SALLY (Brightly): But it's not the end of the world! Is it, Fräulein Schneider?

FRL SCHNEIDER (Not at all convincing): No. It is not the end of the world.¹⁷⁷

It is only with Fräulein Schneider's last line before the start of the song that the subtext of this scene is finally revealed. The whole time, Fräulein Schneider was not really talking about the party but the political situation to which her eyes had been opened. To her it feels indeed as if the world has just ended, for she begins to realize that her marriage to Herr Schultz has become impossible under the current political conditions.

With the beginning of Act III in Draft B₂, the Kit-Kat Klub numbers start to comment on the political situation in Berlin. Two songs, "You Can't See Becky Anymore" and "If You Could See Her (Through My Eyes)" performed by the Emcee, expound the problems of anti-Semitism. While both songs will be discussed more in depth later, it is important to note here that at this point Nazi ideology starts to

¹⁷⁷ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 2-6-52.

infiltrate the nightclub. Before, the Kit Kat Klub songs have commented on the outside situations, too, but now the outside world exerts a greater influence over the kind of material performed in the club. Neither Act I nor Act II of Draft B₂ featured an anti-Semitic number at the club; and Act III opens with two, almost back to back (they are separated by the scene at the fruit shop where Fräulein Schneider breaks up with Herr Schultz).

It seems once the floodgates have been opened at the engagement party, Nazism permeates the personal lives of everyone. Fräulein Schneider feels forced to call off the engagement, Cliff gets into a fight with Ernst, which appears to be quite out of character for the usually laid-back American. Sally feels overwhelmed by her pregnancy and relationship problems, which are grounded in Cliff's unwillingness to stay in Nazi Germany, so that when she learns from Ernst about the fight, she decides to have an abortion and end things with Cliff. And finally there is Herr Schultz, who feels compelled by honor and chivalry to move out of Fräulein Schneider's boarding house to make it easier on her. The message is clear: The rise to power by the Nazis comes with a very high price, in so far that it wrecks the personal relationships and lives of all major protagonists. What started out as separate storylines has become inextricably intertwined over the course of the show and reaches its shocking climax before the final curtain falls. Sally is getting ready to perform "Don't Tell Mama" on stage of the Kit Kat Klub but the orchestral introduction becomes more and more frenzied until it abruptly stops and the curtain falls.

When the Curtain rises -- SALLY is still on the stage of the Kit Kat Klub. The patrons of the Club are applauding her. But now the lights in the Club are on and *we* see -- among the patrons -- many, many Nazi uniforms)

Curtain¹⁷⁸

Draft B₃ is essentially an annotated script of B₁, with one significant exception: it spotlights the secret Nazi anthem “Tomorrow Belongs To Me”. In addition to the schoolboy’s rendition (Act I/Scene 6) and the engagement party (Act II/Scene X), it replaces “Mark In Your Pocket” as the opening to Act II. Thus Act II becomes bookended by the folk song version on one end and the Nazi version on the other end. In draft B₃, this change is only notated as a hand-written note, so the new opening scene for Act II has not been fully developed yet.

However, the revision of B₂, Draft B₄, sheds some light on the idea behind making “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” a structural underpinning of the show, even though the scene is moved to the end of Act I instead of opening Act II. After a group of schoolboys (Act I/Scene 6) sing the song, young college boys gather together to reprise it (Act I/Scene 8). “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” is introduced as a traditional song, treasured and enjoyed by people of all ages (hence the innocent school children and the idealistic college men), who sing it with reverence in *a cappella*. It is only at the end of Act II that it is revealed that this tune has been appropriated by the Nazis. As the audience hears the Nazis sing the song, it is forced to re-evaluate everything they have heard and seen before. Were those innocent looking schoolboys Nazi youths? What about the college students? And suddenly it dawns

¹⁷⁸ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 3-8-30.

on the listener that they may have just seen the indoctrination of young Germans with Nazi ideology in song form. Nazi ideology spreads in the third Act of *Cabaret* like wildfire and swallows anyone who might stand in its way. After Cliff's fight with Ernst at the Kit Kat Klub, he returns to Fräulein Schneider's looking for help (Act III/Scene 6). He knocks on Fräulein Schneider's door to ask for some iodine but no one answers. Instead the stage is filled with the sounds of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" being played on the gramophone in someone's room. The secret Nazi anthem, which has been so clearly developed as musical stand-in for the Nazis themselves, surrounds Cliff acoustically, signaling to the audience that Cliff feels overwhelmed by Nazis everywhere. It makes his decision to leave Germany only more firm.

Act III of Draft B₄ opens with "If You Can't See Her (Through My Eyes)" – "You Can't See Becky Anymore" has been cut. Since both songs deal with a similar thematic, i.e., racial prejudices, "You Can't See Becky Anymore" may have been discarded as the weaker song, although without any music surviving it is hard to say.

In the first rehearsal draft C₁, the prominence of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" is immediately reduced again (Scenes I/6 and I/8 are cut). There are other subtle changes in the dialogue, which bring the issue of anti-Semitism to the forefront. After all the guests have left, Fräulein Schneider, Sally and Cliff clean up the mess together. Unlike in earlier drafts, C₁ addresses directly what has happened at the party:

F[RAULEIN] SCHNEIDER (Sardonically, looking at her watch): My friends. They are not very partial to the Jews.
CLIFF: Then they don't know what they're talking about!
F[RAULEIN] SCHNEIDER: They know as much as most people.¹⁷⁹

C₁ also introduces a thinly veiled Hitler parody (Act III, Scene 3), where Adolph Hitler's failed career as an artist is satirized. This is an allusion to the kind of buffoonery real Weimar cabarets made out of Hitler in their programs. The rejection of his application to the *Akademie der Bildenden Künste* in Vienna is generally considered to have significantly contributed to Hitler's anti-Semitism, because in his opinions it was the predominantly Jewish critics who did not like his art.

In front of the light-curtain, a HOUSE PAINTER appears – carrying a ladder, paint brush [sic] and pail. CHORUS GIRLS enter and watch him as HE tries to paint a wall. HE has enormous difficulties with his various encumbrances -- and the GIRLS have trouble keeping from getting knocked down by the ladder, covered with paint, etc. Finally the job is done. The PAINTER takes his ladder, paint brush [sic] and pail and exits. As HE goes, HE turns his face toward the audience. Adolf Hitler? Or just the EMCEE?¹⁸⁰

This is another example for how Nazism starts to infiltrate the Kit Kat Klub as well as for the topicality typically found in the political cabarets of Weimar Germany. With Nazism on the rise, its charismatic leader was fair game.

C₁ also drops the powerful moment of the finale when the curtain goes up one final time to reveal the Nazi patrons at the club. Instead, the musical ends with the orchestra heating it up, playing the intro to "Don't Tell Mama" frenetically, but unexpectedly the energy fizzles out and the curtain falls. The party is over for good.

¹⁷⁹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 6, 2-6-50.

¹⁸⁰ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 6, 3-3-6.

The audience can draw its own conclusion regarding the future of the Kit Kat Klub, even without the explicit depiction of brown shirts in the audience. Considering Prince's efforts to draw analogies between the plot of *Cabaret* and the contemporary political situation, leaving the ending more open actually is a way to empower the audience. Their story has not yet been finished and written, so they get to decide how the current political situation ends. Rather than painting a bleak picture, Prince leaves the ending up to the audience's imagination, so that they can try to change their future, too.

The try-outs in Boston, which began in September 1966, provide the first feedback from an audience and critics, and several changes were made to the script (Draft C₂). On October 14, they revise Act I/Scene 4 to reveal Herr Schultz is Jewish early on:

HERR SCHULTZ: I want to wish you mazel in the New Year.

CLIFF: Mazel?

HERR SCHULTZ: Jewish! It means "luck".¹⁸¹

While the spontaneous revelation by Fräulein Schneider at the engagement party had had a greater effect, Herr Schultz's casual use of Yiddish vocabulary now reveals his Jewish identity earlier and extends the arc of suspense from Act I/Scene 4 all the way to Act I/Scene 14. Herr Schultz does not hide his Jewish background; therefore Fräulein Schneider is fully aware of the controversy that getting involved with him might cause. As their relationship evolves, the audience looks on with an

¹⁸¹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 7: 1-4-17a.

uneasy feeling, anticipating the inevitable fallout as the Nazis presence becomes ever stronger in the musical.

Moreover, with tryouts well underway, the creative team had begun to implement the staging concept. Prince wanted to separate the stage into distinct areas which would represent the physical reality upstage and the psychological mind of Germany, called limbo, partially downstage but mostly on the apron. The scenes taking place at Fräulein Schneider's and most of the Kit Kat Klub numbers are upstage, but a few scenes like "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" (Act I/Scene 10) or "If You Could See Her (Through My Eyes)" (Act II/Scene 3) are staged in the limbo area¹⁸². In "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" the group of college boys changes to waiters who are draped over the staircase framing the Kit Kat Klub. The change from college students to waiters tightens the connection between the song and the nightclub. It implies that waiters, as a traditionally socially disadvantaged demographic group, may have been particularly susceptible to Nazi propaganda. This subtly foreshadows the later infiltration of the nightclub by Nazi ideology in Act II. At this point, however, they appear to be waiters on their break, simple enjoying singing a traditional song together.

Other subtle changes in C₂ are, first, that Cliff does not operate on the assumption that Ernst is a communist, and second, the reversal of "Meeskite" and "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" at the engagement party. In previous versions, Sally

¹⁸² There's conflicting information on this. Some, like Fred Ebb, say all the cabaret numbers took place in front of the light curtain in the limbo area, some say only a few which tackled issues of the German psyche.

makes an off-handed comment to Cliff about Ernst smuggling in “sinister pamphlets” and/or “pots of money” for the communists. In Draft C₂ it is changed to the more generic “some political party.” The Act I finale of the engagement scene is made more powerful by ending with the secret Nazi anthem “Tomorrow Belongs To Me.” It is now a reaction against Herr Schultz’s performance of “Meeskite”, which precedes “Tomorrow Belongs To Me,” and rather than showing Fräulein Schneider’s, Sally’s, and Cliff’s immediate reactions to the revelation of the Nazi threat, the curtain falls right after “Tomorrow Belongs To Me.” The audience leaves for the intermission not only re-evaluating the meaning of the song but also pondering the implications this new development will have on the main protagonists, especially Fräulein Schneider and Herr Schultz. Sometimes less is indeed more.

It is also during the try-outs in Boston that a controversy about the final line of the song “If You Could See Her (Through My Eyes)” appears on the horizon. The anti-Semitic number showcases the Emcee dancing with a gorilla, while touting the primate’s virtues and talents. The song ends with the claim that “if you could see her through my eyes, she wouldn’t look Jewish at all.” A Rabbi from Brookline, Massachusetts took serious offense at the implication that the gorilla “didn’t look Jewish at all.” Under the pressure of Rabbis threatening to boycott *Cabaret* in New York, Hal Prince had the last line changed to “she isn’t a meeskite at all.” Fred Ebb gives his candid opinion on this topic in a short essay titled “The Gorilla and I,” dated November 6th, 1966:

Hal showed [the letter] to me at once. Frankly, I was shocked. The 'anti-semitic' nature of the number was planned, of course. We were dramatizing the notion that anti-semitic material was seeping into the cabaret world. The country was beginning to accept this anti-Jewish feeling. Insidiously, anti-Jewish references were being dropped everywhere. And most predominantly, under the guise of warped humor. The number said just that and was designed to shock the audience into accepting the premise that it was possible to laugh at something without realizing it's [sic] implication. Once the implication was clear wouldn't the audience then realize that what happened could happen again and we were all responsible?¹⁸³

Ebb's essay may be found in the Fred Ebb Papers in the archives of the New York Public Library, but it is unclear if and where it was ever published. The events referred to in the letter took place several weeks prior at the Shubert Theater in Boston, not at the actual previews on Broadway. John Kander and Fred Ebb have never made it a secret of the fact that they disagreed with Hal Prince on this decision and thought his director-side caved before his producer-side. Years later, in an interview with Greg Lawrence, Fred Ebb recalls the controversy the original lyrics caused in Boston the following:

During tryouts, that line, "She wouldn't look Jewish at all," got the exact reaction that I had hoped for from the audience. There was a collective gasp, which was followed by a moment of silence, and then applause. But when we were about to open in New York, we received a letter from a rabbi who claimed to represent millions of Jews. He found the line decidedly anti-Semitic and threatened to encourage all the Jewish groups to boycott us if it wasn't changed. This same rabbi had earlier disrupted a performance in Boston apparently because he was outraged that a swastika appeared in the show.

At the first preview, I walked into the lobby of the theater, and a lady wearing a checkered skirt accosted me: "Do you have anything to do with this show?" I told her that I wrote the lyrics, and she said, "Well, I represent the B'nai B'rith, and we are here to protest the use of that line 'She wouldn't look Jewish at all.' You are suggesting that Jewish

¹⁸³ Fred Ebb, "The Gorilla and I," 6 November 1966. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 101.

women look like gorillas. That is blatantly anti-Semitic, and if you don't take it out, we will cancel all of our theater parties." The truth is, after that we ran scared. I was frightened. Hal was frightened, and he is not someone who is easily intimidated.¹⁸⁴

The protest gained quickly traction, and eventually director–producer Hal Prince ordered the lyrics changed against the wishes of Fred Ebb, John Kander, and Joel Grey, who have since repeatedly voiced their disagreement with Prince on this matter. Whenever Joel Grey knew he could get away with it, he returned to the original line.¹⁸⁵

It is worth noting, though, that at the same time that revisions were made to "If You Could See Her (Through My Eyes)," the script reflects similar changes in Herr Schultz's "Meeskite." The song about an ugly person began with a couple of rather racist lines:

Nose like an eagle
Skinniest neck you've ever seen
And where there should be thirty-two teeth — thirteen!
Ears like a beagle
Hair that was thick as foliage
And one eye said to the other eye
I'll meet you at the bridge."¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Greg Lawrence, John Kander, and Fred Ebb, *Colored Lights. Forty Years of Words and Music, Show Biz, Collaboration, and All That Jazz* (New York: Faber and Faber, Inc., 2003), 67.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 66-68.

¹⁸⁶ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 1: 2-6-48.

For centuries, biological racism has used these same anthropological markers to visualize and justify anti-Semitism.¹⁸⁷ It seems logical that during the protests of Jewish communities regarding the gorilla comparison, Kander and Ebb decided to cut these lyrics before they had a chance to offend anyone. Unlike the line “she wouldn’t look Jewish at all” in “If You Could See Her Through My Eyes,” the lyrics do not really serve a purpose and their elimination does not change the meaning of the song. Indeed, “Meeskite” might have even profited from the shorter runtime by avoiding dragging out Herr Schultz’s comic routine. Surprisingly none of the Jewish protesters were affronted by the claim in “Meeskite” that it said Jewish people look like beagles or eagles, or if they were, it was drowned out by their clamors to change the lyrics at the end of “If You Could See Her (Through My Eyes).” The comic nature of the song, and the fact that it was sung by a Jewish character, might also have softened the blow. In any case, the audience reaction in Boston and the subsequent threats by the Jewish community might have spurred the creative team to go for a much subtler and more nuanced approach to merge the political background with the personal stories.

The final stage in the genesis of *Cabaret* is characterized by a shift of politics from the public sphere to the personal sphere. The contrived exposure to politically charged situations, such as the Brauhaus scene or the orator scene or the Hitler parody, are dispensed with and replaced with subtle references to the political

¹⁸⁷ The images contained in this article about the role of caricatures in the Dreyfus-affair give a good understanding of the biological racism at the time:
<http://www.caricaturesetcaricature.com/article-15873975.html>.

situation in the dialogue. As the political action is absorbed into character development, the individual characters become more three-dimensional, offering a socio-economic profile of Berliners during the Weimar Republic. Not surprisingly, the characters are sketched out in a way that allows audiences to identify their stereotypical function: Clifford Bradshaw is the compassionate American with civil courage; Sally Bowles is the carefree, blissfully ignorant English wannabe starlet; Fräulein Schneider is the pragmatic, down-to-earth business-woman, Herr Schultz is the amicable but discriminated-against victim who refuses to acknowledge the writing on the wall; and Ernst Ludwig is the staunch, aggressive Nazi.

4.1.2. FROM PASSIVE OBSERVER TO ACTIVE FIGHTER

“I am a camera with its shutter wide open, quite passive, recording, not thinking,”¹⁸⁸ writes Christopher Isherwood in his semi-autobiographical “Berlin Stories.” In the original book, as well as the dramatic adaptation by John van Druten, “I Am a Camera,” the role of the author, who becomes Clifford Bradshaw in *Cabaret*, gets only reluctantly and indirectly involved in the political matters of Weimar Berlin. Isherwood’s camera metaphor captures the protagonists’ intentions beautifully: he sees himself more as a documentarian who absorbs the events around him unfiltered.

In Masteroff’s early drafts Cliff starts out as the same passive character who eschews political confrontation, even though the situation around him escalates. Draft A focuses on Cliff as the romantic lead, playing up the role of the jealous lover

¹⁸⁸ Christopher Isherwood, *The Berlin Stories* (New York: New Directions Books/James Laughlin, 1945), 1 [195].

by introducing a rival for Sally's affections and attention. Cliff is a drifter whose life lacks direction and gets swept up in Sally Bowles' larger-than-life *joie de vivre*. Caught in a whirlwind romance, Cliff does not really pay all that much attention to the political violence in the Brauhaus scene, nor care that his new friend Ernst Ludwig seems to be behind it (Act II/Scene 8).

In the B-Drafts, Cliff becomes a reactive character who is still consumed by his romantic affair but is confronted with the socio-political circumstances to a point where he can no longer ignore what is going on (Act II/Scene I). In the orator scene (Drafts B₂, B₄), Cliff makes a conscious choice to distance himself from his environment, which leads to a confrontation with a Nazi¹⁸⁹:

UNIFORMED MAN: For the new Germany. (CLIFF shakes his head)

You don't care about your country?

CLIFF: We're not Germans.¹⁹⁰

Using their nationality as an excuse, both Cliff and Sally refuse to feel any social responsibility for the cripple, prostitute, and the uniformed man – or generally the inhabitant of Berlin. As mentioned before, it is literally all one big party to them, as they move from one party and bar to another, but they will not acknowledge the music has already stopped a long time ago. Only reluctantly does Cliff start to acknowledge how rising Nazism is starting to affect the lives around him. He only *reacts* to the events unfolding around him and ultimately pays a high

¹⁸⁹ Even though the script simply says uniformed man, one can assume based on the dialogue that this uniformed man belongs to the Nazi Party. Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* further corroborates this theory because towards the end of the novel Isherwood described the strong presence of Nazis with donation collection boxes on the streets of Berlin.

¹⁹⁰ Masteroff et al, *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 2-1-5.

price for his passivity. When Ernst Ludwig corrects Cliff's assumption that he is a communist, Cliff interrupts him, explicitly stating that he does not want to get involved in German politics. It is only when he realizes he has been unwittingly aiding and abetting the Nazis' evil rise to power that his eyes are opened. Learning of Fräulein Schneider's and Herr Schultz's breakup demonstrates the far reaching effects of Nazism that prompts Cliff to take action:

CLIFF: Fräulein – you can't just give up so easily. You can't! The National Socialists aren't in power yet. They may never come to power. – But if everyone surrenders..."

FRÄULEIN SCHNEIDER: And what should I do? Go out and fight them?

CLIFF: Why not? Marry Herr Schultz – and then fight like Hell – together – to make sure they're defeated!¹⁹¹

As a result, he decides to leave Berlin with Sally and gets into a fight with Ernst and his bodyguards. When the Nazi tells the American to go home where he belongs because he does not understand Germany and is unwanted here, what once was a convenient excuse not to get involved in the political quagmire of the country has now become an insult. In a rather out of character move for the peaceful Cliff, he goes physically after Ernst.

Cliff's journey from passive character to critic of the regime in the B-drafts allows the audience to identify with the role he plays in the events on stage. It fosters Prince's ambition to create a link between the characters' actions on stage and the audience's decisions in real-life politics. As they follow Cliff's progression, the viewers have to ask themselves how would they react if they were dropped into an environment like Weimar Berlin without warning. How long would it take them

¹⁹¹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 40, Folder 4: 3-3-12.

to stand up against injustices they witness? The inevitable followup question then has to be, how much are they doing in the fight for civil rights?

Eventually, during the Boston try-outs, Cliff becomes, at least politically, a pro-active character, which is very different from Isherwood's book and the early drafts of *Cabaret*. As Hal Prince explains, "[...] [I]nstead of a neutral observer recording the scene with his camera lens, he is now an active participant in the action."¹⁹² In draft C₁, which dates to the beginning of rehearsals, Cliff's reluctance to get involved in the problems of Berlin and leave the cocoon of love he has created with Sally is expressed in the song "Why Should I Wake Up?". Though aware of the political powder keg he lives in, Cliff still refuses to face reality. The song's moderate tempo and lilting melody, as well as the gentle rhythm which lags a beat behind, capture Cliff's state of mind. He is clinging to the carefree happiness he has found inside the love bubble with Sally but knows it has to eventually burst. Therefore, the longer he closes his eyes and keeps dreaming, the longer he can pretend nothing is going on around him. However, this number shows that the outside world is seeping into their protective cocoon. The confrontations with the crippled, prostitute and uniformed man have already left their impression on Cliff, forcing him to reflect on his situation.¹⁹³ He is not ready yet to meet his responsibilities and prefers to hide from reality with Sally. The song's soft nature is a counterpoint to the increasing

¹⁹² Samuel Hirsch, "Musical 'Cabaret' to Recapture Gaiety, Sadness of Pre-War Berlin," *The Boston Herald*, 16 September 1966, 26B.

¹⁹³ In Draft C₂, the song is pushed back to the moment when Cliff finds out about Sally's pregnancy, forcing him to come to terms with his feelings.

violence in the background of the scene, where the Nazi orator is blaming “the red scum” for the death of Horst Wessel, while the communists are accusing the Nazis of “Six fascist murders this week!”¹⁹⁴ Eventually the communist crowd attacks the Nazi speaker. As in the previous version, none of this registers with Sally and Cliff, who are sleeping it off after partying all night.

During the course of rehearsals, Cliff’s role as the romantic lead diminishes and the attention shifts away from the book–musical parts and towards the portrayal of the moral decline of Germany in the form of the Kit Kat Klub numbers. The absorption of the political subplot into character development leads to a fundamental change of character for Cliff. Now, right from the start, he is introduced as a politically astute, young intellectual who reads “Mein Kampf.”

SALLY: This is your novel! (SHE opens it) And it’s in German! (She looks at the cover) “Mein Kampf”?

CLIFF: It’s not my novel. It’s by one of the local politicians here. Hitler.

SALLY: It’s so heavy!

CLIFF: And more than a little boring.

SALLY: Then why are you reading it?

CLIFF: I thought I should know something about German politics.

SALLY: But why? You’re an American! How could this ever affect you?

(SHE weighs the book) Can you imagine anyone having the patience to sit down and write this?

CLIFF: It’s even worse reading it. But I can’t stop. It’s so – relentless...¹⁹⁵

In Draft C₂, Cliff no longer eschews direct confrontation and politics; in fact, he becomes somewhat the moral and political conscience of the show, even though initially he’d much prefer to continue his life as one big party with Sally than take

¹⁹⁴ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US–NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 6: 2-1-6.

¹⁹⁵ Masteroff et al, *Cabaret*. US–NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 7, 1-7-37 [insert].

responsibility. When Cliff has to take the trip to Paris for Ernst, in order to earn money to provide for his family, his reluctance does not stem from an unwillingness to get involved but is rather based on fear of what he might get himself into. It is not so much that he minds getting involved in German politics, but because he is politically educated, Cliff knows there is a good chance that Ernst's illegal trips might contribute to a coup d'état or revolution. Therefore, the exchange between Cliff and Ernst (Act II/ Scene 3) now has new meaning:

ERNST: You are giving help to a very good cause.

CLIFF: Well – whatever it is – please don't tell me. I don't want to know.¹⁹⁶

While previously Cliff did not want to know because he did not want to get involved, he now is scared that if he knew what it is for, he might not go through with it and he needs the money desperately. Suspecting something and *knowing* something is not the same, so pleading ignorance calms Cliff's conscience enough to allow himself to go to Paris.

However, when Ernst shows up with a swastika at the engagement party and Cliff has visible and undeniable proof of his friend's ideology, the full realization of what he has done and whom he has helped overcomes him, and his moral conscience will not allow him to take Ernst's payment. Sally has to intervene and exchange the briefcase for the money on behalf of her fiancé. (ACT II/ Scene 6).

ERNST: I am sorry, Clifford — since you did not wish to know my politics. However — The briefcase, please. You have it.

SALLY: Here it is.

CLIFF: You said it was a good cause. If I remember correctly...

¹⁹⁶ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 7, 2-3-21.

ERNST: And so it is! ~~The Nazi Party~~ Our party will be the builders of the new Germany! And you are helping. So—for you... Something is wrong?

SALLY: No, of course not. Thank you Ernst.

CLIFF: I've been reading your leader's book...

ERNST: Ah, yes! "Mein Kampf".

CLIFF: Have you read it?

ERNST: But certainly!

CLIFF: Then I don't understand. I mean—you're a very pleasant, rational person. But your leader that man is out of his mind! It's right there in the book! You can't miss it! So how...?

ERNST: This is not the time nor the place for such a discussion. And you are not a German—so perhaps you would never understand.¹⁹⁷

I've chosen to include parts of the dialogue that were crossed out in the script and did not make it into the final draft (D), because they illuminate the conundrum Cliff finds himself in. Ernst Ludwig was the first person he met in Berlin. Ernst was polite and helpful, taking Cliff under his wing like an older brother would do. Cliff finds it hard to believe that an educated, intelligent person like Ernst could fall for Hitler's hate-speech and lies. Cliff's finding out what a colossal error in judgment he has made must come as quite a shock to him. He would have never chosen to socialize with Ernst had he known Ernst was a committed Nazi. Nor, consequentially, would he have met Fräulein Schneider nor Herr Schultz nor gone to the Kit Kat Klub and fallen in love with Sally Bowles, which must lead Cliff to question everything he has done in the past few months.

¹⁹⁷ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 7, 5 [insert after page 2-6-43].

4.1.3. ERNST LUDWIG – THE COMMITTED NAZI

When Ernst Ludwig's character is introduced to the audience, there is nothing about him that suggests he is a National Socialist. Despite his questionable behavior on the train when he meets Cliff Bradshaw, Ernst quickly endears himself to the main protagonist and audience – after all, who has not tried to sneak the one or other souvenir past customs on a trip abroad (Act I/ Scene II)? Ernst's helpfulness to get Cliff settled into Berlin by offering humble abode and entertainment for the night make the audience willing to overlook the fact that he just used Cliff.

This is again a very different approach from *The Sound of Music*, where the Nazis were vilified even before one of them set foot on stage. In order for Prince's parallel between 1930s Berlin and 1960s America to work, it was more effective to introduce the eventual Nazi characters as regular people. It is easier to fight a visible enemy than an unknown threat. If the Nazis had been acting like the monsters they turned out to be from the start, someone might have stepped up sooner to stop them. However, because they were considered to be a phase in German politics, a passing nuisance, by most national and international authorities in the 1930s, they managed to get into positions of power, which eventually allowed them to take over the government.

Just like the Nazis were initially condoned or brushed aside, the Ku Klux Klan was for a long time accepted as part of southern culture. One reason why such organizations can operate so successfully and under the radar for such a long time is that hate and bias are not visible markers. Cliff's shocking realization that his new

friend is a Nazi is intended to represent numerous similar experiences in which the neighbors one thought to know turned out to be racist bigots.

One of Prince's intentions was to show that what happened in Weimar Berlin could happen again anytime and anywhere given the right circumstances. Therefore, the revelation of the Nazis at the engagement party might be the single most poignant scene in all of *Cabaret*. As Hal Prince explains, "If you have Nazis from the start where does the show have to go? You've given everything away. When Ernst is revealed as a Nazi at the end of Act II – when he wears a Nazi armband to Herr Schultz's engagement party – that should be a shock."¹⁹⁸

A comparison of script drafts show how Masteroff experiments with Ernst Ludwig's character until he struck the right balance between villain and friend. In Draft A Ernst is a cool, collected and controlled man who exudes a certain air of superiority. The source of the latter are his subtle references to Germany's superiority, such as for instance at the Brauhaus, when Ernst warns Cliff to drink "[s]lowly" because "[t]his is not your weak American beer. This is German beer."¹⁹⁹ It is the emphasis on "German" that reveals Ernst's nationalistic pride, which could be the first clue that he is a Nazi.

Even at the engagement party (Act I/Scene 13), when Herr Schultz discloses his Jewish heritage, Ernst Ludwig avoids direct confrontation in Draft A and instead chooses to leave quietly during the performance. In the next scene (ACT II/Scene 1),

¹⁹⁸ Foster Hirsch, *Harold Prince and the American Musical Theatre*, Revised and expanded edition ed. (New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2005), 64.

¹⁹⁹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 1: 1-40.

Cliff asks Ernst why he left the party so abruptly. Ernst is the picture of civility, when he explains to Cliff that “it was wrong for you to invite me, Clifford. Most embarrassing. However, you did not realize.”²⁰⁰ If it weren’t for the pub brawl at the Brauhaus, there would be no indication that Ernst has a violent streak and poses an actual threat to Fräulein Schneider or Herr Schultz and this makes his character all the more frightening, because no one knows what he will do when he finally loses control.

In the B-drafts Ernst Ludwig is positioned stronger as the villainous adversary to Cliff. Now he leaves the engagement party demonstratively and slams the door after Herr Schultz’s performance of “Meeskite.” His temper flares when Cliff mistakenly calls him a communist (Drafts B₁&B₃, Act II, Scene 5/Drafts B₂&B₄, Act II, Scene 3). In Draft B1 and B3, Ernst Ludwig even spreads the typical Nazi vitriol:

ERNST: I think – perhaps [Sally] has decided to find lodgings elsewhere... And who could blame her?

CLIFF (annoyed): What does that mean?

ERNST: I cannot imagine anyone remaining at Fraulein Schneider’s. – Living in the same flat as – Herr Schultz.

CLIFF: The fact is: Herr Schultz just happens to be one of the finest, kindest...

ERNST (cutting in): He has bad smell. If you were a German, Clifford – I think you would see him with more clarity.

CLIFF (angrily): If I were a German like you – I’d slash my wrists.

ERNST (dropping the mask): Perhaps it is time you go back to America then – where all is peaceful and child-like. You do not understand this country. You do not understand that we do not play games here. We fight a war now for the future of Germany. And much blood flows – many people die. And – I tell you – if it is my choice,

²⁰⁰ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 1: 2-8.

many more will die: all the enemies – the traitors – the Herr Schultzes.
And I will cheer! You hear me? We will all cheer!²⁰¹

Curiously enough, when they met at the engagement party, Ernst did not recognize Herr Schultz as a Jew immediately. Indeed, the Nazi congratulates the groom and shakes hands with him, none the wiser. It isn't until after Herr Schultz sings "Meeskite" that Ernst realizes his mistake. This little episode shows the flaws in the ethnic and biological racism as practiced by the Nazis in the Nuremberg Laws, i.e., you cannot really judge a book by its cover. For the rehearsal version, Masteroff toned Ernst's anti-Semitic remarks back down, and the character remains essentially the same in all other scenes through the rehearsal process.

In Draft C₂, Ernst goes one step further and confronts Fräulein Schneider about her ill-advised engagement:

ERNST: It turns out that I do not belong here. I cannot stay.

FRL S[CHNEIDER]: As you wish.

ERNST: Fraulein – you and I are old acquaintances. I have sent you many new lodgers... (FRL S[CHNEIDER] nods) So let me urge you – think what you are doing. This marriage – is not advisable. I cannot put it too strongly... For your own welfare.

CLIFF: What about Herr Schultz's welfare?

ERNST: He is not a German.

FRL S[CHNEIDER]: He was born here.

ERNST: He is not a German. Good evening.

FRL KOST: Herr Ludwig – you are not leaving so early.

ERNST: I do not find the party amusing.

KOST: Oh – but it is just beginning. Come we will make it amusing – you and I. Ja? Ladies and gentlemen – Quiet please. Herr Ludwig, this is for you.²⁰²

This exchange illustrates the perfect balance of friendly advice and veiled threat. Ernst Ludwig approaches Fräulein Schneider as an old acquaintance who

²⁰¹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 3: 3-5-19.

²⁰² Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 7: 6[insert] and 2-6-49.

means well and is concerned for her well-being. But in the same breath he slips an indirect threat to her livelihood when he brings up how many lodgers he has brought her in the past. If he stops recommending her rooms, and worse, starts to blacklist her by word of mouth as suitable accommodations, her business will be ruined.

Another difference to *The Sound of Music* is that in *Cabaret* the Nazis, while still only in supporting roles, have singing parts. There is a twist however, in that the Nazis do not sing individually, expressing their emotions like the other characters. They have only one song, which is sung in a group: "Tomorrow Belongs To Me." Even when Fräulein Kost begins the song by herself at the engagement party, Ernst Ludwig joins her by the second strophe and the other party guests follow for the third stanza.

In some drafts, Fräulein Kost starts by singing along with a record or asks the girl band to strike up the song, but eventually she intones "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" without accompaniment, which makes the act of singing more intimate. It also makes it clear that she had not planned ahead of time to sing this song (i.e., she didn't bring along the record of the Nazi anthem, expecting to play it to a room of like-minded people). However, the effect of the group rendition stays the same, when the guests spontaneously join her and Ernst singing for the final strophe and the girl musicians start to accompany them, turning the song more into a march-like rendition than the slow, ethereal presentation of the song by the waiters in a previous act.

As they sing together they gain confidence, which shows the power of music in uniting like-minded people who are fighting for the same cause. It is the same psychology that works behind national anthems, university songs, marching songs etc. – which makes “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” in retrospect the equivalent of a secret Nazi anthem in *Cabaret*.

This is a form of musical essentialism, where specific characters are reduced to musical markers. It implies that every character who sings this song shows his political conviction as a Nazi. Therefore, the Act I finale becomes much more powerful if “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” follows “Meeskite” because it shows the growing power of the Nazis, who in this scene outnumber Herr Schultz not only in volume but also in number. The rendition becomes louder and louder and more violent towards the end, foreshadowing the violent nature of the regime to come. It would be wrong to follow up this demonstration of power with the immediate reaction of Fräulein Schneider, Cliff, and Sally, as in previous drafts; therefore Masteroff cuts that dialogue about Fräulein Schneider’s concerns between the songs, allowing the act to end with an overwhelming musical demonstration of power.

This first act finale leads the audience to question whether the waiters in Scene 6 were in reality singing “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” as an expression of their Nazi ideology or simply as a popular folk song, as they perceived it when they heard it the first time. The song is quite catching and rousing, which would make it a prime candidate for the melody and audience would get stuck humming or whistling during intermission. That would create a chilling effect for everyone who is catching himself or herself doing that, knowing now the dramaturgical function of the song.

Even though “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” is not a real Nazi song, it might not be advisable to let other patrons hear you humming it at the bar during intermission. This creates an interesting dilemma for the audience and probably sparks many a conversation among theatergoers while they ponder what the second act will bring.

4.2. WEIMAR BERLIN – A MORAL QUAGMIRE

The protagonists in *Cabaret* operate in a morally grey area – a quagmire of corrupt ideologies, selfishness, hedonism and desperation to survive. Instead of a black and white dichotomy with good and bad characters, Sally Bowles, Fräulein Schneider, and Herr Schultz make decisions, which turn them simultaneously into perpetrators and victims of the rising regime. Their actions, or lack of actions, contribute to the growing dominance of Nazism.

4.2.1. FRÄULEIN SCHNEIDER – THE PRAGMATIST

Fräulein Schneider is a strong-willed, business-savvy woman who seems almost indestructible. Already in her first song, “So What?” her business acumen and pragmatism are established. Rather than letting a 100-Mark room go unrented, she gives it to Cliff for 50 Marks, which is still 50 Marks more than she had before (Act I/Scene 3). Of course, this also implies her business is not going as well as she would like because if it were, she would have just waited for a higher paying customer. The song is about the ups and downs of life, which is reflected in the wavelike but rather stagnant contour of the melody. It skips back and forth in the interval of a third, so it has a rather narrow range for the most part.

Almost all aspects of Fräulein Schneider's life are ruled by her pragmatic approach to her life. As the pre-rehearsal drafts demonstrate, even her choice of friends is based on convenient availability rather than character. They are mostly people she interacts with on a regular basis, as for instance her butcher and his wife (The Wendels) or her dressmaker (Frau Kruger). Therefore, it comes as quite a surprise for her when her friends and acquaintances turn out to be Nazi sympathizers. Indeed, in Drafts A through B, Fräulein Schneider does not really pay attention to the political climate or she would otherwise not mention Herr Schultz's Judaism so casually. And while in Draft A there is no immediate reaction from her friends to this revelation, this changes with Draft B₁, where "[a]t the mention of the word "Rabbi" – FRAU KRUGER and the WENDELS exchange a rather surprised and disapproving look,"²⁰³ which does not go unnoticed by Fräulein Schneider.

When Sally shows up on Cliff's doorstep, Fräulein Schneider initially opposes the idea of Sally and Cliff living in sin because she is concerned about her reputation. However, her business interests win out; she raises the price of Cliff's room to 80 Marks (which is thirty more than she'd normally get) but insists on calling Sally "Frau Bradshaw" to keep up appearances (Act I/Scene 5).

In her relationship with Herr Schultz, her pragmatism is unfortunately also her undoing. It turns her simultaneously into an offender and victim because on the one hand she has to sacrifice her personal happiness for her livelihood, but on the other hand, her decision also furthers the Nazi's rise to power and spread of anti-

²⁰³ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*, US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 40, Folder 4: 2-7-32.

Semitism. Fräulein Schneider's attitude is the prototypical reaction towards an overwhelming menace, where everyone is first and foremost looking out for him or herself.

SCHULTZ A *new* problem... ?

FRAULEIN SCHNEIDER New to *me* – because I have not thought about it. But at the party my eyes were opened.

SCHULTZ And?

FRAULEIN SCHNEIDER I saw that one can no longer dismiss the Nazis. Because suddenly they are my friends and neighbors. And how many others? And – if so – is it possible they will come to power?

SCHULTZ And you will be married to a Jew.

FRAULEIN SCHNEIDER (*frightened*) I need my license to rent my rooms! If they take it away...

SCHULTZ They will take nothing away. I promise you.²⁰⁴

However, there is a second subtler layer to Fräulein Schneider's decision to end the engagement. Though her character was initially presented as resolute, strong-willed and resilient in Act I, her fear of the Nazis might just break her. Even though she explains to Cliff in a long monologue how she has survived worse than the Nazis and so she shall overcome this obstacle as well, the implication is that the Nazis must pose a devastating and paralyzing threat indeed to frighten Fräulein Schneider so much, since she has seen and heard it all.

This was my dream. But I think now it was only a dream. All my life I have managed for myself ... and it is too old a habit to change. I have battled alone – and I have survived. There was a War – and I survived. There was a Revolution – and I survived. There was an Inflation [sic] – bills of marks for a loaf of bread – but I survived it! And if the National Socialists come – I will survive. If the Communists come – survive! Fire – flood – famine – I will still be here – renting these rooms! For – in the end – what other choice have I? This – is my world!! (Softly) I

²⁰⁴ Joe Masteroff and Fred Ebb, *Cabaret* (New York: Random House, 1967), 89.

regret – very much – returning the fruit-bowl. It is truly magnificent. I
regret – everything.²⁰⁵

Fräulein Schneider is also a realist. She has seen enough of the world to know that, while they may not have come to power yet, there is a very good chance they will. The reaction of her friends and acquaintances at the engagement party, who were all taken in by the rousing singing of “Tomorrow Belongs To Me”, suggests that they’re either Nazi sympathizers or very susceptible to manipulation by displays of power and superiority. And true pragmatist that she is, she knows it is futile to put up a fight when the whole country is swept up by torrents of hate speech. It is easier and safer to just play along and hope it will pass.

Oh yes! That is so easy to say! So easy when you are young and brave. Fight!! And – if you fail – what does it matter? You pack your belongings. You move to Paris. And if you do not like Paris – where? Where would you like? New York? London? Hollywood? Take your choice! The world is yours! But it is not mine. This is mine. This flat. These rooms to rent. I have nothing else. Nothing. And if they take this away – where am I? I tell you where. On the street. Only I am too old for the street.²⁰⁶

The above quote from Draft B1 eventually is shortened and augmented by Fräulein Schneider’s second solo, “What Would You Do,” where she confronts Cliff, who tries to convince her to fight the Nazis. She reasons that at her age, it is sometimes wiser to stay put and wait the storm out because one no longer has the energy to fight or run. While the attitude is naturally comprehensible, it also inevitably contributes to the spread of Nazism.

²⁰⁵ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 40, Folder 4: 3-3-13.

²⁰⁶ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 40, Folder 4: 3-3-12–3-3-12.

After World War II, when the Allied Forces rounded up Germans to determine their level of complicity in war crimes against humanity, a special category called *Mitläufer*²⁰⁷ denoted a group of people who did not oppose Nazism for lack of courage, opportunism or feigned ignorance, although they did not subscribe to Nazi ideology. Fräulein Schneider is the classic example of the *Mitläufer* who knows that something terrible is happening but opts not to do anything against it, which makes her just as culpable.

4.2.2. SALLY BOWLES – THE IGNORANT

Sally Bowles is a different type of *Mitläufer*. Her character is so self-absorbed that she remains blissfully ignorant of what is going on around her politically. One could argue that, if people stopped being so focused on themselves and their problems, they would see the evils that are going on in the world. However, Cliff tries to open Sally's eyes but she chooses to ignore him:

SALLY: I don't understand you. Really I don't. First you tell me you're not going to Paris for Ernst any more—even though it does seem the easiest way in the world to make money...

CLIFF: Or the hardest. Someday I've simply got to sit you down and read you a newspaper. You'll be amazed at what's going on.

SALLY: You mean—politics? But what has that to do with us?

CLIFF (Sardonically): You're right. Nothing has anything to do with us. Sally, can't you see—if you're not against all this, you're for it—or you might as well be.

SALLY: At any rate, the Kit Kat Klub is the most *unpolitical* place in Berlin. Even you've got to admit that.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ *Mitläufer* translates literally into someone who runs along – usually with a group, i.e., he or she caves in to peer pressure without fully buying into their actions and ideas.

²⁰⁸ Masteroff and Ebb, *Cabaret*, 95.

In previous rehearsal drafts, Cliff's frustration with Sally's obliviousness shows when he turns to sarcasm (Draft C₂) and harsh words (Draft D), hoping to open her eyes. In Draft C₂, Cliff tries to point out to Sally that some social responsibilities as well as societal menaces transgress borders (Act II/Scene 4):

SALLY: You mean – politics? But what has that to do with us?

CLIFF: You're right. Nothing has anything to do with us. Sally, can't you see if you're not against all of this, you're for it – or you might as well be.²⁰⁹

Sally's attitude towards Germany is captured here quite well and also resonates with the – eventually cut – orator scene in previous drafts. After having lived in Germany for quite a while, Sally still feels disconnected from the people and events, thinks whatever is going on politically is none of her business. Her relationships are superficial and based on personal gain. She blocks out anything and everything that might interfere with her having a good time.

In Draft D, Cliff's warning that the party in Berlin is over and it is time to face reality falls on deaf ears (Act II, Scene 4)

CLIFF: Sally—Sally— ~~how can I ever~~ wake ~~you~~ up! The party in Berlin is over. It was lots of fun—but it's over. And what is Berlin doing now? Vomiting in the street.

SALLY: How ugly, Cliff!

CLIFF: You're damn right it's ugly! ~~If you opened your eyes—you would see how ugly!~~ And it's going to get a lot worse. ~~The madmen are going to take over—because nobody's going to stop them.~~ So how could we live here? How could we raise a family?

SALLY: But is America the answer? – Running away to America?

²⁰⁹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 7: [pages inserted after 3-1-1, titled Act II, Scene 4] I have chosen to include lines that were obviously cut again right away because they show the process behind crafting dialogue and shed light on the psyche of the characters. To distinguish them from the eventual lines of the dialogue, I have opted to cross them out with a single line.

CLIFF: We're not running away.²¹⁰

Even though there is no malice to Sally's self-centeredness, this kind of behavior allows the Nazis and other questionable organizations to operate unfettered. Sally Bowles is first and foremost concerned with the self-staging and self-exposure, up to a point where she controls how much and what kind of information people can know about her: "You mustn't ever ask me any questions,"²¹¹ she instructs Cliff when they meet. Unless something affects her directly, Sally is not interested in it. Live and let live seems to be her life motto, which eventually causes a lot of friction between her and Cliff, when the latter can no longer turn a blind eye to what is going on. She'd rather stay in Germany clinging to what little of a career she's had there than leaving with Cliff for America to start anew.

Sally Bowles is a force to be reckoned with. She steamrolls Cliff into letting her move into his room in spite of his protests and concerns that she will distract him from writing. Generally, the women in *Cabaret* are the dominant partners in their relationships. Both Sally and Fräulein Schneider come to decisions alone, presenting their partners with *faits accompli*. Even though Sally and Cliff decide to keep the baby together, Sally has an abortion without Cliff's knowledge when things

²¹⁰ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 53, Folder 1: [page insert after 3-4-13].

²¹¹ John Kander, Fred Ebb, and Joe Masteroff, "Cabaret. The New Musical," ([New York]: Times Square Music Publications, 1968), 60.

get rough. In the end, both women subordinate their love life to their business or career ambitions.

(SALLY starts to cry ... rather uncontrollably)

[CLIFF:] Did you lose your coat? Was it stolen? Or did you just leave it at the Kit Kat Klub?

SALLY: I left it ... at the Doctor's office.

CLIFF: Were you sick last night? Is that why you didn't come home?

SALLY (out of control): I was insane, Cliff. I was insane!

CLIFF: Shh – Shh – Calm down ...

SALLY: But you don't understand! (CLIFF shakes his head) You don't understand how hopeless it seemed last night ... how hopeless. And how ugly. You were ugly and I was ugly and we hated each other so. And I thought to myself: Is this the way it's going to be? And it's only beginning. We'll get to hate each other more and more and hurt each other more and more. And then they told me you'd been in a brawl. Ernst told me ... a stupid, meaningless brawl. And I thought ... it isn't worth it. It really isn't. What good is anything if it's going to make us that miserable? Isn't it better to ... stop it right now. Better for us ... And better for him ... or her ... or whatever it would have been ... Do you know what I mean, Cliff? Or do I have to go on ...²¹²

Sally's reaction in Draft B₂/B₄ is human and comprehensible, whereas her callous attitude in the finale draft only confirms what a superfluous, careless person she is. Understandably, she needs a drink after she returns home from the abortion, but her introspective self-reflection is marked by meaningless drivel and climaxes in a heartless joke about how she is going to miss her fur coat more than the baby:

SALLY: Hals and beinbruch. It means neck and leg break. It's supposed to stop it from happening—though I doubt it does. I doubt you can stop *anything* happening. Any more than you can change people. I mean ...

CLIFF: *What* do you mean?

SALLY: I mean—I'm not perfect. Far from it! I meet someone and I make all sorts of enormous promises. And then there's an argument—or something else ugly—and I suddenly realize I can't keep those promises—not possibly! Because I am still *me!*

²¹² Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 3-7-24 – 3-7-25.

CLIFF: Sally, what are you talking about?

SALLY: Oh, darling—you're such an innocent. Really! My one regret is I honestly believe you'd have been a wonderful father. And I'm sure someday you *will* be. Oh yes, and I've another regret: That greedy doctor! I'm going to miss my fur coat. (*CLIFF slaps her*)²¹³

It is no surprise that Cliff loses his cool in this situation when Sally starts to patronize him. While the dialogue in the final version has improved vastly over the one in Drafts B₂/B₄, it is still missed opportunity to add some much needed depth to the character of Sally Bowles because the delivery changed, too. Gone is the relatable, humane knee-jerk reaction to a seemingly hopeless situation; it is replaced with a selfish, calculating maneuver, suggesting this is neither the first nor will it be the last time Sally has to make this decision. There is no growth to her character, unlike Cliff who tries to transform from the lover with rose-tinted glasses into a responsible young father. While Sally “want[s] the world for [their] baby,”²¹⁴ Cliff wants to ensure that the world any child of his grows up in is actually one worth living in.

4.2.3. HERR SCHULTZ – THE VICTIM

As the target of Ernst Ludwig's aggressions and the Nazis' attacks, Herr Schultz is the primary victim in the musical. Even though within one scene (Act II/Scene 2) Herr Schultz suffers the consequences of rising Nazism; when Fräulein Schneider breaks up with him and a brick is hurled through the window, Herr Schultz does not want to face reality.

²¹³ Masteroff and Ebb, *Cabaret*, 109-10.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

Herr Schultz does not want to believe that the Nazis will come to power (Act II/Scene 6), and if they do it is just a passing phase (Act II/Scene 2). He reassures a frightened Fräulein Schneider that “they will take nothing away. I promise you”²¹⁵ and implores her to “*be* sensible. Governments come. Governments go.”²¹⁶ A few scenes later, Herr Schultz is still in denial when Cliff tries to persuade him to leave the country:

CLIFF: We’re going home. To America.

SCHULTZ: America! I have sometimes thought of going there—

CLIFF: Why don’t you? The way things look here—

SCHULTZ: But it will pass—I promise you!

CLIFF: I hope you’re right.

SCHULTZ: I know I am right! Because I understand the Germans ...

After all, what am I? A German.²¹⁷

Herr Schultz does not want to believe the Nazis can come into power because he identifies himself first and foremost as a German. He simply cannot fathom the prospect that his fellow countrymen could support this cause, because he himself will not. To acknowledge this possibility would mean that he is not a German after all because he does not share this national hatred and xenophobia.

This implicit self-concept explains why Herr Schultz handles his Jewishness so casually. When he and Cliff are introduced to each other, Herr Schultz wishes the American “mazel” and upon Cliff’s lack of understanding he explains it means “luck” in English (Act I/ Scene 4). Herr Schultz does not promote his Jewish background

²¹⁵ Ibid., 89.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 90.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 107-08.

prominently, nor does he consciously try to hide it. In the pre-tryout rehearsals (Drafts A-C₁), the big revelation that Herr Schultz is Jewish does not come until the engagement party scene before the intermission because the small exchange between him and Cliff never takes place. This of course is significantly different from racial segregation based on skin color in the United States for audiences in the 1960s or anti-Muslim sentiments and lingering prejudices against African-Americans in contemporary society, which cannot be concealed as easily as Jewishness.

The matter of music as an ethnic marker is brought to a heads-on confrontation in *Cabaret* where two different ethnicities, Germans and Jews, are facing off against each other in a musical showdown at the end of Act II. Whereas Herr Schultz only intends to entertain and not necessarily promote his Jewishness with his performance, the National Socialists respond in kind with song, but there is a certain aggression and self-assertion to their display of power. Herr Schultz simply chooses a song that he is familiar with and underlines his comic talent as an entertainer, which happens to be a Jewish mixture of charm song and comedy number. The Nazis, however, consider his harmless entertainment an act of provocation, thus imputing sinister motives to Herr Schultz, and retaliate musically by joining their forces to intone their Nazi hymn. They feel that they have been lured into a room with a Jew under false premises, which tarnishes their good reputation as proper Germans.

They form a group around Ernst Ludwig, effectively separating the guests into two camps: the Nazi sympathizers and those critical of Nazi ideology. In the

latter camp there are Fräulein Schneider, Sally and Cliff, who have witnessed everything with growing trepidation, especially as the voices grow louder and louder repeating the whole song. Fräulein Schneider even feels the need to put some physical distance between herself and Herr Schultz, laying the first seeds of doubt regarding the future of their relationship.

This is why the switch of “Meeskite” and “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” is so effective for the dramatic climax of the musical. Before the try-outs in Boston, “Meeskite” was the follow-up to “Tomorrow Belongs To Me,” which completely changes the meaning of the scene. Drunk as a skunk, Herr Schultz completely missed the implications of the Nazis gathering to sing their anthem and tries to keep up with their beautiful singing by providing his own entertainment. Reversing the order of the songs adds depth to the level of anti-Semitism, ethnic music is an affront and will not be tolerated, and at the same time exposes the irony of double moral, since the Nazis use their own ethnic music to manifest their superiority.

All three characters analyzed here have in common that their ignorance (Sally), indifference (Fräulein Schneider) and unwillingness to acknowledge plays directly into the hands of the Nazis. The message to the Broadway audience of the 1960s is loud and clear: Complacency breeds ignorance and indifference, which give way to sweeping oppression and, in the case of Weimar Berlin, genocide. Harold Prince explains how this relates to contemporary audiences: “Our musical is about four people in Berlin of the late 20s—early 30s—set in relief against a world that’s changing. They struggle with their problems—much as people still do—and we try

to make some pertinent parallels with the scene today.”²¹⁸ Audience members of the original *Cabaret* production found themselves caught in the middle of this increasing civil disorder. Watching the characters in the show navigate the political minefield of rising National Socialism confronts the audience with their own past and future decisions regarding current events.

4.3. REFINING BRECHT’S EPIC THEATER

Several scholars, among them Larry Stempel, Keith Garebian, Foster Hirsch and Raymond Knapp, have commented on the use of Brechtian elements in *Cabaret*, even though Hal Prince shies away from the comparison to Brecht’s epic theater: “I have not remotely been consciously influenced by Brecht. Unlike Brecht, my purpose is not to eliminate emotional response – it isn’t by design that a show of mine is cold. Brecht flooded his stage with white light; I like shadows [...]. Furthermore, I’ve been bored to death by Brecht-inspired productions.”²¹⁹ Prince himself links his work to Vsevolod Meyerhold and Russian theater through the use of stage technology, citing a performance of *Ten Days That Shook The World* at the Taganka Theater as an eye-opening experience. The use of lighting, black velour drapes, projectors, animated objects inspired the staging of *Cabaret* and his later works fundamentally.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Hirsch, "Musical 'Cabaret' to Recapture Gaiety, Sadness of Pre-War Berlin," 26B.

²¹⁹ Hirsch, *Harold Prince and the American Musical Theatre*, 15.

²²⁰ Prince, *Contradictions. Notes on Twenty-Six Years in the Theatre*, 127-30.

Brecht's epic theater is only one expression of similar and widely circulating theories regarding technological innovations in the theater and agitprop in the first half of the twentieth century. Erwin Piscator (Brecht's teacher), Vladimir Mayakovsky, Brecht, and Meyerhold all played around with the same ideas about acting methodology (gests), use of technology (projectors, etc.), and agitprop (social reform through theater reform), however, to different ends. To borrow from one often means to incorporate elements from another as well. Seeing as Brecht is the most prominent representative of epic theater, this might explain why many scholars detect Brechtian components in Prince's work, even if they were not intended. However, I do think Prince is also acting coy when he categorically renounces Brecht, because whether he wants to admit it or not he likes to use a lot of Brecht's ideas, though granted to a less extreme effect than the German director, in *Cabaret*.

Prince reduces Brecht to emotional distance and coldness, as if both were the purpose of epic theater, when in reality those were only means to an end. What Prince eliminates is Brecht's overarching goal of social reform using theater as an educational tool to shake people out of their complacency. To that end, Brecht used alienation strategies to create emotional and physical distance between audiences and the stage to kick start a thought process of self-reflection. This is not too different from what Prince tries to achieve in *Cabaret* with his metaphorical concept based on "spiritual bankruptcy." What distinguishes *Cabaret* from Brecht's epic theater is that Prince uses Brechtian elements to first draw the audience in to a level

where they become participators, only to use the same elements to sucker punch them in the second act until they're wide awake (Act II, Scene 2).

4.3.1. NON-LINEAR CONTINUITY

Cabaret's genesis was plagued by problems with the book, which in its original form consisted of two parts: a succession of cabaret numbers performed by the Emcee and the Kit Kat Klub concentrated in the prologue, followed by a traditional book musical detailing the development and dissolution of relationships. However, the two parts did not naturally gel until Prince's experience at the Taganka Theater in Moscow provided him with a possible solution to *Cabaret's* staging problems.

"We had two shows – my book and Joel's fifteen minutes," Masteroff recalls: Fred and John had written a number of cabaret songs, then I wrote book scenes. At first the songs were placed higgledy-piggledy throughout the show, although it emerged that the songs reflected the book scenes: there were a lot of wonderful accidents. It never occurred to me that when you put the two shows together you would have a new kind of musical, but Hal knew.²²¹

With this decision Prince had effectively taken the first step into the direction of what would be termed *concept musical* in the 1970s. While *Cabaret* retained the traditional conventions of a book musical in the scenes unfolding the relationships between the two main couples, it also featured a new style of loosely connected and independent scenes (at the Kit Kat Klub) which were united more by staging and directorial style than narrative. Therefore, scholars like Larry Stempel refer to

²²¹ Hirsch, *Harold Prince and the American Musical Theatre*, 60.

Cabaret as the prototype of the concept musical, which lacks continuous narrative (e.g. *Hair*, 1968 and *Company*, 1971).

In the case of *Cabaret*, the Kit Kat Klub numbers (i.e., the concept musical parts) comment on the developments in the real world of the preceding scenes. For example, when Sally weasels her way into cohabitating with Cliff (Act I/ Scene 5), the Emcee and two ladies sing about a *ménage a trois* (Act I/Scene 6). After the revelation that Ernst Ludwig and most of the party guests are National Socialists (Act I/Scene 12), the Emcee responds with a song about racial prejudices (Act II/Scene 2).

The Kit Kat Klub numbers disrupt the linear narrative of the book musical, forcing the audience to switch back and forth between the somber real world of Fräulein Schneider's boarding house and the phantasmagorical world of the nightclub. Discontinuity of the plot is a characteristic of Brecht's epic theater because it increases the audience's awareness that they are watching theater. The repeated shifts between the world throw off the audience's rhythm, because the commentary provided by Kit Kat Klub scenes on the regular plot recontextualizes the events of the outside world in the seedy, sexually charged and morally corrupt ambience of the nightclub.

With the *Cabaret* numbers now interspersed throughout the book musical, Prince decided to split the stage into two areas to reflect the conceptual separation spatially. Inspired by the light curtains used at the Taganka Theater, Prince asked his lighting designer to recreate it in New York. However since this was a physical impossibility at the time, Jean Rosenthal came up with "a light trough about six feet

upstage of the apron edge”²²² to cordon off a dedicated limbo space, her own version of a light curtain. The limbo area represented the psychological state of Germany, expressed in Kit Kat Klub songs. Boris Aronson framed the limbo area with a spiral staircase, allowing Kit Kat Klub boys and girls, as well as the Emcee, to linger and observe scenes.

Covered by a wooden shield and electronically powered, this trough could rise at a forty-five degree angle upstage to the rear wall [...]. Downstage at forty-five degrees, the audience was to be momentarily blinded, while at ninety degrees straight up into the flies, the lighting would produce a curtain of dust. The trough would serve as footlights for the devilish M.C., and the lighting in general would enhance communication with the audience and define mood and meaning without requiring words or music.²²³

4.3.2. THE EMCEE - COMMENTATOR

A lot of Brecht’s ideas regarding epic theater are grounded in practices of German *Kabarett*²²⁴ at the time of the Weimar Republic. The role of the narrator is likely inspired by the function of the *Conférencier*, a charismatic showman who leads throughout the evening with political and satirical monologues, and establishes a rapport with the audience from the introduction onwards. In order to achieve this, he frequently breaks the fourth wall to address the audience directly, often

²²² Garebian, *The Making of Cabaret*, 42.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ I use the German spelling here to avoid confusion with *Cabaret*. In German, *Kabarett* denotes intellectual and witty stand-up comedy, which focuses on political satire, social criticism and parody of cultural fads. The kind of entertainment provided by nightclubs, which capitalize on sexuality, is referred to as *cabaret*. Nowadays *Kabarett* can either be a mesh of different musical genres and skits in a revue-like setting or be based on monologues by a single comedian; during the Weimar Republic it was usually the former.

improvising off of their reactions or events unfolding in the auditorium.²²⁵ The *conférencier's* opening monologue sets the tone for the evening, and like the narrator in Brecht's epic theater, he can steer the audience's attention to specific issues.

Quite obviously the German *conférencier* is the template of the Emcee in *Cabaret*, particularly because Prince based the character on an actual master of ceremonies he encountered on a visit to the nightclub Maxim in Stuttgart while he was stationed in Germany after World War II. Right from the start, the Emcee in *Cabaret* addresses the audience directly in "Willkommen," inviting everyone to the club and creating a faux sense of familiarity among strangers. His use of French and English translations in addition to his native tongue German is an attempt to lend an air of imagined cosmopolitanism to this third-rate nightclub, which is betrayed by the slightly out of tune on-stage girl-band.

The Emcee's Kit Kat Klub numbers come to represent the psychological state of Germany, cherishing the decadence and debauchery that is eating up Berlin in the 1930s. Throughout the various drafts, the creative team addresses different types of material often found in Weimar cabaret. As Peter Jelavich points out in his book *Berlin Cabaret* (1993), the establishments at the time grossly underestimated the threat of Nazism by "portraying Hitler as a political buffoon."²²⁶ The scene where the Emcee parodies Hitler's failed career as a painter in Draft C₁ of *Cabaret* captures that

²²⁵ The food and beverage service encourages a more casual ambience and offers opportunities that can be capitalized on with a joke.

²²⁶ Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 187.

spirit, even if it was ultimately cut. Another song that never made it into the final stage version is “You Can’t See Becky Anymore,” which makes fun of the perceived notion regarding Jews’ proclivity to wealth. According to Jelavich, many cabaret practitioners were Jews who told Jewish jokes to gentile audiences, even though that trend diminished with rising anti-Semitism in the 1920s.²²⁷ “You Can’t See Becky Anymore” is a comment on the shift from Jewish humor to anti-Semitic jokes in the Kit Kat Klub during the second act.

You’ve heard about star-crossed lovers
I can assure you it’s true
On account of the Star of David
My heart is black and blue.²²⁸

The invocation of the symbol millions of Jews around the world identify with and which has been featured prominently in Israel’s flag ever since 1948 sets up the stage for the tale of a traumatic romantic experience. Some audience members in 1966 would also be keenly aware of the perversion of the symbol called *Judenstern*, which the Nazis forced every Jew in the Third Reich to wear publicly and visibly on their clothes. They might infer that the ill fated love story found a rather abrupt and violent ending due to rising Nazism, assuming the protagonist of the song to be Jewish. However, it is quickly revealed that this is not the case and the song is really about the rejection of a gentile admirer by the Jewish girl’s father.

He asked me if I was a Hebrew
Was there a mezuzah on the door?
I said: Not quite

²²⁷ Ibid., 6.

²²⁸ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 3-1-1.

He said: All right
You can't see Becky anymore²²⁹

One by one, the song touches upon commonly held stereotypes about what kind of professional background a suitor needs to be an acceptable match for a Jewish daughter. Just as the audience starts to feel sympathy for the poor Emcee's battered heart, the music drops out and the tone shifts completely, revealing the offensive punch line:

He asked me what I did for a living
And I nearly fell through the floor

(Music out)

Well – to tell you the honest truth, Mr Finkelstein – I pack pigs' knuckles.

(Music up)

So I can't see Becky
I can't see Becky
I can't see Becky anymore!

(Lights out)²³⁰

Without any surviving music for this number, it is hard to gauge the exact nature of the song, but from the description of scene it seems that the delivery of "You Can't See Becky Anymore" was likely very similar to "If You Could See Her." They both finish with a shocking anti-Semitic revelation and between the two songs, "If You Could See Her" was simply the stronger material.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

4.3.3. BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL

While Brecht solely uses the breaking down of the fourth wall as an alienation strategy (*Verfremdungseffekt*), Prince exploits its opposite potential to reel in the audience first before he alienates it. The Emcee's antics fire up the audience, makes theater goers feel a part of the show, and seduces everyone into enjoying a good time until he delivers a harsh wake-up call with the original punch line "She wouldn't look Jewish at all" in "If You Could See Here" (Act II/Scene 3). Of all the times the Emcee breaks the fourth wall during the evening, this is the most powerful moment. The song is a cheerful, playful foxtrot in which dancing partner is a female gorilla, which according to the script "is really rather attractive – as gorillas go – she wears a chic little skirt and carries a handbag."²³¹ The scene is clearly set up as a quirky, absurd, and bizarre spawn of the sexual freedom propagated by gaudy nightclubs, which called themselves "cabarets." Touting the gorilla's commendable virtues as the ideal girlfriend (doesn't smoke, doesn't drink etc.) winds up the audience with hysterical laughter, until it literally gets stuck in everyone's throat once the Emcee drops the anti-Semitic bombshell. The idea of laughter getting stuck in someone's throat is a literal translation of the German idiom "Da bleibt einem das Lachen im Halse stecken," which in my opinion comes closer than English equivalents, such as the proverbial smile freezing on someone's lips. Laughter is a loud and full body experience that is hard to hide, a smile can be quickly camouflaged without to many people noticing. Nobody who laughed at the

²³¹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 2: 3-3-6a.

absurdity of the Emcee falling in love with a gorilla, when the scene began, can deny their entertainment or hide in the anonymity of the audience. Through the large mirror every other audience member bears witness:

Then I really had to think of what the number was about. I wanted it to be about anti-Semitism, and it all worked from there, to show how anti-Semitism had crept into the cabaret. That was my intent, and eventually the line “If you could see her through my eyes,/ She wouldn’t look Jewish at all” generated the whole number.²³²

Unlike Brecht’s works, the so-called *Lehrstücke*, *Cabaret* is not a teaching tool. It is first and foremost entertainment, a culinary, hedonistic pleasure, as Brecht would describe it. However, the moral lesson imparted on the audience in the gorilla scene is at least as effective, if not more, than anything Brecht could hope to achieve in epic theater. Rather than pointing the finger at the audience and preaching to it, Prince lets the audience learn empirically, which is probably longer lasting and leaving a great impression. After experiencing themselves how easily people can be tricked and/or lured into racial prejudice, audience members will be quick to take a stand against similar injustice plaguing their contemporary society.

Even though it may not seem overtly obvious, the companion piece to “If You Could See Her” is “What Would You Do?” in the book musical part. Granted, Fräulein Schneider is primarily directing her rhetorical question at Cliff and Sally, not even expecting a real reply from them. Cliff’s reaction will be to run away from the confrontation, Sally’s answer is to ignore her environment and focus on herself. The song’s subtext, however, expands the circle of persons concerned to the audience,

²³² Lawrence, Kander, and Ebb, *Colored Lights. Forty Years of Words and Music, Show Biz, Collaboration, and All That Jazz*, 64.

because in the end this is a question that everyone has to answer for himself or herself. It is the logical conclusion to the results of the gorilla scene.

In “What Would You Do?” Kander and Ebb emulate once again the style of Kurt Weill. The song consists of an A and B section creating the form ABABA. The A part is characterized by an persistent rhythmic motive (♩ ♪ ♩ ♩) in the accompaniment that shows the relentless force of the Nazi threat (Example 4.1). Moreover the ostinato comes to represent the time ticking by, beat by beat and minute by minute, of the impending Nazi takeover as well as the remainder of Fräulein Schneider’s time on earth. Like “So What”, this song has been tailored to Lotte Lenya’s idiosyncratic style of singing fluctuating between song and speech, therefore the range of the melody is limited. The harmony stays on the tonic (C major) for the whole of the first ten measures of the A section before modulating to D \flat major (C:I-IV-vii $^{\circ}$ 7-V/vi-vi-D \flat :V-I) for the B section through the shared pitch C (Example 4.1.).

It is worth noting that the modulation is already completed by the end of the A section, so that the last few bars of the A section are already in D \flat . The reason for this lies, I believe, in the lyrics, which signal a shift from you (i.e., Cliff, Sally and the audience) to I, “But imagine you were me.”(Example 4.2.) Just before the final A section the music returns to the home key of C major.

Example 4.1. Harmonic Progression of “What Would You Do?” (A Section)

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of a right-hand treble clef and a left-hand bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C).

System 1: The vocal line begins with a whole rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note C5. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and chords in the left hand.

System 2: The vocal line continues with a quarter note D5, a quarter note E5, a quarter note F#5, and a quarter note G5. The piano accompaniment continues with similar rhythmic patterns.

System 3: The vocal line concludes with a quarter note A5, a quarter note B5, a quarter note C6, and a quarter note D6. The piano accompaniment ends with a final chord.

Lyrics:
 With time rush-ing by _____ what would
 you do? _____ With the clock run-ning down _____ what would
 you do? _____ The young al-ways have the cure _____ be-ing brave, be-ing

Example 4.2. Modulation from C major to D \flat major in “What Would You Do?”

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment (Pno.) line. The key signature changes from C major to D \flat major between measures 16 and 17. The tempo marking *poco rit.* is present in the first system. The lyrics are: "sure and free But i - ma - gine if you were me. A - lone like me, and this is the on - ly world you know. Some rooms to let. The".

This song positions Fräulein Schneider against Cliff and Sally: citizenship against foreign nationalities, old age versus youth. Fräulein Schneider is old and very set in her ways therefore she refuses to leave the country and start anew. She is stuck in a rut, which is expressed musically through the limited melodic and harmonic range. For her, it seems easier to bury her head in the sand and wait for

the Nazi threat to pass or adjust to the new regime. This is slightly at odds with the survival instinct she boasts in the dialogue immediately following the number, when she lists all the adversities in life she has overcome (inflation, war and revolution) and will (Nazis, Communists). The musical material betrays it as false bravado, however, because she is scared and tired of fighting.

“What Would You Do?” is peppered with dissonances appearing on accented beats. The song begins on a tritone (C-F#) drawn out for the two opening measures (Cf. Example 1). Traditionally the tritone has been used as a symbol of the devil in music, thereby equating the Nazis with the devil in this particular case. Even more so, the strong presence of dissonances in the melody shows the encroaching of Nazism in Fräulein Schneider’s personal life (measures 3–10). She mourns the loss of her harmonious life, and the words “time” and “clock” are emphasized with a raised fourth scale degree (F#) and “by” and “down” with the flattened sixth scale degree (Ab).

Previously I claimed that this song breaks down the fourth wall and indirectly addresses the audience through subtext. Every time Fräulein Schneider sings “What would you do?” the word “you” is musically underscored with a dissonance. In measure nine the dissonance on “you” (raised sixth A#) resolves to the leading tone, which itself is never resolved. Since “What would you do?” is a question, a rhetorical one no less, it makes sense to end the musical phrase on that note. The musical setting draws the audience’s attention repeatedly to the word

“you” through dissonances, creating the feeling that the viewer is addressed personally.

In the B-section (mm. 19 – 28), Fräulein Schneider reminisces about her life and the only world she knows. The feeling of familiarity is expressed musically in the even quarter note accompaniment and the courage to wider intervals in the melody, for instance a minor seventh on “alone” and “and this” or an octave on “some rooms” and “the sum.”

The song ends as expected on the tonic but in the antepenultimate bar the piece reaches its climax on the word “you” in the phrase “if you were me” (Example 4.3). Out of nowhere Kander throws in an $A\flat^7$ chord (! Borrowed from of the B-section which is in $D\flat$ major) in C major (measure 78), with the $E\flat$ carried in the vocal voice that constitutes the second highest pitch of the melodic line (the highest pitch is $E\sharp$ in mm. 54 and 56-57 and 59).

Example 4.3. $A\flat^7$ (borrowed chord from $D\flat$ major) in measure 78 (C major)

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.3, consisting of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The score is for measures 77 and 78. The key signature is C major. The vocal line is in treble clef and the piano accompaniment is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The lyrics are "you do if you were me?". The piano part includes the instruction "molto rit." in measure 78. The score shows a chromatic shift in the piano accompaniment in measure 78, where an $A\flat^7$ chord is used, which is borrowed from the $D\flat$ major key.

If you felt mobilized by the punch line, “She wouldn’t look Jewish at all,” to counteract racial hatred, Fräulein Schneider’s question demands that you reflect on which concrete steps you will take to improve your own society. In light of Prince’s metaphorical approach based on the similarities between Weimar Berlin and 1960s America in terms of “spiritual bankruptcy” this becomes more than a mental exercise in hypothetical constructs.

4.3.4. VERFREMDUNGSEFFEKT MIRROR

Boris Aronson capitalizes on the parallels between Berlin in the 1930s and the United States in the 1960s by installing a large trapezoid mirror on the stage. It was mounted in a way that allowed for it to be tilted at an angle, so it could either reflect the audience in the auditorium or, slightly distorted, the action on stage. Aronson took the phrase “to take a look at oneself in the mirror” quite literally and forced the audience into a confrontation with their own behavior. The knowledge that anyone might see your reactions in the mirror, yourself included, hangs like a Damocles sword over the theater goer. What if I laugh in an inappropriate place? What will others think about me? What does it mean if I found this funny? These are just some of the questions that will inevitably plague the audience as the second act unravels on the heels of the infamous anti-Semitic punch line of “If You Could See Her.” Aronson literally held up the mirror into viewer’s faces: “It was the mirror of life – of a society.”²³³ The idea was that in that moment the 1960s New York audience became the 1930 audience of the Kit Kat Klub. Garebian sums up the

²³³ Garebian, *The Making of Cabaret*, 49.

mirror's purpose perfectly: "Look at yourselves and the cabaret performers [...] Do you recognize yourselves in them? If you do, and if you were in their place, would you have behaved differently?"²³⁴

The presence of the mirrors makes it more difficult for the audience to lose themselves in the plot. They are constantly reminded of their role as an observer as an audience member; even if they get sucked in by the magic of the theater, the mirror might pull them back into reality anytime. While Brecht wants to do away with the illusion created by the theater completely, Prince merely undermines its authority. Rather than completely alienating his audience, he uses alienation strategies sparingly and consciously as an effect on the audience. As a result Prince plays with the level of observance-participation the viewer gets involved in.

Also the possibility of reflecting the events on stage with a slight distortion addresses the fact that objective story telling is impossible. We all filter what we see through the lens of our experiences, often distorting the facts to fit into our realities. The nature of theater is a voyeuristic experience; the audience pays to be entertained for two hours by, in the case of *Cabaret*, the ups and downs of four fundamentally different protagonists. The slight distortion of the mirror expresses the same kind of morbid curiosity with which onlookers watch traffic accidents and train wrecks: on the one hand it attracts one's attention, on the other hand one feels conflicted about what one sees.

²³⁴ Ibid., 50.

For a while Prince considered the use of projectors, another *Verfremdungseffekt*, to end the musical with footage of the Little Rock riots and the March on Selma, drawing a long arch from German fascism to racial segregation. Prince's desire to connect the two worlds runs so deep that it seems hardly a coincidence that they named the nightclub in *Cabaret* the Kit Kat Klub. The initials KKK are shared with the infamous Ku Klux Klan that operated out of the southern United States under lynch laws.²³⁵ While the German spelling allows for both *Klub* and *Club*, so one could argue that the makers of *Cabaret* Germanized the name as it may have been handled at the time, however, the use of Anglicism has spread so far in the German language that German-speaking productions of *Cabaret* have a Kit Kat Club instead because it seems counterintuitive to spell clubs in the style of nightclubs with a k. The spelling of the Kit Kat Klub may just feel a little alienating, or at least cause a hesitant pause.

The links established in this chapter between political content in *Cabaret* and how it affects audiences will be further explored in the next chapter. Tracing the development of the script and main characters illustrates how the political references in the show were increasingly incorporated into the characterization of the main protagonists. Unlike *The Sound of Music*, which encourages the audience to identify with the Trapp family, i.e. the heroes, *Cabaret* does not make that decision for the viewer. Instead the creators leave the choice of which character to identify

²³⁵ Raymond Knapp mentions this connection in his book *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (2005), when he comments on the shift from C to K in both Klan and Klub.

with most up to the individual members in the audience, encouraging them to draw parallels between Berlin in the 1930s and their contemporary society. The use of Brechtian elements fosters the critical engagement with the issues brought forth in *Cabaret*. Even though scholars like Stempel, Hirsch and Garebian mention Brecht's influence on Prince in *Cabaret*, their discussion rarely goes into detail about what exactly is Brechtian about Prince's direction of *Cabaret*. Instead they usually discuss Prince's own opinions and rejection of Brecht. In this chapter, I have identified specific devices used by Prince, such as the mirror, non-linear continuity, and commentary, which can be reinterpreted in a Brechtian context. As we will see in the next chapter, it was exactly those elements – particularly the mirror that drew critics' attention, and were described as a major innovation to the genre in reviews.

CHAPTER V

***CABARET* RECEPTION HISTORY**

“When has a musical ever aroused such a personal conflict between enthusiasm and emotion, such a shattering impasse between appreciation and apprehension?”²³⁶ asks Richard V. Cohen a month after *Cabaret*'s premiere in the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*.

The wonderful thing about live theater is that every performance, every production is unique, and each one enters into a dialogue with society through every audience member. It comes, thus, as no surprise that *Cabaret*'s subsequent productions have changed and grown, adapting to changes in society and incorporating those changes into the show. There are two clear trends in the reception history of *Cabaret*: First directors increasingly take advantage of the potential of making audience members complicit in the events on stage. Second, there is the tendency to shock audiences with stronger visual presence of Nazi symbols in grittier productions.

5.1. ORIGINAL PRODUCTION 1966

Cabaret opened to rave reviews on November 20th, 1966 at the Broadhurst Theater; and to capitalize on them, Harold Prince took out newspaper ads, as well as radio and TV spots, to print/broadcast the best ones from the most prominent critics.²³⁷ Such marketing strategies were unusual at the time. Not that he needed

²³⁶ Richard V. Cohen, "Memorable Musical," *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 13 December 1966, 16.

²³⁷ Prince was among the first to use media in this particular way for marketing purposes.

the promotion desperately; *Cabaret* was sold out night after night for weeks in advance. Walter Kerr (*New York Times*) called the show “stunning,”²³⁸ Richard Watts Jr. (*New York Post*) “brilliant and remarkable”²³⁹ and Norman Nadel (*World Tribune Journal*) “scintillatingly unconventional.”²⁴⁰ Edwin Newman from NBC-TV attested that *Cabaret* had “wit, spirit and intelligence,” while Leonard Harris from CBS-TV labeled it “such a good, brassy, marvelously melodic smartly decorated fast moving musical.”²⁴¹ Marjorie Gunner (*Town & Village*) wrote “[it] promises ingenuity, melody, comedy [and] surprise.”²⁴² Lewis from *Cue* described it as “a colorful explosion of wit and intelligence” and “a musical of unusual distinction.”²⁴³

What exactly was it about *Cabaret* that set it apart from the rest of the season, according to New York and national critics? The three things mentioned most in reviews were Boris Aronson’s stunning set, most notably his mirror and its effect on audiences, Prince’s metaphoric and conceptual approach, and finally *Cabaret*’s overall ability to capture the spirit of Weimar Berlin in the songs, dance, costumes, and setting.

²³⁸ Walter Kerr, "'Cabaret' Opens at the Broadhurst," *The New York Times* 1966, 62.

²³⁹ Richard Jr. Watts, "The Innocence of Sally Bowles," *New York Post*, 21 November 1966, 54.

²⁴⁰ Norman Nadel, "Hitler's Berlin in a Cabaret Mirror," *World Journal Tribune*, 4 December 1966. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 232.

²⁴¹ US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 232.

²⁴² Marjorie Gunner, "See-Lebrities I See," *Town & Village*, 17 November 1966.

²⁴³ Lewis, "Joel Grey, Rosemarry Harris, and Other Artists," *Cue* 1966.

Several critics, such as Kerr, Frederick H. Guidry (*The Christian Science Monitor*) and John Chapman (*Daily News*), liked *Cabaret* overall but found fault with certain aspects of the production. Chapman and Guidry found the book lacking (thin plot and underdeveloped characters), while Kerr considered the casting of Jill Haworth in the role of Sally Bowles the production's Achilles heel. I shall refrain from discussing these issues as numerous scholars and critics before me have deliberated them.²⁴⁴ Instead, I focus on the reception in terms of *Cabaret's* politically metaphoric concept.

The success of Prince's directorial conceptualization hinges on the plausible depiction of Weimar Berlin and its nightclub scene. Guidry, from *The Christian Science Monitor*, comments after the first try-out performance in Boston on the "great deal of solid research into the times it re-creates,"²⁴⁵ singling out Patricia Zipprodt's costumes in particular. "Atmosphere is the theme," headlines *The Washington Post* after the premiere in Richard L. Coe's review, "[f]or it is an atmosphere more than a personal story which 'Cabaret' has set out to evoke and this it has done with striking, haunting effect."²⁴⁶ Leonard Hoffman (*The Hollywood Reporter*) describes this atmosphere as being "drawn with a pen dipped in

²⁴⁴ See for example, Jessica Hillman-McCord, Keith Garebian, Foster Hirsch and Linda Mizejewski to name a few.

²⁴⁵ Frederick H. Guidry, "'Cabaret' Opens," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 October 1966.

²⁴⁶ Richard L. Coe, "Atmosphere Is the Theme," *The Washington Post*, 22 November 1966, D10.

penetrating acid by George Grosz.”²⁴⁷ Harold V. Cohen from the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* can hear “in the distance even the wails of Buchenwald and Auschwitz.”²⁴⁸

And William A. Raidy’s verdict in the *Long Island Star Journal* is:

More than anything else, “Cabaret” [...] has caught the flavor of Berlin of the late ‘20’s. It echoes “The Blue Angel,” Brecht and Kurt Weill, that frenzied bitter-sweetness which was the era. [...] As a still life of Germany, just before the storm troopers took over, it goes beyond the ordinary framework of the usual musical comedy. In dance and song “Cabaret” has caught the whole mood and beautifully.²⁴⁹

The comparison to Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel* as well as Brecht and Weill occurs frequently in the early reception, which illuminates the American perception of Weimar Berlin after World War II in the sixties. Indeed, the constant comparison of *Cabaret* to the *Blue Angel* and Marlene Dietrich tells us that, for the majority of the American public, Josef von Sternberg’s film about the torrid love affair and tragic love story between a high school teacher and a nightclub singer dominates the public image in the United States of what Weimar Germany was like. This goes both ways because Hal Prince told Samuel Hirsch before the Boston try-outs, “Berlin in that period was the most garish period there ever was. There is something very vivid about those people. That was the time of Marlene Dietrich and Oscar Karlweiss [sic]. [...] It’s the world of George Grosz, Bertolt Brecht, Meyerhold.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ Leonard Hoffman, “Cabaret (Broadhurst),” *Hollywood Reporter*, 22 November 1966.

²⁴⁸ Cohen, “Memorable Musical,” 16.

²⁴⁹ William A. Raidy, “Add ‘Cabaret’ to Hit List,” *Long Island Star Journal*, 21 November 1966.

²⁵⁰ Hirsch, “Musical ‘Cabaret’ to Recapture Gaiety, Sadness of Pre-War Berlin,” 26B.

The makers of *Cabaret* encouraged the Brecht and Weill connection among audiences and critics. The casting of Lotte Lenya, Kurt Weill's widow and most prominent performer of his music, in the role of Fräulein Schneider was an early decision, which was integral to the success of *Cabaret*. Along with Jack Gilford who played Herr Schultz, Lenya received top billing and was assigned a considerable amount of promotional work to plug the show in print and media. Rex Reed and Jerry Tallmer ran profiles of her in the international edition of the *New York Times* the morning after the premiere and in *New York Post* in advance of the try-out phase respectively. During the Boston try-outs, Fred Ebb emphasized in an interview with Samuel Hirsch how lucky they were to have secured Lenya for the role of Fräulein Schneider because "she lived through those days. Her husband was Kurt Weill, the composer whose music records that era's special combination of gaiety and sadness. She helped us keep everything authentic."²⁵¹

Tirelessly Lenya plugged *Cabaret* in the weeks leading up to the opening, drawing similarities to her own life to lend even greater authenticity to the atmosphere of the fictitious Kit Kat Klub: "I really have lived through that and that's why I can say it without even being sentimental. I just sing it and say it the way it happened."²⁵² She played her role in the promotional circus very well, probably because she enjoyed being recognized for her own work outside of her husband's

²⁵¹ "Will U.S. Find Itself Mirrored in 'Cabaret'?" *Boston Sunday Herald*, 9 October 1966.

²⁵² Jerry Tallmer, "To Lotte Lenya, with Love," *New York Post*, 1 October 1966.

opus for a change, telling her life story again and again to every reporter who would listen:

For me it's as if I just left the Kit Kat Klub in Berlin last night. It's so authentic, it's frightening. The way they caught the atmosphere, everything of that era—the telephones at the tables, the girls, the kick line, the monkey number. The Nazis! The frightening inflation! I was just like Fräulein Schneider in the play. I had a suitcase full of money. At 2 it was worth 3 million mark. At 2:30 it was worth nothing. The people in the show are too young to have lived through that, but they have caught it. Am I pleased? That is an understatement. I am very happy about it.²⁵³

Such a stamp of approval from a survivor of the turbulent Nazi take-over at the end of the Weimar Republic must have influenced the public's image of *Cabaret's* credibility (as well as tainted their opinion of what Weimar Berlin might have been like). William A. Raidy noted in his reviews how Lotte Lenya's interpretation "further enhanced the illusion of a Kurt Weill flavor" in the score.²⁵⁴ Some critics remained skeptical; *Time's* critic asked, "[i]f the Kit Kat Klubs fostered Hitler, whatever will the Bunnies spawn?"²⁵⁵ Obviously they do not buy into "[t]he least credible presumption of *Cabaret* is that the dance floor of the Kit Kat Klub portrays a civilization goose-stepping its way to disaster."²⁵⁶ The generally unfavorable review calls *Cabaret* a "whale of a production and a minnow of a show," describing it as "a montage of the bloatedly satiric cartoons of George Grosz, the sardonic sadomasochism of Bertolt Brecht, the tinkling melancholic musical style of Kurt

²⁵³ Richard Gilman, "I Am a Musical," *Newsweek*, 5 December 1966.

²⁵⁴ Raidy, "Add 'Cabaret' to Hit List."

²⁵⁵ "Kit Kat Kutups," *Time*, 2 December 1966.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Weill and the plumpish, thigh-bared, black-gartered allure of Marlene Dietrich in *The Blue Angel*.”

However, according to Richard Gilman in *Newsweek*, Kander and Ebb could have even “borrowed more heavily” from Brecht and Weill, “thus saving their show from empty balladeering or the strained cuteness it periodically lapses into.”²⁵⁷ He lauds Fräulein Schneider’s song “So What?” for its “Brecht-Weill spirit,” adding, “Broadway has never had any musical-comedy spirit to match that.”²⁵⁸

Many critics highlighted Kander’s score for its versatility, originality, and accuracy as well, which comes as no surprise, since Kander explains how he has “steeped himself in the music of the period”:

The music of the late ‘20’s early ‘30’s in Germany is very special, with its own flavor and style. I found myself writing wonderful imitations for the first couple of months. After I got it out of my system, I was able to find my own voice.²⁵⁹

Indeed critics like Samuel Hirsch and Kevin Kelly have commented how Kander and Ebb’s songs have their own style and identity, while at the same time capturing the essence of Weimar Berlin. Kelly writes about the “Kurt Weill flavor [...] that is polished with its own originality, a sour note reality that is perfect.”²⁶⁰

Samuel Hirsch further describes the versatility of the score in a detailed list:

²⁵⁷ Gilman, "I Am a Musical."

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Hirsch, "Will U.S. Find Itself Mirrored in 'Cabaret'?"

²⁶⁰ Kevin Kelly, "'Cabaret' Has the Makings of a Rare Musical," *The Boston Globe*, 11 October 1966.

They have composed numbers in many modes: sentimental, “Unter den Linden” romantic melodies; Dixieland, New Orleans jazz, vaudeville and cheap burlesque; comic, character songs; and several songs for Lotte Lenya, superbly set in the wry, bitter minor chords of Kurt Weill, who used to write for Miss Lenya his wife.²⁶¹

Martin Gottfried at *Women’s Wear Daily* criticized Kander for mixing musical styles from the 1920s and 1930s, detecting notions of *The Boyfriend* and “Bill Bailey”²⁶² in his score. Nevertheless he considered the score “excellent and enriched by Don Walker’s banjo’d orchestrations.”²⁶³ For Alta Maloney, Kander’s music is “blatant when needed, philosophic on demand [and] plaintive at odd moments;”²⁶⁴ and for Frederick Guidry “music and lyrics sound authentic enough”:

“Tomorrow Belongs To Me” comes right out of “Die Lorelei,” and “Willkommen” (“Welcome,” the multilingual opener) could kick off a night-club show. Several ballads have the requisite synthetic emotion to make their way out of the show’s make-believe bistro into the nation’s juke boxes. Even the cabaret’s high-kicking chorus line could take their numbers unchanged into any upper club.²⁶⁵

The adumbration of the nightclub setting in the theater is definitely a key factor in *Cabaret’s* successful staging concept: “When one enters the theater he sees the image of the audience reflected in the night club’s ceiling mirror,” notes Peter Bellamy in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. “The distorted images add to the musical’s

²⁶¹ Samuel Hirsch, “Fusion of Ideas and Musical Form,” *Boston Sunday Herald*, 16 October 1966.

²⁶² John Graziano has pointed out to me that this is not a reference to a musical but to the popular song “Bill Bailey, Won’t You Please Come Home.”

²⁶³ Martin Gottfried, “Cabaret,” *Women’s Wear Daily*, 21 November 1966, 31.

²⁶⁴ Alta Maloney, “‘Cabaret’ Sure to Arouse Broadway Bravos,” *Boston Traveler*, 11 October 1966, 26.

²⁶⁵ Guidry, “‘Cabaret’ Opens.”

often nightmarish quality."²⁶⁶ Critics were fascinated with Boris Aronson's innovative stage set, and the following impressions by Walter Kerr, Richard L. Coe, Haskel Frankel, Harold V. Cohen and Samuel Hirsch give an idea of what kinds of reactions the audience in the 1960s might have had:

The first thing you see as you enter the Broadhurst is yourself. Designer Boris Aronson [...] has sent converging strings of frosted lamps swinging toward a vanishing point upstage center. Occupying the vanishing point is a great geometric mirror, and in the mirror the gathering audience is reflected. We have come for the floor show, we are all at tables tonight, and anything we learn of life during the evening is going to be learned through the tipsy, tinkling, angular vision of sleek rouged-up clowns, who inhabit a world that rains silver.²⁶⁷ – Walter Kerr, *The New York Times*

The stage immediately suggest a cabaret, open to view when the audience enters, a runway of multi-colored lights, a semi-circle of black and silver surrounding a mirror which will give us novel views of Ronald Field's dancers.²⁶⁸ – Richard L. Coe, *The Washington Post*

Even before the house lights dim and the first note blasts into the theater, Cabaret (Broadhurst Theater) is at work establishing its mood. The curtain is up, revealing a black hole of a stage dominated by a slanted, mirrored ceiling that reflects the arriving audience back at itself. We are patrons of the Kit Kat Klub in Berlin in the years 1929–1930.²⁶⁹ – Haskel Frankel, *The National Observer*

There is no curtain separating "Cabaret" from the audience at the Shubert Theater and a large, glittering, prismatic mirror hangs in front of black drapes, hangs—cold, silver, gaudy and vain—like a rectangular peeping eye reflecting a preening, prancing, prurient

²⁶⁶ Peter Bellamy, "It's a Colorful Grey in 'Cabaret' as Broadway Unleashes a Winner," *The Plain Dealer*, 15 January 1967.

²⁶⁷ Kerr, "'Cabaret' Opens at the Broadhurst."

²⁶⁸ Coe, "Atmosphere Is the Theme."

²⁶⁹ Haskel Frankel, "A Triumph of Mood over Matter, 'Cabaret' Is a Nonstop Party," *The National Observer*, 28 November 1966, 24.

world intent on destroying itself in the jazzy age in Berlin just before Hitler poisoned the world.²⁷⁰ – Samuel Hirsch, *The Boston Herald*

Inside the Kit Kat Klub, a dazzling sin spot Boris Aronson, the scenic designer, has created with mirrors and sorcery, the world moves on an axis of fun and wild living, while outside it, the world has stopped moving at all and is reaching an end.²⁷¹ – Harold V. Cohen, *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*

Marjorie Gunner (*Town & Village*) and Alta Maloney (*Boston Traveller*)

mention in their reviews that the girl band from the Kit Kat Klub played during intermission, maintaining the illusion of nightclub atmosphere in the theater.

Frankel found the set up of *Cabaret* so convincing that he had a hard time believing that the creative team had not unearthed a secret treasure trove of original material in a run-down warehouse.²⁷²

Not everyone, however, found the new kind of conceptualization behind *Cabaret* effective or convincing. Eliot Norton from *Record American* considered the show neither “persuasive [nor] interesting” because it is “dramaturgically a jumble of bogus romance, bogus melodrama and clumsy social commentary.”²⁷³ Julius Novick from *the village VOICE* [sic] thought the “sentimentality and simple-minded anti-Nazi propaganda” were just “schrecklich.”²⁷⁴ Guidry complained that the show

²⁷⁰ Samuel Hirsch, "Musical 'Cabaret' at Shubert Opens with Lotte Lenya at Best," *The Boston Herald*, 11 October 1966, 16.

²⁷¹ Cohen, "Memorable Musical," 16.

²⁷² Frankel, "A Triumph of Mood over Matter, 'Cabaret' Is a Nonstop Party," 24.

²⁷³ Elliot Norton, "Musical Show 'Cabaret' in Premiere at Shubert," *Record American*, 11 October 1966, 12.

²⁷⁴ Julius Novick, "Schrecklich," *The Village Voice*, 1 December 1966, 22.

is “dramatically void” and even though it is partially intentional because Cliff and Sally “are barely aware of the political ferment just beyond the rooming-house walls,” he criticized the “vague glimpses of a forming political-military machine, as well as flickering notions of impending terror.”²⁷⁵

Martin Gottfried liked the new conceptual directorial style in the Kit Kat Klub scenes, but chastised the creators of *Cabaret* for not being brave enough to ditch the book musical parts altogether. He called *Cabaret* “schizoid” and explained why “schizophrenic theatre will not do.”

But while this cabaret style, and mood, was a good idea, extremely well translated for theater needs, it was in need of a fresh mode of incorporation. What I mean is, it demanded more than a “story” – it demanded a new idea of musical theatre continuity. Unable to find one, Mr. Masteroff fell back on the conventional idea of “book,” and as a result the cabaret sequences are alternated with ordinary Broadway romance [...].

The difference between the cabaret and the plot halves of “Cabaret” could not be more striking. On the one hand there are unique ideas, striking uses of lighting and movement, a sense of the bizarre. And on the other the same old romance, secondary romance and sketched in compilations. Seldom do these parts blend and the cabaret sequences generally have nothing to do with the story.²⁷⁶

Gottfried’s review suggests that Prince’s solution to Masteroff’s book problems did not quite gel as well and naturally as the director had hoped. Apparently not everyone was dazzled by the novelty of the concept to ignore the break in style between the two parts. Of course the valid counter argument is that Gottfried missed the relation of Kit Kat Klub scenes through social commentary to

²⁷⁵ Guidry, “‘Cabaret’ Opens.”

²⁷⁶ Gottfried, “Cabaret,” 31.

the book musical parts, but this brings to the forefront the problem that if someone does not comprehend the social statement behind *Cabaret* he or she might not understand the whole show. Oppenheimer in *Newsday*, for example, complains that the “*Cabaret* lacks focus” because the Kit Kat Klub scenes continuously disrupt the plot so “that little seems real and no one seems dimensional.”²⁷⁷ Gottfried and Oppenheimer are thus in opposite camps, one complaining about the shackles traditional style puts on innovative staging, and the other one, vice versa, criticizing the interference of a new concept with good old story telling.

A considerable number of critics were put off by *Cabaret*'s perceived vulgarity. John McCarten in *The New Yorker* described it as “very large, very garish, very vulgar, and very disappointing.”²⁷⁸ Chapman's review in the *Sunday News* noted a vulgarity in women's fashion as well and the headline read “vulgar audience, too.”²⁷⁹

Hobe in *Variety* could not get past the emphasis on the “morbid vulgarity (and frequently explicit homosexuality) of Depression-era German saloon entertainment,”²⁸⁰ either. He considers the cast weak singers and the musical numbers distasteful and ineffective. Furthermore he accuses choreographer Ron Field of “relying on attention-attracting novelties, such as a dancing couple holding

²⁷⁷ George Oppenheimer, "'Cabaret' Has Premiere at the Broadhurst," *Newsday*, 21 November 1966, 3A.

²⁷⁸ John McCarten, "'Cabaret'," *The New Yorker*, 3 December 1966, 155.

²⁷⁹ John Chapman, "Vulgar Audience, Too," *Sunday News*, 27 November 1966.

²⁸⁰ Hobe, "Cabaret," *Variety*, 23 November 1966.

a kiss during several minutes of gyrations, rather than originality of visual form of grace."²⁸¹ This nightclub frolic is exactly where McCarten locates the root of all things vulgar:

The trouble [...] lies in the fact that in dealing with Berlin in 1929 and 1930 it attempts to both deplore the sickness of the city and to entertain us with the fatuous doings of the night-club crowd. [...] There is little about this that, at this point in history, demands the close attention given here.²⁸²

For Chapman, *Cabaret* is the "most vulgar show of the season" and "leaves a bad taste when a showgoer [sic] heads for home."²⁸³ Dave McIntyre from the San Diego *Evening Tribune* compares *Cabaret* to "sampling bad champagne. The bubbles are there but the aftertaste is somewhat unpleasant."²⁸⁴ It is no surprise then that Hobe asks if a paying audience is willing to support a musical, which has "few of the qualities that might ordinarily be expected to attract, entertain or satisfy an audience."²⁸⁵ A few weeks later Dave McIntyre still doubts the success of *Cabaret* as well, despite sold-out performances, even though he is less offended by the vulgarity, which he sees as an essentiality to the kind of portrayal *Cabaret* draws of Weimar Berlin:

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² McCarten, "'Cabaret'," 156.

²⁸³ Chapman, "Vulgar Audience, Too."

²⁸⁴ Dave McIntyre, "Dave McIntyre's Front Row," *Evening Tribune*, 14 December 1966, E-16.

²⁸⁵ Hobe, "Cabaret."

Walking away from a performance of “Cabaret” one cannot help but reflect that a nation which had allowed itself to sink to such a state of moral lethargy was a ripe candidate for Hitler’s poison. And if one’s path should be past several of the more garish go-go joint which abound in the Broadway area, the comparison is not lost. Still, I doubt very much whether many of the customers of the Broadway show are going to appreciate having been exposed to such a moral reminder. Having gone to the theater expecting to be entertained, they are not likely to be satisfied with a demonstration that cheap, tawdry diversions often go hand in glove with lethargic notions about life in general. Philosophical or sociological lecturing is not what draws people to New York’s musical theater.²⁸⁶

Of course McIntyre’s pessimistic view that *Cabaret* “would not last or become a touring attraction”²⁸⁷ proved to be very wrong. As I am writing this dissertation, yet another revival of *Cabaret* is about to open in New York’s Studio 54. And for every critic that predicted a quick end for the show, there was one who encouraged people to go. Even though Norman Nadel thought *Cabaret* went a step too far with “Two Ladies” and the gorilla scene because the debauchery had been established already enough, he encouraged people to go:

[...] and perhaps too much is less of a fault than too little. I hope the show will attract the millions who in their own words, “go to the theater to be entertained.” “Cabaret” might not be what they are used to seeing, which, in the long run, could be its heartiest strength.²⁸⁸

However, according to Chapman, critics need not have worried anyway, since *Cabaret* attracts just as much “a vulgar audience” that gets to see itself reflected in Boris Aronson’s mirror” because “first-night women are showing less and less taste

²⁸⁶ McIntyre, "Dave McIntyre's Front Row."

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Nadel, "Hitler's Berlin in a Cabaret Mirror."

in dressing.”²⁸⁹ This account of the *Cabaret* premiere in the *Sunday News* is slightly at odds with Chapman’s previous and more favorable review (“fine production ... good cast”) the following day for the *Daily News*: “The forced gaiety and decadence of Berlin night life in 1929, when the Nazis were beginning to feel their oats, is smartly and picturesquely presented.”²⁹⁰ Even though Chapman considers the second act a setback, there is no mention of vulgarity at all.

As a reaction to the much deliberated vulgarity in *Cabaret*, Whitney Bolton “defends ‘Cabaret’ as accurate [and] honest” in the headline of his opinion piece for *The Morning Telegraph*. Using the “money number” as an example, he argues that unlike the sexist Broadway reviews of earlier years, *Cabaret* stages it as part of a satire that attempts to capture the spirit of past times honestly.

Mr. Prince and his devoted sides have put together an excellent approximation of the Berlin carnival without in the least treading on sensitive nerve ends or in the least really freezing anyone’s morals [...] If you have the gray in your hair that I have in mine, surely you remember these peeled durbars in successions of Shubert shows with Miss France, Miss Italy, Miss Japan and all the rest stalking across the stage on those staggeringly long and seductive legs in as idiot a display as human mind could conceive. The difference is that those musicals of long ago were deadly serious about it. We used to goggle at the parade, now we laugh.²⁹¹

Indeed, Prince purposely chose to present the decadent and vulgar side of Weimar Berlin to illustrate the level of frenzied hedonism Germans had succumbed

²⁸⁹ Chapman, “Vulgar Audience, Too.”

²⁹⁰ “‘Cabaret’ Has Fine Production, Good Cast, Downhill Story Line,” *Daily News*, 21 November 1966, 64.

²⁹¹ Whitney Bolton, “‘Cabaret’ Defended as Accurate, Honest,” *The Morning Telegraph*, 28 November 1966.

to in order to combat the harsh economic reality and clashing political ideologies vying for hegemony.

People then were so immersed in their own private fun, their perverted tawdry affairs, their frantic need to blot out the world. So that's what we were most interested in doing, finding, a form to say something about those people. It's not just an entertainment, nor a diverting, colorful evening in the theater. It's a statement, a point of view, and we've used the cabaret form as our voice, as our technic [sic] to say it musically and theatrically.²⁹²

The nature of such an undertaking is quite risky, since, according to Watts Jr. "[a] big, gawdy Broadway musical show is hardly the place where one anticipates striking social comment on an ominous era in modern history."²⁹³ Therefore, Masteroff is keen to point out the contemporary relevance of Weimar Berlin for Broadway audiences:

You know the period of the play is similar to ours. There are all kinds of parallels. Germany in those days had a loose moral freedom, which seems to signal the decline of an era rather than its progress. It generally means it's over the top and going downhill. We make our own definite statement about our times; to remind those who turn the other way and think they have no responsibility for events in their time that they are in trouble. Just as the Germans were in Berlin – and people elsewhere in the world [...].²⁹⁴

For Howard Lord, staff reviewer at *The Long Island Catholic*, the message is crystal clear: "If there is a moral to this glittering, exciting musical, it is that patient

²⁹² Hirsch, "Musical 'Cabaret' to Recapture Gaiety, Sadness of Pre-War Berlin," 26B.

²⁹³ Richard Jr. Watts, "The Nightclub That Was Berlin," *New York Post*, 3 December 1966.

²⁹⁴ Hirsch, "Will U.S. Find Itself Mirrored in 'Cabaret'?"

acceptance of today's nuisances allow the growth of tomorrow's monstrosities."²⁹⁵ Lord really understands the metaphoric concept behind *Cabaret*, for he continues, "Showing how frantic escapism cleared the way for the primitive brownshirts, "Cabaret" reminds us that we must not be indifferent to our own social problems lest fanatics exploit them for vicious purposes."²⁹⁶ Lord further commends Hal Prince for bringing "an astringent realism" back to Broadway. However, he finishes with a warning that *Cabaret* requires a "mature audience" and may offend the one or other "scrupulous viewer with its sexual connotations."²⁹⁷

Besides Samuel Hirsch and Lord, Alta Maloney and Richard L. Coe notice the parallels between 1930s Berlin and 1960s America. "It is an atmosphere (so like our own) demanding an antidote,"²⁹⁸ writes Coe. And Maloney describes the "contemporary climate" as similar and poses the question "whether the audience wants to see this much of itself in a musical mirror."²⁹⁹ Richard Watts jr relates *Cabaret* to the political developments outside of the US, making it a point to remark on "recent news from Germany" which "darkly suggests that the neo-Nazis are bent on making "Cabaret" appear all the more balefully timely."³⁰⁰ Richard V. Cohen's

²⁹⁵ Howard Lord, "Important New Musical for Mature Audiences," *The Long Island Catholic*, 22-29 December 1966. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 232

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Coe, "Atmosphere Is the Theme," D10.

²⁹⁹ Maloney, "'Cabaret' Sure to Arouse Broadway Bravos," 26.

³⁰⁰ Watts, "The Nightclub That Was Berlin."

observations of audience reactions show how *Cabaret* taps into the socio-political awareness among the viewers:

Time and again there will be a number of surpassing skill which finishes only to scattered applause because, and you can actually feel this the length and breath of the house (the Broadhurst), the people aren't quite sure whether they should react with enthusiasm to a superlative piece of Theater or remain silent out of sober respect to the implications.³⁰¹

Prince's gamble paid off with critics and average audience members alike.

Actor/director Ross Alexander sent a letter in to *The New York Times's* "Drama Mailbag":

To the editor:

It was more than a little heartwarming to see the New York drama critics (almost to a man) rise up to the occasion of the opening of the new musical "Cabaret." However, most of the critics seemed to view the show as an outrageously exciting musical extravaganza that captured the spirit of 1929-30 Berlin. It was nostalgic. Nothing was made of the contemporaneity of the evening.

I would like to pose a few questions and tender a few possible answers.

Why a musical in the year 1966 concerning pre-Nazi Germany? Was producer-director Harold Prince merely trying to cash in on the growing reportorial concern with the period (e.g., "The Investigation" and other such plays that are being written here and abroad today)? Or is there a point, not taken by the critics, implicit in "Cabaret" as a total theater experience, applicable to us today?

A thoughtless theater-going public will see "Cabaret," enjoy-enjoy and, perhaps, leave the theater a bit saddened about those awful things that happened... way back in the nineteen-thirties... way over there in Germany. Another, undoubtedly smaller, segment will be lovingly lulled into bliss, warmly welcomed up onto the stage and then smashed in the face with what is implicit in "Cabaret," i.e., that it could happen again. Could it? After all, haven't recent elections in Germany shown that neo-Fascism is again rearing its head? Nonsense. We brought them to economic prosperity. They're on our side now. But what about here—in America? What about the growing threat on the right? What about the swastika and the anti-Semitism here at

³⁰¹ Cohen, "Memorable Musical."

home? What about our leather-jacketed, motorcycle-riding kids? Absurd. It couldn't happen. Not here. Not in America. After all, we celebrate Christmas as a national holiday. Is "Cabaret" nostalgic? Or are we being brilliantly warned that perhaps it might be time for us to learn from the past? To put aside our toys? To finally see "face to face?"³⁰²

And even though R. M. Chernowitz's letter is concerned with another show that deals with National Socialism, his response from the same issue of *The New York Times* as Mr. Alexander's letter contextualizes the audience reception of *Cabaret* in a larger framework. Drawing an analogy between *The Investigation*³⁰³ and the Vietnam War, he reads into Weiss' drama "a condemnation of the U.S. extermination of Vietnamese whose deaths are proudly reported to the press, as if it were roaches we were killing instead of human beings." He finishes his letter with the question "how will U.S. citizens justify their passivity and misplaced obedience?" Will they echo the German whine: "We didn't know?"³⁰⁴ Whether it is the civil rights movement on your doorstep or carpet-bombing Vietnam in a proxy-war, everyone has to own up to their social responsibility. Part of *Cabaret's* intention is to remind people that it is their societal responsibility to keep informed of what is going on politically around them, Mr. Alexander argues, so that nobody can and must not ever again claim that he or she simply did not know.

³⁰² Ross Alexander, "Musical Warning," *The New York Times*, 11 December 1966, 10.

³⁰³ *The Investigation* was another play about Nazism that opened the same season as *Cabaret*.

³⁰⁴ Chernowitz, "'We Didn't Know?'," *The New York Times*, 11 December 1966, 10.

5.1.1. NEW DIRECTIONS

The innovations brought forward by *Cabaret* launched a discourse among several American theater critics about the state of musical theater. Samuel Hirsch in the *Boston Sunday Herald* was the first to notice that *Cabaret* brought something fundamentally new to the table during the Boston try-outs, hinting about “the fusion of ideas and musical form.”³⁰⁵ Walter Kerr in *The New York Times* and Cecil Smith from the *Los Angeles Times* both deduce that *Cabaret’s* achievement lies in its innovative staging. While Smith saw in *Cabaret’s* staging the signs of epic theater, Kerr attributed its priority over narrative as the primary vanguard. And while none of them use the term *concept musical* yet, they have all focused on those aspects of Hal Prince’s production, which constitute elements that set the Kit Kat Klub scenes apart from the book musical scenes, or, in other words, those ingredients which distinguish the new conceptual directorial style from traditional story telling.

Not everyone jumped on the bandwagon at the time. Alan Rich, music critic at *New York* magazine and the *World Journal Tribune* considered *Cabaret* an abomination of its literary templates and accused it of single handedly slaughtering “Christopher Isherwood, Lotte Lenya, the memories of Julie Harris and Gertrude Berg, common sense, patience and a few good ideas.”³⁰⁶ Rich complains that the musical numbers in *Cabaret* do not grow organically out of the narrative and thus do not embellish the characters naturally. Instead, “[a] musical conception has been

³⁰⁵ Hirsch, "Fusion of Ideas and Musical Form."

³⁰⁶ Alan Rich, "The Triumph of the Cliche," *New York/World Journal Tribune*, 11 December 1966, 30.

imposed onto Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* that neither illuminates the original material nor gives it any kind of time scale consistent with itself."³⁰⁷ Stock characters and musical clichés have ruined two perfectly good literary templates (Isherwood and van Druten) under the pretense of adapting the pre-existing material, according to Rich. He singles out the lack of curtain, the distorted mirror, and the on stage girl band as old theater gimmicks and castigates the debauchery of travesty in "Two Ladies." In other words, Alan Rich has a very big problem with the conceptual side of *Cabaret*, implicating that the show underplays the political cabaret component and refuses to treat the topic with the respect it deserves.

Considering Alan Rich condemns Mozart for ruining Beaumarchais with *Le Nozze di Figaro* in the same breath as he indicts *Cabaret*, Fred Ebb's slightly tongue-in-cheek apology to Rich is understandable. In a letter to the editor, Ebb does not only defend the collaborative work on *Cabaret* but he also takes Rich to task about his farfetched comparisons (Rich described Lotte Lenya's Fräulein Schneider as Gertrude Berg playing Molly Goldberg, Bert Convy's Cliff as Pinocchio and Jill Haworth's Sally Bowles as Betty Boop) and misrepresented facts (Rich claims there a mirror was used earlier in *Anyone Can Whistle*).

Being derisive about Broadway successes hardly makes any kind of point, Mr. Rich. Again, I can hardly say I didn't mean it. Of course, I meant it. It was not, however, what was uppermost on our thoughts when we set out to do *Cabaret*. It was not (however harsh your viewpoint) Betty Boop, Pinocchio and Molly Goldberg we had in mind. We were writing about amorality and indifference in a society that permitted a world catastrophe to take place. We meant to say it could happen again. You think we failed. And I would defend forever your

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

right to say so. But when you ask, “is it possible that, this late in the day, the creators of *Cabaret* were afraid to create a significant musical treatment of important material?” I feel I have to answer your question. The answer is no.³⁰⁸

Ebb goes on to enlist snippets of favorable reviews by Walter Kerr, Norman Nadel and Richard Watts to prove that *Cabaret* can be understood as a political metaphor after all. However, Rich ignores the issues raised by Ebb in his response to the lyricist.

To one failing I will readily own up, the somehow unshakeable conviction that the American musical theater is a serious and important art form, or at least will become this when its creators recognize its potential.³⁰⁹

Rich defends his standpoint, arguing that for all the “surface glitter expected of a Broadway show, the material that went into *Cabaret* had insides to it [and] somewhere along the lines these [...] were removed.”³¹⁰ The loss of the human element hits Rich hard, for he concludes, “We witness the cataclysm, but, without it being brought into focus through specific characters with whom we can identify, its impact is seriously dissipated.”³¹¹ He closes his letter by posing the question to Ebb that, if other critics and people liked the show, were his personal impressions less valuable or wrong?

³⁰⁸ Fred Ebb, "Aftermath: 'Cabaret'," *ibid.*, 15 January 1967, 34.

³⁰⁹ Alan Rich, *ibid.*

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

Kerr asks if “today’s musicals [are] green around the girls?”³¹² when he bemoans the formulaic nature of book musicals and exhaustion of suitable literary templates. He considers *Cabaret* a game changer, despite its roots in literary sources:

But it wrenches the stale pattern open in one special way. Instead of putting the narrative first and the singers and dancers wherever a small corner can be found for them, it pops the painted clowns and gartered girls directly into our faces, making them, in effect, a brightly glazed window—with a musical staff scrawled all over it—through which we can perceive the people and the emotional patterns of the plot.³¹³

For Kerr, then, the solution is to incorporate character development and plot advancements into the musical numbers, so they become less of the expected song-and-dance routine. He lauds *Cabaret* for using “music as mediator between audience and characters, as lord and master of the revels, as mocking conferencier without whose ministrations we should have no show at all.”³¹⁴ Kerr concludes that the characters and the narrative have to submit themselves to the musical atmosphere in order to be noticed. Therefore, it might be time, according to Kerr, to turn towards contemporary, more apocalyptic literature, such as Günter Grass and Joseph Heller, whose narrative structures do not only allow but may inspire *coups de théâtre* by directors, composers, choreographers, and designers.

³¹² Walter Kerr, “Today’s Musical: Green around the Girls?,” *The New York Times* 1966, 5.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Cecil Smith writes that "'Cabaret' brings together separate musical elements," and declares it the stepping stone for a new direction in musical theater, "one that utilizes the total theater, the epic theater, that not only makes its dramatic point in language in lyric and music but in the explosive manner of its staging."³¹⁵ Smith and Kerr focus on different aspects of Prince's conceptual staging. Kerr concentrates on the implications conceptual direction has on traditional storytelling, while Smith addresses the potential of audience relationships.

The conception and execution by producer director Prince is brilliant. You enter the theater into the world of the play. A huge distorting mirror on the curtainless stage twists back the image of the audience swarming down the aisles and finding their seats. Joel Grey from as the charming, soulless, white-faced and mascaraed master of ceremonies bursting from the dark to welcome you to the cabaret, swinging his stick and smiling his mirthless smile. You are the audience of the cabaret, Berlin's infamous Kit Kat Club [sic] and the show, world weary and blatantly amoral, is for you. The scenes in Fraulein Schneider's rooming house, a railway compartment, even the charming wedding party in the grocery store are played in sets that slide into the cabaret. While they are played, Grey watches bored from the sidelines, smoking a cigar. Or the dancing girls pause on a winding iron stairway at one side of the stage to placidly watch. You can almost smell the acrid smoke, spilled drink, stale powder and cheap perfume of the place.³¹⁶

At the end of the Broadway season 1966/67, Walter Kerr diagnoses a "spiritual depression" brought on by a transitional period plagued with scarcity of material:

I suspect we're caught just now in a transition between old and new. The older playwrights, I think, are somewhat thrown by the obvious

³¹⁵ Cecil Smith, "'Cabaret' Brings Together Separate Musical Elements," *Los Angeles Times*, 25 December 1966.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

changeover in styles and subject matter, which makes them a little less confident about their own work. The younger ones, to whom the newness is like second nature, haven't begun to produce in sufficient numbers to sustain a full-bodied Broadway season all by themselves. How soon will the balance right itself and a genuinely new energy take over full-speed? I haven't the faintest idea.³¹⁷

While for Walter Kerr this time cannot come soon enough, Dave McIntyre from the San Diego *Evening Tribune* worries that the expeditious changes in theater are too much for audiences to handle. They are addressing the long-standing components of economy; Kerr focuses on the supply, whereas McIntyre ponders the demand:

To appreciate this show, one would have to alter considerably the standard concept of the role of musical comedy. If it is viewed purely as entertainment, "Cabaret" is bound to disappoint many customers. [...] On the other hand, if one is to look at this show as a moral lesson, a strong point is made. The only question, of course is whether those who patronize Broadway musicals are willing to adjust to such a purpose.³¹⁸

Kerr cannot offer a timeframe for this transitional process, but he is convinced that the future lies in the path paved by *Cabaret*. Narrative/Book musicals need to take a backseat to music:

Musicals desperately need a change of form, which only "Cabaret" has had the nerve to attempt. [...] The big problem is to imagine a new use for songs and production numbers; instead of tagging after the "book" and helping to shore it up, they need to be imagined as the dominant element in themselves, the lens through which the show is seen. That is to say, they should dictate the style of the show instead of letting the libretto do it. [...] I think it's time for an essentially musical

³¹⁷ Walter Kerr, "Must Be Patient While Screaming," *New York Times*, 21 June 1967, 83.

³¹⁸ McIntyre, "Dave McIntyre's Front Row," E-16.

imagination to take over in force, dictating not only the sound but the shape of the evening.³¹⁹

This new style, for which *Cabaret* gave the impulse in the mid 1960s, would come to be retrospectively termed concept musical by scholars and critics in the 1970s. The arrival of *Zorba* (1968), *Hair* (1968), *A Chorus Line* (1975) and the frequent collaborations between Hal Prince and Stephen Sondheim developed the interaction of music, lyrics, acting, dancing, costumes, and sets under a common theme or metaphor further.

5.1.2. WEST END PRODUCTION 1968

On the first anniversary of *Cabaret*, Prince announced eight international productions of the show alongside the arrival of the national touring company in the papers.³²⁰ Among those international productions was London's version with Judi Dench (Sally Bowles) and Lila Kedrova (Fräulein Schneider) as headliners, set to open at the Palace Theatre on February 28, 1968. The West End transfer was a nearly identical production of its Broadway mother, with one notable exception: The original punch line of "If You Could See Her" was reinstated. Peter Lewis in *The Daily Mail* described the moment on stage:

The curious effect was that an intentionally revolting number—a dance of the cabaret's leering compere with a gorilla—dressed in a bra and pink tutu brought the usual unthinking laughter, even though

³¹⁹ Kerr, "Must Be Patient While Screaming," 84.

³²⁰ US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 232.

the last line of the song was: "If you could see her through my eyes, she wouldn't look Jewish at all."³²¹

An astute audience member, who saw both Broadway and West End versions, observed in a letter the editor of *The Stage and Television Today*, that only two and a half months into *Cabaret's* run at the Palace, "She wouldn't look Jewish at all" had been once again replaced by "she isn't a Meeskite at all." This change in lyrics was met with incomprehension by the writer Ms. Halliwell, as she considered the original line a "genuine coup de theatre", with which she was very pleased because it indicated that, unlike Broadway, London had not been "muffled with that shortsightedness and hypocrisy which we are apt to attribute to American officialdom."³²² Indeed, she described the climax of the gorilla scene as a very powerful moment, when "[a] horrified thrill went through the audience; the plight of the Jews under Hitler was suddenly grasped; an audience sympathy was generated which served the rest of the play very well and added immeasurably to its poignant effect."³²³ Therefore she was surprised by its replacement and noticeably angered, demanding to know the reasons behind this move:

Who done it? I am not Jewish myself, but I have too high a regard for Jewish sensitivity and perception to imagine any official protest from that quarter at a comment which, however superficially outrageous, could in effect produce nothing but goodwill for the Jewish people. What other explanation can there be for so lily-livered and feeble an

³²¹ Peter Lewis, "Sentiment and the Nazis Just Don't Mix," *The Daily Mail* 1968. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 11.

³²² Leslie Halliwell, "Meeskite," *The STAGE and TELEVISION TODAY*, 16 May 1968, 16. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 11.

³²³ *Ibid.*

amendment at a time when theatrical censorship has supposedly been abolished³²⁴?³²⁵

We will never know the rationale behind Prince's decision, but evidence from other productions, such as the first German-speaking production in Vienna, where "Meeskite" was used instead of Jewish as well, may suggest that, as a producer, Prince had to insisted on a hardline approach to the lyrics. Since eventually subsequent *Cabaret* revivals (1988, Donmar Warehouse, etc.) returned to "She wouldn't look Jewish it all," it does not seem to be motivated by licensing and copyright issues. Nevertheless both accounts by Halliwell and Peter Lewis show what a powerful moment in theater history Kander and Ebb tried to create with their original intention.

In general the London critics were deeply divided about *Cabaret* with the majority finding it difficult to let go of Isherwood's original novel. Irving Wardle from *The Times* warns that this is "a sure way to underestimate *Cabaret*."³²⁶ Unwilling to see *Cabaret* as an independent work of art, comparisons between the novel and stage version of Sally Bowles inevitably had to fall short. Ironically the two headliners, Judi Dench and Lila Kedrova proved to be the biggest obstacles because as each and every critic let the world know, neither of them could sing. Rob Marshall shared an anecdote during a recent panel discussion on *Cabaret*, sponsored by *The New York Times*, that the Palace Theater had to put up a sign in

³²⁴ This is obviously a reference to the newly minted "Theatres Act 1968"

³²⁵ Halliwell, "Meeskite," 16.

³²⁶ Irving Wardle, "Broadway View of Berlin," *The Times* 1968. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 11.

the hall clarifying that “Judi Dench is not sick, this is her voice.”³²⁷ It did not help matters that neither the audience nor the critics really took to Judi Dench in the female lead, so *Cabaret* closed its door on November 30 of the same year “after 13 performances, at a loss of ‘at least’ \$240,000 investment, according to Richard Pilbrow one of its producers.”³²⁸ The number 13 must have been a typo, a range just under 300 is much more likely.

More so than American critics, reviewers were upset about the lack of a happy ending in a musical comedy and unwilling to accept the dark premise of the show, arguing that the gaiety of the Kit Kat Klub, the sentimental book musical parts and the rising Nazi menace made for a strange cocktail. Douglas Haswell in the *Sunday Mirror* warns his readers “if you like a happy ending then the new American musical *Cabaret* is not for you. It centres on night-life in pre-war Berlin with the Nazi about to take over. Make a happy ending of that.”³²⁹ *News of the World* recommends *Cabaret* only “for the shock-proof,” noting the “show buries its faults in a blaze of endearing vulgarity and a stunningly wicked performance by Barry Dennen as a pasty-faced MC.”³³⁰ Peter Lewis in *The Daily Mail* claims that “sentiment and the Nazis don’t mix” and declares that “it would take greater talent than that of Messers [sic] Masteroff and Kander to take us into the atmosphere of the real-life

³²⁷ David Rooney et al., “The Talent of Cabaret,” *The New York Times*, <http://timestalks.com/detail-event.php?event=cabaret>.

³²⁸ Stanley Green lists the number of performances at 336, which seems a little bit too high for me for the time allotted.

³²⁹ Howell, “Tinsel--and Terror,” *Sunday Mirror* 1960. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 11.

³³⁰ “Show for the Shock-Proof,” *News of the World* 1968. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 11.

cabaret itself and combine this anti-sentimentality with the sentimental demands of Broadway."³³¹ For Eric Shorter in *The Daily Telegraph*, John Kander's music simply is "insufficiently astringent to bridge the contrasting moods" when *Cabaret* "boldly tries to mix the tawdry glitter and vulgarity of the 1930s Berlin night-life with the creeping shadow of Nazism. [...] What was needed was a more precise musical evocation, such as Kurt Weill could have provided since he was there at the time. His melodies have the right touch of dissonance."³³² Unable to hide his frustration, Frank Marcus claimed the disparity in *Cabaret* was enough to "leave the theatre as a manic-depressive,"³³³ which puts an entirely new spin on Martin Gottfried's "diagnosis" that *Cabaret* is schizophrenic theater.

The majority of English critics agree with their American counterparts that the show aptly captures the decadence of Weimar Berlin; both Milton Shulman in the *Evening Standard* as well as Philip Hope-Wallace in *The Guardian* can practically smell "a country slowly going to rot in the lurid and garish pictures they create."³³⁴ At the same time Hope-Wallace cautions, "those who had a whiff of the period first hand or who know the seedy nostalgic music of Kurt Weill won't be even remotely satisfied."³³⁵ Only Fergus Cashin in *The Daily Sketch* commented on the large mirror and its effect on audiences. Hilary Spurling opines that *Cabaret* may be too subtle for

³³¹ Lewis, "Sentiment and the Nazis Just Don't Mix."

³³² Eric Shorter, "Judi Dench a Spirited Sally Bowles," *The Daily Telegraph* 1968.

³³³ Garebian, *The Making of Cabaret*, 127.

³³⁴ Philip Hope-Wallace, "Cabaret at the Palace Theatre," *The Guardian*, 29 February 1968, 6.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

London audiences and “years beyond [...] our hopeful avant-garde [...] which explains the blank and somewhat dubious reception”³³⁶ of the show in England.

Indeed, the London audience never quite connected with *Cabaret* until Sam Mendes’ 1993 production at the Donmar Warehouse – an earlier revival in the 1980s remained equally short-lived as the West End transfer of Prince’s original production. Notably absent from the discussion among English critics are the repercussions of Prince’s metaphorical conceptualization. Except for B. A. Young in *The Financial Times*, who commented on the total integration of the “excellent music and dancing into the general dramatic pattern,”³³⁷ no one else talks about the different conceptualization of the show.

5.2. GERMAN-SPEAKING PRODUCTIONS IN THE 1970s

In Germany and Austria the situation was fundamentally different from the United States and Great Britain. Once united under Hitler’s *Third Reich*, both countries now based their post-war politics and diplomacy on the promise and premise that they have turned their back on fascism for good and that something like the Holocaust could never happen again. While West Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland – BRD*) assumed the responsibilities of Hitler’s German state, and worked contritely to rebuild international relations and national democracy and economy, Austria’s *Zweite Republik* (Second Republic) hid in its perceived role as

³³⁶ Hilary Spurling, "Brave New Broadway," *Spectator* 1968, 303.

³³⁷ B.A. Young, "Cabaret," *Financial Times* 1968. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 11.

Hitler's first victim and shrouded itself in oblivion. Thus, Prince's political metaphor, that what happened in Weimar Berlin could happen again, does not quite work.

Moreover, German and Austrian audiences have to grapple with the fact that it was them, or their direct ancestors, who committed the crimes against humanity adumbrated in *Cabaret*. Even Austrians who claimed they were forced into complicity have to face the reality that they *let* these things happen. Of course, history has proven meanwhile that many Austrians were Nazis just as devoted as German Nazis were and readily participated in the war crimes. However, it is important to acknowledge the perceived public image of each country at the time of arrival of *Cabaret*: Austria in the so-called *Opferrolle* and West Germany in the role of the contrite model student. East Germany (DDR) fell behind in the process of denazification, claiming the communist foundation deprived Nazi ideology of its breeding ground, which allowed several war criminals to assume official positions there.

The German-speaking premiere of *Cabaret* took place on November 14th, 1970 at the *Theater an der Wien* in Vienna. Its run was abysmal, clocking in at only fifty-nine performances, attracting a meager audience of 45,329 – in comparison *My Fair Lady* ran for 148 performances and three times as many viewers (155,328) in the previous season.³³⁸ Impresario Rolf Kutschera was well aware of the risks involved in bringing *Cabaret* to Vienna; still he lobbied heavily for the rights to the German-speaking premiere (*deutschsprachige Erstaufführung*). The *Theater an der*

³³⁸ Peter Back-Vega, *Theater an Der Wien. 40 Jahre Musical* (Vienna: Amalthea Signum Verlag, 2008), 68.

Wien found itself in the exceptional situation of receiving municipal subsidies to stage long-term productions of American musical theater, which implies an educational mandate to a certain extent. Kutschera thus rationalized his decision to acquire the German-speaking rights with Hal Prince by stating that he did not only want to serve Viennese audiences pure entertainment but also some food for thought.³³⁹ Kutschera had to promise a minimum run of fifty to eighty performances on average to receive licensing rights of Broadway shows,³⁴⁰ a mark *Cabaret* barely met with fifty-nine performances and at a great financial loss for the theater. Kutschera explains to Fred Ebb in a letter:

Now some time has passed since the first night of "CABARET". It was a sensational success. The financial success, however, has not come. I am not surprised, for when I purchased the rights for this play I knew that the theme would be difficult for people having lived through this time and that not everybody would appreciate it.³⁴¹

He is eager to point out the apprehension of his colleagues from West Germany at the premiere at the prospect of producing a difficult musical like *Cabaret*:

At the first night of "CABARET" the important directors of private theatres in Hamburg, Berlin, and Munich were present. They all were enthusiastic about the performance, but they said as private persons they would not take the risk of producing this play at their own theatres. When "CABARET" has been launched in Lubeck we will see which direction it will take at the German theatres. Maybe its chances are greater at subsidized theatres than at purely private theatres, for

³³⁹ Rolf Kutschera. Personal correspondence with Hal Prince dated March 2, 1970. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 4.

³⁴⁰ Back-Vega, *Theater an Der Wien. 40 Jahre Musical*, 27.

³⁴¹ Rolf Kutschera. Personal correspondence with Fred Ebb dated December 16, 1970. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 11.

the German theatre directors are expecting the same reaction of the audience we are presently experiencing in Vienna.³⁴²

Rolf Kutschera co-directed the *Deutschsprachige Erstaufführung* with choreographer Michael Maurer and made a concerted effort to “get New Yorks [sic] performance on [his] stage.”³⁴³ To this end, he sent Maurer to the United States to study the production for a little over a month, and used Boris Aronson’s set design and Patricia Zipprodt’s costumes. Another letter from Rolf Kutschera suggests that Vienna may have used the London set after *Cabaret* closed its doors at the Palace Theatre.³⁴⁴ The Austrian premiere of *Cabaret* thus advertised the production as the German translation of the Broadway original, promoting for Viennese audiences the impression that they will get exactly what they would see in New York without making the overseas trip.

Kutschera made one significant change to *Cabaret*: He cast a woman, Blanche Aubry, in the role of the Emcee. This casting decision sheds new light on the already highly stylized role in the original when played by a male. In the Viennese production the *conférencier* becomes an androgynous *Kunstfigur* (artificial figure), whose sexuality is pushed into the foreground. Harold Prince did not seem to be particularly pleased about this turn of events, as evidenced in his personal

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Rolf Kutschera. Personal correspondence with Hal Prince dated March 2, 1970. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 4.

³⁴⁴ Rolf Kutschera. Personal correspondence with L.R. Blackmore dated June 16, 1971, US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 4: “Finally, I want to mention that the transport of the “Cabaret” set from London to Vienna was executed by your firm in an excellent and scrupulous manner [...]”

correspondence: “It may interest you to know that the MC in Vienna is being played by a girl – and of course they are wrong.”³⁴⁵

As in London and New York before, Vienna did not dare to use the potentially offensive punch line “She wouldn’t look Jewish at all,” translating the Yiddish “Meeskite” into its *Jiddisch* equivalent “Miesnick.” However, due to its historical background, the decision in Vienna is the most comprehensible and seems less like groveling. Even the slightest insinuation of a comparison between an ape and a Jew in Austria at the time would have caused an international incident. Austrian and German audiences are much closer to the historical events than those in London or New York, and in addition they have to deal with the repercussions that they were the perpetrators. This leaves less wiggle room for satire where anti-Semitism is concerned.

Kutschera gives various reasons to Fred Ebb in his letter as to why *Cabaret* failed to such epic proportions in Vienna. On the one hand, Viennese audiences were unwilling to accept a musical-comedy with a dark subject matter; on the other hand, it deals with a topic the majority of audiences would still like to forget. Moreover, Kutschera points out a generation gap in reactions to *Cabaret*:

Although just in Vienna “MAN OF LA MANCHA” and “FIDDLER ON THE ROOF” were smash hits, the theme of “CABARET” is too modern for our audience and too serious to be taken as a musical play. It is interesting to observe: People over fifty who have seen that time, also in Austria, refuse the theme. Young people, up to thirty and thirtyfive [sic], accept the show, the sophistication, the wit and the esprit it offers and are not offended by the theme, for what they know of that

³⁴⁵ Hal Prince, personal correspondence to Thomas G. Firestone, dated September 15, 1970, US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 37

time is only what their parents told them, and that is to a great extent very subjective. On the contrary, the young people's reaction to the theme is very positive.³⁴⁶

Kutschera addresses the problem of selective memory when it comes to Austria's past. The official position, i.e. that Austria was Hitler's first victim, which was explicitly stated for the record in the *Treaty of Moscow*, created a vicious circle. On the one hand, the public image in the *Opferrolle* encouraged citizens to forget/ignore what they may have seen and known, while at the same time the selective memory of its citizens fed the misperception. The rude awakening for a blissfully unaware and misinformed younger generation came in the 1980s with the Waldheim Affair, which launched the long-overdue process of coming to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*).

Cabaret did not fare much better in West Germany in its early years, even though Bob Fosse's film adaptation in 1972 made the material more accessible to a larger audience.³⁴⁷ Wolf Donner in *Die Zeit* criticizes the movie for perpetuating the stereotype of vague causality between fascism and moral squalidness, homosexuality and decadence, without rationalizing it.³⁴⁸ The premiere of the stage version of *Cabaret* in East Germany (*DDR-Erstaufführung*) did not occur until 1976

³⁴⁶ Rolf Kutschera. Personal correspondence with Fred Ebb dated December 16, 1970. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 11.

³⁴⁷ Manfred Sack from *Der Zeit* describes in his review of *Cabaret* at the Theater des Westens in 1979 the audience's reaction as "friendly applause." (Manfred Sack, "Schmalere Broadway Von Berlin," *Die Zeit*, 5 January 1979.)

³⁴⁸ Wolf Donner, "Tingeltotentanz," *ibid.*, 15 September 1972, 26.

at the *Staatsoperette Dresden*, and undoubtedly profited from the popular film adaptation of Bob Fosse (1972).

One must note, however, all productions after Fosse's iconic film suffer from superimposed comparisons which are unjust because the stage and film versions are so fundamentally different. Nevertheless, the *DDR-Erstaufführung* was a success, according to the *Sächsische Neueste Nachrichten*, which highlighted how *Cabaret* "departs from standard musical-schemata in its novel concern and fashion, and demands the audiences to readjust, because this is not simply an entertaining show, but deals with a dead serious subject matter."³⁴⁹ In contrast, Gottfried Schmiedel in the *Sächsischen Tagesblatt* criticized Isherwood, van Druten and Masteroff for "loosely stringing together scenes, *Stimmungsbilder* and snapshots of Berlin" and in which were in Masteroff's case "glued together makeshift with blunt puffery by a bisexual Emcee."³⁵⁰ Schmiedel found the show too sentimental and superficial for such a somber topic, effects amplified by Kander's score. He quotes Viennese music critic Gerhard Brunner, who wrote after the German-speaking premiere that the

³⁴⁹ H.W.F., "'Cabaret' Auf Der Bühne," *Sächsische Neueste Nachrichten*, 20 January 1976. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 4. "Das Anliegen und die Machart der Novität weichen vom landläufigen Musical-Schema weitgehend ab und fordern vom Publikum eine grundlegende Umstellung, denn es geht hier nicht nur um eine unterhaltsame Show, sondern um eine bitterernste Sache."

³⁵⁰ Gottfried Schmiedel, "Faschistische Vergangenheit Aus Broadway-Sicht," *Sächsisches Tagesblatt* 1976. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 4. "Die gleichen Fehler übernahm Joe Masteroff, als er einige dieser Berliner Szenen, Stimmungsbilder und Momentaufnahmen lose aneinanderreichte, notdürftig zusammengeleimt durch marktschreierische Texte eines zwitterhaften Conférenciers."

music is so “thin-blooded that one could find a thousand times more substantive material in Kurt Weill’s trash can.”³⁵¹

While Schmiedel argues that the majority of the audience did not understand the parody and persiflage that is *Cabaret*, the *Sächsische Neueste Nachrichten* commends the audience for “its positive reaction to a work which looks upon a dark blot in the history of the [German] people, which gives hope.”³⁵²

Ingo Zimmermann from the *Union* pointed out how unusual it is for the musical genre to have such a close relationship to reality, which speaks volumes about the general perception of American musical theater in East Germany as light-hearted entertainment as late as the 1970s. He comments on the unique situation that East German audiences, whether young or old, carry their historical and political understanding into the theater, even though “at the end it seemed as if this factor was not considered for the solution in the finale, which was consistent but patronizing.”³⁵³ Only a few months later, Gerd Focke in the *Sächsische Neue Nachrichten* points out that *Cabaret* “unmasks the concerted manipulation of

³⁵¹ Ibid. “Was sich daran Musik nennt, ist so dünnblutig, daß sich selbst in den Papierkörben von Kurt Weill tausendmal Substanzvolleres gefunden hätte.”

³⁵² H.W.F., ““Cabaret” Auf Der Bühne.” “Seine positive Reaktion auf ein Stück, das den Blick auf die finsterste Zeit in der Geschichte unseres Volkes lenkt, stimmt zuversichtlich.”

³⁵³ Ingo Zimmermann, “Leichte Muse-Apokalyptisch,” *Union*, 21 January 1976. “Das Publikum von heute, hierzulande, alt und jung, bringt sein historisches und politisches Wissen ins Theater mit. Am Schluß wollte es mir scheinen, als wäre man sich dieses Umstandes bei der Finallösung doch nicht ganz sicher gewesen. Man schloß konsequent, aber belehrend.”

bourgeois entertainment.”³⁵⁴ *Stimme der DDR*, a radio program in East Germany, which identified itself as the “voice of East Germany,” opened its segment on *Cabaret* with a description of the finale:

I have to mention the extraordinary ending first. No musical incentive for applause, no extravagantly bowing performers. The ensemble stands as a block on the apron, rigid, silent. Ten minutes of thunderous applause surge against this block with bravos and stomping feet.³⁵⁵

Dr. Frede in *WZ* misses a deeper analysis of the political background and motivation in *Cabaret*, which is aptly described as a “dance on a volcano.”³⁵⁶

Friedrich Streller from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* mentions the very short run *Cabaret* enjoyed in West Germany.³⁵⁷ Rolf Kutschera states in a letter to Hal Prince that by 1978 *Cabaret* had played successfully in fifteen theaters in East Germany and many more in the West.³⁵⁸

In 1987, the *Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus* imported a French production of *Cabaret* to West Germany. Director Jerome Savary created a glittering Kit Kat Klub worthy of Liza Minnelli’s talent in the Fosse film adaptation, which inspired his

³⁵⁴ Gerd Focke, "Ein Großer Theaterabend Des Musical-Ensembles," *Freiheit*, 18 February 1976. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 4. "Auf unterhaltsame Weise sucht es die gezielte Manipulation bürgerlicher Unterhaltung zu entlarven."

³⁵⁵ Horst Heitzenröther, "'Cabaret' - Ddr-Erstaufführung Des Musicals an Der Staatsoperette Dresden," in *Kulturspiegel* (Stimme der DDR, 1976).

³⁵⁶ Dr. Frede, "'Cabaret' - Tanz Auf Dem Vulkan," *WZ*, 19 February 1976. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 4

³⁵⁷ Friedbert Streller, "'Cabaret' Als Zeitkritisches Kabarett," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 23 January 1976, 4. US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 4.

³⁵⁸ Rolf Kutschera, personal correspondence with Hal Prince dated April 20, 1978, US-NYp, Hal Prince Papers, Box 4

version generally.³⁵⁹ In other words, the highly professional entertainment provided by the supposedly third rate nightclub seemed at odds with the debauchery and decadence it should have portrayed.³⁶⁰ Gerhard Knopf in *Musicals*, a professional magazine dedicated to musicals run by and for musical theater aficionados, calls Savary's *Cabaret* "a tick too chic."³⁶¹ However, Savary's production is the first to incorporate the audience into a nightclub setting: "In front of the first row, audience were served at tables."³⁶² Knopf also comments on the provocative, politically charged staging:

Of utmost importance was the political component for Savary. He demonstrated the slow and creeping takeover amidst the tingle tangle hauntingly on a large scale. For example, a Nazi flag appears suddenly in the auditorium – for a part of the audience very provocatively – and what appears to be at first a red curtain turns out to be a stage-filling Nazi banner, in front of which the girls swing their legs. The "invasion" of a "brownshirt" marching band appears threatening and that's when the glitter turns, in a flash, into brutal (stage) reality.

That same year, the *Theater des Westens* in Berlin restaged the musical almost ten years after the private theater had played the work for six months in 1978. Director Helmut Baumann managed a similar casting coup as Prince did with Lotte Lenya, when he secured Hildegard Knef for the role of Fräulein Schneider. Baumann's direction shows already the first signs of a more confrontational trend in theater productions when it came to depicting Nazism on European stages. D.

³⁵⁹ Co-incidentally, Ute Lemper was discovered in this production, playing Sally Bowles.

³⁶⁰ Gerhard Knopf, "Einen Tick Zu Chic," *Das Musical*, February 1987, 14.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid. "Um Cabaret-Atmosphäre ins 'Große Haus' zu bringen, hatte man vor die erste Sitzreihe Tische gestellt, an denen dann dem Publikum auch serviert wird."

Plögert and M. Barricelli in the German magazine *Musicals* draw a comparison to the previous production in Düsseldorf, which used Nazi symbols for cheap effects. They commend Hartmann for finding a middle ground between cheap showmanship and provocative staging, leaving out colossal swastikas in favor of a more subtle ending of Act I: “Against the rousing rendition of “Tomorrow Belongs To Me”, a glowing colorful mountain scene rises in the background, until the ensemble finally raise their arms for the Hitler salute.”³⁶³

Baumann added a monologue to the scene, where the Emcee appears dressed like a baby to symbolize the new year: “Uncle Adolf is coming, I don’t like Uncle Adolf.” The sound of jackboots in the streets interrupts his words, and the baby hides in the stroller, wailing, “I’m scared, why is nobody helping me?” To calm him down, he is given an oversized lollipop with a swastika, which satisfies him.³⁶⁴

Hartmann even includes the stagehands as part of the atmosphere he creates on stage. In the first act they are dressed in typical 1920s fashion, but with the encroaching Nazism they switch to long and dark raincoats and eventually wear Nazi uniforms.³⁶⁵

³⁶³ D. Plögert and M. Barricelli, "Willkommen, Hilde! Großes Staraufgebot Bei "Cabaret" Im Theater Des Westens," *ibid.*, October, 18-19. "Während des Crescendo steigt im Hintergrund eine in glühenden Farben gemalte Gebirgsszenerie auf, und zum Schluß hebt das Ensemble die Hand zum Hitlergruß."

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 18. "Einmal liegt er als Baby, das neue Jahr 1930 symbolisierend, im Kinderwagen und hält einen Monolog: "Onkel Adolf kommt; ich mag Onkel Adolf nicht". Dann hört man den Klang der Schaftstiefel, die durch die Straßen ziehen. Das Baby vergräbt sich im Kinderwagen und schreit: "Ich hab' Angst, warum hilft mir keiner?". Zur Beruhigung wird ihm ein übergrosser [sic] Lutscher mit Hakenkreuz-Emblem gereicht, und er ist zufrieden."

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.* "Auch mit den Bühnenhelfern, die Tische und Schränke herein- und herauschieben, hat es etwas Besonderes auf sich: Sie verändern ihre Kleidung im Laufe des Stückes. Zuerst

In an interview with *Musical* magazine, Hildegard Knef opines, “the tragedy was that no one had read ‘Mein Kampf’, which contained everything that was yet to come. Basically, the treaty of Versailles was the catastrophe and is to blame to this day for the Berlin Wall.”³⁶⁶ Like Lotte Lenya, Knef lived through Nazi Germany, but unlike Lenya, Knef was only a child when the Nazis came into power. Knef began her career as an actress in the final days of Nazi Germany, before she emigrated to the US in 1947. Her above comment reflects to a certain extent the prevailing notion of her childhood and teenage year propagated by the Nazis, that the Treaty of Versailles was the root of all evil and things gone wrong in Germany. The experience of her formative years in the Third Reich informed her portrayal of Fräulein Schneider on a deeply personal level:

When I play this woman, then I feel so at home. At first, she has this typical optimistic Berlin comic. But how she then breaks down at the end and yet walks off with her head held high, you just know that her life has ended here. Her own inability to follow the fate of an emigrant causes her to break herself into pieces. I have indeed submersed myself to deeply in this role, but this is how I feel every evening, when I stand on stage and sing the last song. In the scene, where I explain to Herr Schultz that I cannot marry him, I start to cry every time. Fräulein Schneider has lost any self-respect and hope at this point, and this is exactly what I want to convey to the audience.³⁶⁷

die Mode der 20er, dann unheilverkündende lange, dunkle Regenmäntel und schließlich die Nazi-Uniformen.”

³⁶⁶ Das Musical and Hildegard Knef, "Das Interview: Hildegard Knef," *ibid.*, 21.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.* “Aber wenn ich diese Frau spiele, dann fühle ich mich so zu Hause. Sie hat am Anfang diese typische optimistische Berliner Komik. Wie sie dann aber am Schluss abbricht und zerbricht und dann doch noch erhobenen Hauptes weggeht, da weiß man, daß ihr Leben hier an sich zu Ende ist. Diese eigene Unfähigkeit, sich dem Emigrantenschicksal anzuschließen, läßt sie vor sich selber zusammenbrechen. Ich bin zwar hier zu weit in die Rolle hineingegangen, aber so empfinde ich, wenn ich abends auf der Bühne stehe und das letzte Lied singe. In der Szene, in der ich Herrn Schultz klarmache, daß ich ihn nicht heiraten

5.3. 1987 BROADWAY REVIVAL

When Prince revived his 1966 production for another run on Broadway in 1987, *Cabaret* lost some of its innovative flair. Gone was the novelty of the mirror, the conceptualization of a show outside the framework of a traditional book musical, or the confrontational premise of the political metaphor. But at the same time, shifts in society, public opinion and personal lifestyles allowed Prince to “modernize” *Cabaret* for a 1980s audience. While in 1966 Prince shied away from the implied homosexuality of Isherwood’s semi-autobiographical protagonist in the *Berlin Stories*, the revival embraced Cliff’s ambiguous sexuality. Granted, Bob Fosse’s film adaptation broke the ground for this move, because Michael York’s character stands openly by his bisexuality. Whereas Fosse’s movie capitalizes on sexuality and its role in debauchery and decadence, Prince’s 1987 production merely addresses it as part of the problems of the previous production.

Downgrading Cliff’s whirlwind romance with Sally to a casual affair helps alleviate the problematic relationship between the two characters, which was noted by several critics in the original production. Even in 1987, Marshall Fine in the *Marin Independent Journal* complains about the “lack of chemistry” between the two main protagonists.³⁶⁸ In the 1987 version Sally and the boys from the Kit Kat Klub

kann, fange ich immer an zu heulten. Fräulein Schneider hat da jeden Selbstrespekt und alle Hoffnung verloren; und genau darauf kommt es mir an, das dem Publikum zu vermitteln.”

³⁶⁸ Marshall Fine, “‘Cabaret’ Retains Its Fire after 20 Years,” *Marin Independent Journal*, 15 May 1987.

tease Cliff about Gottfried von Schwartzbaum, who has taken a liking to Cliff and will not leave him alone.

In 1966 Sally's abortion was still shocking to audiences, but at least it was Sally and Cliff's lovechild. In 1987, Sally does not know who the father of her baby is. She and Cliff openly discuss abortion, and Sally's response implies that she has had one before. The lovechild becomes a bastard, "a horrible little German infant – with a moustache – ordering us about."³⁶⁹ This change reflects developments in women's sexual liberation since the end of the 1960s. Marshall Fine remarks that what was once "a shocking plot twist" has now become "a convenient story device." He considers the changes in the script to be too minor to really "reflect the times."³⁷⁰ Cliff's decision to raise the child (even if it might not be his) with Sally, on the one hand, makes him even more of a "stand-up guy" for the audience, but on the other hand, taps into the portrayal of homosexuals like heterosexual people who wish for a child.

The role of Fräulein Kost received a major overhaul as well. A Nazi sympathizer in the original production, Fräulein Schneider's adversary now becomes downright vindictive. With Herr Schultz's song "Meeskite" cut from the revival, the duty to expose Fräulein Schneider's fiancé as a Jew falls to Fräulein Kost. While she dances with Ernst Ludwig, she lets it slip:

³⁶⁹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. 1987 Version with revised cuts. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 53, Folder 4: 1-10-51.

³⁷⁰ Fine, "'Cabaret' Retains Its Fire after 20 Years."

FRAULEIN KOST: Herr Ludwig – remember me? Fraulein Kost? You must dance with me! Come!

ERNST: A pleasure, Fraulein. [...] A delightful party. Herr Schultz is a most generous host. Ja?

FRAULEIN KOST: He should be. He could afford – ten times as much. They have all the money – the Jews.³⁷¹

Fred Ebb sums it up for Michael Kuchwara from *The Associated Press*, “We decided to toughen up the show a little.” Prince adds, “Twenty years ago we were throwing innovative stage techniques, Nazis, and controversial subject matter at the audience. So we decided that we weren’t going to give them a complex, neurotic and emotional relationship, which is what Sally and Cliff have.” Masteroff explains that “Sally became older and wiser” for the 1987 revival.³⁷² According to Frank Rich in *The New York Times*, they were not quite as successful as they might have hoped:

As inadequately acted, Joe Masteroff’s talky script [...] seems tame now in its treatment of Nazism, especially in light of some of the franker Prince musicals (“Evita,” “Sweeney Todd”) that came later. [...] At the end of Act I, when an innocuous beer-drinking polka (“Tomorrow Belongs To Me”) evolves into a Nazi anthem, Mr. Prince abruptly freezes the mob in place, lifts the set up into the darkness and then sends out Mr. Grey to point his face toward the audience in a hideous, mocking grin. As the white lights jolt us into intermission, we feel just how timely a consistently tough “Cabaret” could have been, especially for those partying in a boom world at the brink of a crash.³⁷³

³⁷¹ Masteroff et al. *Cabaret*. 1987 version with revised cuts. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 53, Folder 4: 1–13–72.

³⁷² Michael Kuchwara, “Joel Grey Back in ‘Cabaret’ after 20 Years,” 19 March 1987.

³⁷³ Frank Rich, “Theater: ‘Cabaret’ and Joel Grey Return,” *The New York Times*, 23 October 1987, 3.

5.4. SAM MENDES' DONMAR WAREHOUSE REVIVAL

Considering *Cabaret's* dreadful past in London, Sam Mendes' choice to direct the musical at the Donmar Warehouse in 1993, even for a limited run, seems an unlikely candidate to make its mark on English theater landscape. Like Kutschera in 1970, Mendes was well aware of the financial and artistic risk involved: "The show could have come and gone very quickly and quite unimpressively."³⁷⁴ Yet he felt that *Cabaret* was just another "classic that deserved to be reinvented and rediscovered from generation to generation."³⁷⁵

Mendes did not completely reinvent the wheel, though. Instead he built on the ideas set forth by Prince and his team, spinning them further. For instance, while Aronson's mirror merely implicated the audience in its role in fascism in 1966, Mendes' version makes them incontrovertibly complicit. Instead of seat rows, Mendes had the stalls at the Donmar remodeled to fit in tables, where the audience would be seated. While the idea was not completely new (cf. Savary's production), Mendes arranged for the stage to cross over seamlessly into the auditorium. This decreased not only the spatial distance between audience and stage, but also fostered a more intimate bond between audience and Emcee. Alan Cumming, who took over duties as master of ceremonies at the Donmar, became the audience's guide into the decadent world of Weimar Berlin. This allowed the audience to become directly involved in the events they witness, while at the same time it made

³⁷⁴ Matt Wolf, *Sam Mendes at the Donmar: Stepping into Freedom* (New York: Limelight Editions, 2003), 38.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

it impossible for them to deny their involvement. In 1966, the audience the audience could *choose* not to look at itself in Boris Aronson's mirror, however hard that might have been.

At one point, the Emcee even invites a girl and a man onto stage to dance with him. According to Matt Wolf this was originally improvised by Cumming but "quickly became a signature part of the show, including sometimes celebrities, such as critic Mark Steyn and BBC weatherman Ian McGaskill, in London as well as dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov and news anchor legend Walter Cronkite on Broadway."³⁷⁶ Cumming himself disclosed in a panel discussion on the occasion of *Cabaret's* 2014 revival that he usually avoided celebrities and went for the people who did not want to be there:

One night he invited an older gentleman onto the stage, "Come on, granddad," and the audience went wild, clapping and cheering. Cumming remembers thinking, "Aren't Americans so nice to their elderly!" Once on stage, he asked the gentleman for his name, and it turned out to be Walter Cronkite. He further recalls how they met again a year later at the Kennedy Center Honors for John Kander and Fred Ebb at the after party. Thinking he was "going to get bitch-slapped by Walter Cronkite," Cumming admits that the newsman actually turned out to be quite a good sport about the actor's Kit Kat Klub antics, asking him, "May I have this dance?"³⁷⁷

Raising the participatory level for audiences was not the only thing Mendes introduced in *Cabaret*. Like Fosse and Prince, he plays up Cliff's homosexual side. Whereas Prince and Fosse presented Cliff as a bisexual man, Adam Godley portrays him in Mendes' adaptation as a confused homosexual, who falls for the first time in

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 44.

³⁷⁷ Rooney et al., "The Talent of Cabaret".

his life for a woman: "I need you here. You're the only woman I've ever... listen, Sally, maybe you're the only girl I'll ever want. I've never felt this way before." This makes the weird relationship between Sally and Cliff a little more relatable.

Sexuality, sexual identity, and sexual freedom were generally an underlying theme of *Cabaret* at the Donmar. When Sally Bowles and the girls sing "Mein Herr," their dominatrix-dream-come-true performance, several males in the audience to loosen their tie knots uncomfortably. Compared to Alan Cumming, Joel Grey's Emcee showed restraint in his embodiment of the sexual decadence and moral depravity of a nation. Cumming's Emcee lacks the garish white mask, the pretentious air of cosmopolitanism, and the stylized mannerisms. All that remains of Grey's evening attire is a bow tie, and only that – the rest of Cumming's chest is bare. Instead, Cumming is a horny, mischievous, sexually lascivious, menacing master of ceremonies with rouged nipples and Nazi tattoos, one who wears black leather and combat boots, a simultaneously disgusting and fascinating figure.

When Joel Grey created the role of the Emcee, he received fifth billing. However, Grey turned the role into one of those once-in-a-lifetime-dream roles for any actor, so by the time he returned to it in 1987 he got top billing, even though his role had not been expanded. In Mendes' production, the Emcee carries the entire show, appearing in almost every scene. This means that he is on stage practically all the time, lurking in the shadows, throwing bricks, carrying briefcases, observing or commenting, or assuming other identities, such as the customs officers on the train to Berlin or the prostitute who sings "I Don't Care Much," both of which used to be played by separate actors in Prince's productions. Even more so than in Prince's

original, does the Emcee become the epicenter of *Cabaret*. Cumming used his exuberant stage presence to infuse every scene with his mischief, as his co-star Jane Horrocks recalls: "It started off where Alan just sat there quietly, and by the end of the run he was practically masturbating during your scene; it was slightly irritating."³⁷⁸ The emphasis on the correlation between sexual hedonism and fascism is a clear influence from Fosse's movie, but as we shall see later on in this chapter, Mendes steps out of the logical fallacy that drives the correlation between these two.

Another influence of Fosse on Mendes was the reconfiguration of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me." In Prince's version, the waiters of the Kit Kat Klub sing this lyrical tune *a cappella*, whereas at the Donmar it is played on a gramophone, which is carried onto the stage in complete darkness by the Emcee. As in the film, the song is sung by a young boy; however without the revelation of the Nazi uniform, the disembodied soprano voice through the theater is ethereal and innocent. As mentioned before, the use of recorded music implies that the tune is widely popular among the Germans. The Emcee listens to the song enthralled, until he suddenly turns off the gramophone and ends the song abruptly, foreshadowing the harsh break in reality ahead, and announces that tomorrow belongs to him. The innocent boy soprano has turned into the looming specter of egomania and Nazism.

Similarly, Alan Cumming's Emcee whispers the words "She wouldn't look Jewish at all" in a theater so silent, one can hear a pin drop, at the end of "If You

³⁷⁸ Wolf, *Sam Mendes at the Donmar: Stepping into Freedom*, 41.

Could See Her.” Prince had already reinstated the original line in his 1987 revival, but when Fosse decided to use it in the movie in 1972 he had Joel Grey whisper the words, in case he encountered too much opposition, so he could take it out in editing.

Mendes also built on the Brechtian elements in *Cabaret*, turning the “Money” scene, for which he, like Harold Prince in 1987, replaced the original money song with the much more successful “Money” from the film adaptation. Where Prince had the Emcee parade women dressed as currency (à la Miss French Franc, Miss American Buck, or Brünhilde, Miss German Mark) around stage, Mendes had Sally and the Emcee appear as homeless people in cardboard boxes, which was “a little too Brechtian,” Mendes admits in retrospect, so it would not survive the transfer to Broadway.³⁷⁹ Additionally, Mendes asked some of the actors to play instruments (Fräulein Kost on the violin, Ernst Ludwig on the banjo) to augment the stage band, which was in this case overhead on stage, and not in the orchestra pit.

Fräulein Kost becomes a secondary villain, who sets up Fräulein Schneider for failure, even more so than in Prince’s version. The duet between Fräulein Schneider and Herr Schultz, “Married,” transforms into a nightclub chanson, sung in German by Fräulein Schneider in the style of Marlene Dietrich. While this suggests that she is supportive of the interfaith marriage, Fräulein Kost shows her true colors when she tells Ernst Ludwig about Herr Schultz’s Jewish heritage to get back at Fräulein Schneider. Leading up to this moment, the ensemble stomps their feet rhythmically to the dance music, suggestive of the marching Nazi boots in the

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 45.

streets, but upon Fräulein Kost's revelation, the movements suddenly stop and silence spreads. When Ernst Ludwig pulls Fräulein Schneider aside to advise her against the marriage, the music picks up again and the rigid ensemble accents the breaks in Ernst Ludwig's speech flow with loud stomps, as if to physically enforce his words. As the party guests sing the reprise of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me," the Emcee watches on from above with unease. Just before the curtain falls, he turns around, sticks out his butt, and flaps open his leather coat to reveal a glaring red swastika painted on his right ass cheek.

Corresponding to this shocking revelation at the end of the first act is the Emcee's final moment on stage at the big finale. As Cliff's memories merge with the reprise of "Willkommen," Mendes lets all the protagonists have their say, even Ernst, who was left out in Prince's version. This leads into a slightly dissonant rendition of "Cabaret," which peters out into silence. With his trademark smirk, the Emcee steps forward and begins a striptease. But when he takes off his leather coat, the audience sees him in a concentration camp's prisoner uniform, which features not only his inmate number (40577) but also a purple triangle, and a red and yellow star each to designate him as a homosexual, Jewish, political inmate.³⁸⁰ With a thin voice, the

³⁸⁰ In concentration camps, Nazis used color-coded triangles to keep track of the inmates' infringements: A red triangle stood for political inmate (quite often, but not exclusively, communists, socialists, anarchists, "free thinkers"), pink triangles marked sex offenders among which the Nazis considered homosexuals, purple triangles were for religious prisoners, and yellow star of David, of course, reserved for Jews. A homosexual Jew, for example, would therefore wear a pink triangle on top of a yellow one. Sam Mendes' different colored stars allude to the Nazi color scheme, though he uses purple instead of pink for homosexuals.

Emcee raises his right hand to sing the final line of “Willkommen:” “Auf wiedersehen, à bientôt,” before he takes his final bow.

Turning the Emcee into a victim of the Nazis validates his shocking and promiscuous behavior throughout the show beyond a simple “sex sells” or shock value premise. Where Prince’s version only really addressed the Holocaust, Mendes’ adaptation shows the full scale of Nazi cleansing: Beyond the Jews, the Nazis persecuted homosexuals, gypsies, political and religious groups – so many they implemented a color code categorize them. Even more so, despite the popular simplification of causality, or really the misperception that Nazism evolved directly out of Weimar decadence, which has often been the takeaway from the Fosse movie for audiences, Mendes suggests that the Nazis considered the style of decadent entertainment in the Weimar period, as presented by the Kit Kat Klub, *entartete Kunst* (degenerate Art). Had the Kit Kat Klub been real, it would have been shut down pretty quickly by the authorities after the Nazi takeover, and many of its performers could have likely ended up in a concentration camp as the last scene suggests.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ Rooney et al., “The Talent of Cabaret”.

5.5. 1998 BROADWAY REVIVAL

Like Prince, Mendes was not completely satisfied with his first version, so when the opportunity presented to transfer the Donmar production to Broadway, he jumped at the chance. Intermittently, it looked as if Mendes could not free up his schedule, so the Roundabout Theater hired Rob Marshall instead. As luck would have it, both directors suddenly became available and decided to co-direct.³⁸²

Mendes described the Donmar production as “the beginning of a brilliant idea which I hadn’t seen through. It was chaos to be honest, but we got by with chutzpah and elan.”³⁸³ Together with Marshall, he made significant changes to his original revival, which sets the Broadway revival apart from the Donmar version.

Even though *Cabaret* on Broadway began in the old Henry Miller Theater (March 18, 1998), which was rebranded into the Kit Kat Klub, it eventually moved into the newly reopened, historic Studio 54 nightclub, which was also turned into the Kit Kat Klub. According to Alan Cumming, “everything was designed to step into the world” of the Kit Kat Klub down to the bathrooms and murals on the wall.³⁸⁴ Rob Marshall adds that they had to lock away the props because once they were finished with the show, the regular life of the working nightclub resumed. He stresses that neither he nor Mendes aimed for a *coup de théâtre*, or high production values. Rather they were inspired by things found in the theater/club and used hardly any

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Wolf, *Sam Mendes at the Donmar: Stepping into Freedom*, 45.

³⁸⁴ Rooney et al., “The Talent of Cabaret”. David Sheward took note of the atmosphere in the lavatories of the old Henry Miller Theater in his review, too.

sets.³⁸⁵ The Kit Kat Klub girls and boys interact with the guests even before the show begins, making it sometimes hard to distinguish between real waiters and fictitious ones. This took the environmental concept of *Cabaret* even one step further than the Donmar atmosphere.

For Broadway, Mendes and Marshall created an even darker rendition of *Cabaret*, which David Rooney describes as “the definitive production of our time” at a discussion panel sponsored by *The New York Times* on the occasion of the 2014 revival.³⁸⁶ Marshall lists as one of the reasons for the darker turn the increased “sanitized and loud feel of a majority of musicals” for why “it is important in the current Broadway climate” to stage grittier and more intimate shows like *Cabaret*. People are used to expecting a big spectacle for the expensive ticket prices, Marshall argues; “they don’t remember storytelling.”³⁸⁷

When Rooney comments how thematically relevant *Cabaret* still is today, Cumming elaborates that “every generation should be reminded about the Holocaust and the artistic freedom and sexual hedonism that preceded it. [...] People need to be vigilant because the bigotry is still happening, for example, in Russia and Arizona.”³⁸⁸ This is where the Emcee comes in, Cumming explains; and he compares the character to a cypher and guide for the audience. He reminds the theatergoer to “enjoy what is happening but also stand out and reflect:”

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

The first thing you see is me, my finger (makes a come hither gesture), "Come in here, come!" I'm gonna bring you in. And that kind of image is used quite a lot during it, for a kinda 'you know you want to' thing. And then the actual show starts like ha ha ha – these people are funny. It's sexy and daring. And then it slowly starts to turn, almost imperceptibly; it starts to turn in a very awful way. And towards the end in the second half you see – it's really funny – the audience go a ha ha ha ha. OH! – And by that point they are complicit in it as well because they have enjoyed it so much they have encouraged it, so it's a really clever way of hopefully making an audience realize what it would have been like in those times. Because a whole nation does not suddenly support a horribly fascist dictator on a whim.³⁸⁹

Rob Marshall describes the Emcee as "the audience's conduit to voyeurism,"³⁹⁰ which draws a parallel to our modern culture. Roger Copeland in *American Theatre* argues that Mendes' *Cabaret* is much more about contemporary society than any other:

The emcee is the spirit of the zeitgeist, all right, but what he symbolizes isn't so much Weimar decadence as the spectacle of a society (ours!) in which politics, journalism, and televised news have all become subdivisions of show business.³⁹¹

The premises between Prince's Kit Kat Klub and Mendes' nightclub could not be any more fundamentally different. Prince's production showed how the Kit Kat Klub became slowly infiltrated by encroaching Nazism. In contrast, Copeland states, "[Mendes'] Kit Kat Klub has swallowed up the reality beyond it."³⁹² Where Prince separated the stage spatially to reflect the contrasting worlds of the phantasmagoric

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Roger Copeland, "From Its Beginnings as an Isherwod Memoir to Sam Mendes's Razor-Edged Revival, the Tale of Sally Bowles Is a Template for the Times," *American Theatre* January (1999): 88-89.

³⁹² Ibid., 28.

nightclub and the somber reality, Mendes creates a unit form. As a result the whole world has become the stage in Mendes' production. Sally Bowles's words "life is a cabaret, old chum, come to the cabaret" have never rung truer. Ultimately, the joke is on us, the audience, for whom everything has become entertainment.

In the last twenty years, reality television and social media have facilitated a new level of obsession with the life of others to a point where it has become part of our entertainment, which closes the circle back to Marshall's comment on voyeurism. As a result we get a deeper glimpse into Sally Bowles. We see her in her dressing room in between shows snorting coke, where she also has a violent confrontation with her current lover Max, depicting domestic violence. It took three attempts, but for the first time Broadway finally has a believable Sally Bowles; according to Copeland.

As she prepares to sing the line "But when I saw her laid out like a queen," Richardson (later [Jennifer Jason] Leigh) closes her eyes and begins what looks like a ritual of self-hypnosis. We see this Sally working hard – very hard! – to convince herself that her story (somehow, against all odds) is going to end happily. But what follows is one of the most ominous pauses in the history of the musical theatre—and the ultimate effect of her halting delivery is to place the emotional emphasis on the word *corpse* [emphasis in the original]. In that split second of silence, Sally's glazed-over eyes open wide and she seems to be staring into Elsie's coffin. But the body she sees there is undoubtedly her own.³⁹³

Marshall and Mendes manage to flesh out the characters in a way that makes them more relatable. For instance, in the Broadway version Ernst Ludwig becomes obviously enamored with Cliff from the moment they meet, even though he never

³⁹³ Ibid., 26.

acts on it. This adds new complexity to Ernst Ludwig's character just as Sally's backstage life does to hers. Conversely, they show the loss of individualism and uniformity in fascism in the transition of the showgirls, as Sam Mendes explains:

The chorus defines the whole spirit of the show. The journey of the ensemble is the journey of the club. At the beginning, all the girls have distinct personalities. But over the course of the show, they lose their individuality. By the second act they all look the same. And then they disappear altogether.³⁹⁴

Indeed, the showgirls all have a backstory in Mendes' versions, which they play out on stage sometimes. For instance they might get into a catfight over a man in the audience; they all had to sleep with Max to get into the club in the first place. Their bodies a riddle with scars and bruises, drug veins and tattoos – all of which state the hardships of their lives.³⁹⁵

This darker, more realistic *Cabaret* resonated tremendously with audiences and critics alike. Clifford A. Ridley in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* stated that Mendes' version is "the musical as it was meant to be."³⁹⁶ Patrick Stearns from *USA Today* writes that "a few minutes into the new Broadway revival of *Cabaret* (***/2), you're in such a sexual swamp you could either slide into complete dissolution or be frightened into celibacy."³⁹⁷ And John Podhertz headlines his piece with "the Great

³⁹⁴ Wilborn Hampton, "Very Busy Chorus Keeps 'Cabaret' on the Move:," *The New York Times*, 6 May 1998, E8.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Clifford A. Ridley, "'Cabaret' the Musical as It Was Meant to Be," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 22 March 1998, F15.

³⁹⁷ David Patrick Stearns, "Close up and Coarse, 'Cabaret' Revival Rubs Raw," *USA Today*, 23 March 1998, 2D.

White (Nazi) Way; a brilliant production raises disturbing questions.”³⁹⁸ Vincent Danby in *The New York Times* attests that in Mendes’ production “the scary hypnotic fascination of one of those nightmares from which you feel you can wake yourself at any time, but somehow you never do. It is too entertaining to abandon, no matter how much it threatens.”³⁹⁹ Jack Helbig in the *Chicago Daily Herald* calls it “powerful, honest and riveting:”

The "entertainment" at the Kit Kat Klub is not merely amusing, it is very sexy in a sleazy way that makes you want to wash your hands at the end of each number. [...]Until I saw director Sam Mendes' current revival, I never knew just how dark, down and dirty "Cabaret" really is. Not even Bob Fosse, in his magnificent 1972 movie, depicted as effectively the furious decadence of Weimar.⁴⁰⁰

David Sheward comments on the stronger Brechtian influence on the 1998 production, which “seems less like ‘Broadway’ and more like commentary. Ben Brantley described Cumming’s Emcee as a “Brechtian guide to the play’s seamy universe,⁴⁰¹” too. Whereas Prince related Weimar society to American society in the 1960s, Mendes relates today’s society back to fascism. Roger Copeland sums it up:

He’s showing us that much of what our current popular culture finds erotically appealing has its roots in German fascism. Yes it’s *our* look, *our* fashion statement, but the thematics and the metaphysics of these

³⁹⁸ John Podhertz, "The Great White (Nazi) Way, a Brilliant Production of a Classic Raises Disturbing Questions," *The New York Post*, 26 March 1998, 35.

³⁹⁹ Vincent Canby, "At the Heart of a Spellbinding 'Cabaret'," *The New York Times*, 29 March 1998, 7.

⁴⁰⁰ Jack Helbig, "Oh, 'Cabaret'! Director Sam Mendes Takes Rich but Raunchy Musical 'Cabaret' to a New Darker Level," *Chicago Daily Herald*, 18 June 1999.

⁴⁰¹ Ben Brantley, "Desperate Dance at Oblivion's Brink," *The New York Times*, 20 March 1998, E30.

trends—and the instincts that they manipulate—take us deep into the heart of Nazi aesthetics.⁴⁰²

This insight affects the understanding of the ending in Mendes' *Cabaret*, when the Emcee is revealed to be inside the barb wired walls of a concentration camp. Throughout the show the Emcee has appropriated the symbols of Nazism, i.e., black leather trench coat, combat boots, sometimes even making fun of them, i.e., he moons the audience with a swastika tattoo on his ass, he feigns a Hitler moustache, similar to how our contemporary MTV-inspired pop culture in the 1990s has helped itself stylistically to Nazi imagery. The Emcee's fate thus becomes a cautionary tale for audiences: no one gets away with appropriating Nazi symbolism scot-free. If we do not watch out, we, too, will have to pay the ultimate price.

Copeland links Mendes' artistic vision to Susan Sontag's "Fascinating Fascism", in which she lays out the connections between sexual imagery and politics, arguing that fascist regimes are usually sexualized in contrast to asexualized left-wing politics. This in turn explains the fascination of gay culture with Nazi fashion-style inspired S&M paraphernalia, based on how dominant-submissive relationships reflect similar dynamics as fascist regimes. As a result, the S&M tone of Sam Mendes' *Kit Kat Klub* is a direct commentary on the political situation. Copeland argues that "total dominance requires total submission" to a level of childhood dependency on the government, which is expressed in *Cabaret*

⁴⁰² Copeland, "From Its Beginnings as an Isherwod Memoir to Sam Mendes's Razor-Edged Revival, the Tale of Sally Bowles Is a Template for the Times," 27-28.

through Sally's number "Don't Tell Mama," which replaces childhood innocence with sexual power.⁴⁰³

Not all critics took kindly to Marshall and Mendes' darker version of *Cabaret*. Ed Siegel in the *Boston Globe* thought the show had "lost its soul." Siegel conceded that the original *Cabaret* was "too timid in exploring the psychosexual politics of life in Berlin at the dawn of the Nazi's rise to power" and "Mendes can be given some credit for [...] serving up a clearer view of what the cabaret represented – a decidedly decadent place that symbolized the amorality, and ultimately immorality, of political indifference." However, Siegel complains that in the same breath Mendes tossed out "the heart and soul that made the musical."⁴⁰⁴

Robert Feldberg in the *Wall Street Journal* compared the Mendes revival to "pouring old wine into new bottles."⁴⁰⁵ Brantley in *The New York Times* felt that the nightclub set up of the Mendes production is simultaneously its coup and own pitfall:

This "Cabaret" is seedier, raunchier and more sinister than either the original groundbreaking Broadway version, directed by Harold Prince, or the 1970 movie by Bob Fosse. But it is also, in the long run, less effective. Like its heroine, Sally Bowles, it wants nothing more than to shock, and as with Sally, the desire winds up seeming more naïve than sophisticated. [...] There's nothing seductive about [the Kit Kat Klub girls]. [...] Even though theatergoers are meant to feel they're patrons of the Kit Kat Club, the hard-sell ugliness is distancing after

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁰⁴ Ed Siegel, "New Version of 'Cabaret' Loses the Musical's Soul," *Boston Globe* 1999, E1. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 10

⁴⁰⁵ Robert Feldberg, "Decadent, Damned, and Revived a 'Cabaret' in a Cabaret," *Wall Street Journal*, 20 March 1998.

the initial jolt. The production has shot its ammunition of shock effects, and nothing that follows is likely to be too surprising.⁴⁰⁶

Vincent Canby felt so uncomfortable in the audience, he wrote:

The problem with this are both physical and esthetic. The chairs are uncomfortable and the tables are so jammed together that fist fights might be encouraged. That's carrying audience participation too far. Mr. Mendes also has the M.C. inviting patrons up to dance with him at the beginning of the second act, which has a way of making the audience almost as uncomfortable as the people he chooses. In this instance, breaking the fourth wall stops the show dead.⁴⁰⁷

Canby's comment brings us back to the perennial discussion: how much Brecht can Broadway tolerate? When Prince brought *Cabaret* to Broadway in 1966, several critics wished for more Brechtian influence on Broadway. Thirty years later, critics argued that Mendes was too realistic and Brechtian. Brantley briefly hints at the "entertaining but preachy revival," while Canby feels *Cabaret* has taken it one step too far with the level of audience participation. Of course, they hadn't seen anything yet, as the 1996 Viennese production by director Meret Barz illustrates in the next section.

⁴⁰⁶ Brantley, "Desperate Dance at Oblivion's Brink," E1, E30.

⁴⁰⁷ Vincent Canby, "At the Heart of a Spellbinding 'Cabaret'," *ibid.*, 29 March, 7.

5.6. 1996 VIENNA PRODUCTION

If Sam Mendes reinvented *Cabaret* for younger generations in the 1990s, then Meret Barz repositioned Mendes' production in her 1996 production in Vienna for German-speaking audiences. Originally it premiered in a converted exhibition hall on October 24, 1996 at the former *Messepalast* (now called *Museumsquartier*). The Kit Kat Klub moved into the fictitiously designated Hall X⁴⁰⁸ with full restaurant service, just as Sam Mendes' production had remodeled the old Henry Miller Theater. Director Meret Barz commissioned murals from four contemporary artists: Christian Ludwig Attersee, Georg Eisler, Alfred Hrdlicka and Hermann Nitsch. Of those three Attersee's style is the most mainstream, whereas Hrdlicka's work usually divided the public. Nitsch, who is famous for painting with blood, is probably the most controversial and provocative in the eyes of Austrians. All three artists have in common that, in the eyes of the Nazis, their art would be condemned as *entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) – an opinion probably shared by many Austrians today. The murals reflect the artists' sentiments towards the time depicted in the musical and theme of the production, resistance. For instance, Attersee painted a grotesque face with the title "Rotzzeit" (which literally means "snot time"). When the audience arrives at the venue they step into the Kit Kat Klub. One reviewer mentioned that at the premiere the audience was given vouchers for mail-order lingerie instead of programs.⁴⁰⁹ The Kit Kat Klub boys and girls flirt with the

⁴⁰⁸ Hall X does not exist in the hall system of either the *Museumsquartier* or the former *Messepalast*.

⁴⁰⁹ S. Haizmann, "Cabaret," *musicals*, Dezember 1996/January 1997 1996.

audience before the performance begins, while they sip free champagne at the tables.

When Barz revived the production a year and a half later at the *Wiener Sofiensäle*, the choice of location was directly related to the time in the musical: In 1924, the Austrian wing of the Nazi Party was founded at the *Sofiensäle* and frequently used for party events.⁴¹⁰ After the war, the *Sofiensäle* became a multipurpose venue and was used primarily for clubbing, which made it an ideal space to house the Kit Kat Klub. Its former imperial glory shone through the run down venue in its dark red velvet walls – until the building burnt down in 2001: If there ever was a venue that could have been the original Kit Kat Klub, it was the *Wiener Sofiensäle*. It may have just been a fortunate co-incidence that Barz’s production, whose central themes are tolerance and humanity, moved eventually into a venue significant for Nazi history in Austria. It may have been simply a matter of availability. But then again, the thoughts put into the ambience and murals at the *Messepalast* suggest that her entire production is conceived as a political statement.

Another area where Sam Mendes’ impact can be felt is the decision to play on a uniform stage with minimal sets, which makes it increasingly hard to distinguish between the real world and the Kit Kat Klub. This, of course, is also a natural result

⁴¹⁰ Christoph Römer, *Die Wiener Sofiensäle. Eine Wiener Institution*, Die Reihe Archivbilder (Erfurt: Sutton Verlag GmbH, 2004), 65.

of the constrained budget Barz had at her disposal for the limited runs⁴¹¹ (October 24th, 1996 – March 1, 1997 at the *Messepalast* and September 17th, 1998 – January 9, 1999 at the *Sofiensäle*), but also where the similarities to Mendes' version end.

Whereas Mendes' Kit Kat Klub expands to include the book musical scenes as entertainment, Barz's Kit Kat Klub functions as a protective shield from the outside world, which spills into the club more and more as the show progresses. For example, the engagement party for Herr and Frau Schultz takes place at the nightclub, which is at the end of the first act run over by Nazis singing "Tomorrow Belongs To Me." It is different from Prince's conception, too, because for Barz the Kit Kat Klub becomes a beacon of resistance. She conceives the Kit Kat Klub as an isolated island of tolerance in a sea of bigoted, racist, and xenophobic fear mongers, for her production is an anachronistic one:

"We free the plot from the time of the beginning World War II because what we are showing is timeless. The confrencier embodies a world, which threatens to disappear: It is impressed animated love, tolerance, humanity and taboolessness and sensuality." At some point, she adds, the honkey-tonk club will be liquidated by a new leader. "But the confrencier will move on and build the next island somewhere in this world."⁴¹²

⁴¹¹ Heinrich Sichrovsky from Austrian magazine *News* lists the federal and municipal subsidies of *Cabaret* at a fourth of what the nation's prestige theater, the *Burgtheater*, spends on a single, measly production of the Raimund play "Der Bauer als Millionär."

⁴¹² Heinrich Sichrovsky, "Totentanz Im Cabaret," *News*, 17 October 1996, 148. "Wir lösen die Handlung aus der Zeit des beginnenden Zweiten Weltkrieges, denn was wir zeigen, ist zeitlos. Der Confrencier verkörpert eine Welt, die in unserer Zeit verlorenzugehen droht: Sie ist beseelt von Liebe, Toleranz, Menschlichkeit, Tabulosigkeit und Sinnlichkeit." Irgendwann, fügt sie hinzu, wird der kleine Tingeltangelklub [sic] von einem neuen Führer liquidiert werden. "Aber der Confrencier wird weiterziehen und irgendwo auf der Welt die nächste Insel gründen."

I am purposely not translating the German name for the role, *conférencier* into Emcee, because the character is fundamentally different from any previously discussed productions in Barz' artistic vision. What originated with Prince as a *Kunstfigur* (artificial figure) with no name, no soul, no backstory transforms in this version into the *only* truly human character. Whereas Cliff, Sally, Fräulein Schneider, Herr Schultz, Ernst Ludwig, and Fräulein Kost never get beyond their cut and dried characters, which never step outside their comfort zone, never really stop pretending that everything will turn out all right, the *conférencier* becomes the epitome of a broken, exhausted man, tired of pretending. The party is officially over.

Barz re-contextualized the gorilla scene completely anew: in other words, there is no gorilla. Instead the *conférencier* appears, illuminated only by a spotlight, carrying a little Jewish girl that was shot dead by Nazis. Sung in this context, "If You Could See Her (Through My Eyes)" gains an entirely different meaning. Gone is the satire, which is replaced by a sobering sucker punch the audience receives ten times worse than Kander & Ebb's original punch line could ever achieve. The slower tempo and softer instrumentation reflect the somber tone of the number in this production, even though the lyrics were not changed with the exception of one word: The official German translation of the original last line is "Säht ihr sie mit meinen Augen, dann säht ihr mein Miesnick ist schön." (If you could see her through my eyes, you would see that my meeskite is beautiful.) In Barz's version the word "Miesnick" (Meeskite) is replaced with "Mädchen" (girl), implying that if you could see her through my eyes, then you would see that above anything else, Jewishness included, this innocent little girl was simply beautiful. The song therefore becomes

less directed at the audience and more as an accusation against the Nazis who shot her.

Barz is using the implied anti-Semitism of the song as a metaphor for the surging xenophobia in the country, which went hand in hand with the rise of the FPÖ (Austrian Freedom Party) under the leadership of Jörg Haider in the ten years leading up to this production.⁴¹³ The party is the ideological continuation of pan-Germanic and nationalistic movements, in which many former Nazi Party members found a new political home after World War II and its abolishment. Haider, a charismatic populist just like Hitler, frequently played down the horrors of the Third Reich, praising their “employment politics” (if you can call forced labor that). From the 1990s, xenophobic slogans and sentiments increasingly entered Austrian political discourse and foreign policies. Barz reflects that trend by making Herr Schultz a Jewish immigrant, thus changing his backstory. It addresses the expanding numbers of people with migration backgrounds in Europe, traditionally the targets of nationalist parties like the FPÖ. In accord with this concern, Barz assembled a multicultural ensemble, representing eleven nations.⁴¹⁴ Whereas in 1970, when *Cabaret* had its German premiere in Vienna, the prevailing motto was that it cannot and must not ever happen again, the 1990s were becoming ripe for a reminder that

⁴¹³ Votes for the FPÖ had increased by roughly fifteen per cent in the 1990s, starting to make them a viable coalition candidate. In 1999 the ÖVP (Austrian people party) approached them to form a government coalition, against national and international protest. This caused an international incident and EU sanctions.

⁴¹⁴ Sichrovsky, "Totentanz Im Cabaret," 148.

this could indeed happen again. The packaging is different (xenophobia) but the problem is the same (belief of ethnic superiority).

Karl Markovics, who played the *conférencier* for the 1996/97 season, explains: “What we are showing here is a timeless fight – ideals vs. anti-ideals, tolerance vs. *Gleichschaltung* (consolidation of institutional powers), diversity vs. state decrees.”⁴¹⁵ The production probably succeeds best in this regard with its unique and unprecedented *coup de théâtre* right before the intermission. As the Nazis on stage start to intone the Nazi anthem “Tomorrow Belongs To Me,” one by one, actors and actresses placed strategically throughout the auditorium jump up and sing along. In any other context, this would come across as a cheap theatrical gimmick, but in the countries of Austria and Germany it becomes a Brechtian device. As pointed out earlier, Kander and Ebb purposely emulated German folk and Nazi songs, when they created this number, which must bring up all kinds of disturbing images and memories for German and Austrian audiences, when it is sung on stage. However, the psychological effect of having the person next to you spontaneously burst out into a rousing anthem creates a shiver down your spine I have rarely experienced in the theater: When I saw this production in its second limited run on December 10th, 1998, Austria had just taken over the EU presidency for the first time. The performance began 45 minutes late due to the diplomatic roadblocks and heavy traffic throughout the city of Vienna. I was an impressionable sixteen-year-old teenager and out of nowhere the gentleman, who had seemed so nice and polite,

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

sprang out of his seat like a jack-in-the-box and joined the actors on stage, singing with a most beautiful tenor voice. I remember for a second I was in awe; for a minute I thought maybe this was some kind of bizarre custom as in the case of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, but then with increasing panic I realized that more and more people were standing up and joining in. The lyrics in the German translation have an even stronger nationalistic, instigating ring than in the English original, making it an unmistakable Nazi hymn (cf. Table 5.1.). As the meaning of the lyrics penetrated my mind, I exchanged worried looks with my mother who was equally shocked and disturbed. For a second, I thought, “This is it. It’s happening again. I don’t know *how* he did it, but somehow Haider managed to take over the country and staged a coup d’état on the day we took over the EU presidency. I have to take my mum, pick up my father and brothers and get the hell out of this place.” As I was mentally ticking off escape routes and envisioning emigration life, my mind returned to the very first thought I had, the beautiful voice, and it clicked. These voices were trained! They had placed actors among the audience to create the impression that neo-Nazis sympathize with the Nazis on stage! My relief was short-lived as my focus returned to the lyrics just in time for the “fatherland” verse, which did little to ease my discomfort. Judging by the haunted looks among a significant portion of the audience, as they filed past my mother and I out of the auditorium for the intermission, it was an unsettling experience for everyone.

Table 5.1. “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” Translation Comparison

Original English Lyrics	German Translation	English re-translation
The sun on the meadow is summery warm. The stag in the forest runs free. But gather together to greet the storm. Tomorrow belongs to me	Im Licht liegt die Wiese so sommerwarm da. Der Hirsch schlägt die Freiheitsbahn ein. Doch sammelt euch alle ein Sturm ist nah. Der morgige Tag ist mein	The stag takes the path to freedom.
The branch of the linden is leafy and green, The Rhine gives its gold to the sea. But somewhere a glory awaits unseen. Tomorrow belongs to me.	Das Lindengrün leuchtet, die Blätter sie weh'n, Sein Gold verströmt meerwärts der Rhein. Doch fern geht ein Stern auf noch ungeseh'n. Der morgige Tag ist mein.	But in the distance a star rises unseen
The babe in his cradle is closing his eyes. The blossom embraces the bee. But soon, says a whisper; “Arise, arise, tomorrow belong to me.”	Das Kind in der Wiege liegt selig im Schlaf, Der Kelch schließt die Bienen fest ein Doch bald wird es raunen, “Wach auf, wach auf!” Der morgige Tag ist mein	The calyx locks in the bees
Oh fatherland, fatherland show us the sign. Your children have waited to see. The morning will come when the world is mine. Tomorrow belongs to me.	Oh Vaterland, Vaterland zeig uns den Weg. Dein Ruhm soll uns Wegweiser sein. Die Welt gehört uns und die Nacht vergeht. Der morgige Tag ist mein	Oh fatherland, fatherland, show us the path. Your glory shall guide our way.

Naturally this effect cannot be achieved outside of Germany and Austria due to the unique situation that both countries were the breeding grounds for Nazism.

Despite the denazification attempts by the allied forces and the *Verbots- und*

*Wiederbetätigungsgesetze*⁴¹⁶ in either country, the ideology lives on. The similarities

to German folk songs have not been lost on German speaking audiences, either, and

⁴¹⁶ Federal laws in Austria (and Germany) which define what constitutes re-engaging with Nazi activities (e.g. the use of Nazi symbols, such as the swastika or Hitler salute) and to which extent the re-engaging in Nazi activities is punishable with fines or jail time.

when sung in German, the native language of Nazis, it suddenly becomes even more likely that this might be a long forgotten Nazi tune and that the Nazi, who has been hiding in plain sight for the past forty years, is spontaneously moved to burst into song, when he hears a long forgotten melody. It does not have to be fully convincing or logical to work. All it needs is this split second of confusion, before the audiences' minds start rationalizing the experience. And while possible, it would make a lot less sense for a closeted Nazi to jump up and sing along in a Broadway performance of *Cabaret*.

It is at this time that the mood topples over in Barz's production. It is not only the wake up call for the characters on stage but also for the people in the audience. Brigitte Suchan from the *Wiener Zeitung* singles out this moment in her review as well:

What theater can achieve can best be gleaned from the scene at the end of act one, when rightwing extremists under the leadership of slick Ernst Ludwig storm onto the stage of the Kit Kat Club [sic], in order to intone their hymn and actors, dressed as audience members, stand up and sing along. That's when one's blood runs cold.⁴¹⁷

For the most part, the critical reception of this production focused on the role of the *conférencier*, since it has been so drastically altered and also somewhat turned the small production into a star-vehicle. Suchan describes the characters as "the symbol for tolerance and artistic freedom [...] a *conférencier* with heart and brain, a

⁴¹⁷ Brigitte Suchan, "Ein Nachtclub Als Spiegel Des Lebens," *Wiener Zeitung*, 26 October 1996, 5. "Was Theater vermag, läßt [sic] sich am besten in der Szene gegen Ende des ersten Teiles erahnen, wo Rechtsradikale unter der Leitung des aalglatten Ernst Ludwig die Bühne des Kit Kat Club [sic] stürmen, um ihre Hymne anzustimmen und als Publikum verkleidete Schauspieler aufstehen und mitsingen. Da rieselt es einem kalt über den Rücken."

human being and not the demonic puppet player from the film.”⁴¹⁸ Renate Wagner in *Neuen Volksblatt* muses that the character “is initially brilliantly eccentric, then excellently stylized in the pose of a tragic muse of the events.”⁴¹⁹ Manfred A. Schmid in the *Wiener Zeitung* attests the *conférencier* “an inaccessible mythical aura, paired with razor sharp wit, which qualifies [the] *conférencier* to observe the activities around his establishment critically and to see them through. And one senses that his mask is a shield against an increasingly radical and intolerant environment.”⁴²⁰ Helmut Schneider in the *Salzburger Nachrichten* shares Schmid’s opinion regarding the character’s mystical appearance and “TG” from the *Krone* situates the “figure between comic and tragedy.”⁴²¹

As in London and New York, Austrian critics loved the nightclub setting and commented extensively on the atmosphere:

The tawdry ambience matches Berlin in the interwar years perfectly. The hall of the Messepalast was pimped a little by Austrian artists, such as Attersee, Hrdlicka or Nitsch. Show girls and show boys whirl across the stage and through the auditorium; the protagonists laugh and suffer while the chilling breath (icy breeze?) of history blows.⁴²² – Helmut Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten*

⁴¹⁸ Ibid. “Als Zuggpferd und Sympathieträger fungiert Karl Markovics, der die Rolle des Conferenciers [sic] übernommen hat, in Meret Barz’ Version das Symbol für Toleranz und künstlerische Freiheit. Markovics macht seine Sache gut, er singt und tanzt passable, ist ein Conferencier [sic] mit Herz und Hirn, ein menschliches Wesen und nicht der dämonische Marionettenspieler aus der Filmvorlage.”

⁴¹⁹ Renate Wagner, “Die Ganze Welt Ist Kit Kat,” *Neues Volksblatt*, 29 October 1996, 14.

⁴²⁰ Manfred A. Schmid, ““Bienvenue” - Uwe Kröger!,” *Wiener Zeitung*, 14 December 1998.

⁴²¹ TG, “Willkommen, Bienvenue,” *Krone*, 26 October 1996, 31.

⁴²² Helmut Schneider, ““Cabaret” in Wien: Auf Dem Vulkan Tanzt Es Sich Am Besten,” *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 29 October 1996, 15.

Musical life explodes in Hall X, shabbily hidden in a backyard, where the horse stable flavor of the baroque lingers on. [...] The whole space, whose round arches have been fitted with artwork by Nitsch, Attersee, Hrdlicka and Eisler, has become the Kit Kat Club. The audience sits at tables and is served a glass of champagne for free at the beginning. The plot takes place everywhere, one is right in the thick of the action – and doesn't feel like a stranger at all.⁴²³

– Renate Wagner, *Neues Volksblatt*

Luise Czerwonatis has transformed Hall X of the Museumsquartier into the run-down Kit Kat Club, in which the audience sits at tables with free sparkling wine or in adumbrated boxes and follows the action on a *Einheitsspielfläche* (uniform stage area).⁴²⁴

– Brigitte Suchan, *Wiener Zeitung*

Julie Lillie in the *OÖ Nachrichten* and Haizmann in *Musicals* complained about the long-winded performance, and the latter and Suchan also questioned the back and forth between German and English lyrics. Haizmann in particular considered the production a failure, illustrating the outcome when Brechtian effects fail to resonate with the audience. They thought that Barz's version had nothing new to offer and relied too much on steamroller tactics. According to them, "quieter tones would have certainly been more effective and touching."⁴²⁵

This review opens the discourse on the changes in the treatment of the subject matter over the course of time. In 1970 such a confrontational course as that pursued by Barz would have been unthinkable and met with indignation. The temporal distance to the events of World War II has made possible a less emotional

⁴²³ Wagner, "Die Ganze Welt Ist Kit Kat," 14.

⁴²⁴ Suchan, "Ein Nachtclub Als Spiegel Des Lebens," 5.

⁴²⁵ Haizmann, "Cabaret."

discourse, while at the same time encouraged artists to stage the time period more provocatively. The line between theatrical masterstroke and steamroller tactic is a very fine one and not all audience members, especially conservative ones and older generations, will appreciate the antagonistic approach to staging. At the same time, artists have to offer something fresh and captivating that resonates with younger generations, who have not experienced fascism and are less easily shocked, to make the material relevant to them. Leon Voster's review of the Amsterdam production, adapted from Sam Mendes' revival, is the complete opposite of Haizmann. It shows that by 2006 audiences have so gotten used to confrontational staging that "subtle" isn't cutting it anymore for everyone:

What a pity that the threat of fascism is not always shown clearly. A single guy with a swastika armband or a glittering swastika on the ass of the emcee right before the intermission does not suffice to create the minatory feeling, which this musical should cause.⁴²⁶

The constant race to shock audiences with even more daring and provocative staging in the last 50 years has created a de-sensibilization. In 1959, when *The Sound of Music* began its try-outs in Boston, the audience reaction was adversarial to the mere presence of Nazi uniforms and swastika symbols on stage. Donehue, Rodgers and Hammerstein decided that ultimately less is more and excised those things from their production. Today, the mere presence of a swastika on a stage hardly elicits a double take. In a 2011 production of *Cabaret* at the *Staatsoperette*

⁴²⁶ Leon Vosters, *ibid.*, April/May (April 6) 2006, 97. "Schade aber, dass die Bedrohung durch den Faschismus sich nicht immer deutlich zeigt. Ein einziger Typ mit der Hakenkreuzbinde am Arm oder rein glitzerndes Hakenkreuz auf dem Hintern des Conférenciers kurz vor der Pause reichen nicht, um dieses unangenehme, bedrohliche Gefühl hervorzurufen, das dieses Musical eigentlich auslösen sollte."

Dresden, Herr Schultz, the Jew, dances with the gorilla, and the Emcee gets it on with a pack of dogs. Voster's reaction raises the issue for further research in reception history, namely, at which point the shock value has reached saturation with audiences.

CHAPTER VI

THE SOUND OF FOLK MUSIC

This chapter focuses on those songs in *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret* intended to sound like folk music. Some songs, for instance “Edelweiss” and the *Ländler* from *The Sound of Music* or “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” from *Cabaret* have in fact been mistaken for authentic folk songs by audiences, even though all the music and text of the songs discussed in this chapter were composed by Americans during the second half of the twentieth century (1959-2001). By analyzing three examples from the two musicals under consideration in this dissertation, this chapter investigates, first, how these songs are contextualized as folk music through visual and musical signifiers as well as narrative and dramaturgical cues. Second, it addresses how these pieces differ in their narrative function within their respective shows. Finally, it looks at how some of these pieces engage with audiences directly, almost developing a reception history of their own outside of their Broadway and Hollywood productions. From *The Sound of Music*, “Edelweiss” and the “*Ländler*” are discussed, *Cabaret* is represented through “Tomorrow Belongs To Me.”

6.1. FOLK MUSIC CONTEXTUALIZATION

In order to successfully ground their characters and plots geographically or culturally, composers and lyricists frequently draw on the folk music idiom.

Whether it is general characteristics, such as the use of nature imagery in the lyrics, the act of teaching and oral transmission, or markers specific to certain styles and regions, such as dance rhythms or instrumentation, they infuse their show tunes with elements that create a credible environment for audiences to invest in. All examples discussed in this chapter aim to recreate folk music traditions of the alpine regions in particular, conflating Austrian and German culture into one.

An important aspect of folk music is the oral manner of transmission, putting the spotlight on teaching as one of the preferred modes to transfer song repertoire in person and across generations. In *The Sound of Music*, Kurt asks Maria to show him how to dance the *Ländler*, after seeing all the other party guests dancing in the Trapp villa. After a few steps, the Captain takes over and shows Kurt how it is properly done, dancing with Maria himself.

In the film adaptation, an additional teaching scene exists, when Captain von Trapp sings “Edelweiss” to his raptly listening children. When Liesl begins to remember the tune from her childhood, she joins her father briefly, implying that she has learned the song from him before and they are now passing it on together to the other children. This is a crucial moment in the film because it unites the father with his children and lays the groundwork for the romance between Maria and the Captain.

However, this scene is not part of the original stage production, even though Brigitta makes a reference that implies it took place off-stage. When Maria returns slightly confused from her dance with the Captain, Brigitta explains to Maria that she is in love with the Captain, and her father is in love with the governess. As proof for that she recalls how her father stopped singing “the Edelweiss song he taught us” so he could look at her.⁴²⁷

Like the act of teaching, the act of singing together in a group is an essential element of folk music traditions. In the film version, the audience at the Kaltzberg festival joins the Captain spontaneously, confirming the song’s background as a popular traditional tune from a shared repertoire. In the stage version, it is Maria who picks up the melody when Captain von Trapp’s voice falters under emotional duress at the festival. In both versions of the show, the act of making music is a source of family and community sense, a positive force of strength, and a form of empowerment, on which I will elaborate in the second section of this chapter.

While the sense of empowering is also true for “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” in *Cabaret*, here music becomes an instrument of evil, which is the opposite of the positive, quasi-magical properties music possesses in *The Sound of Music*. The first time “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” is performed a cappella by a group of waiters. The second time, the song is sung at the engagement party at the end of Act I. Fräulein Kost, who has had an eye on Ernst Ludwig all along, intones “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” as a way to placate him and convince the Nazi to stay, after Herr Schultz

⁴²⁷Richard Rodgers et al., “The Sound of Music,” (New York: Williamson Music, 1960), 80.

inadvertently outed himself as a Jew to a group of covert Nazis. The song functions like a secret handshake, by which Fräulein Kost reveals herself to Ernst Ludwig as a kindred spirit; as do all the other party guests disclose their political views when they join one by one. Indeed, Ernst Ludwig is moved by the rousing lyrics to sing along with Fräulein Kost and gets carried away with singing. This implies that “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” must be part of a shared cultural experience, which has been appropriated by a political group as a mode of unification.

The contextualization of these songs as folk tunes is supported by visual aids in the forms of costumes and props – and, in the case of the films, on-location shoots. Whether it is the beautiful vista of Austrian mountains and lakes in the opening sequence of *The Sound of Music* or the typical *Biergarten* atmosphere in *Cabaret*, nothing lends authenticity to a story like original and historic locations. Usually this device is reserved for film adaptations, while stage design, costumes and props departments try to recreate the historical flair as realistically as possible in the theater. In *The Sound of Music*, the Trapp family wears *Loden* costumes, and the guitar is used as a signifier of folk music. Since the plot of *Cabaret* takes place in Berlin, the characters don’t wear the traditional clothing seen in the alpine regions, but more typically urban fashion of the 1930s. However, the swastika-armband on Ernst Ludwig’s arm immediately draws the audience’s attention and discloses his political and moral convictions.

While these narrative cues and visual signifiers explain the circumstances under which the audience is introduced to these presumable folk tunes, the question remains if there are any musical characteristics in these pieces, which can be also

found in traditional music of Austria and Germany. For example, all the songs have a triple meter, which is derived from regional folk dances, such as the *Ländler*, the waltz or the *Schuhplattler*, all of which are very common in the Alps. Regional alpine culture thus becomes a stand-in for both Austrian and German culture, even as far north as Berlin in *Cabaret*.

The *Ländler*, which is often considered to be a predecessor of the waltz, is a couple's courting dance based on intricate arm- and footwork. The dance movements, with varying degrees of intricacy, can be accompanied by foot stomping, clapping and occasionally yodeling. The stylized *Ländler* from *The Sound of Music* follows by and large familiar figurations from the traditional *Ländler* but is a choreographed number based on another melody from an earlier scene, i.e., "The Lonely Goatherd;" ergo, it is non-representative of the traditional genre. The order of dance movements is not pre-determined or standardized for the *Ländler* in the alpine region, with the exception of the finale figure, the waltz. When Maria first teaches the *Ländler* to Kurt and then dances with the Captain, their fixed choreography implies that there is one particular way to dance the *Ländler*, when in reality the progression of steps and movements are the choice of each couple.

"Edelweiss" and "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" are both in strophic form, a typical structure for folk songs. The melodies of all examples, *The Sound of Music's Ländler* included, follow a regular periodic pattern of eight bar phrases in triple meter. "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" has a typically stepwise moving melody, whereas "Edelweiss" has a more disjunct contour, based on the broken triads, skips and sometimes leaps found in the melody (Cf. Examples 6.1. and 6.2.). While stepwise

motion is often preferred in German traditional music, movement in thirds is not entirely uncommon either.⁴²⁸

Example 6.1. Opening bars: “Tomorrow Belongs To Me”



Example 6.2. Opening Measures “Edelweiss”



In terms of accompaniment, “Edelweiss” begins with simple guitar accompaniment and subtle harmonies provided by the string section. Of course, the guitar is a popular folk instrument, since it allows the singer to accompany himself/herself and underline the vocal line with chordal support. The accordion is similarly used at the party scene for the reprise of “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” in *Cabaret*. According to the score, orchestral accompaniment is to be used sparsely and only when necessary for “Tomorrow Belongs To Me,” which begins with a tenor solo singing the first strophe. Eventually the other voices join in, still singing a cappella, creating a four voice harmony reminiscent of the German *Männerchor*. Different productions have rendered different performances of “Tomorrow Belongs

⁴²⁸ It is important to acknowledge the roots of much traditional repertoire in modal music, even though for the purpose of this dissertation I restrict myself to diatonic repertoire due to the comparison with show tunes.

To Me”, especially in the waiter scene, sometimes singing the whole piece a cappella, sometimes having the orchestra join for the second or third verse.

Both examples invoke nature imagery. Captain von Trapp indulges in nostalgic memories connected to the nature and landscape of his homeland. “Edelweiss” expresses an intimate and personal relationship between nature and the individual, which has been a popular trope since Romanticist art. The flower is “happy to see” the Captain and is there to “greet [him] every morning.”⁴²⁹ Early drafts of the song in the Oscar Hammerstein II Collection at the Library of Congress shed some light on the kind of relationship Rodgers and Hammerstein envisioned for the Captain. “When I am far from my country over the sea/ A sprig of Edelweiss means home to me.” Like the flower’s roots in the soil, the Captain feels anchored in the mountains of Salzburg, describing a rather symbiotic relationship between nature and mankind.

“Tomorrow Belongs To Me” illustrates a similarly ambiguous relationship between the two constituents of man and nature, even though the bond is described in a more generic and less personal fashion. The lyrics emphasize specific nature imagery, such as “the stag in the forest runs free”, “the branch of the Linden is leafy and green”, “the Rhine gives its gold to the sea” or “the blossom embraces the bee.”⁴³⁰ Whereas nature was portrayed in a simple pacifistic way in *The Sound of Music*, Kander and Ebb add a ferocious layer to the picture. In “Tomorrow Belongs

⁴²⁹ Rodgers et al., “The Sound of Music,” 132.

⁴³⁰ Kander, Ebb, and Masteroff, “Cabaret. The New Musical,” 55.

To Me”, there is a group “gathered together to greet the storm” while “somewhere a glory awaits unseen”, until “the morning will come when the world is [theirs]” as “the whisper says arise, arise”, for “tomorrow belongs to [them].”⁴³¹ The relationship depicted here is then not with nature itself but rather with the individual’s destiny *against* the backdrop of nature.

Of course, the portraiture of the individual’s relationship with nature in these songs relies heavily on the overall approach to nationalism and Nationalism Social in the respective shows, for *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret* pursue very different avenues, which is the focus of the next section.

6.2. NARRATIVE FUNCTION OF FOLK MUSIC

When Mary Martin approached Rodgers and Hammerstein for the first time to write an original song for her new star vehicle based on the German *Heimatfilm*⁴³² and music of the historic Trapp family, they politely declined. Rodgers, in particular, was against the mixing of folk and popular song idioms; he did, however, favor the idea of writing the music for an original musical with Hammerstein based on the same story. Thus *The Sound of Music* was born. With the show’s roots in the saccharine *Heimatfilm* genre, the musical was accordingly shrouded in nostalgia and sentimentality.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² After World War II, the film industry in Germany, Austria and Switzerland produced a slew of movies set in the alpine region, or other rural areas, capturing the supposedly idyllic, simplistic life in the countryside, untainted by the war. The plots revolve around love and the generation gap, as well as a juxtaposition of the rural and urban.

In 1959, only fourteen years after World War II and thirteen years after the Nuremberg trials had ended, Broadway had yet to see Nazi characters singing and dancing on its stages. The Nazi characters in *The Sound of Music* do not take center stage; instead they act on the sidelines in minor speaking roles. Nobody involved in the creative team conceived of the plot as a flaming indictment against Nazi war crimes; from the very start it was intended to be a family show and star vehicle for Mary Martin.

The soft approach of *The Sound of Music* is also reflected in “Edelweiss,” which does double duty as a folk song and political protest song. In the stage version, the first and only time “Edelweiss” is performed, it is by Captain von Trapp at the Kaltzberg festival. Aside from the last line “Edelweiss, bless my homeland forever”, the song makes no outright references to the political situation, yet his performance on the festival stage is politically charged.

Notes in the early drafts found in the Hammerstein Collection at the Library of Congress clarify the thought process and intentions behind the song.

Hammerstein describes the *Edelweiss* as a “tiny flower that can mean so much – all that is good in a great country – more than armies, more than [illegible] – outlasting them all – always in the mountains, on the slopes [?] of Austria – the Tyrol, there will be Edelweiss [sic].⁴³³” Clearly, Hammerstein thought of the flower not only as a national symbol of Austria but also as a metaphor for the country. In a draft from October 19th, 1959, the lyrics read as follows: “Edelweiss, Edelweiss, I won’t leave

⁴³³ US-Wc, Oscar Hammerstein II Collection, Box D, Folder “Edelweiss.”

you behind me/ Though I'll be far at sea/ Where I dream you will find me."⁴³⁴ These words illuminate the emotional and mental state of Captain von Trapp as he sings the song at the festival. He is about to abandon his roots and home and flee with his family but is still holding out hope for an eventual return to his homeland. Hammerstein cycles through different versions of this sentiment before he discards it completely in favor of the final lyrics (cf. Table 6.1). However, the scene at the Kaltzberg festival is still infused with the spirit of the earlier drafts.

Table 6.1. "Edelweiss" Comparison of Lyrics

10/19/59	[10/20/59?]	10/20/59	Final (10/21/59)
Edelweiss, Edelweiss, I won't leave you behind me, Though I'll be far at sea When I dream you will find me.	Edelweiss, Edelweiss Stay the way that I found you. Small and bright, Sprays of white/light On the mountain around you.	Edelweiss, Edelweiss, I'll come back and I'll find you, Small and white, Clean and bright On the mountain behind you.	Edelweiss, edelweiss, Ev'ry morning you greet me. Small and white, clean and bright, You look happy to meet me.
Flower of Austria White as snow Bloom and grow forever! Edelweiss, Edelweiss Bless my homeland forever...	Flower(s) of Austria Bloom and grow Bloom and grow forever – Edelweiss, Edelweiss, Bless my homeland forever	Flower of Austria, Bloom and grow, Bloom and grow forever! Edelweiss, Edelweiss Bless my homeland forever...	Blossom of snow, May you bloom and grow, Bloom and grow forever- Edelweiss, edelweiss, Bless my homeland forever.

The transition from folk song to anti-Nazi protest song is more obvious in the film adaptation of *The Sound of Music*, where "Edelweiss" is performed twice. In the stage version Brigitta makes a short reference to "the Edelweiss song", which implies its status as a folk song, whereas in the film the viewer witnesses the Captain actually recalling the old but familiar tune. When he sings the reprise at the

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

festival, the audience in the film joins him spontaneously. What has started out as an innocuous folk song becomes a political statement. The act of singing “Edelweiss” turns into an act of defiance, instigated by the Captain's performance. It allows the audience at the festival to mourn the loss of their sovereignty and country collectively, in a relatively covert and peaceful way, when freedom of speech is no longer an option after Germany’s annexation of Austria a few weeks earlier.

Music is solely the prerogative of the good characters in *The Sound of Music*. As mentioned before, the Nazis have no singing parts, which is exemplified by Rolf, who gets no more song material after he joins the Nazi party in the second act. Throughout the musical, the power of music is positively reinforced. First, it is music that allows Maria to connect with the children and ultimately brings the family back together. Second, it is through music – in particular the *Ländler* dancing – that Maria and the Captain slowly grow closer and eventually admit their feelings for each other. Third, music becomes a protective shield from behind which the Captain can plan a ruse to escape the Nazis while simultaneously voicing his dissent and uniting Austrians against their common oppressor.

Seven years later, the power of simple music sung by the folk is still a central theme in *Cabaret* (1966), but the focus has shifted significantly. Here the Nazis take advantage of the influence of music to further their evil goals. As a result, the narrative function of folk music in *Cabaret* is quite different than that in *The Sound of Music*. *Cabaret* shows the dangerous side of the very same cultural commodity that represented the good and untainted in *The Sound of Music*. With each reprise “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” gets more menacing. The first time (Act III, Scene 8) a

group of “handsome, well-scrubbed, idealistic”⁴³⁵ waiters sing the song on the spiral staircase in the *Cabaret* world and are joined by the Emcee for the finale strophe. Kander and Ebb carefully crafted a song that could function as both folk song and political anthem. Phrases such as “[...] gathered together to greet the storm” and “somewhere a glory awaits unseen” are not overtly political at first hearing, until the third strophe reveals the nationalist undertones.⁴³⁶

During the rehearsal process, Fred Ebb replaced the original third strophe of generic nature imagery (“The babe in the cradle is soundly asleep/ The blossom embraces the bee/ And love like a valley lies wide and deep/ Tomorrow belongs to me”⁴³⁷) with more politically charged lyrics: “Oh fatherland, fatherland, show us the sign/ Your children have waited to see/ The morning will come when the world is mine/ Tomorrow belongs to me.”⁴³⁸ Table 6.2 keeps track of the changes Fred Ebb made to the lyrics over the course of time.

Though not all folk songs feature an exclusively pastoral setting, many German *Volkslieder* do contain a political element, as the example of the national anthem of Germany, the “Deutschlandlied”, illustrates. Hoffmann von Fallersleben’s text, referencing national treasures from German rivers to German song, and set to a tune by Haydn, was a widely circulated *Volkslied* from 1851 onward, before the

⁴³⁵ Kander, Ebb, and Masteroff, “Cabaret. The New Musical,” 55.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁴³⁷ Masteroff, et al, *Cabaret*. US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 52, Folder 6: 2-6-49 (Oct 4 Revision)

⁴³⁸ *ibid.*

German republic adopted it as its national anthem in 1922. It is uncertain whether Kander and Ebb purposely aimed for this type of *Volkslied*, but evidence of early drafts suggest that they might have been influenced in that regard.

Table 6.2. “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” Comparison of Lyrics

5/19/66	08/01/66	10/4/66	Final (11/20/66)
The sun on the meadow is summery warm The stag in the forest runs free The heart as a shelter defies the storm Tomorrow belongs to me	The sun on the meadow is summery warm The stag in the forest runs free The heart as a shelter defies the storm Tomorrow belongs to me	The sun in the meadow is summery warm The stag in the forest runs free The heart as a shelter defies the storm Tomorrow belongs to me	The sun on the meadow is summery warm, The stag in the forest runs free, But gather together to greet the storm, Tomorrow belongs to me.
The branch of the linden is leafy and green The rage has deserted the sea The world holds a promise that shines unseen Tomorrow belongs to me.	The branch of the linden is leafy and green The Rhine gives its gold to the sea The world holds a promise that fights unseen Tomorrow belongs to me	The branch of the linden is leafy and green The Rhine gives its gold to the sea The world holds a promise that shines unseen Tomorrow belongs to me.	The branch of the linden is leafy and green, The Rhine gives its gold to the sea, But somewhere a glory awaits unseen, Tomorrow belongs to me.
The babe in his cradle is soundly asleep The blossom embraces the bee And love like a valley lies wide and deep Tomorrow belongs to me.	The babe in his cradle is soundly asleep The blossom embraces the bee And love like a valley lies wide and deep Tomorrow belongs to me.	The babe in his cradle is soundly asleep The blossom embraces the bee And love like a valley lies wide and deep Tomorrow belongs to me.	The babe in his cradle is closing his eyes, The blossom embraces the bee. But soon, says a whisper, arise, arise, Tomorrow belong to me.
			Oh, Fatherland, Fatherland, show us the sign Your children have waited to see. The morning will come when the world is mine, Tomorrow belongs to me.

Despite various cuts, shifts and rewrites of the second version of the script, two scenes persist all the way to the rehearsal stage. First, a group of schoolboys in uniforms sings “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” (Act I, Scene 6), then a group of college-boys reprises it in scene 8 of Act I. In the 1930s, singing folk tunes was a very effective way of indoctrinating children in the Hitler Youth with nationalistic ideas. By teaching all German children the same core repertoire of folk songs, the Hitler Youth was able to build a sense of unity and community based on one common German culture across different regions. Eventually, however, the creative team of *Cabaret* decided to consolidate these two scenes and replace the students with waiters. The latter are traditionally symbolic of the lower end of the social strata, representing exactly the kind of disenfranchised and ignored demographic group that Hitler would tap into.

While the first rendition of “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” seems politically and morally ambiguous, the first reprise draws the lines clearly. After Herr Schultz inadvertently discloses his Jewish heritage with his rendition of “Meeskite,” a song about an ugly Jewish couple with a beautiful baby, Ernst Ludwig is about to leave affronted. In an effort to placate him into staying, Fräulein Kost – who has had an eye on Ernst all along – intones “Tomorrow Belongs To Me.” The song functions like some form of cultural shibboleth, through which Fräulein Kost identifies herself as kindred spirit, as do eventually all the other party guests who join her singing. Moved by the words and music, Ernst joins Fräulein Kost for the strophe that had been previously cut in the scene with the waiters (“The babe in the cradle...”). In this scene, all four stanzas are sung, as the strophe, which begins with “Oh fatherland,

fatherland” is sung by the whole party, with exception of Cliff, Sally, Fräulein Schneider and the ever-oblivious Herr Schultz.

Unlike in *The Sound of Music*, the act of singing does not only unite people (i.e. the covert Nazis at the party) but also separates them (the four main protagonists who happen to be anti-Nazi at this point⁴³⁹). Moreover, it illustrates with a frightening chill how people can be swept up in the power of music and collective singing. The music becomes increasingly rousing as it takes on the style of a march.

The same march-like rendition of “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” opens the second act; here the chorus girls goose-step across the stage, imitating Nazi soldiers. This is the third and final time the song is heard and now the progression from folk tune to Nazi anthem is complete. By this time, no lyrics are needed; just the instrumental version, the melody itself, signifies the Nazis.

Originally the trajectory of the Nazi menace extended all the way to the middle of the third act,⁴⁴⁰ where “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” was played from a record instead of being played live. Cliff returns from his fight with Ernst at the Kit Kat Klub, looking for help. His knocks on Fräulein Schneider’s door go unanswered, however. All the while “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” is played on a gramophone in one of the rooms at the boarding house. This implies that the folk tune was popular enough to be recorded. Armed with the knowledge from the party scene, i.e., that this song has now for all intents and purposes been appropriated by the Nazis, the

⁴³⁹ While this is undoubtedly the crucial moment for Fräulein Schneider, which causes her to reconsider her engagement to a Jew, she has not changed sides yet.

⁴⁴⁰ *Cabaret* did not change to a two act structure until after rehearsals started.

audience would comprehend that Fräulein Schneider's house has been infiltrated by Nazis. Naively, or perhaps oblivious, Cliff emphasizes that he has been in a fight with the Nazis, hoping it would sway Fräulein Schneider to open the door. The audience, however, would know that Cliff is now surrounded by Nazis and has to leave the country.

This scene was cut on September 15, 1966, when the rehearsal script was revised – roughly around the same time that the opening of the second act was changed to include the *Tomorrow Belongs To Me* kick-line and the lyrics for the song itself were politicized. The third strophe (“The babe in the cradle...”) was replaced with (“Oh fatherland, fatherland...”) because Kander and Ebb may have aimed to make the song less ambiguous in order to underscore its function as a secret Nazi anthem.

The rearrangement of “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” and eventual strategic placement of the song as the link between the first and second act not only results in the tightening of the Nazi subplot but also creates a more memorable finale for Act I. During intermission the song and its role in splitting the characters into Nazis and non-Nazis will weigh heavily on the audience's mind and create suspension for the second act, making them wonder who else will be identified as a Nazi in the coming scenes. When the tune returns in a march-like rendition accompanied with a goose-stepping kick-line after the break, any remaining doubts as to whether “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” is indeed now a Nazi song, is cast aside. The transition from folk song into political anthem is complete.

6.3. RECEPTION HISTORY OF FOLK-LIKE SHOW TUNES

In both case studies, composers have drawn on folk music to express a character's identity. In *The Sound of Music* the folk idiom is ascribed an immaculate status, untainted with sinister Nazi politics; ergo, the Trapp family is positioned directly against the few Nazi characters, who only have speaking parts. *Cabaret*, on the other hand captures how political systems can misappropriate cultural goods, as the formerly as pure depicted folk music, to enforce their agenda. In both cases, the plot pits the Nazis and heroes/antiheroes directly against each other.

Some may argue that in the cases of "Edelweiss" and "Tomorrow Belongs To Me," Rodgers & Hammerstein and Kander and Ebb respectively did too good a job, for numerous fans came to believe that these songs were examples of authentic Austro-German folk music. Even director Robert Wise, it seems, had come to believe that "Edelweiss" was a pre-existing anthem of sorts for Austrians. For when he filmed the iconic concert scene for the film *The Sound of Music* on location in Salzburg, he was completely baffled by the extras' reserved reaction to his direction cue to join the captain in singing "Edelweiss." Assistant director Georg Steinitz recalls that, like many other people, "Wise considered the song some sort of Salzburg state anthem."⁴⁴¹

Among those fooled into believing that "Edelweiss" was an Austrian folk song was the advance team for U. S. President Ronald Reagan. In February 1984, when Austrian president Rudolf Kirchschläger appeared at the White House for the official

⁴⁴¹ Strasser, "'The Sound of Music' - Ein Unbekannter Welterfolg," 280.

state dinner, the band struck up “Edelweiss,” for Reagan’s administration mistook it not only for an Austrian folk song but the country’s national anthem. This minor diplomatic faux pas might have been dismissed quickly, had Reagan not built his welcome speech around *The Sound of Music*.

The U.S. government had invited the real Baroness von Trapp to the state dinner as a sign of goodwill and the friendly relations between Austria and the United States. When Reagan quoted directly from “Edelweiss” (“Blossom of snow may you bloom and grow – and bless your homeland forever”) to end his speech and indicate the U. S. government’s favorable view of a flourishing Austria, he used the song from *The Sound of Music* to facilitate diplomatic relations between two countries who once had been at war.⁴⁴²

For Reagan, or at least his speech-writer or the bandleader, *The Sound of Music* represented the best both countries had to offer. Misguided as their perception was, the U.S. government considered *The Sound of Music* to be a positive expression of everything Austria stood for in the 1980s: beautiful music, breathtaking nature and moral integrity. It is all encapsulated in what they deemed to be an authentic Austrian anthem, namely, “Edelweiss.” However, it also shows that almost four decades after World War II, it was impossible to discuss Austria in international politics without addressing its Nazi past. *The Sound of Music* is for many people the first, and sometimes only, access point to learn about Austria’s

⁴⁴²Ronald Reagan, "Speech at the State Dinner for the Austrian President," (February 28, 1984). [<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/22884c.htm>] Accessed December 1, 2013.

involvement in the Third Reich, which is problematic because it presents a distorted historic version in a simplistic way, perpetuating Austrians' insistence on being Hitler's first victim.

In contrast to "Edelweiss", whose imagined status as a beloved traditional Austrian song is usually regarded favorably, albeit sometimes coupled with amusement, the story of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" outside of *Cabaret* is much more troublesome. For it is often believed to have been a song used by Nazis of the WWII era. Indeed, time and again, Kander & Ebb have had to defend themselves against accusations of using a real Nazi song in their musical. The transformation the song undergoes in the plot of *Cabaret* only invigorates the complaints of misguided critics.

The scandal surrounding the programming of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" at a Long Island junior high school concert shall serve as an example for the kind of public outrage Kander & Ebb were sometimes confronted with. According to the *New York Times*, the school board of Great Neck convened on May 29th, 1973 to hear a petition brought forward by one hundred and thirty upset parents. Their concern was the spread of Nazi propaganda in the schools of the predominantly Jewish district after the local junior high planned to perform what the parents considered to be a "Nazi youth song" at the school's annual concert. Even though school principal Richard Sherman immediately withdrew the song from the program, his leadership was called into question by the chairwoman of the Sisterhood of Temple Israel, who called for an official investigation by the school board to address the recent anti-Semitic trends. Superintendent Mortimer J. Abramowitz, on the other

hand, supported principal Sherman's actions, confirming the song in question's origins as a 1960s show tune. Finally, board president Stanley E. Rubenstein shut down what he considered had all the makings of "a holy war [and] witch hunt."⁴⁴³

Naturally the news report rekindled the debate instead of putting an end to it, as the following letter by one H. William Galland proves:⁴⁴⁴

Although I "graduated" over a decade ago, as a parent of the Great Neck School system permit me to set the record straight on the actual origin of the song "Tomorrow Belongs to Us." Contrary to Dr. Abramowitz's statement that it had been written in the 1960's by two Americans, its original text, in German, and the music were written in the 1930's by Nazi Germans. The theme verse – "Wir werden weiter marschieren, und wenn alles in Scherben faellt, den heute gehoert uns Deutschland, und morgen die ganze Welt" – is a direct reference to the infamous "Crystal Night"⁴⁴⁵ (so called because of the mountains of broken window panes) when synagogues and Jewish business establishments and homes were ransacked by Nazi hordes boasting that "today it is Germany which belongs to us, tomorrow it will be the whole world."

I find it hard to understand how the inclusion of this piece in a school concert could have been contemplated, no less defended. It is a sad commentary on the human condition that even well-educated and well-motivated individuals appear to be quite ignorant of a chapter in history so recent that its horror, having tortured, maimed and killed many of our contemporaries and the loved ones of not a few of Great Neck's own residents, among millions of others, still casts a long shadow over every civilized community.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴³ "Great Neck School Board Bars Inquiry on Nazi Song in Concert," *New York Times*, 30 May 1973, 48.

⁴⁴⁴ The source is a news paper clipping found in one of Fred Ebb's scrapbooks at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, which unfortunately does not give the name of the paper it was published in.

⁴⁴⁵ The *Reichspogromnacht*, or *Crystal Night* as Galland calls it, did actually not take place until 1938, so it was impossible to be a reference in this song.

⁴⁴⁶H. William Galland, "Song's Origin." US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 5.

The German lyrics Galland quotes are from “Es zittern die morschen Knochen” (which roughly translates into “The frail bones are quivering”).⁴⁴⁷ With such a compelling textual link between the English translation of Baumann’s verse line “today Germany belongs to us, and tomorrow the whole world” and Kander and Ebb’s “tomorrow belongs to me”, it takes little prompting to create connections where there are none. Kander and Ebb purposely tapped into people’s inclination to connect experiences to previous memories by carefully crafting a song that could pass as a Nazi song. Indeed, Draft A refers to Baumann’s song (also called “Tomorrow Belongs To Us” in the script, as Mr. Galland did) as a sort of placeholder until Kander & Ebb wrote their song. Unlike the songs written by Kander & Ebb, which are usually marked with all capital letters (TOMORROW BELONGS TO ME), the Baumann song is between quotation marks and not all capitals (“Tomorrow Belongs to Us”).

Both John McCarten (*The New Yorker*) and McIntyre (*The Evening Tribune*) hone in on “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” in their reviews of *Cabaret*. While for McCarten “the most memorable song is a notion too close to “Tomorrow the World,”⁴⁴⁸ thus eliciting exactly the kind of uncomfortable association Kander and Ebb aimed for, McIntyre singles it out as “the most lyrical song in the show,”⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ In an effort to rehabilitate himself, the author of this 1933 Nazi song, Hans Baumann blames youthful inexperience and ignorance for the imperialistic line and membership in the *Hitlerjugend* “denn heute gehört uns Deutschland” and claims this version was officially outlawed in Germany and immediately replaced with “denn heute hört uns Deutschland.” (Hans Baumann, “Die Morschen Knochen,” *Der Spiegel*, August 22, 1956, 6-7).

⁴⁴⁸ McCarten, ““Cabaret,”” 155-56.

⁴⁴⁹ McIntyre, “Dave McIntyre's Front Row,” E16.

interpreting it as an ironic twist that such a violent undertaking as the Nazi regime would happen to such a pastoral tune. Howard Lord (*The Long Island Catholic*) zeroes in on the significance of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" as well:

After a half-hour of superficial, sometimes brassy songs and dances, a cabaret waiter lines out what sounds like an innocent folk ballad in a clear, tenor voice. He is joined in close harmony by other waiters and the maître d'. Attention to the lyrics of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" reveals that it celebrates an unfettered nationalism.

Later, at the engagement party of Fraulein Schneider and Herr Schultz, the innocent tune is given the vigorous, hate-filled interpretation it deserves. Boredom, loneliness and despair have turned into solidarity, purpose and hate.⁴⁵⁰

However, here ends the commonality between these two songs. Fred Ebb's lyrics make no mention of marching soldiers or piles of shards. The text as well as the music are so fundamentally different I am inclined to assume that Galland was thinking of Friedrich Silcher's musical setting of the Heinrich Heine poem "Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten." Several critics, such as Frederick H. Guidry (*The Christian Science Monitor*) and Friedbert Steller (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*)⁴⁵¹ recognized the German tune in Kander and Ebb's song as well, notes Guidry from notes:

"Tomorrow Belongs to Me" comes right out of 'Die Lorelei'.⁴⁵²

⁴⁵⁰ Lord, "Important New Musical for Mature Audiences."

⁴⁵¹ Steller, "'Cabaret' Als Zeitkritisches Kabarett," 4. "Aber Gottfried Neumann als marktschreierischer Conférencier, der mit erstaunlicher Agilität "den Laden" in Bewegung halt, überspielt mit allen Mitteln des Publikumsfangs die Klippen der Modewechsel von der entfesselten Erotik der zwanziger Jahre bis zu den Idolen des Deutschtums neogermanischen Glaube-und-Schönheit-Kults, der musikalisch treffend von Intonationen des populären Lieds "Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten?" gespeist wird."

⁴⁵² Guidry, "'Cabaret' Opens."

More commonly known as the “Lorelei,” Silcher’s art song in the simple style of a folk song shares not only some musical qualities with “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” from *Cabaret* but a similarly contentious history of re-appropriation by the Nazis. Both melodies spin out from the same distinctive head motive comprised of a dotted neighboring note motive followed by a stepwise descending line, as the following comparison shows (cf. Examples 6.3. and 6.4.):

Example 6.3. Opening bars of “Ich weiß nicht was sol les bedeuten” (Lorelei):



Example 6.4. Opening measures of “Tomorrow Belongs To Me”



The harmonic progression is very straightforward in both cases and hovers mainly between the tonic and dominant. The lyrics in the two examples romanticize nature and invoke images of the Rhine, the sun, and gold.

Moreover, the reception history of Silcher’s “Lorelei” is as fabled as the mythological siren herself. Originally invented by Clemens Brentano, the Lorelei was immortalized in Heinrich Heine’s poem “Ich weiss nicht, was soll es bedeuten” in the 1820s, which Silcher – among other composers – set to music approximately ten years later. It was quickly adopted by the German people and became part of the folk song repertoire through continuous usage and circulation from generation to generation. By the time of the Nazi takeover it was so firmly ingrained in German

cultural life that any attempts to ban its singing because of Heine's Jewishness proved difficult to enforce.⁴⁵³

According to an anecdote put forward by the literary scholar Walter A. Berendsohn in 1933, the Nazi's solution to the "Lorelei" problem was to eradicate Heine's name from the song and circulate it as a traditional tune of unknown authorship⁴⁵⁴ – simultaneously disowning Silcher's ownership as well. This allowed them to embrace the Lorelei myth wholeheartedly, the famous song included. After the Second World War in 1956, music sociologist Theodor W. Adorno proliferated this narrative, without corroborating its veracity, through his highly publicized radio essays, anchoring the anecdote in the collective memory of German speaking people.⁴⁵⁵

It was not until 2006 when in a new comprehensive study of Heinrich Heine carried out by Dietmar Goltschnigg and Hartmut Steinecke called into question the common misconception. While they carefully reconstructed the subtle and cynical machinery with which the Nazis first discredited and defamed and then eventually

⁴⁵³ Germans were so familiar with the tune that during war times, pamphlets with new topical lyrics were dropped as moral boosters for German soldiers.

⁴⁵⁴ Walter Arthur Berendsohn, *Der Lebendige Heine Im Germanischen Norden* (Kopenhagen: Det Schønbergske Forlag, 1935), 21.

⁴⁵⁵Theodor W. Adorno, *Noten Zur Literatur*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), 95.

eradicated the Jewish poet, they were unable to recover any form of concrete evidence for Berendsohn's claim.⁴⁵⁶

As to the matter of whether John Kander was influenced by Silcher's "Lorelei," it is entirely possible. For when asked about his compositional process, John Kander explained that he often immersed himself into the music of the period whose style he is going to emulate in his score.⁴⁵⁷ It is certainly possible that Silcher's "Lorelei" was among the German vaudeville and Kabarett tunes Kander listened to. Hal Prince, director of *Cabaret*, was stationed in Stuttgart and visited cabarets, where he also might have come in contact with the legend and song about the "Lorelei." In one of the early drafts found in the Fred Ebb Papers at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Sally and Cliff visit the "Club Lorelei." It could very well have served as a subconscious inspiration for "Tomorrow Belongs To Me."

Following the incident at the Great Neck junior high school and its subsequent news coverage, Fred Ebb's own brother, Burton Bernhard, felt compelled to come to his brother's and principal Sherman's defense. In a letter of support to Sherman, he assures him that *Cabaret* "was a 100 per cent Jewish endeavour" and deems "[the suggestion] that this unusually talented group of Jewish artists somehow contrived to create a piece of Nazi propaganda so patently

⁴⁵⁶ Dietmar Goltschnigg and Hartmut Steinecke, *Heine Und Die Nachwelt: Geschichte Seiner Wirkung in Den Deutschsprachigen Ländern. Texte Und Kontexte, Analysen Und Kommentare*, 3 vols., vol. 2: 1907-1956 (Berlin: E. Schmidt, 2008), 105.

⁴⁵⁷ Jackson R. Bryer and Richard Allan Davison, *The Art of the American Musical. Conversations with the Creators* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 104.

false as to be laughable.”⁴⁵⁸ Bernhard also puts an emphasis on the innocence of the lyrics:

Any fair-minded person reading this beautiful poetic lyric sees only a pastoral ballad suggesting future promise. This song could easily be sung by a group of young people anywhere in the world. The objectors are apparently unable to separate their myopic recollection of the fact that this song in the context of a theatrical presentation was sung by a young boy wearing a Nazi uniform.⁴⁵⁹

Perhaps it is a bit short-sighted of Burton Bernhard to have disregarded the nationalistic undertones of the third strophe, which provide ammunition for those who claim “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” as a Nazi song. The White-Power music scene adopted the song in the 1980s for their agenda because of exactly that third stanza. Many right wing extremist groups and artists have covered the song, the styles ranging from rock song (Skrewdriver, 1984) over pop piano ballad (Saga, 2001) and piano rock ballad (Endstufe, n.d.) to a rockabilly version (The Klansmen n.d.). A brief visit to a thread dedicated to “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” on the online forum “Stormfront,” a popular social place for neo-Nazis and white supremacists, confirms that there is a widespread belief that “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” is a traditional German song used by Bob Fosse in his film *Cabaret*.⁴⁶⁰

Fosse’s artistic vision of restricting *Cabaret*’s musical numbers to the nightclub performances plays unwittingly into the hands of neo-Nazis, because in the film “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” is the exception to the rule. It is the only song

⁴⁵⁸ Burton Bernhard, “His Brother Wrote The Song.” US-NYp, Fred Ebb Papers, Box 5.

⁴⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁶⁰ Stormfront, “Stormfront Forum - Tomorrow Belongs to Me Thread,” <http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t6509/>. (Accessed November 30, 2013).

performed outside of the nightclub, thus separating it from the rest of the score, giving it a special status. It allows the viewers to detach it without further consideration from the rest of the soundtrack and invent a mythological background for it.

Neo-Nazis chanting a song created by Jews may seem ludicrous. However, those white supremacist groups either conveniently overlook the song's origin as a show tune or are blissfully ignorant of it. Thus the reception history of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" comes full circle, when the song falls victim to exactly what Kander and Ebb had been accused of. Life imitates art, when the white power music scene replicates exactly what happens with "Tomorrow Belongs To Me" on stage in real life.

The investigations into the use of folk music in Broadway musicals in this chapter shows music's pliable nature, which subjects it to covert and overt agendas. The creators of *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret* draw on a range of markers and signifiers, such as dance rhythms, oral transmission, and music lessons on stage, to create more or less credible musical environment for particular characters. The example of "Edelweiss" illustrates how composers and lyricists succeed in their efforts so well that audiences are fooled into believing they hear original folk music. However, in the case of "Tomorrow Belongs To Me", Kander and Ebb's achievements backfired. Not only were they faced with accusations of using real Nazi songs in their musical, but more importantly White-Power musicians have co-opted the song for their agenda.

Therefore the factor of agency in music cannot be underestimated, as the narrative function of both examples in their respective shows proves. As it becomes clear from each case study, all these fictitious folk songs are diegetic. Thus they are conscious performances of identity, expressing cultural ties and political affiliations for the other characters in the plays to see. Captain von Trapp sings “Edelweiss” in an act of defiance, reasserting his Austrian heritage. Fräulein Kost and Ernst Ludwig intone “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” together to proudly profess their Nazi ideology and German nationality. Franz Liebkind, crazy as he is, dances the “Guten Tag Hop-Clop” in a manifestation of his cultural heritage and veneration for his political idol. All these characters take agency of folk music, making it evident, that music is a process and not just a product.

Folk music as a process then means that the meaning of songs can change, similarly to what the audiences witnesses with “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” in *Cabaret*. As described earlier in this chapter, the observer experiences first hand how the agency of the song changes hands from a group of nondescript waiters to Ernst Ludwig, the proud Nazi. Suddenly the meaning of the song shifts from pastoral folk song to Nazi hymn, making the viewer question everything he or she has so far seen. As in real life, these folk songs on stage undergo a process of manipulation by different agents, always reflecting upon their cultural and socio-political milieu.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The comparison of *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music* in the preceding chapters has revealed a fundamentally different approach to Nazism. As a family show, *The Sound of Music* treats Nazism only tangentially, whereas *Cabaret* puts it at the center of a moral and political discussion. There is a certain sense in *The Sound of Music* that what happened in Germany could never happen in the United States. The musical juxtaposes American values against German corruption; therefore it presents the Nazis as antagonistic, nasty people without personalities. Seven years later, the political climate in the United States had changed so drastically that Harold Prince felt able, in a musical, to remind American audiences that U.S. society was currently exhibiting some frightening parallels to Weimar Germany. *Cabaret* introduces Nazis as human characters and the Germans as conflicted souls who make the wrong decisions for what they think are the right reasons and serve their personal circumstances best.

Both musicals choose social gatherings (the gala in *The Sound of Music* and the engagement party in *Cabaret* to profile society and people's political views. This allows a juxtaposition of moral and political standpoints and shows the deep divides in Austrian and German society. However, both musicals zoom in from a macroscopic perspective to the intimate, personal sphere, where they show couples breaking up due to political differences. In *The Sound of Music*, the Nazis indirectly

save the Captain from a loveless marriage, whereas in *Cabaret* the breakups leave the characters broken and damaged.

The discussion of “Edelweiss” and “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” addresses issues of agency and ownership. In *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret* musical agency becomes moral agency, since in both cases specific interest groups use the power of music to further their cause. Captain von Trapp performs “Edelweiss” to simultaneously express his loyalty to Austria and protest the recent *Anschluß*. Moreover, the power of music protects the Trapp Family in *The Sound of Music* because the staging of the “Farewell” song allows to them to escape the Nazi claws unnoticed. Even before that, music reunites the children with their estranged father and fosters the romance between the Captain and Maria. Music then is a positive source of optimism and encouragement, a moral reinforcement of what is right, i.e., resistance against the Nazis, who are not given any musical material.

In *Cabaret* this moral resource, which is so pure and unadulterated in *The Sound of Music*, becomes corrupted by a group of Nazis. They re-appropriate the popular song “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” to demonstrate their power and unity at a private party and turn it into a quasi-anthem. The comparison of *The Sound of Music* and *Cabaret* reveals the malleable nature of music, which can be utilized like any other tool in politics.

My analyses of different productions of both musicals from the 1950s to the 2010s confirm the trend towards a grittier staging, as noted by Jessica Hillman-McCord. My dissertation offers historical distance, shock value and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* as possible explanations for this tendency. In the 1950s

and 1960s memories of World War II were comparatively fresh and therefore audiences did not need strong visual reminders of what Nazism was like. They were used to seeing it on the news and in the papers. Many people at the time lived through the experiences themselves as soldiers overseas or exiled camp survivors. Younger generations, born long after the war, have no first-hand memories of what Nazism was like. They only know second hand through relatives' stories, books and films. A swastika for them does not evoke the same kind of reaction it did for people in the years following World War II.

While younger generations know the extent of the Nazis crimes against humanity, they really have no personal access to it. It remains more a vague concept than a detailed personal experience. Therefore those gloomy productions of *Cabaret* and partially *The Sound of Music* emerge in the middle of the nineties as a provocative reminder. The strong visual presence of Nazi symbols in these shows aim to shock audiences and create an atmosphere of unease and discomfort.

My discussion of Austrian productions of *Cabaret* and *The Sound of Music* links the increased presence of both musicals in Austrian theater repertoire in the past twenty-five years to changing political circumstances in the 1990s and 2000s. While *The Sound of Music* is primarily considered a family show internationally and even something of a rite of passage in American childhood, the stagings of this Rodgers and Hammerstein musical in itself are sometimes politicized (cf. Volksoper Wien, Salzburger Landestheater). In contrast, *Cabaret* is generally deemed a commentary on various contemporary politics and societies around the world

(original Hal Prince production, Donmar Warehouse production, Meret Barz production).

The next logical step after this dissertation is to conduct further research on the topic of Nazism on musicals by including readings of the film adaptations. They are very different from the stage texts, accenting the political elements stronger but also changing characters' motivations and portrayals. Moreover, it will be interesting to analyze the reception history of both musicals in other countries around the world in the context of their histories and societies. Likewise this research should be expanded to smaller, regional productions in Austria and Germany as well, since they often feature rather experimental and innovative approaches. Finally, the research presented in this dissertation needs to be further contextualized in a wider field of dramatic works that deal with National Socialism and World War II.

APPENDIX A

THE SOUND OF MUSIC CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINE

April	10	Oscar Hammerstein II begins work on “Sound of Music”
	12	Oscar Hammerstein II words on “Love Is Not Blind”
May	19	Oscar Hammerstein II still works on “Love is Not Blind”
	20	Oscar Hammerstein II finishes work on “Sound of Music”
	25	Oscar Hammerstein works on Maria
	27	Oscar Hammerstein II’s Draft, dated: Includes “Sound of Music,” “Maria,” and “Do Re Mi” <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Captain flat out says he doesn’t want people talking to Berlin from his house• Captain is determined to resist the “wave of the future”• Rolf says people are making plans and Colonel Scheinholst is in Salzburg• Swastika bonfires• Max advances from 2nd to 1st secretary• Max worries about Georg’s safety• Rolf is rude to Liesl when he warns them• Gardener is a Nazi (Hans Braun)• Captain is frustrated and irate about the <i>Anschluß</i>• Gestapo judges the singing contest
End of May/ Beginning of June		Leland Hayward’s Draft, undated (B63/F2), undated draft from Oscar Hammerstein II Collection is virtually identical Includes “Sound of Music,” “Maria,” “Do Re Mi” <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall tone is less aggressive• Rolf is not as rude (prompted by note from Donehue)• Captain is angry and resigned over the <i>Anschluß</i>• Scheinholst, bonfires, Max’ promotion, Gestapo, Hans Braun remain unchanged
June	4	Vincent Donehue Draft “New” (B4/F8), incomplete, only Act I Includes “Sound of Music,” Maria,” “Do Re Mi,” “My Favorite Things” <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Captain and Elsa talk about Max in the role of matchmaker <p><u>Nota Bene:</u> Oscar Hammerstein didn’t start on “My Favorite Things” until the end of June, according to the notes in the Oscar Hammerstein II Collection at the Library of Congress</p>

- 7 Oscar Hammerstein II finishes work on “Maria” (except for small revisions in Boston)
- 9 Oscar Hammerstein starts work on “Buck The Tide,” which eventually becomes “No Way To Stop It”
- 11 Oscar Hammerstein II works on “I Have Loved”
- 14 Oscar Hammerstein II works on “Lonely Goatherd”
- 26 Oscar Hammerstein II works on “My Favorite Things” and “The Farewell Song”
- 29 Oscar Hammerstein II finishes “My Favorite Things”
- July 1 Oscar Hammerstein II begins thinking about “Sixteen Going On Seventeen,” as a copy of Sam Cooke’s “Only Sixteen” in his papers suggests
- 4 Oscar Hammerstein II dismisses “I Have Loved”
- 7 Oscar Hammerstein II works on “Climb Every Mountain”
- 15 Oscar Hammerstein II works on “Play Safe!”, dismisses “Buck The Tide”
- 24 Oscar Hammerstein II finishes “Farewell Song”
- 25 Oscar Hammerstein wraps up “Play Safe!”
- 29 Oscar Hammerstein sends Leland Hayward and Richard Halliday cues for “Sixteen,” “Goatherd,” and “My Favorite Things”
- Late July Oscar Hammerstein II Draft, “Blue,” undated
Includes “Sound of Music,” “Maria,” “Do Re Mi,” “My Favorite Things,” “The Lonely Goatherd,” “Farewell,” “Ländler”
- Dialogue has been edited (lines changed, cut and added)
 - Elsa warns Captain it is not a good time to make enemies
 - Oscar Hammerstein suggests to cut Max’s reply the he’s got enough character for both of them, when the Captain questions it
 - Max is promoted from 3rd to 1st secretary
 - Max is still concerned about Georg, but is more worried about his own welfare
 - Oscar Hammerstein suggests to cut Hans Braun (cf. Vincent Donehue’s notes)
 - Oscar Hammerstein suggests to cut line about Captain admiring new U-boats
 - Oscar Hammerstein suggests to cut lines for Herr Zeller to tone down his aggressiveness
 - Oscar Hammerstein suggests to replace Gestapo with Ministry of Interior (cf. Vincent Donehue’s notes)
 - Still has bonfires, Rolf still warns the family
- August 3 Oscar Hammerstein works on “How Can Love Survive”
- 13 Oscar Hammerstein finishes “How Can Love Survive”

Nota Bene: Oscar Hammerstein probably worked on a revision of “Play Safe” called “I” or “A Thing Called I” around the same time

- 16 Oscar Hammerstein finishes “Climb Every Mountain”
Leland Hayward Draft, undated (B63/F1)
Contains all songs for Act I, including “Sixteen Going On Seventeen,” “Climb Every Mountain,” and “How Can Love Survive”
- Instead of “making plans,” they’re now “pretty mad” and “getting ready”
 - Elsa’s last name changes to “Schroeder”
 - Max’ reply about Georg’s character is cut
 - New dialogue between Herr Zeller and Baron von Elberfeld
 - Hans Braun is cut
 - Captain von Schreiber is promoted to Admiral (and consequently outranks Captain von Trapp)
 - Max replaces Maria to support the Captain against the Trapps, Maria is searching for kids
 - Accepted changes from previous version: Max is still 3rd secretary, Rolf still tries to warn the Trapp family, Max’ line about “rope around his neck” is still in, Zeller’s line about Maria “questioning our authority” is still in, Ministry of Interior has replaced the Gestapo at the singing contest

- 22 Oscar Hammerstein II works on “Ordinary Couple”
30 Oscar Hammerstein II reworks “A Thing Called I” into “No Way To Stop It”
31 Oscar Hammerstein II finishes “Ordinary Couple”

September

- 1 Rehearsals begin at Lunt-Fontanne theater
11 Oscar Hammerstein II finishes “No Way To Stop It”
12 Oscar Hammerstein II revisits 2nd chorus of “How Can Love Survive”
14 According to preliminary production schedule, first run through
Oscar Hammerstein II works on reprise of “Sixteen Going On Seventeen”
17 Oscar Hammerstein II finishes “Sixteen Going On Seventeen” reprise and moves on to reprise of “Farewell”
18 Oscar Hammerstein II finishes “Farewell” reprise

October

- 3 Tryouts opening in New Haven
13 Boston opening
15 Oscar Hammerstein II starts work on “Edelweiss”

- 21 Oscar Hammerstein II finishes "Edelweiss"
- 26 Oscar Hammerstein concludes work o 2nd chorus of "How Can Love Survive"
- Late October/Early November Leland Hayward Draft, undated (1959) draft (B63/F3), Vincent Donehue, undated draft (B4/F9) identical to Oscar Hammerstein II Finale script and Leland Hayward Final Script (B62/F10)

APPENDIX B

EXCERPT OF GERMAN-SPEAKING PREMIERES OF POPULAR BROADWAY MUSICALS CA. 1960S – 1980S⁴⁶¹

Production	Broadway	German	Location
<i>No No Nannette</i>	1925	1925	Metropol Theater Berlin
<i>Kiss Me, Kate</i>	1948	1955	Städtische Bühnen Frankfurt
<i>Annie Get Your Gun</i>	1946	1957	Volksoper Wien
<i>My Fair Lady</i>	1956	1961	Theater des Westens, Berlin
<i>How To Succeed in Business...</i>	1961	1965	Theater an der Wien
<i>The Fantasticks</i>	1960	1965	Neues Theater am Kärntnertor
<i>The King and I</i>	1951	1966	Stadttheater am Gärtnerplatz, München
<i>Hello Dolly</i>	1964	1966	Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf
<i>Man of La Mancha</i>	1965	1968	Theater an der Wien
<i>Hair</i>	1967	1968	Theater an Briennerstraße, München
<i>Fiddler on the Roof</i>	1965	1968	Operettenhaus Hamburg
<i>West Side Story</i>	1957	1968	Volksoper Wien
<i>Guys and Dolls</i>	1950	1969	Theater der Freien Hansestadt Bremen

⁴⁶¹ This list has been compiled using Charles B. Axton and Otto Zehnder's *Reclam's Großer Musicalführer* and is by no means exhaustive.

Production	Broadway	German	Location
<i>Showboat</i>	1927	1970	Städtische Bühnen Freiburg
<i>Cabaret</i>	1966	1970	Theater an der Wien
<i>Sweet Charity</i>	1966	1970	Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden
<i>The Boys From Syracuse</i>		1971	Stadttheater Pforzheim
<i>A Funny Thing Happened on the Way To The Forum</i>	1962	1972	Theater im Reichskabarett Berlin
<i>Oklahoma!</i>	1943	1973	Halle Münsterland
<i>A Little Night Music</i>	1973	1975	Theater an der Wien
<i>Lady Be Good</i>	1924	1976	Städtische Bühnen Dortmund
<i>On The Town</i>	1944	1977	Pfalztheater Kaiserslautern
<i>Gypsy</i>	1959	1979	Städtische Bühnen Münster
<i>Brigadoon</i>		1980	Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe
<i>Anything Goes</i>	1934	1981	Pfalzttheater Kaiserslautern
<i>Camelot</i>	1960	1981	Badisches St. K.
<i>The Sound of Music</i>	1959	1982	Stadttheater Hildesheim
<i>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</i>	1949	1988	Stadttheater Pforzheim
<i>On Your Toes</i>	1936	1990	Stadttheater Stuttgart
<i>South Pacific</i>	1949		

APPENDIX C

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