

Project Description

Background

Weimar Germany was awash with new art, music and theatre that has influenced Western cultural movements ever since. The Bauhaus was the best known tertiary arts institution of the Twentieth Century. Names like Kandinsky, Klee and Johannes Itten still resonate through art schools and galleries today. The architecture of Gropius has influenced much modern architectural works.

At the same time, Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill were writing some of the most significant music and theatre in the canon of popular theatre and musicals. Brecht was number two or three on the Nazi hit list of artists. Brecht's legacy in twentieth century theatre has been unmatched by anyone except Stanislavsky. The song ***Mack The Knife***, first featured in the 1928 musical *Threepenny Opera* (based on *The Beggars Opera*) and has been reprised by the likes of Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Bobby Darren and The Doors. It features a mesmeric tune with tough lyrics. In our project it will be a focusing point for an exceptional work of theatre, art and music.

Projects Aims

The play aims to:

- Integrate Drama, Art, Movies and Music in a dynamic project;
- Inspire audiences to value cultural events and artistic activity as having great merit and worth in an age of commodification of intellectual, spiritual and social activity;
- Entertain while stimulating discussion on parallels between a foregone era and our own times.

Sample Text for Children Of The Bauhaus

Act 1

Children Of The Bauhaus

1

FADE IN SCREEN IMAGE.

Elsa
My little Jewish boy! So intense ...
A misguided youth! Product of The
Bauhaus. It has a good reputation
now. It didn't always ... at least
not among most people ...

PAUSE

And of course the whole Hitler thing!
It was so regrettable ...

Interviewer
Regrettable?

Elsa
Regrettable! (PAUSE) Of course it was
regrettable.

SILENCE

Elsa
Horrible. Regrettable ... No sane
person would ever want a war!
Destruction!

SILENCE

INTERVIEWER
And Weimer?
Elsa
What do you want me to say? Without
Weimer there would never have been
Hitler? Is that what you want me to
say? Hitler was an artist too ...
remember! Nazism as defined by Hitler
was as much an art movement as politics.
It was unfortunate he didn't stay with
the art ... diverted by lesser human
beings ... criminals ...

INTERVIEWER
Criminals?

Elsa
But you are trying to trap me into
saying something stupid ... banal ...
I am old ... not senile ...

INTERVIEWER
Sorry Miss. Lehar ... Sorry if I ...

Elsa
You are not sorry ... (PAUSE) There
are criminals of influence in the
world today. Potentially equal to
Hitler and you pretend they are
not criminals ... Look around you.
Read the papers. But you cannot
bring yourself to say they are evil.
(Puffs her cigarette.)

Elsa
Depressing people ...

INTERVIEWER
Depressing?

Elsa
The world is the same as ever ...
But you cannot bring yourself to
believe the unthinkable about the
future.

SILENCE.

Elsa
Johannes believed in the possibility of the impossible. Impossible. But how can one enjoy any work that is so depressing. His art ... all their art ... it was so depressing and ugly. Beautiful Johannes was misled into the ugly world of decadent art ... decadent approach ... At least the NAZIs held out the possibility of beauty ... I miss the beautiful art and grandeur ... the possibility of ennobled mankind ...

SILENCE.

ELSA
Poor Johannes with his ideals ... I still young men like him: idealistic, beautiful ... misguided ... dangerous!

INTERVIEWER
He was Jewish.

ELSA
You are trying to paint me as anti-Semitic. I will not fall for your trap. Johannes and I ... we were close.

SILENCE.

INTERVIEWER
What happened that night?

Elsa
That night! That night! What night? It might have been more than one night. Perhaps days ... Weeks ... Years ... I'm old ...

INTERVIEWER
But you remember!!!

Elsa
And I believe what happened in that silly little bar room might have led directly to the war ... or at least the foundations that made it possible!

She smokes her cigarette looking directly into the camera. The screen rises slowly.

2

MACK ENTERS THE CABARET around the audience.

YOUKALI TANGO is played on his Piano Accordion. The Untstien Band are slowly moving to their positions.

YOUNG ELSA LEHAR stands centre stage directly behind where the screen had been. It is a misty stage.

Johannes (Voice Off)
Elsa! (Calling out) Elsa Lehar ...

ENTER JOHANNES.

Elsa
I see you still remember my name.
That is a start.

Johannes
Do you remember mine?

Elsa
Oh you are so shy.

Johannes
I'm ...

Elsa
But, I love shy boys ... Johannes.

Mack
A love story. Our very own Romeo
and Juliet: It's Elsa and Johannes.
Give them a big hand ladies und
gentlemen.

ENTER ROSA.

Rosa
Hey darlings, grab a schnapps! It's
always happy hour at Macks.

Elsa
You have such delicate features.
Almost like a woman's; beautiful
boy.

Johannes
Then you are a goddess.

Elsa
A goddess is something from beyond
this world. I am very much OF this
world.

Johannes
Very much ...

Elsa

Your friends say you are an artist.
Would you paint me?

Johannes
You wouldn't like my painting.

Elsa
Why not? I am told you are very good.

Johannes
Painting you would force me to look
into your heart.

Elsa
And what might you find in my heart?

Johannes
It is mostly ... GROTESQUE!

Elsa
Grotesque?

Johannes
We are protected by our masks of
civility and purity. But these are
only masks.

Elsa
Stop! Don't tell me you are one of
those depressing artists that paint
like madmen!

He smiles.

Johannes
We grew up during the great war.
And you accuse us of being mad? Who
are the madmen?

Elsa
Such crazy talk. I like it better
when you call me a goddess.

He goes to leave.

Elsa
But no. Take me and show me your
art.

They walk.

Mack
Notice how we introduce "art" with
love? Hmmm ... and why not add just a
dash of war! Hey?

LIGHTS UP on FRIEDL DECKER.

Friedl
Betrayal!

LIGHTS UP on BARDRIC HAHN.

Bardric
The future!

Friedl
Who's future Bardric Hahn?

Bardric
Friedl, Friedl, Friedl ... There is
no future for you if you stay with
those Bolshevik swine! The future
is National Socialist.

Friedl
The only reason I speak to you is
because our families knew each other
in Vienna.

Bardric
Oh yes dear Friedl! And I remember
the Jewish family at the end of the
street. I remember you didn't talk
to me then as you walked past our
house.

Friedl
We were never wealthy.

Bardric
Oh yes you were. You pretend to be
working class. But then you were off
being an artist at that decadent
Bauhaus with all those Comrades ...

Friedl
You joined the party too ...

Bardric
But I left. I think about the future.
You wait. Hitler will be triumphant.
You'll see ... (He laughs)

They both see Johannes and Elsa.

Bardric
But what do we see? Who is that at
Mack's Club on a night like this?
Your old boyfriend is having a good
time! Ya? Bauhaus Boy is flirting
with the enemy. Poor Friedl! Perhaps
Friedl would like to fraternize with
her enemy too?

He reaches out to touch her.

Friedl
Touch me and I'll throw up in your
face.

Mack
Ladies und Gentlemen: We have a
special guest tonight. She is the
star of the new sensational movie,
Blue Angel, to be released next year.
I give you Miss Marlene Dietrich.

LIGHTS UP ON Marlene. She uses a YOUNG MAN as a prop. He
stands beside and behind her. She at times strokes his
head.

Marlene
You ask me of love. Love isn't
exclusive, I'm not exclusive. I
love many men, women too. Love
can hurt, life can hurt, life
DOES hurt. But you won't hurt me,
will you. (She pauses)
Kiss me ...

The young man goes to kiss her. She gestures away from
him reaching out to a Young Woman.

Marlene
Kiss me! (The young woman moves closer)
Kiss me!

Marlene withdraws her advance.

Marlene
Ah but it's so tiring,
Don't get me wrong, I love it.
Making movies, the glamour, the
parties. All of this and being in
the public eye; scrutinised. It's
tiring; for I am a private person.
It's so tiring but I love it so.

She sings the song: FALLING IN LOVE AGAIN

Marlene
Falling in love again,
Never wanted to.
What am I to do?
Can't help it
Love's always been my game
Play it how I may
I was made that way
Can't help it
Men cluster to me like moths around a flame
And if their wings burn, I know I'm not to
blame
Falling in love again

Never wanted to
What am I to do?
Can't help it
Mack darts up to her.

Mack
A big hand Ladies and Gentlemen
for the one, the only, Miss
Marlene Dietrich.
The audience cheers.

Mack
I'm falling in love with you every
time Miss Dietrich.

Marlene
Oh Mack, you are too sweet.

Mack
Sweetness has nothing to do with it.

Marlene
(Giggling) I am delighted as always.

Mack
You'll do another song for us later
Miss Dietrich?

Marlene
If I am in the mood.

Mack
We'll do our best ...

Marlene
I know you will ...

A Waiter presents Miss Dietrich with a tall glass of
champagne.

Mack
You heard that ladies and gentlemen.
'Hope you are all enjoying the night
here at Mack's. I'm Mack and as always
I'm your host for the night. And what
a night we have for you! We have special
celebrity guests: Mr. Bertolt Brecht
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Brecht stands and acknowledges the audience.

Mack
Celebrating the great success of his
new work The Threepenny Opera.

He leads applause.

Mack
Mr. Brecht, your thoughts on love?

Brecht
Love is a gutter over which flows
the sewerage of life ...
Awkward silence.

Brecht
At least that is what my mother
always told me.

He goes back to his seat and drinks.
The Screen is lowered again depicting 1920s designs.

Mack
Ah Ladies and Gentlemen: such words
of wisdom from our Bolshevik leaning
friend! Ha ha ... Love your work ...
hate your politics! Ha Ha ... And here
at Mack's we have a real mish mash
of politics eh ... from the sublime
to the ridiculous. And let's keep
the sublime to a minimum eh! At the
the cabaret of life there is little
space for the sublime. Rather we
face the absurd. LOVE! And isn't
love the most absurd of all things!
But as Miss Dietrich says, we "can't
help it". We all want love. We might
hate it. But we want it. Love! Love
is a juicy steak on the grill. It
needs to be cooked just right. Too
much and it burns. Too little and
... ha ha ...

NOTE: Performance rights for the play are now available. However
separate license needs to be obtained for each of the songs
included in the production. Should any such license not be
available for any of the songs, then a substitute would need to
be made. Music license in Australia can be obtained via APRA.

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