ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

CABARET

UPSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of
EDUCATION AT ROUNDABOUT

UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

Cabaret

Welcome to the infamous Kit Kat Klub, where the Emcee, Sally Bowles and a raucous ensemble take the stage nightly to tantalize the crowd—and to leave their troubles outside. But as life in pre-WWII Germany grows more and more uncertain, will the decadent allure of Berlin nightlife be enough to get them through these dangerous times?

a note from Artistic Director Todd Haimes

Sam Mendes and Rob Marshall's *Cabaret* is one of those theatrical experiences that truly needs to be seen live on stage. That's how seminal and how vibrant it is. A great novel will forever be preserved in its original form on the page, and a great painting can be visited as the artist wanted it to be seen on the wall of a museum. But theatre is very much of the here and now, and I honestly believe that, when it comes to the masterpieces, each generation should have the chance to see the best with their very own eyes. That's why I had to bring back this production. I wanted to give a new audience the chance to hear John Kander and Fred Ebb's score live, to see Alan Cumming's unforgettable Emcee for themselves, to sit in Robert Brill's immersive Kit Kat Klub, and to be swept away anew with an incredible Broadway debut from Michelle Williams. For those coming back to *Cabaret* with us, I know you are as eager to revisit this world as I am. And to those who will be experiencing it for the first time, all I can say is that you are in for something magical, and to you I echo the very first word sung by Alan Cumming's Emcee: *Willkommen!*

when *1929–1930*

where *Berlin, Germany*

who

Emcee- Master of ceremonies for the Kit Kat Klub

Fräulein Schneider- Older woman, boarder of apartment Sally and Cliff live in

Cliff- American, writer

Fräulein Kost- Prostitute that lives next to Sally and Cliff

Sally Bowles- British, mediocre cabaret performer

Herr Schultz- Elderly Jewish man, fruit shop owner

Ernst- German, friend of Cliff

Kit Kat Boys and Girls

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INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR **ALAN CUMMING**

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Alan Cumming about returning to his Tony®-winning role as the Emcee in *Cabaret*.

Ted Sod: Can you tell us a bit about your background: where you grew up, where you were educated, when you decided to become an actor?

Alan Cumming: I was born in Aberfeldy, Perthshire, Scotland and grew up in Angus, which is on the east coast of Scotland. My dad was a forester so I grew up in the forest—really far away from anything. I had a very sheltered upbringing. I attended Monikie Primary School and Carnoustie High School. I wanted to become an actor because the local repertory theatre company came to our school and did a play, and I was just mesmerized by that. I saw them packing up their trunks as they were leaving the school and I thought: I want to do that. After I left school, I spent a year and a half as an editor and columnist for the pop and TV magazine TOPS and then I went to drama school at the Royal Scottish Academy for Music and Drama.

TS: Did you have any teachers who had a profound influence on you?

AC: There was one teacher who was very negative towards me and he told me, "You'll never make it as a professional actor!" I had to realize that that was just his subjective opinion. There was a teacher in high school who encouraged me to be in the school play, and she told me I should pursue acting. But I think we learn from people who contradict us. We're not puppies who need to be petted all the time. We learn from those people who challenge us.

TS: Why did you choose to do the revival of the revival of *Cabaret*?

AC: I just thought enough time had passed. I am almost 50 years old, and I am in a different phase of my life and think it will be interesting to return to this role at this age. Also, stories like the one in *Cabaret* need to be told to every generation.

TS: I realize the rehearsal process has just begun, but can you share some of your preliminary thoughts about how you return to a role you have already done?

AC: I approach it like any role that I undertake, but I have to think about it as if I were doing it for the first time. I have done a lot of different roles and projects since I played the Emcee on Broadway, and I never went back to see the show after I finished the run on Broadway—I avoided it or any of the songs from it— because I wanted to keep it special. So coming back to it now—I can remember some of it—there are things that are in my body still, but I am rediscovering it. Also, it's a whole new group of people in the cast, and I am a different person. You have to remember that the Emcee isn't really a character—he isn't described as a certain age—or in any specific terms—he is really more of a symbol. I am just trying to be authentic and honest—I have a whole different relationship to the role because I am older.

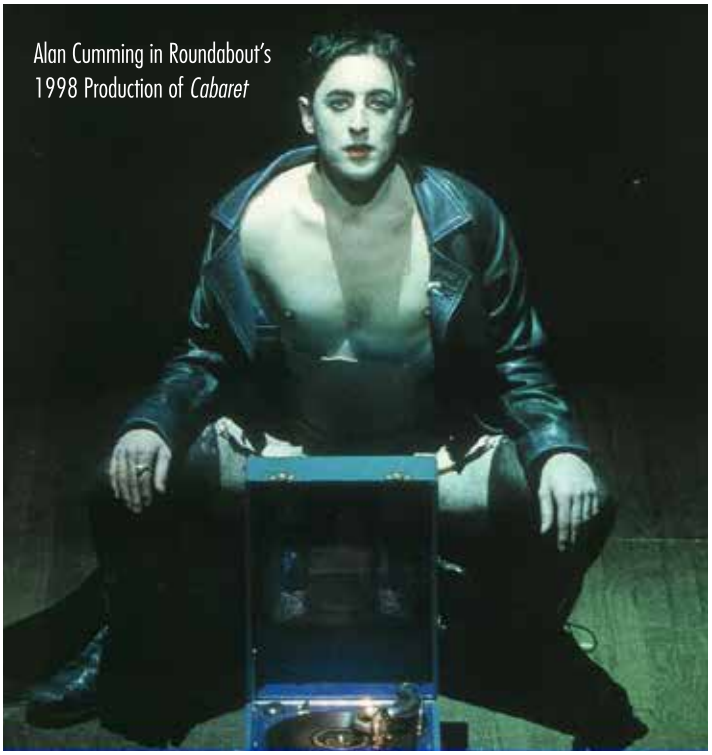
Alan Cumming, Michelle Williams and the Kit Kat Girls performing "Don't Tell Mama"

TS: What kind of research do you have to do in order to play the Emcee again?

AC: I actually have done a documentary entitled *The Real Cabaret*, about cabarets during the period the musical takes place in, and so I went to Berlin and investigated the performers who were working at that time. I went to the apartment where Christopher Isherwood lived when he was there. I reread the Isherwood books, *The Berlin Stories*, which includes "Goodbye to Berlin" and I reread *Christopher and His Kind*. So I have been putting myself back into the world. By my bed I have books on the Weimar Republic, so I try to keep my brain aware of all the history. It is fascinating to remember that Berlin at that time was a city that had something for everyone. There were constant political battles, experimental artistic ideas, and revolutionary new films.

TS: It seems that every major production of *Cabaret* happens when there is political or economic upheaval happening—do you sense that this is true?

"THE EMCEE ISN'T REALLY A CHARACTER—HE ISN'T DESCRIBED AS A CERTAIN AGE—OR IN ANY SPECIFIC TERMS—HE IS REALLY MORE OF A SYMBOL."



Alan Cumming in Roundabout's 1998 Production of *Cabaret*

AC: I don't know—I am sure that there are productions that happen when there isn't upheaval. When we did it at the Donmar [in England] in 1993, the Thatcher years were over but there was still a conservative government. When we did it in New York City, all the country seemed to be obsessed with was Clinton's extramarital affair—it always made me feel that there was a Puritanical streak in this country. I think now one of the reasons to do the play is because of what is happening to gay people in Russia and how they are being oppressed. There are people being persecuted everywhere—it comes in waves really—and that is why it is important to tell stories like this.

TS: Can you talk about how you develop the relationship between the Emcee and Sally?

AC: They don't really have that much of a relationship on stage. I haven't really had a chance to rehearse with Michelle yet, but I am sure we'll have a chat about how our characters relate to each other. It is more about leading the company actually. Really for the Emcee the most important actor I interact with is the audience. The Emcee lives primarily in the world of the Kit Kat Klub. Emcees at that time were the hosts of the singing, dancing, and occasional debauchery—the shows they oversaw often satirized the politics of the time—especially the Nazis.

TS: Do you remember how the ending of this version of *Cabaret* came about? When the Emcee is found out to be Jewish and gay?

AC: We found that in rehearsals, but what's interesting is that early on the Emcee was wearing not only the yellow star and the pink triangle, but a red circle because he was a Socialist—but nobody knew what the red circle symbolized, so it was cut. I think the ending works because the audience becomes complicit—they've been watching the Emcee and enjoying all his antics, and they are shocked to see him being carted away at the end.

TS: What do you look for from a director?

AC: Open communication. Someone who enjoys collaborating and is willing to take risks. It should be someone who spurs you on.

TS: How do you keep yourself inspired? What feeds you as an artist?

AC: I try to go into the world with an open heart. I get asked to do an eclectic range of things—it seems the more eclectic projects I take on, the more I am asked to do them. I do whatever strikes my fancy. I make art, write, take photographs, do odd projects on the side. I perform on TV shows and I do plays. I try to do things that excite me—there are so many things to do in the world that it isn't smart to stick with things if they don't excite you.

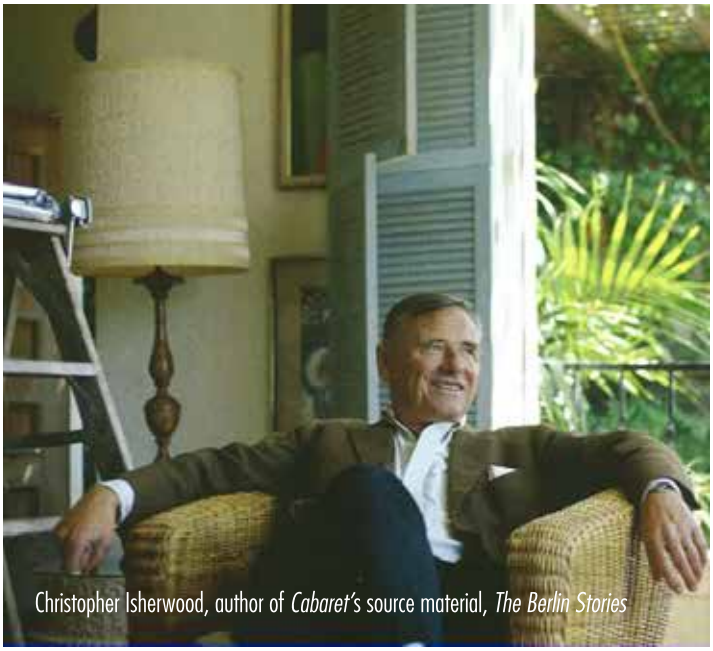
TS: Students will read this interview and will want to know what it takes to be a tremendously successful actor—what advice would you give to young people who want to act?

AC: I can only speak for myself. Try to find out who you are and what you have to offer—what your experiences in life have taught you. The minute you try to emulate someone—that's death. Try to hold on to what makes you unique. Try to keep open to things and don't close off.•

Alan Cumming and the Kit Kat Boys and Girls

FROM *THE BERLIN STORIES* TO *CABARET*

Cabaret has made an indelible impact on musical theatre and inspired some of the greatest theatrical artists of the last century to imprint the work with their unique style. The undeniable power of this musical lies in the universal question it poses: why do we again and again allow destructive powers to take control of society?


Christopher Isherwood, author of *Cabaret*'s source material, *The Berlin Stories*

The vibrant characters of *Cabaret*, including nightclub singer Sally Bowles, writer Clifford Bradshaw, and the presiding Emcee of the Kit Kat Klub, help to draw audiences into the world. None of these characters would exist without the work of one young English writer. Christopher Isherwood wrote about the people he met and everything he encountered while living at the apex of the most infamous turning point in the history of the modern world. His stories, after a number of incarnations, would bring us to *Cabaret*.

Christopher Isherwood was kicked out of Cambridge University in 1925 for writing joke answers on his second-year exams. He was an unhappy student and jumped at the chance to leave his formal education behind. Free of academic responsibilities, he moved to Berlin, entrenching himself in nightclubs. This is where he met Jean Ross, the original inspiration for the character Sally Bowles, and many others he would co-opt and develop. As a reflection of his time there, he wrote a collection of short stories, *The Berlin Stories*, chronicling Berlin in the 1930s as a cosmopolitan world of decadence and detachment in the same moment that Germany was being taken over by Adolph Hitler's regime. This was a true labor of love for Isherwood. When he was writing the book, Isherwood was chastised by the owner of the boarding house where he was residing: "after all, old boy, I mean to say, will it matter a hundred years from now if you wrote that yarn or not?" *The Berlin Stories* remains Isherwood's most popular work.

John Van Druten was inspired to adapt Isherwood's book into a play. The title of that play would become *I am a Camera*, which was taken from an early line in one of Isherwood's short stories, "Goodbye to Berlin": "I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking." Van Druten focused his play on the story of Sally Bowles, the enigmatic club singer who enchants and befriends a young English writer. For the first production of *I am a Camera*, Van Druten found his leading lady in Julie Harris, already a well-known star of film and stage. Isherwood was taken aback at how perfectly she embodied the character. "Miss Harris was more essentially Sally Bowles than the Sally of my book, and much more like Sally than the real girl who long ago gave me the idea for my character," he said. Julie Harris received rave reviews for her performance and critics were impressed by the play's daring views, in 1955 *I am a Camera* was turned into a movie, starring Harris.

In 1965, Harold Prince, a (soon-to-be famous) director and producer, knew he wanted to adapt *I am a Camera* into a musical, but he wasn't sure of the exact approach to take. He was acutely aware that it shouldn't fall into the category of many popular American musicals of the time. Broadway was populated with romantic musical comedies such as *Hello, Dolly!* and *She Loves Me*, where sinister forces are overcome and the good guy always gets his girl. "It was only after we'd come by a reason for telling the story parallel to contemporary problems in our country, that the project interested me," Prince said. Putting the struggles of the civil rights movement of the 1960s

Jill Haworth as Sally Bowles in the original 1966 *Cabaret*

in the context of Nazi persecution of minorities would give him that powerful reason. Prince realized that *Cabaret* had to inhabit two worlds: one telling the story of Sally Bowles, the writer she befriends, and the denizens of Berlin, and another in which the Emcee performs musical acts that comment on the state of the rapidly shifting world around them. Each reality is represented by a different musical style. The numbers that tell Sally's story hew closer to the style of traditional musical theatre, while the songs in the Emcee's world are heightened, offering stylized commentary that is wildly entertaining, with an unexpectedly dark subtext. Prince's original Broadway production of *Cabaret* in 1966 was a hit, with audiences embracing the dark musical. Richard Watts Jr. said in his *New York Post* review, "It is the glory of *Cabaret* that it can upset you while it gives theatrical satisfaction."

After the success of the Broadway production, director/choreographer Bob Fosse adapted *Cabaret* for a 1972 film. Joel Grey would reprise his Tony Award-winning performance as the Emcee, but Sally Bowles was re-imagined for actress Liza Minnelli. In the film version, Sally is American (rather than British) and a much flashier vocalist. Kander and Ebb even wrote two new songs for Minnelli to showcase her famous voice. Many of the other supporting characters and plots were pared down or eliminated in order to focus on Sally, Cliff, and the world of the cabaret. Fosse was able to reinstate the question of Cliff's bisexuality, which is apparent in *The Berlin Stories* but not in the play or musical. (Prince did not think Broadway audiences were ready to accept a gay leading man, so the original production presented a clearly heterosexual love story between Cliff and Sally.) When Prince revived his production on Broadway in 1987, the book was adjusted to further explore Cliff's sexuality as another facet of his complicated relationship with Sally. *Cabaret* continued the tradition of attracting directors and choreographers with a strong vision in 1998 when director Sam Mendes and director/choreographer Rob Marshall brought *Cabaret* back to Broadway. Roundabout transformed the Henry Miller's Theatre into the Kit Kat Klub, replacing standard audience seating with nightclub-style tables, complete with drink service.

Mendes said, "It's really about the central mystery of the twentieth century—how Hitler could have happened. And it's important that we go on asking the question whether or not we can find some sort of answer." This *Cabaret* was seedier and darker than the previous incarnations. Mendes and Marshall took the sheen off and delved into a more sinister look at the indulgences of the time, adopting a messy, aggressive style for the choreography. Marshall commented, "It's like choreographing everything twice. I'd say to myself, 'No, fray it purposefully with people on the wrong foot or out of step.' " There were also additions made to the libretto from Isherwood's original *Berlin Stories*, and this production went further than any previous incarnation to explore the full spectrum of sexuality. This *Cabaret* eventually moved up to Studio 54 and ran for six years.

The world of Sally Bowles has proved captivating since she was first brought to life in Isherwood's stories. That timelessness has made *Cabaret* a landmark piece of the theatrical cannon to be continually mined by artists, because it is not merely a historical play looking back to our not-so-distant past, but it acts as a perpetual reminder of how darker forces can take hold of humanity. This idea continues to be fertile ground for artistic exploration, innovative theatricality, and a story that fascinates in every form it takes.•

Michelle Williams and the Kit Kat Girls

INTERVIEW WITH LIBRETTIST **JOE MASTEROFF**

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Joe Masteroff, *Cabaret* librettist, about his journey with this musical.

Ted Sod: You were born in Philadelphia in 1919 and went to Temple University, correct?

Joe Masteroff: Correct.

TS: And then you studied at the American Theatre Wing?

JM: I was in the army during WWII, and when I got out, I eventually came to New York to become a playwright, which is what I always wanted to do since I was a child. The American Theatre Wing had a special course in playwriting for guys who had been in the war. They had you write at least a one-act play every week and then we would discuss it. Little by little, I was writing these things and the playwright Robert Anderson would say, "It is interesting—it's not good enough, but keep doing it." That was the beginning, and it ended really well.

TS: You had a play on Broadway in the late '50s with Julie Harris and June Havoc.

JM: Yes, and Farley Granger. My agent called me one day and said, "You won't believe this, but Julie Harris read your play *The Warm Peninsula*, and she wants to do it for a full year on the road before bringing it to Broadway." It ran for six weeks or so in New York. I got to do the musical *She Loves Me* with Bock and Harnick because somebody had seen *The Warm Peninsula* and said that I was the right person to do the libretto (or the book) for their next musical.

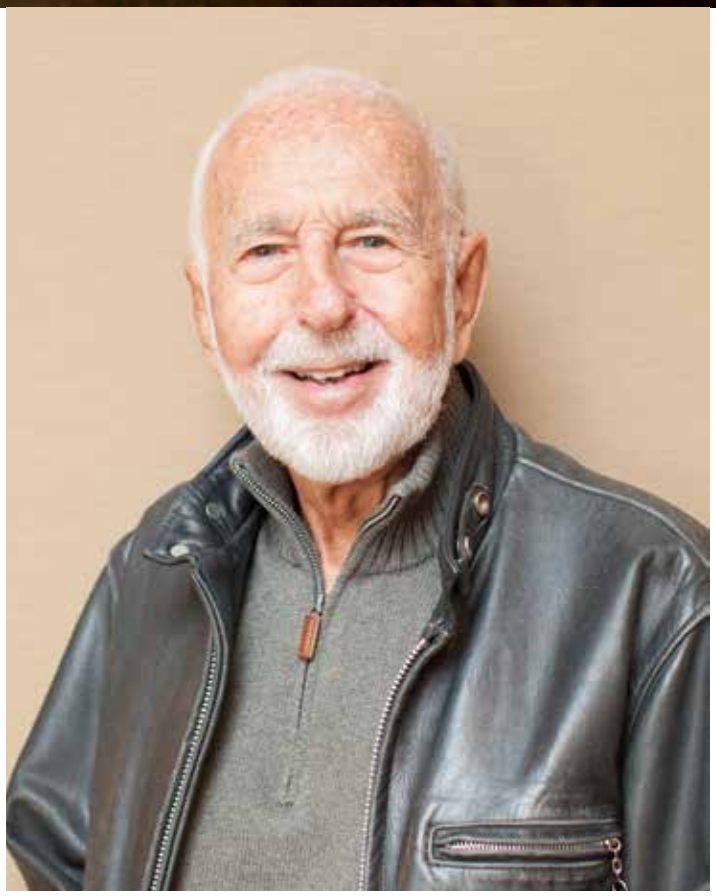
TS: And how did you come to the attention of Harold Prince for *Cabaret*?

JM: We had almost finished writing *She Loves Me* when we found out the producer didn't have the rights; he thought he did, but he didn't. So Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick suggested we ask Hal Prince. He was brought in as producer for *She Loves Me*, and he ended up as director as well. One day, Hal came to me and said, "I want to do a musical based on John Van Druten's play *I am a Camera*." I knew the play very well because it starred Julie Harris and she won her first Tony award for it. I said I would love to do a musical based on *I am a Camera*—that musical turned out to be *Cabaret*, and you know the rest.

Original poster from Roundabout's *She Loves Me*

TS: Did you start with just the play or did you do research into the period? How did you begin your process?

JM: I worked with the composer and lyricist, John Kander and Fred Ebb, and we wrote the show together bit by bit. Hal Prince was in charge because he was the producer and the director. We were aware all the time that we were on dangerous ground. I mean, we were doing a show about abortion and Nazis and subjects that were hardly the stuff of Broadway musicals. We hoped that it would get good reviews, but we never thought it would be a commercial success because it was too different. This was not a show where the librettist, composer, and lyricist did their own work independently from the director. Hal was very involved all the way through.



TS: What were the challenges in adapting Van Druten's play?

JM: I didn't think it was a satisfactory play, but there is material in there that works. The greatest problem with *I am a Camera* is the two lead characters. One is American and one is English, and what was going on in Berlin in the '30s didn't really involve them except in oblique ways. It was important, I think, to create a subplot. That's when we created the love affair between Fräulein Schneider and Herr Schultz. Fräulein Schneider is a minor character in the Van Druten play.

TS: Do you have a favorite character? Who do you most relate to?

JM: Having worked with Julie Harris for a long time, I realized when I was writing my version of *I am a Camera* that a lot of Julie got into it. So Julie Harris in a sense is Sally Bowles in my version. But I relate to Fräulein Schneider very much. I think partially because it was Lotte Lenya's role, but also because she speaks for the German people who weren't Nazis, and I think that is very important. It is a great country, and there were a lot of people in the streets cheering for Hitler, but

there were also a lot of people who didn't, and she speaks for the ones who stayed home.

TS: Did you hear Julie when you were writing Sally?

JM: Yes, very much. I couldn't help but be influenced by Julie in writing her. And Sally Bowles is a character that a lot of actresses want to play, and it's a role that has won a lot of awards for people, so I figure it must be okay.

TS: Were you surprised by the audience response to the show when it was first done?

JM: I will say that we were very pleased that in New York we had good reviews for the show. At the end of the show, there wasn't a lot of applause because all these people were having a wonderful time and then suddenly weren't having such a wonderful time. We wanted people to think. That was our intention. It has always been true of *Cabaret* that it doesn't get a standing ovation at the end.

TS: How many times have you seen *Cabaret* performed?

JM: Quite a lot. Everywhere from Israel to Berlin. Of course, in Germany it is playing all the time, and it is now almost 50 years since it was written.

TS: Did you know you were writing the first "concept" musical?

JM: I still don't know what that is. I mean, we did something that had never been done before. We talked about things that just didn't seem appropriate, but that's what fit the story we were telling. It starts as a cheerful story and then little by little by little it changes. You don't see swastikas until the very end of the first act. Then you see one swastika. I have seen productions of *Cabaret* in Europe where there are so many swastikas around you can't see through them. When we first did it, there was no way the leading man in the show could be gay. He was never gay in the Isherwood stories or *I am a Camera*, and when we did it in 1966, he wasn't gay either. Cliff and Sally had a legitimate boy and girl love affair. There was no way the audience could have handled it. Little by little Cliff became gay as the years passed on, and finally, in the Roundabout production, he actually kissed a guy on stage.

TS: I think that's interesting because Isherwood and Van Druten were both gay.

JM: Absolutely. It was a complete taboo to even mention it to anybody—that just couldn't happen.

TS: But by the time Bob Fosse directed the movie, wasn't Michael York's character bisexual?

JM: He was, but that was a good while after 1966.

TS: What did you make of the movie version?

JM: People who see the movie and then see the stage show see two different things that almost have nothing in common except the Emcee and the night club scenes. The movie absolutely neglects the meaning of the show. I don't like to watch the movie *Cabaret*; it doesn't interest me at all. The night club scenes are wonderful. But everything else is...

Julie Harris as Sally Bowles in stage version of *I am a Camera* (1951)

TS: Hard to watch?

JM: It's not what I like. Bob Fosse didn't believe that you could do serious musicals. He didn't believe in that at all, and that is the reason that his version of *Cabaret* is so much lighter than mine.

TS: Did you see the Sam Mendes version at the Donmar Warehouse in the mid '90s?

JM: Some friends of mine went to London and had seen the Donmar version and said, "Go see it!" I did, and I thought it was terrific. I knew Todd Haimes very well because he had produced *She Loves Me*, and I told him he ought to do this terrific show, and he agreed. Sam Mendes was very eager to do it. It took about three years until it was all cleared, but finally we got it on.

TS: What made you want to retire? Were you just finished with it?

JM: I will tell you exactly why. All my life, as I said, from my childhood, I knew I was going to be a writer on Broadway. Don't ask me how I knew, I just knew. One success wouldn't have done it, but once I had two successes, I said, "Okay, that's it, I've done what I wanted to do with my life, and now I am going to have a good time."

TS: I think it takes a kind of bravery to say, "I'm done, I did it."

JM: But you know some people, when they win a million dollars, need to win another million dollars. My dream came true. I didn't make a huge amount of money out of it, but I do have enough money that I don't need to be a waiter.

TS: Do you have any advice for a young writer?

JM: I will tell you the most important thing in playwriting or anything is luck. I've had amazing luck. People just brought projects to me; I never had to go out and look for things to do.

TS: So you were in the right place at the right time?

JM: That too, very much so.

TS: Do you have opinions about musicals that are being written now? Is there anything you have seen recently that you like?

JM: Other than revivals? I think that Broadway is in a sorry state today.•

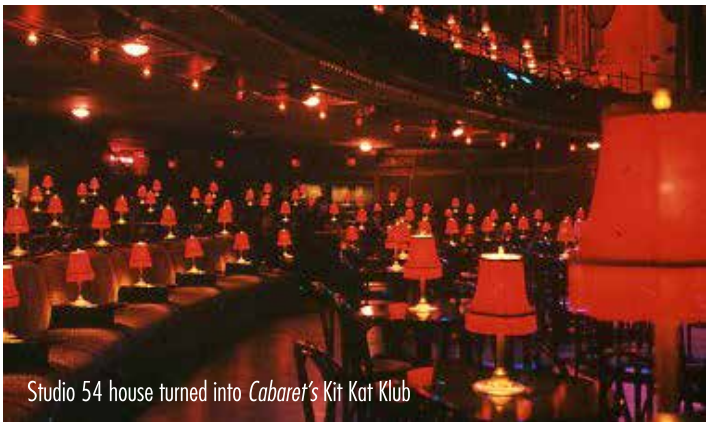
CABARET'S PLACE IN MUSICAL THEATRE

CABARET: A MIRROR OF ITS TIMES

American musicals hold a mirror up to our culture, hoping to reflect the issues of their day and the concerns of Americans. As a product of the tumultuous 1960s, the original *Cabaret* seduced and entertained while commenting on social issues and showing a frightening vision of our darkest potential.

The generation reared in the conservative 1950s became the counterculture youth of the '60s, and American society was divided by volatile conflicts. The African-American civil rights movement that began in the '50s was growing to involve large-scale nonviolent protests and civil disobedience. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was formed in 1966 in order to help gain full participation for American women in mainstream society and gain the same freedoms and privileges as American men of that time. President Lyndon B. Johnson promoted reforms to extend human rights, education, economic opportunities, and health care. Not all Americans supported these reforms, and some reacted with alarming violence. A rise of Klu Klux Klan activity in the south instigated beatings, shootings, and lynchings of activists.

Broadway was not immune to the cultural shocks of the era. The Broadway and Times Square district saw a rise in prostitution, adult shops, and derelicts (someone lacking personal possessions), which created a dangerous environment for theatregoing. Production costs were rising, and Broadway producers had to raise ticket prices: a top price of $12 in 1966 was the equivalent of $86 today. Prior to the rise of rock-and-roll in the mid-'50s, show tunes were considered popular music—what played on Broadway played on the radio. By the '60s, an entire generation was listening to rock and pop instead of show music.



Studio 54 house turned into *Cabaret's* Kit Kat Klub

EVEN THE AUDIENCE IS BEAUTIFUL:
IMMERSIVE THEATRE NOW

Despite Boris Aronson's high concept mirror set, the traditional proscenium layout of the Broadhurst Theatre allowed *Cabaret's* first audiences to keep a comfortable distance from the action. For Roundabout's 1998 revival, director Sam Mendes and set designer Robert Brill conceived a different theatrical space, putting the audience at small club tables right next to the performers, as they would be in an actual cabaret. This arrangement allows the cabaret to serve as not just a theatrical metaphor but a real atmosphere that makes the experience inescapably visceral.

Environmental staging and immersive theatre are increasingly popular formats for plays, non-narrative "happenings," and musicals. More and more, audiences in New York and beyond are able to experience theatre as a 360-degree experience. In 2013, New York theatregoers could dine in a Russian supper club while watching *Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812* (a musical based on a portion of *War and Peace*), drink in a gritty East Village bar (actually the Union Square Theatre) while experiencing the musical *Murder Ballad*, or dance in a pulsing discotheque while watching the story of Imelda Marcos in *Here Lies Love* at the Public Theatre. Christopher Ashley, Artistic Director of La Jolla Playhouse, has said he believes this is "the next huge wave of growth in the American theater." In re-opening the Kit Kat Klub at Studio 54, Roundabout invites us not only to watch but to be inside the seedy, seductive, and scandalous world of *Cabaret*.

Broadway needed to reinvent itself and find a new relevance, and visionary directors like Bob Fosse, Gower Champion, and the emerging Harold Prince became more prominent and, sometimes, more identified with shows than the songwriters. With the rise of the director came the "concept musical," described by critic Martin Gottfried as a show whose music, lyrics, choreography, and scenes are woven together to create "a tapestry-like theme" or central metaphor, more important than plot. Gottfried identified

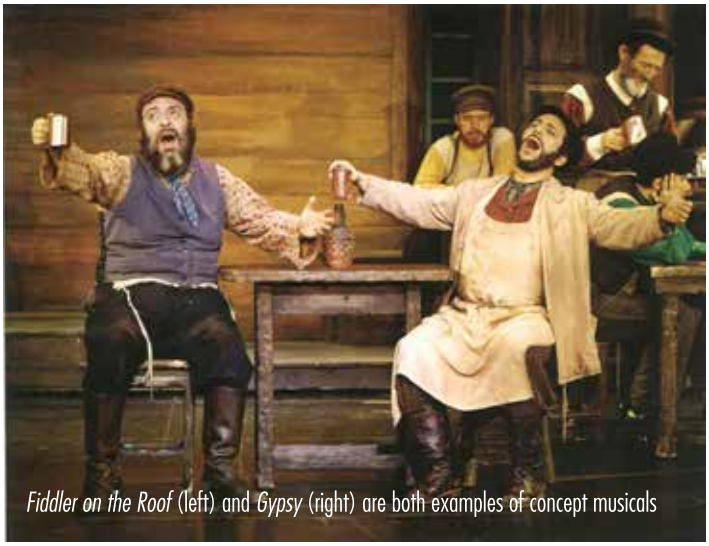
Danny Burstein, Linda Emond and Alan Cumming

West Side Story (1957), *Gypsy* (1959), and *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), as the first important concept musicals, and *Cabaret* is an important title in this genre.

By the early 1960s Harold Prince had a proven reputation as a producer and was emerging as a formidable director. At this time Prince was taking on the challenge of turning the play *I am a Camera* into a musical, but it was not until Prince received the first draft of the libretto from Joe Masteroff that he realized this was an opportunity to tell the story parallel to contemporary problems. Prince saw an opportunity to show these ties between racism in the U.S. and the rise of Nazism in the early 1930s through *Cabaret*. Prince brought on writing team John Kander (composer) and Fred Ebb (lyricist), whose first show, *Flora the Red Menace*, had premiered the year before. The team set out to create a show about civil rights and tell audiences that what happened in Germany could happen here. At his first rehearsal, Prince showed the cast a photograph of a group of angry young white men taunting a crowd off-camera. The cast assumed that it was a picture of Nazi youth harassing Jews; in fact, the picture was taken that year in Chicago, and the men were taunting black tenants of an integrated housing project. For a short time, Prince thought about ending the show with a film of the march on Selma, Alabama, though he abandoned that idea.

The original idea for the show was to begin with a prologue of cabaret-style songs to set the tone of Weimar Germany and then move into a straight play, but the team found that the songs worked better when distributed throughout the evening. As the show took shape as a more traditional musical, with some songs within book scenes, the cabaret world emerged as a central metaphor. The Brechtian device of songs that comment on the action rather than tell a story gave a central function to the Emcee character. Designer Boris Aronson conceived the production's penultimate metaphor: a giant mirror center stage reflected the audience and reinforced the message that "it could happen here."

After previewing in Boston, the play opened in November 1966 to great acclaim. *Cabaret* won 8 Tony Awards, including Best New Musical, Best Direction, Best Score, and Best Featured Actor for Joel Grey as the Emcee. The production ran nearly three years, for a total of 1165 performances, followed by international productions, a national tour, an Academy Award-winning film, and Roundabout's breakthrough revival in 1998. In its own day, and almost 50 years later, *Cabaret* validates the power of musical theatre to reflect a complicated world and the willingness of audiences to see ourselves in its mirror. •


Fiddler on the Roof (left) and *Gypsy* (right) are both examples of concept musicals

Sandra Church and Ethel Merman in *Gypsy*, 1959

INTERVIEW WITH COMPOSER **JOHN KANDER**

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod met with composer John Kander to discuss his work on *Cabaret*.

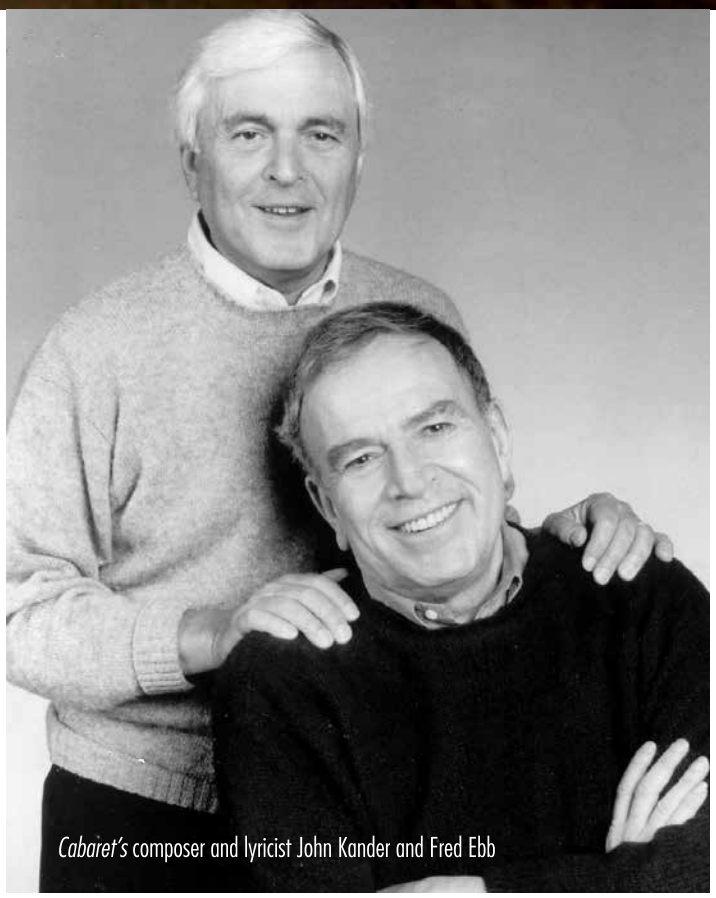
Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? When did you realize you wanted to write music for theatre and film?

John Kander: I was born in Kansas City in 1927. I found the piano when I was about four, and I had a good ear. I started playing at a very early age. I lived in a household where there were no professional musicians but music was an encouraged experience. My father had a big, beautiful baritone voice, and my grandmother and aunt played the piano, and my brother sang. My mother was tone deaf, but she had rhythm. I remember once my aunt put her hands over my hands and we made a chord together, the C Major Triad. I was overwhelmed that I could make that sound happen. I started piano lessons when I was six, and I listened a lot. There would be times when I would play and my father would sing, or my aunt would play and my brother would sing and my mother would march. I started listening to the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts when I was seven. I grew up loving the idea that you can tell stories through music and singing. I just always assumed—and I think my folks did, too—that music and theatre were going to be a part of my life.

TS: You studied music at Oberlin and Columbia—correct?

JK: Yes. I went to Oberlin and graduated with a major in music. I didn't go into the conservatory because I wanted to get a regular liberal arts education. I went to Columbia to get my master's. While I was at Oberlin, we had a theatre group that I wrote musicals for. I had an internship at Columbia in the opera workshop, which meant I played for and coached a lot of singers. At the same time I was making a bit of a living coaching and accompanying singers at auditions. I ended up conducting in summer stock for three years, arranging music and conducting a couple of off-Broadway shows. Douglas Moore was the head of the music department at Columbia, and he was a very close friend. I was writing lots of theatre songs, but I was also writing so-called serious music at the same time. One night, Douglas told me that if he had it to do over again, he would write for Broadway, and that was the kick in the ass that I needed. From then on I focused on the idea of writing musicals. I was working with James and William Goldman, who were my closest friends. The three of us wrote a musical called *The Family Affair*, and Richard Seff, who was an agent then, heard our work and made it his business to get the piece produced.

In those days, once you established yourself as a professional and people realized that you could actually be counted on, from then on you could pretty much get your work heard. I was part of that last generation—Jerry Herman, Fred Ebb, Steve Sondheim, Jerry Bock, Sheldon Harnick, and a bunch of others—we really were allowed to fail and still work. There was a time when musicals didn't cost millions of dollars to put on. I met Fred Ebb, and we started writing together. Hal Prince got us involved doing the music for *Flora the Red Menace*. *Flora* was not a success, but several weeks before it opened Hal Prince said to us, "Whatever happens to *Flora*, we will meet at my apartment the Sunday after and we will get to work on the next piece." And the next piece turned out to be *Cabaret*.



Cabaret's composer and lyricist John Kander and Fred Ebb

TS: What can you tell us about the famous *Cabaret* "What if" sessions?

JK: "What If" is a way of working that I continue to use today with my current collaborator, Greg Pierce. I gave it that name because most of it is talking. You sit around and you make a story with your collaborators. Sometimes you have a story that is already written, sometimes you have characters with no story or it is something you are starting from the very beginning, but it always begins with "What if?" What if Sally has an abortion? What if someone throws a brick through the fruit shop window? "What if" is a great game, at least in my experience; it is how you make a musical theatre piece, which is so collaborative.

TS: Did you know at the time you were working on *Cabaret* that you were breaking rules and creating something that would ultimately be called one of the first "concept" musicals?

JK: Of course not. We were just playing "What if." I think we thought it was a curious subject—we certainly had never dealt with that material before, and neither had anyone else—but we were just trying to make a story. We found the form, again after playing "What if," that allowed us to go in and out of the Kit Kat Klub with the Emcee. We wrote what we called Berlin songs—we originally wrote these songs so they could be sung at various points between scenes—and that's how the whole concept of the Emcee evolved. Some of those Berlin songs, as we called them, ended up being used in the show.

TS: Did you have to do a lot of research or were you familiar with the sound of those Berlin songs?

JK: I had known a lot of that style, but yes, I did a lot of research; I got

all the recordings I could of Berlin jazz and Berlin vaudeville songs. Even though there always seems to be some connection in people's minds to Kurt Weill, I was very careful to not listen to his work for obvious reasons. I wanted to have as much of Berlin's popular music running through my head and then put that away and start writing. I hoped that somehow it would seep into the music. Lotte Lenya, Weill's widow, said something to me shortly before we opened that made me very happy. I was well aware of the Weill comparison and I said to her, "I'm sure that some critics will say this is watered down Kurt Weill." She took my face in her hands and said, "No, it's not Kurt, it's Berlin, and when I am on that stage I am singing Berlin." After that I thought, if that is the way she feels, I really don't give a crap about anybody else.

TS: How did you and Fred work on the songs for this—was it different for each moment?

JK: We were working straight from *The Berlin Stories* and our own imagination. When we started working on this, we talked and talked endlessly about musical moments. And as we began to shape it and scenes began to happen, the musical moments made themselves clear. It was all going on at the same time. I must say that is the way our whole career went. I don't remember anybody handing us a book, saying, "Here, write songs for it." First off, I wouldn't know how to do that, but Fred and I would find moments and we would start to improvise them and we would write together. We would improvise 90% of everything we wrote.

TS: Did you and Fred work every day?

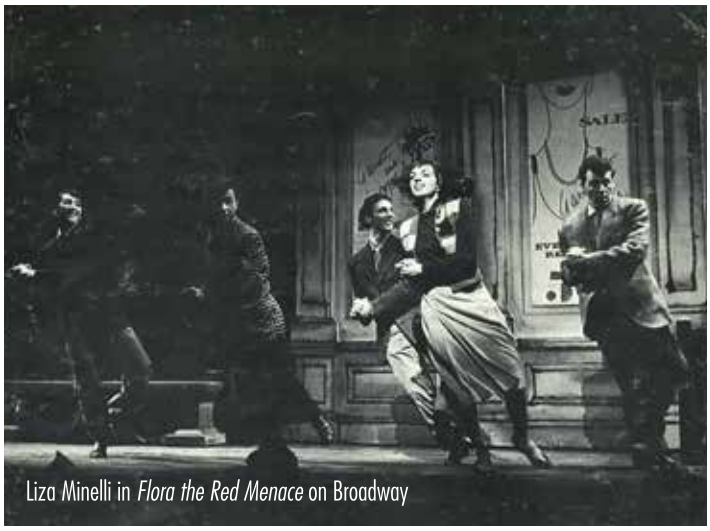
JK: When we were working on the show? Yes. Fred lived four blocks from me, and I like to go out for work and he liked to stay home, so generally I would go over there between 10:00 and 10:30, and we would sit around the kitchen table and have coffee and talk about a lot of things and eventually begin to talk about the characters and how they would speak and what they might want to express. Then we would continue those conversations in his little studio—where the piano was in the apartment—and he would sometimes have a line or I would have a rhythm or I would improvise something, but it all happened at the same time. Fred was able to improvise in rhyme and meter in the same way I was able to improvise at the keyboard.

TS: How important was Hal Prince's input as part of the collaborative process on *Cabaret*?

JK: Enormous. *Cabaret* is his piece. We would have these meetings where everybody would contribute, but Hal was the captain of that collaboration. When we were writing, we could say anything that we wanted to, but ultimately it was Hal's decision what idea prevailed. I would say Hal was in many ways the most important element in *Cabaret*.

TS: When you are approaching a revival, and this is the revival of a revival, what do you look for from the director? Do they ever reach out to you, or do you just let them do their thing?

JK: Sometimes the director will call or will want to get together. Mostly there will be communication. This revival of *Cabaret* began at the

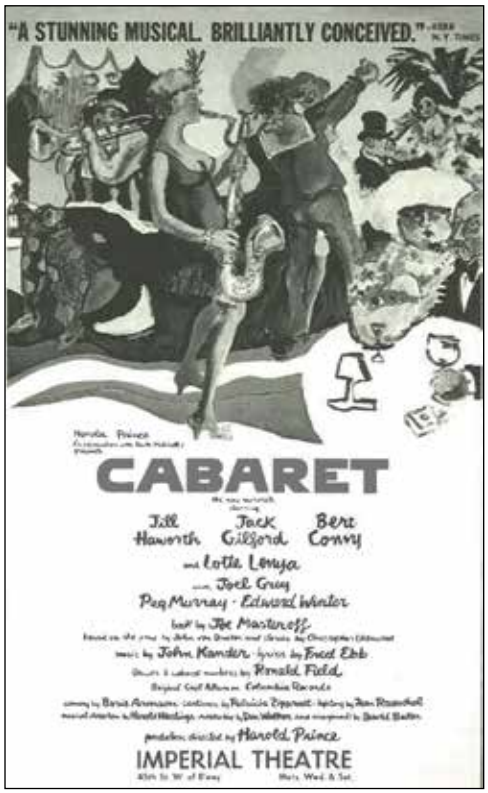


Liza Minelli in *Flora the Red Menace* on Broadway

Donmar Warehouse in the early '90s, and we had a conversation about it. I was at Donmar for the last week of rehearsal, contributing whatever I could that was useful. I was amazed at what Sam Mendes was able to do in that tiny little space and his approach to the material. Sam's version of *Cabaret* works as well as it does because it is several decades away from the original and people have changed, our experiences have changed, how we view the world has changed—the same thing happened with *Chicago*—a moderate success when it first happened, but when the revival came along, audiences had changed to the point that suddenly the piece was accepted. People felt close to the material. I can't explain it really.

TS: Mr. Kander, are you able to offer any advice to a young person who might be interested in writing music for the theatre?

JK: I know that it's helpful to get as much experience as you can and to say yes a lot. I was really lucky, because I don't think I skipped any steps in my career… coaching, playing, arranging, etc. If anybody asked me if I wanted to do something, I would usually say "Yes!" and then go learn how to do it. •



Original *Cabaret* artwork from the 1966 production

WEIMAR REPUBLIC

WEIMAR CABARET

The end of World World I in 1918 brought radical change to a defeated, disillusioned Germany. The entire population had experienced hunger, death, and violence. In October of that year, as the Americans brought renewed vigor to the fighting on the Western front, a largely communist revolt against the Kaiser and the war spread across Germany. Top military leaders showed no confidence in the monarchy. In early November, the Kaiser abdicated, and a leading socialist party declared a republic, thus bringing the Weimar Republic to power. The November 11 armistice was signed soon after. The war with the world had ended, but Germany's internal war was just beginning.

Between November 1918 and the summer of 1919, competing groups of Communists, ultra-nationalists, and former soldiers (Freikorps) clashed in a series of bloody urban street wars. Then, the young republic was forced to agree to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. In it, they accepted full responsibility for starting the war, gave up land and the right to a standing military, and agreed to pay a huge sum in reparations to the Allies. The Treaty was hugely unpopular in Germany and weakened support for the Weimar Republic. It also worsened Germany's already difficult financial situation. Support for radical right and left wing parties increased as ordinary citizens sought a solution to Germany's problems.

Early on, the Weimar Republic ended censorship and enacted liberal social policies. These new policies, combined with an incredibly favorable exchange rate for foreign money, attracted artists, scientists, and "outsiders" such as gays and lesbians from around the world. Christopher Isherwood, author of the source material for *Cabaret*, was one such outcast. Berlin quickly became the cultural capital of the Western World.

Traditional rules about gender and sexuality were also being challenged. Magnus Hirschfeld, the German doctor who coined the term "transvestite," founded the Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin in 1919 and openly advocated acceptance of homosexuality. Gay and lesbian bars appeared. Women, who had entered the workforce during the war and recently gained access to some forms of birth control, were no longer defined by marriage and child-bearing.

CABARET

The word "cabaret" is an old French term for tap-room or tavern, social spaces where there were often impromptu performances. But by the late 19th century, the word was used to describe gatherings of artists—poets, musicians, visual artists, actors, directors—who came together to share new work and, importantly, to critique mainstream society. Cabaret, from its inception, has been an art form dedicated to the counter-culture, to pushing the boundaries of art, to questioning society.

The first formal cabaret, Le Chat Noir (the Black Cat), opened in Paris in 1881. Le Chat Noir established the hallmarks of the art form. Patrons sat at tables to eat and drink while they watched a variety show on a small stage. The space was small, the performances intimate. The show was hosted by a conférencier, a type of emcee (or master of ceremonies), which further minimized the physical and psychological distance between performer and spectator. Early cabaret audiences were primarily other artists, philosophers, and journalists—the cultural elite. Interestingly, many of these art forms were associated not with high art or culture, but with circuses, music halls, and street performers. This tension between "high" and "low" art would continue to define cabaret.

Origins of German Cabaret

The first successful German cabaret, the Überbrettl ("super variety theatre"), opened in Berlin in January 1901. Early German cabaret took itself seriously and endeavored to showcase true art, presented in a "refined and tasteful" way by professionals. Berlin was then part of the German Empire, ruled by an emperor. Strict censorship laws prevented the cabaret from satirizing political topics or presenting overtly sexual material. Many stars of the German cabaret, both in the early years and later, were Jewish.

Between 1901 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914, cabarets were established in both Berlin and Munich, some leaning toward a more popular entertainment style, others firmly literary in their aspirations. By the start of World War I, German cabaret had moved away from counter-cultural art and toward a commercial venture. Those in attendance were middle class pleasure-seekers out to enjoy their champagne while watching an uncontroversial variety show that featured sexual innuendo and black humor.

Weimar Berlin was a city in chaos. The old rules no longer applied. New ideas about art, money, gender, and sexuality arose and were brought to life on the cabaret stage. Berliners sought out cabaret as a wild way to process their difficult, changing lives.

Two kinds of cabaret were present in Berlin in the early 1920s. "Literarisches Kabarett" were small music halls that strove to present work with literary value. "Wilde Buhne" (Wild Stage), the most famous of these, was founded in 1921 by singer and actress Trude Hesterberg. A young Bertolt Brecht (known for creating *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *The Threepenny Opera*) performed his own songs there in 1922. He sang "The Ballad of the Dead Soldier," a song about World War I that describes how the German Army, running out of soldiers, digs up a dead soldier, revives him with schnapps, covers his stench with incense, and sends him back into the war. "Wilde Buhne" closed in 1924, at the height of Germany's financial instability. The era of the literary cabaret was over, but the influence of cabaret songs and style can be seen in Brecht's later works.

"Kabaret der Komiker" (Cabaret of Comedians), or KadeKo, was the most famous of Weimar Berlin's later cabarets. KadeKo featured populist entertainment with a left-leaning political slant. A typical night would feature an hour or so of cabaret songs followed by a one-act parody or play, all hosted by a witty conférencier (emcee). In the mid '20s, KadeKo produced an operetta parodying Hitler's megalomania that ran for 300 performances. The KadeKo often booked international stars as performers, a shrewd

1931 Berlin, Germany

business move, as they had 950 seats to fill each night by 1928.

In contrast, other cabarets, like the fictional Kit Kat Klub, were more nightclub than artist's pub or theatre. The "Resi" (Residenz-Casino), an enormous dance hall, was an important feature of Weimar nightlife. In addition to a dance floor that could accommodate one thousand, an indoor carousel, a geyser of colored water, and mirrored ceilings, the "Resi" featured table-to-table telephones like those in *Cabaret*. The "Resi" also had a system of pneumatic tubes through which patrons could send notes or have gifts (selected from a long menu of items, including cocaine) delivered to other tables.

As Hitler and the Nazis rose to power in the early thirties, cabarets were forced out of business or turned to creating nationalist propaganda. The golden era of the Weimar Republic was over. It was no longer safe to be gay, Jewish, or to oppose the government, let alone to do so in song.

ANITA BERBER

Weimar cabaret's stars, once known orldwide, are now mostly forgotten.

Perhaps the most famous was Anita Berber, a dancer and actress whose lifestyle would be shocking even in today's tabloids. Born in 1899, she studied ballet and Dalcroze movement (a methodology to teach music through movement). She moved to Berlin at 16 and worked as a professional dancer, model, and silent film actress. Berber was a pioneer of expressionist dance, creating strange, intense performance pieces with titles like "Suicide" and "Morphium." She danced naked, dressed androgynously, dyed her hair an unnatural shade of red, was openly bisexual, and carried a monkey around.

Berber was also a consummate party girl, and her personal life soon overshadowed her artistic work. She was addicted to almost every drug available in Berlin at the time: her favorite was to mix chloroform and ether (two early anesthetics) in a bowl with a white rose and then eat the rose petals. She turned to prostitution to pay for her drug habit. She died of tuberculosis in 1928, at just 29 years old.

Berber is a potent symbol for Weimar cabaret: artistic and innovative, decadent and destructive, spinning brilliantly out of control, and cut down in her prime.

RISE OF NAZI GERMANY

THE TRIALS OF THE GERMAN ECONOMY

At the start of World War I, Germany was a rising power. Bolstered by a strong economy, a widening system of international trade, and a growing military, the country had ambitions of European expansion and control. But four years of battle took a huge toll on the cultural, political, and economic future of the nation. Germany suffered a greater loss of life than any other Allied or Central power, with over 1.7 million men killed among the war's 8.5 million death total. Including soldiers wounded, missing, or imprisoned, the German casualty count rose to 7,142,558, just under 65% of the 11 million soldiers deployed in battle.

Such a shattering loss of life had a major economic impact on the nation. In the post-war years, the government faced an overwhelming demand for pensions (from surviving soldiers) and compensation (for war widows). These needs, combined with the material costs of war, paved a daunting road to recovery for every European nation. But Germany also faced a different set of challenges: the stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles. The document, which laid out the terms of peace, placed the responsibility for War squarely on Germany's shoulders and ensured that the price of the nation's recovery would not be confined to its own borders.

The treaty dictated that Germany would be tasked with paying heavy reparations (in money and resources) to the victorious Allied powers. Essentially, the document laid out a prolonged punishment for Germany and established a narrative that held Germany accountable for all of the damages of war. The Treaty was both economically and psychologically devastating for the nation, combining insurmountable costs with a humiliating public defeat.

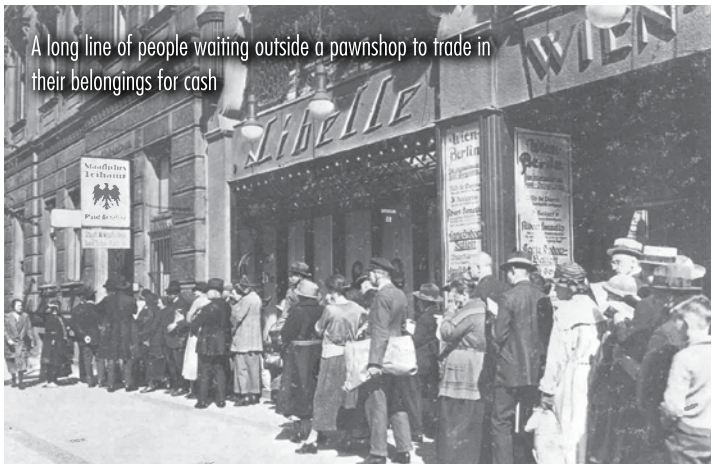
Prior to the War, Germany had a gold-backed currency, but they lost the gold standard in the four years of combat. Now indebted to other nations (to the final tune of $31.5 billion), the government simply did not have enough money, neither to pay its debts nor to pay its workers. So the Central Bank printed more money, leading to a period of inflation in which German currency completely lost its value. By 1923, the peak of German hyperinflation, money was essentially meaningless.

In the years after the war, the international community realized that Germany simply would not be able to pay the reparation costs they demanded. The United States, in particular, was frustrated by the fact that countries waiting for reparation payments from Germany couldn't reimburse the U.S. for war loans. So the U.S. Reparations Committee offered a potential solution: the Dawes Plan. Adopted in 1924, the Plan laid out a course of action to help Germany reestablish economic stability. By 1928, aided by the institution of the plan and by U.S. loans, the German economy was booming.

But after the stock market crash of 1929, the U.S. could no longer loan money to Germany, and the entire international community suffered from decreased monetary resources (and, thus, decreased trade). Once again, German savings lost their value, and unemployment skyrocketed (from 3 million in 1929 to 6 million, or 1 in 3 Germans, in 1932). After a dramatic rise to prosperity in the mid-to-late 1920s, Germany was now firmly back on the bottom, and the national unrest from the post-war years was poised to make a violent recurrence.

THE RISE OF THE NAZI PARTY

Economically strapped and left in the diplomatic cold, German citizens were looking for someone to blame. Many of them turned to the Social Democratic Party, the majority party of the Reichstag, or German parliament. The Reichstag and the entire government, the Weimar Republic, were obvious scapegoats for the poor quality of German life. The parliamentary democracy had been established in the wake of war, and its leaders had been instrumental in peace talks that led to the hated Treaty of Versailles. And the legend of their perceived betrayal became known as the "stab-in-the-back myth," or *Dolchstosslegende*, a narrative that sparked a polarization of German politics and spawned a number of radical right-wing parties.



A long line of people waiting outside a pawnshop to trade in their belongings for cash

A large crowd waiting to hear Hitler speak

As the authority of the Weimar Republic flailed and the power of right-wing parties grew, a radical right-wing activist by the name of Adolf Hitler began to attract attention. He was an inspiring speaker, vocal in his hatred of the Weimar government and firm in his belief that Germany could return to its prestigious past. In 1919, he joined the newly-formed German Workers' Party, a group united by a deep nationalistic pride and a pronounced anti-Semitism. In 1920, the party changed its name to the National Socialist German Workers' Party, or *Nazi*, for short. In 1921, Hitler became their leader and began to spread his notion of "pure" German-blooded dominance.

The party was divisive but a relatively small player in German politics until after the Crash of 1929. Hitler, however, attracted national attention in the Beer Hall Putsch of 1923, an attempted overthrow of local authorities in Munich. The armed rebellion was ultimately unsuccessful, and Hitler was tried and jailed for high treason (he served one year of his five year sentence). But his 24-day trial promoted his cause, giving him a public stage on which to proclaim his anti-Weimar and anti-Semitic beliefs. By the end of his testimony, he had become a national figure and, in some quarters, had gained support for his political cause. Though the Nazis were not yet a government majority (they received only 3% of the 1924 Reichstag vote), the German people were eager for a savior—and Hitler was primed for the role. When he was released from prison in 1925, Hitler began rebuilding the Nazi party. The party's ranks swelled quickly, from 27,000 members in 1925 to 108,000 members in 1929, the year of the Wall Street Crash.

With the parliament system so weakened, the struggling Weimar Republic reached the brink of collapse just as the Nazi party was rising to power. In 1930, the party received 18.3% of the vote, making it the second-largest party in the Reichstag. In 1932, though Hitler lost the presidential election to the incumbent von Hindenburg, the Nazi party garnered an impressive percentage of the July parliament elections (37%), which made them the largest party in the Reichstag. In the November elections of the same year, the party faltered slightly, attaining only 33% of the votes. Hitler, in a series of backroom negotiations, sought to attain greater personal power in the government through an appointment to the position of Chancellor. At first, President von Hindenburg, annoyed by Hitler's power plays, refused to consider the appointment. But continual pressure and instability in the government forced his hand, and he finally appointed Hitler as Chancellor in January of 1933, hoping that the position might check his quest for dominance.

But Hitler's rise to power was only beginning. Because of various political pressures in March of 1933, the Reichstag transferred its legislative power to Hitler's cabinet, thus finalizing the demise of the Weimar government's parliamentary democracy. In April of 1933, the cabinet passed the Law for the Restoration of Professional Civil Service, which abolished trade unions and removed Jews (and other non-Aryan citizens) from government and state positions. The Law was one of the first anti-Semitic legislative acts of the newly unchecked government. Over the following six years, Reich legislation would boom to include some 400 decrees, laws, and regulations inhibiting the rights of non-Aryan Germans. By mid-July of 1933, the Nazi party was the *only* political party remaining in Germany; all others had been outlawed or had dissolved under police pressure.

When the elderly President von Hindenburg died in August of 1934, Hitler assumed the powers of Presidency, in addition to those of the Chancellorship. He granted himself the title *Führer und Reichskanzler* (Leader and Imperial Chancellor) and established the *Führerprinzip*, or Leader Principle, which equated his will with the future of the German people. With no figure above Hitler's jurisdiction and no government process to check his power, the course was set for the genocide and war to come.•

DESIGNER STATEMENTS

PEGGY EISENHAUER AND MIKE BALDASSARI—LIGHTS

The lighting in *Cabaret* is simultaneously everywhere and nowhere. It is conceived as a theatrical, period, low-rent nightclub. It is a space without a defined edge that exists with an invisible perimeter. The audience sits at tables wrapped around the stage, becoming part of the club environment. With individual lights on each table as part of the lighting design, the audience can be connected by light to the performance space. The stage space is framed in different runs of light bulbs in varying states of decay. These cabaret-style "chaser" lights delineate a performance space, beyond which we do not see vividly. All of the lights have been placed by an imaginary "house lighting guy" who would make various lights work the best way they could, from what was available. There is no symmetry, nothing slick or measured, only a "hand-made" quality of individual compositions strung together musically.

For almost every primary focus of attention, there is a background/secondary focus of members of the ensemble and band watching the action. This gives a natural additional mid-layer of lighting in the picture. Our goal is to allow the space to expand and contract musically, so we can sense but never see the dark edges.

The lights of the Kit Kat Klub

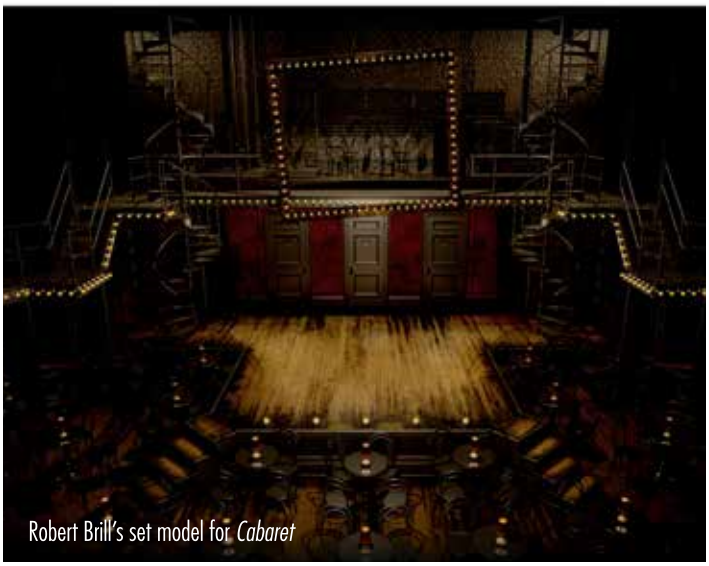
ROBERT BRILL—SETS

The challenge of designing the set for *Cabaret* is that it's really so much more than creating a set design—it's about imagining an entire world for both the actors and the audience. It's an immersive experience that places the audience inside the world of the nightclub. By doing so, it becomes a transformative experience where the audience becomes fully engaged as participants in the story.

To accomplish this unique "total-experience," it was important to find the right venue for our production. That makes the project 'site-specific', which means that our play is specific to this location—to Studio 54. Originally built as The Gallo Opera House in 1927, the building has served many purposes in its time, perhaps most notably as a legendary nightclub during the 1970s and 80s. Named Studio 54, it was a place of fantasy and adrenaline—a place where everyone was onstage—where everything and anything was possible. Many called it "divine-decadence." This made it the perfect home for *Cabaret*.

While our audience may be familiar with the hey-day of Studio 54, the rich architectural character and history of the building shares the same time period as the world of our play. It is an ideal merging of worlds. This is nowhere better defined than at the entrance to the theatre, where above the original glass doors to Studio 54, a red curtain reveals a sign that reads "in here life is beautiful," a haunting statement from the play filled with rich meaning and irony.

Through the doors begins a journey of both decadence and decay—or what we like to call "decayed-decadence." The interior of the theatre is dark—every square-inch of the theatre has been painted black and crimson, and the original details of plaster ornament have been restored to their original gold-lustre. The chamber of the theatre interior features hundreds of glowing red lampshades, which establishes both the charm and seductive world of the nightclub. However, what becomes clear to the audience as they enter this world of decadence is that there's an unusual feeling of decay and tarnish to the world of the nightclub. Director Sam Mendes likes to think of it as "embracing the rough edges,"a world of darkness masked by an imaginary surface of beauty, temptation, and allure. Welcome to the Kit Kat Klub!



Robert Brill's set model for *Cabaret*

Cabaret orchestra from Roundabout's 1998 production.

WILLIAM IVEY LONG—COSTUMES

This production is unique for me, as it is a remount of the 1998 production. Although the design will feel similar, I started from scratch when approaching the design. The costumes mostly represent a process of "deconstruction." I began by dressing the actors in full costume and then eliminated one piece of clothing at a time, photographing each look as we went along. I then put all the photographs on a board, and the director Sam Mendes, and I chose how dressed (or undressed) each character should be. And though it looks as if most of the women are in their underwear, underneath their corsets, bras, panties, and garter belts, they wear an additional pair of underwear beneath the outer layer, including bras with microphones sewn into the seams.

William Ivey Long's *Cabaret* costume renderings of a Kit Kat Girl and Fräulein Kost

THE LIFE OF STUDIO 54

Studio 54 was known for two things before Roundabout purchased this historic theatre: being a famous club and being a cursed theatre, with shows sometimes opening and closing in the same night. However, Roundabout turned Studio 54's luck around with successful productions like *Sunday in the Park with George*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and, of course, *Cabaret*.

STUDIO 54 TIMELINE

1927: Gallo Opera House built by Italian entrepreneur Fortune Gallo for the San Carlo Opera Company.
November 7, 1927: First production at Gallo Opera House, *La Boheme*, closes after less than three weeks of performances.
December 1, 1927: The opera house is renamed The Gallo Theatre and does a production of *Electra*, which only runs for 12 performances.
October 21, 1929: Revival of *A Tailor-Made Man* opens three days before Black Thursday, the start of The Depression.
May 12, 1930: Theatre re-opens with a performance of Henrik Ibsen's *The Vikings*. Closes after eight performances.
1932: Spanish Theatre of Madrid occupies the space for several weeks, attempting to bring good luck to the theatre; meets the same fate as all the previous occupants.
April 8, 1933: Gertrude Cox stars in a musical about life on Kentucky race tracks titled *Hummin' Sam*. Opens and closes on the same night.
1937: Space renamed the Federal Music Theatre with aid from the WPA's Federal Theatre Project, which strives to create a performance venue that would only charge 25 or 50 cents per ticket. In 1939 the project was defunded and the theatre was left open for purchase again.
1939: The theatre is renamed The New Yorker Theatre and starts with a performance of *The Swing Mikado*, an adaptation of *The Mikado* with an all-black cast.
1940: CBS-TV renames the space yet again to the CBS Radio Playhouse Number 4, only to have another name change after World War II as CBS Studio Number 52. During this time the studio is home to popular shows including "The Jack Benny Show," "Captain Kangaroo," "Password," and "The $64,000 Question."
1974: CBS decides to move most of their studios to California, and the space becomes vacant again.
April 16, 1977: Restaurateurs Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager purchase the building and renovate the interior to create the club popularly known as Studio 54. Studio 54 is known for only admitting the rich, famous, and beautiful.

With its capacity at only 700, people line up around the block for a chance to go inside.
November 1979: Rubell and Schrager begin to take money from the business for personal use. The IRS comes down on them and both plead guilty and spend over a year in jail.
February 4, 1980: Studio 54 closes after having a last blow-out party.
1982: A second incarnation of the club opens with attempts to keep the same environment as the original Studio 54 and undergoes various changes as nightclub, concert hall, and more until 1998.
November 12, 1998: Roundabout Theatre Company's production of *Cabaret* moves from the Henry Miller's Theatre to Studio 54 and runs until January 4, 2004.
2003: Roundabout Theatre Company purchases Studio 54.
April 22, 2004: Broadway debut of *Assassins* by Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman opens and goes on to win five Tony awards.
December 2, 2004: Another Sondheim and Weidman collaboration, *Pacific Overtures*, opens at Studio 54.
2005: Roundabout Theatre Company removes the cabaret style seating and adds in traditional raked seating, creating a 1,002-seat house.
April 2005: *A Streetcar Named Desire* receives its 8th Broadway production, starring John C. Reilly and Natasha Richardson.
April 20, 2006: *The Threepenny Opera* opens, starring Alan Cumming.
February 2008: Roundabout brings over *Sunday in the Park with George* from the Menier.
April 30, 2009: *Waiting for Godot* opens starring Nathan Lane, Bill Irwin, John Goodman, and John Glover.
May 2012: *Harvey* opens starring Jim Parsons.
November 2012: *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* opens and receives 5 Tony nominations.
March 21,2014: First preview of the return of *Cabaret*.

KIT KAT BOYS AND GIRLS

Andrea Goss

Evan D. Siegel

Caleb Damschroder

Kaleigh Cronin

Will Carlyon

Dylan Paul

Benjamin Eakeley

Jane Pfitsch

Jessica Pariseau

The Kit Kat Boys and Girls answer a few questions to help us understand what it takes to work in the Kit Kat Klub.

Andrea Goss explains what she believes is the most difficult part of being a Kit Kat Girl:
"For me, I think the hardest part is the dancing. It is amazing choreography, but it's all about finding the balance between doing the steps and staying in the world of each girl's life. These girls are tired, poor, and probably on drugs, so they are not going to look like perfect showgirls. It's definitely a challenge, but I look forward to finding my own specific way of moving as Frenchie."

Evan D. Siegel talks about his favorite moment in the show:
"I think that the final moment expresses the show's message with poignancy and with brutal honesty. Harsh reality comes crashing back in, and for a few frightening moments, it stares the audience unblinkingly in the face: we cannot simply close our eyes and tell ourselves that 'life is beautiful.' The reality is that life is not always beautiful, and refusing to acknowledge this truth can have dire consequences. This has certainly been true throughout history, and sadly, the show's message is just as relevant today as it has ever been."

Caleb Damschroder describes the history behind the instrument he will use for the show:
"The banjo I'm playing is actually my grandfather's. My dad and grandfather and I used to play square dances together when I was in high school. My grandfather was a State Representative for years, so there is actually a plaque on the head of the banjo inscribed with 'Representative Damschroder.'"

Kaleigh Cronin jokes about her new favorite pick-up line:
"I'm not a fan of pick-up lines, but I may have to start using this one: "I have hairy armpits. Want to buy me a drink?" Just kidding. But not about the hairy armpits part. We have to grow it for the show!"

Will Carlyon discusses his process of becoming a quadruple threat:
"I started learning cello when I was nine, but I was much more of an athlete growing up, so singing, acting, and dancing didn't come until much later. I started taking voice lessons and acting in shows when I was in high school, but I didn't really take a dance class until college."

Dylan Paul gives us the recipe to be a Kit Kat Boy:
"It's different for everyone. But broad strokes would be luck+talent+experience+drive+freedom from entanglements and inhibitions+desire to serve the story. Sprinkle some joy over that. Pressure cook for 6 weeks. Ding."

Benjamin Eakeley shares his history of learning the piano as a young boy:
"I began studying piano at age 5 and entered my first competition a few years later. The concerts for winners of our annual competitions were held at Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall; I played solo piano there 6 times from ages 12-17."

Jane Pfitsch lists the necessities for being a Kit Kat Girl:
"Knee pads, valve oil, rosin, and a good long warm-up."

Jessica Pariseau tells us how she learned all the different skills needed to be a Kit Kat Girl:
"Dancing came first. I used to dance around the back yard so, thankfully, my mom decided dance lessons were for me. The studio I lucked into was run by one of Bob Fosse's assistants and his wife. They instilled the love of dance in me but also the love of singing and acting as well. Music lessons came in grade school. Again, my parents were kind enough to put me in lessons, this time for piano and clarinet, and I've always been grateful!"

PRE-SHOW LESSON PLAN

THEMATIC QUESTION: How do individuals respond to organized discrimination?

MATERIALS: Papers and Pen. Optional: paper plates, cups, napkins, and prop menu; colored arm bands or badges to give to each group.

KNOW (FACTS, INFORMATION, VOCABULARY):
Improvisation (an unscripted scene discrimination). Adolf Hitler, Nazis, Cabaret (For more detailed background, students may read "The Rise of the Nazi Party" on pages 16-17 of this UPSTAGE Guide.)

UNDERSTAND (COMPREHENSION OF THE BIG IDEAS):
Discrimination impacts all members of a society, but it is experienced differently depending on one's status in the society.

DO (ACTIVE DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING):
Through guided improvisation, students will role-play as citizens of a fictional society that is becoming progressively more discriminatory against some of its citizens.

INCITING INCIDENT (THE HOOK:)
Ask students to privately think about a time they, or someone they knew, faced discrimination because of race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. Allow a few minutes for quiet reflection. Optionally, ask a few volunteers to share their experiences and feelings around it.

EXPOSITION (THE VOCABULARY, CONCEPTS, AND TOOLS THAT WILL INTRODUCE LEARNERS TO AND ALLOW THEM TO INVESTIGATE THE THEMATIC QUESTION.)
"The musical *Cabaret* takes place in 1930s Germany, just as Hitler and the Nazi party were beginning to take power, but before the Holocaust. It was a complicated time for the Germans, and most people did not know what would happen when Hitler was in control. Today, we are going to use improvisation to explore what it feels like to live under a government that systematically discriminates against one group of people."

RISING ACTION: (LEARNERS APPLY VOCABULARY, CONCEPTS, AND TOOLS TO RESPOND TO THE THEMATIC QUESTION THROUGH A SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES.)

1. Divide/Assign students into 4 groups. BLUE, RED, and YELLOW Families have 4 people each. Everyone else plays the RESTAURANT WORKERS. (Pre-arranged before class or randomized with through drawing) If using arm bands or badges, distribute them now.
2. Allow 3 minutes for Families to decide their characters' relationships and Restaurant Workers to decide on jobs: Hosts, Waitpersons, or Cooks.
3. Setup room as Restaurant: 3 "tables," a kitchen area, an "Entrance" (without leaving the classroom). Optionally give props to Restaurant Workers – Menus, plates, napkins, cups.
4. In a very official voice, announce: "DAY 1: "Everyone is equal in this society. It is dinner time, and we are in the restaurant. The BLUE, RED, and YELLOW families are all coming to the restaurant." (Allow 3 minutes to improvise a normal day in the restaurant, where everyone is treated equally.)
5. Announce "DAY 2: "It's a few months later and the YELLOW people have become very unpopular in the country. The RED people blame the YELLOW people for all the country's problems. The BLUE people are undecided. Restaurant Workers can decide their own loyalty." (Repeat dinner improvisation. Allow more time, about 5-7 minutes for students to explore different interactions based on the new circumstances.)
6. Announce DAY 3: "Now it's a few months later. The RED people have won the elections and taken control of the country. All businesses are discouraged against serving the YELLOW people." (Repeat dinner improvisation. Monitor student role-play carefully, and allow students to role-play discrimination scenarios, but stop if interactions escalate or become too upsetting for students. Allow 5-7 minutes.)

PRE-SHOW LESSON PLAN (CONTINUED)

FALLING ACTION: (LEARNERS REFLECT ON THE MOMENT OF TRUTH, ARTICULATE THEIR CHOICES, AND JUSTIFY THEIR RESPONSES TO THE THEMATIC QUESTION.)
ASK representative students from each group: How would you describe the experience from your perspective? How did it change from DAY 1 to DAY 3?
ASK: How do different people experience discrimination differently, within the same society?
ASK: Why do you think some people responded differently than others? (Try to identify a few examples of people making different choices to the circumstances)

DENOUEMENT: (LEARNERS ANTICIPATE HOW THEIR RESPONSES TO THE THEMATIC QUESTION MIGHT BE APPLICABLE IN THE FUTURE.)
As you watch *Cabaret*, consider how different characters in the play respond to the rise of the Nazis in different ways. See if you can you understand their point of view and their choices.

SUPPLEMENTAL PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

How does a designer analyze the script to make choices about the setting?

Cabaret's setting provides both a real location for the scenes and songs and also stands as a metaphor for the escapism people sought at the time. By analyzing a short section of text and making artistic choices about the space, students can prepare for the immersive experience of the production. (For more background on Berlin's cabaret scene in the 1930s, see page 14 of this UPSTAGE Guide.)

MATERIALS: White/colored paper; colored pens, pencils, and/or crayons. (This could also be a collage activity using magazines, photographs, print-outs of period images.)

Read and discuss this selection from *Cabaret*'s opening number:

EMCEE:
"Ladies and Gentlemen: Good evening.
Do you feel good?
Leave your troubles outside…
So – life is disappointing? Forget it!
In here life is beautiful…
The girls are beautiful…
Even the orchestra is beautiful!"

Guide a brief discussion to explore the clues in the script about the setting: What kind of place is it? How does it look? What is the atmosphere? What might be happening outside? Who comes here? Identify key words that give clues about the setting. (Advanced: you could also discuss irony and ask students whether they believe this character is sincere or ironic. How would this change the way they see the location?)

ACTIVATE: Using their evidence from the script, students draw a rendering of (or collage) the cabaret setting. Encourage them to think about the configuration of the space, relationship of audience to performers, its size, and to include choices about decoration, color, and lighting.

REFLECT: As they share their work, ask students to articulate and defend their choices. Challenge students to support their choices with evidence from the script. Ask them to predict what they think the *Cabaret* set will look like before coming to the show.

POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

FOR EDUCATORS

POST-SHOW LESSON PLAN

THEMATIC QUESTION: How does a cabaret performer make a comment on current events?

MATERIALS: Weimar Cabaret article from the UPSTAGE Guide; access to information on current events; name tag, hat, or suspenders to designate the Emcee, simple song lyrics and limericks printed

KNOW (FACTS, INFORMATION, VOCABULARY):
cabaret, conférencier, shock value, parody, fourth wall

UNDERSTAND (COMPREHENSION OF THE BIG IDEAS):
How cabaret performers used parody, shock value, and breaking the fourth wall to engage their audience in a topical exploration.

DO (ACTIVE DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING):
Create and perform cabaret acts in the classroom-turned-cabaret.

INCITING INCIDENT (THE HOOK):
Learners engage in the investigation of the thematic question through an action or event. As students settle, teacher, wearing something that designates him or her the Emcee, says, in the style of an emcee: *Willkommen, Bienvenue, Welcome to OUR cabaret!* Begin interacting with students as if they are the audience, questioning: *In Berlin in the thirties cabaret performers parodied Nazis. What should we parody? What's really on your mind?* Get responses, repeat them, and then conclude with something mildly shocking like: *Politics, economics! So many choices! Perhaps Miley Cyrus? Shall I twerk?*

EXPOSITION (THE VOCABULARY, CONCEPTS, AND TOOLS THAT WILL INTRODUCE LEARNERS TO AND ALLOW THEM TO INVESTIGATE THE THEMATIC QUESTION.)
What did I just do that was similar to production of *Cabaret* you saw? (talk to audience, talk about politics, use humor, use shocking things) Scribe answers and ask students to keep these techniques in mind.

Based on the production you saw, what topics do cabarets address? Scribe answers.

Students read "Weimar Cabaret" article from UPSTAGE Guide, highlighting or circling topics that cabarets addressed. Use this information to add to the list. Why do you think cabaret performers chose these topics?

RISING ACTION: (LEARNERS APPLY VOCABULARY, CONCEPTS, AND TOOLS TO RESPOND TO THE THEMATIC QUESTION THROUGH A SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES.)

- Individually, students list three current event topics they feel would make good cabaret topics. Popcorn out ideas, and land on one or two topics that resonate with the class.

- Break students into groups of three or four. Give the groups three options for their cabaret act: a song, a dance, or a poem. Make a simple limerick and simple song lyrics available for adaptation. Give students time to create and rehearse their cabaret act.

- Ask each group to name their act and create a set list on the board. Rearrange the classroom to create a stage and seating area.

POST-SHOW LESSON PLAN (CONTINUED)

MOMENT OF TRUTH:
Learners demonstrate their understanding of the thematic question.
Students perform their cabaret acts, with the teacher acting as conférencier and introducing each act.

FALLING ACTION:
Learners reflect on the moment of truth, articulate their choices, and justify their responses to the thematic question.
When you were performing, how did you get the audience involved?
When you were sitting the audience, how did the performers get you to think about this topic?
Why do humans use humor and entertainment to talk about serious subjects?

DENOUEMENT:
Learners anticipate how their responses to the thematic question might be applicable in the future.
Where do we see the elements of cabaret in modern society? In our pop culture?

SUPPLEMENTAL POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

How were individuals challenged to make personal choices in the face of rising Nazism?

After seeing how the rise of the Nazis impacts the characters in *Cabaret*, consider these lines from Fräulein Schneider's song "What Would You Do?" (For more detailed background, students may read "The Rise of the Nazi Party" on page 16-17 of this UPSTAGE Guide.)

With a storm in the wind, what would you do?
Suppose you're the one frightened voice
Being told what the choice
Must be,
Go on, tell me,
I will listen.
What would you do if you were me?

ACTIVATE: Use a standing agree/disagree exercise, asking students to stand on either side of the room, or the middle, if they agree or disagree with the following statements:

- "Fräulein Schneider made the right choice not to marry Herr Schultz."
- "Cliff made the right choice to leave Berlin."
- "Sally made the right choice to ignore the events around her."

(For each statement, ask a few students to explain their position)

WRITE: Ask students to choose one of the major characters (Cliff, Sally, Fräulein Schneider, Herr Schultz) and answer the question: "What would you do if you were me?" Write a letter to one of the characters, giving advice on what you think they should do and why.

REFLECT: Consider what it must have been like living in the 1930s, without having the historical perspective about Hitler and the Nazis that we have now. What did the people know then? What did they not know, that we know now? How does this lack of perspective affect their decisions? How can we relate to this?

GLOSSARY

PROPRIETOR	Business or property owner *Herr Shultz is the proprietor of a fruit store.*
INKLING	A small hint or clue *Sally Bowles explains that her mother doesn't have an inkling that she is working in a nightclub.*
CHUMS	Close friends *Sally Bowles explains that her mother believes that she is with her school chums in Europe.*
ALLURE	To attract, commonly through use of charm or appearance *Sally Bowles talks about how she wants to allure people to the Kit Kat Klub.*
TACITURN	Quiet or speaking infrequently *Sally Bowles describes a taciturn Malaysian man.*
SPINSTER	An older unmarried woman *Fräulein Schneider is concerned that she is being perceived as a spinster.*

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ABOUT ROUNDABOUT

ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

Founded in 1965, Roundabout Theatre Company has grown from a small 150-seat theatre in a converted supermarket basement to become the nation's most influential not-for-profit theatre company, as well as one of New York City's leading cultural institutions. With five stages on and off Broadway, Roundabout now reaches over 700,000 theatergoers, students, educators and artists across the country and around the world every year. We are committed to producing the highest quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure, and providing accessibility to all audiences.

2014-2015 SEASON

Book by Joe Masteroff
Music by John Kander
Lyrics by Fred Ebb

Starring Alan Cumming and Michelle Williams

Co-directed and choreographed by Rob Marshall

Directed by Sam Mendes

By Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman

Directed by Scott Ellis

By Tom Stoppard

Directed by Carey Perloff

By Tom Stoppard

Starring Ewan McGregor, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Josh Hamilton and Cynthia Nixon

Directed by Sam Gold

Music & Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
Book by James Lapine

Reimagined by Fiasco Theater

Directed by Noah Brady and Ben Steinfeld

Book & Lyrics by Betty Comden & Adolph Green
Music by Cy Coleman

Choreographed by Warren Carlyle

Directed by Scott Ellis

By Jeff Augustin

Directed by Giovanna Sardelli

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: SYDNEY BEERS, GENERAL MANAGER

Ted Sod:Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated?

Sydney Beers: I was born in Wilmington, Delaware and went on to study theatre at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. I got my college degree in just three years and came straight to New York City to pursue a career in acting. As I auditioned, I took a part time job in ticketing at what was, at the time, a small Broadway theatre called Roundabout. Performing in several shows opened my eyes to the kind of collaboration it took to create independent theatre in New York City. I became interested in how the shows I was participating in were actually coming to fruition. I realized how valuable it was that I was working at Roundabout and made it a point to learn everything I could while there. I worked my way up in the company and became the Director of Sales, the Administrative Director, and finally the General Manager of the organization and now I am Executive Producer on all of the musicals we produce.

TS: How would you describe the job of being General Manager?

SB: There is no manual that will ever completely prepare you for being a General Manager at a company like Roundabout. As a GM here, you not only facilitate the production of the show on a practical level (overseeing budgets, contracts and staffing), but you must also be a part of the creative process, working with the creative team and acting company to provide a safe and supportive environment so that everyone is able to do their best work. I supervise the General Managers of each theatre and I also directly manage the production of the shows at Studio 54 and the Stephen Sondheim Theatre. There is never a dull moment, but being an integral part of creating the art we produce is simply priceless.

TS: Currently you are executive producing *Cabaret*. What does that job entail?

SB: I oversee every aspect of the production process from the physical (sets, costumes, lighting, sound, music and dance) to the intangible (being a sounding board for the director, creative team, company manager and house staff). I am responsible for making sure all the pieces of producing a musical fit together properly.

TS: What has been the best part of your work at Roundabout?

SB: There is no feeling quite like when the curtain goes up on first preview. I think back to when I was reading *Cabaret* for the first time and reflect on how many passionate people it took to get it up on that stage. It is very gratifying and makes me extremely proud. Todd Haimes has such a gift for choosing work to produce that wouldn't happen anywhere else and it really sets us apart as a theatre company. Working with Todd is one of the great rewards of my job! When *Cabaret* closed in 2004, it was very emotional as it was the first production I felt completely immersed in as a General Manager. I have worked on countless productions that have given me a sense of accomplishment that I know is rare in this industry; but, I have to say, remounting *Cabaret* this season and getting to work with Sam, Rob and Alan again feels like a full circle dream come true.

WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

FOR EDUCATORS

TICKET POLICY

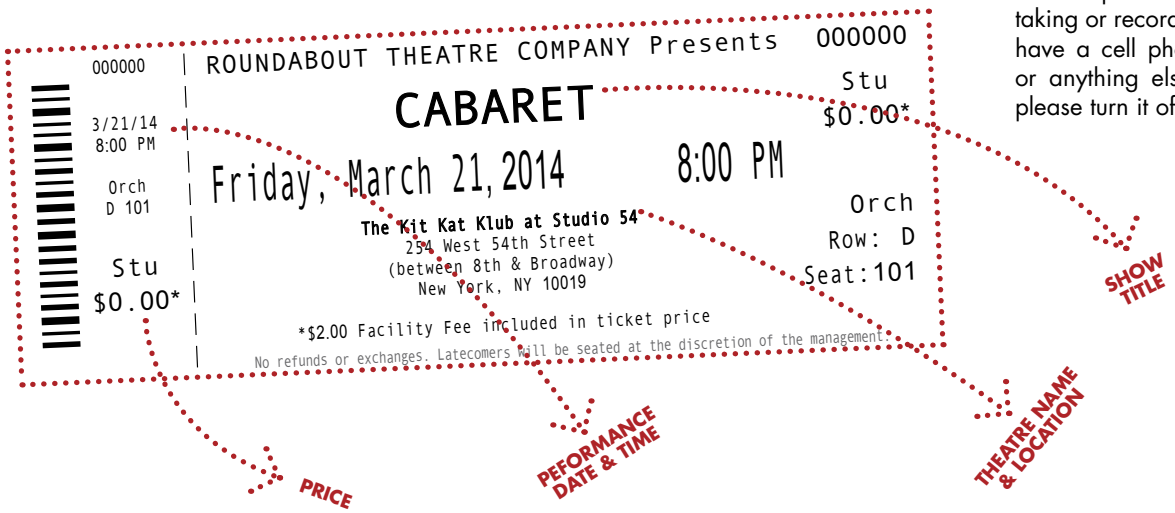
You will notice that your ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, beeper, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



Roundabout Theatre Company gratefully acknowledges the following for their generous support of Education at Roundabout during the 2014-2015 school year:

Anonymous
John Noffo Kahn and Mark Addison
Theodore H. Barth Foundation
Lisa Pevaroff Cohn and Gary Cohn
Con Edison
Jeanne Feldhusen and Gerry Jager
Kathy Fisher and Rocco Maggiotto
Kiendl and John Gordon
Barbara McIntyre Hack
Meryl Hartzband
The Heckscher Foundation for Children
Muna and Basem Hishmeh
H. Brett Humphreys and Samantha Merton
City Council Member Vincent Ignizio
Joseph and Michelle Jacobs
JPB Foundation
Erica and Michael Karsch
Elroy and Terry Krumholz Foundation
Barbara Lee and Alston Gardner
Josie Maynard and Jim Kelly
Tristin and Marty Mannion
Patty and Mark Manoff
Andrew Martin-Weber
Anita and David Massengill
Sara Miller McCune/SAGE Publications, Inc.
McGraw Hill Financial
Terrence Meck and Breton Alberti
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As a not-for-profit, we rely on the support of our individual, foundation, corporate, and government donors. Due to space limitation, this list reflects gifts of $5,000 and above to Education programs and activities at Roundabout.

Education programs at Roundabout are supported, in part, by public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature.

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