

TARRAGON THEATRE

33rd SEASON 2003-2004

“Is there a better evening of theatre to be had anywhere?”

David Macfarlane, *Globe & Mail*, 2003

“An unrivalled purveyor of Canadian drama”

Vit Wagner, *Toronto Star*, 1999

“Tarragon [has] the key position at the centre of Canada’s theatrical stew.”

Mira Friedlander, *Globe & Mail*, 1997

About Tarragon Theatre

Tarragon is primarily a playwright’s theatre. Its mandate is to develop, encourage and produce new work; to attract or train new artists and technicians to interpret new work; and to inform and develop an audience for new work. The goal of the OutReach programs is to develop quality theatre education initiatives for students, educators, community members, and theatre patrons. The mandate of OutReach is “to use all its resources, programs, and facilities to promote, wherever possible, inclusion. Particularly through our OutReach initiatives we aim to support and foster relationships with community members, educators and students as together we develop the theatre practitioners and audiences of today and tomorrow”.

Tarragon Achievements

- Over 175 Canadian premieres by such celebrated and award-winning playwrights as David French, James Reaney, George F. Walker, Judith Thompson, John Murrell, Joan MacLeod, Maja Ardal, Morris Panych, Jason Sherman, Guillermo Verdecchia, Ann-Marie MacDonald, Daniel Brooks, Diane Flacks, Richard Greenblatt, Ted Dykstra, Ken Garnhum, Michael Healey, Morwyn Brebner, Mavis Gallant, Kristen Thomson and a host of others.
- Tarragon is the foremost producer, in English Canada, of translated plays from Québec, most notably the work of Carole Fréchette and Michel Tremblay.
- Plays developed and produced at Tarragon have on many occasions, toured nationally and internationally; they have also been widely published, broadcast and filmed.
- Tarragon has received more than 200 Dora Award nominations, many nominations (and winners) for the Chalmers Canadian Play Award and many nominations for the Governor General’s Award for Drama (winners include Judith Thompson, Joan MacLeod, Guillermo Verdecchia, John Krizanc, Jason Sherman and Morris Panych, all for Tarragon plays). Tarragon has received the Lieutenant Governor’s Award 5 times in the past 7 years.
- Since the 1995/96 season, Tarragon subscriptions have risen 136% to a record 4,255 subscribers in the 2003-2004 season. Tarragon is deficit-free.

- In 2003, our neighborhood association unanimously voted to adopt the official name Tarragon Village Community Association, making this the first neighborhood in Toronto to take its name from that of a theatre. Tarragon Village encompasses Dartnell Avenue to Bathurst Street and Bridgman Avenue to Davenport Road. An inaugural ribbon cutting ceremony took place on May 31, 2003.
- The Urjo Kareda Playwrights Endowment Fund, named to honour Urjo's commitment to Canadian theatre, stands at \$1.2 million. Income from the fund is used to assist playwrights while they are writing their plays.

Tarragon Programs

- 7 or 8 major productions in two theatres each season. In the 2003-2004 season, there are eight productions with a total projected attendance of nearly 50,000.
- Playwrights Unit (since 1982). As many as 7 playwrights, with works-in-progress, work individually and collectively with the artistic director and the associate artistic director over the course of a year. These plays are given a public reading during Play Reading Week, held in mid-December.
- 4 playwrights-in-residence.
- Tarragon Theatre/George Brown College New Play Development Project – a Tarragon playwright will write a play to be workshopped by second year acting students at George Brown College in order to give the students a sense of the development process and their role as actors within it.
- Spring Arts Fair: an extraordinary free celebration of the performing arts, presented in spaces throughout the interior and exterior of Tarragon Theatre; now celebrating its 20th anniversary.
- OutReach programs aimed at youth including Spring Training Project, Young Playwrights Unit, *Under 20 for Under 20's* playwriting contest, high school and post-secondary co-op placements; OutReach programs aimed at educators including Teacher Nights and educator workshops.
- Apprentice programs in arts administration and stage management.

Tarragon Special Services

- Over 500 scripts professionally read and assessed annually without charge.
- Student and senior matinees; wheelchair accessibility throughout facility.
- Teachers provided with a complimentary study guide.
- Costume and prop rentals for professional and community companies.
- Pay-What-You-Can performances every Sunday afternoon.
- Tickets donated to community and social service groups for fundraising events.

TARRAGON THEATRE

study guide

simpl



Starring: Peter Froehlich, Nicola Lipman and Peter Tiefenbach

Directed by Richard Rose

Original music and music direction by John Millard

Assistant director: Lee Wilson

Set and costumes designed by Yannick Larivée

Lighting designed by Martin Conboy

Stage Manager: Laurie Champagne

March 23 – May 2, 2004

About the **simpl** study guide:

This study guide has been created so that your theatre experience at Tarragon is a fulfilling and engaging one. We hope that it will help create discussions, generate ideas and prompt many questions.

The original **simpl** study guide was created by Deborah James, a freelance writer working with the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. We'd like to acknowledge her vast contribution and thank her for the opportunity to use many of her resources in this guide.

For Tarragon, the **simpl** study guide was coordinated by Laura Bonfigli and compiled by:

Laura Bonfigli (BA Honours, M.A.) has been with the Tarragon Theatre since 1996 when she began as a co-op student. Currently, she is the Toronto Fringe's Development Associate and is Tarragon Theatre's OutReach Associate.

Joanna Falck (BA Honours, M.A.) is in the final year of her PhD at the Graduate Centre for the Study of Drama. She is the Literary Coordinator for the Tarragon Theatre.

Kristen Van Alphen (BA Honours) is a professional stage manager, who in 1999 made a career change to education program administration and theatre outreach. She is Tarragon's OutReach Director.

Mary B. Wood (BA Honours, B.Ed.) first came to Tarragon in 2000 as a Tarragon Theatre/OISE intern. She teaches dramatic arts full time and continues to work with Tarragon Theatre as our OutReach Consultant developing lesson plans grounded in Ministry Curriculum.

Special thanks and acknowledgements to Avery Swartz, Tamsin Kelsey, Henry Bertrand, Alex Gilbert, Catherine Matzig and Kirk Thomson.

The **simpl** study guide is divided into several sections.

1. **About the Tarragon Theatre**
2. **About the Play**
3. **Additional Resources**
4. **Lesson Plans**

We encourage you to make use of this study guide as effectively as possible and as such we want to highlight the fact that some elements of the guide are most useful prior to viewing the production and some are most useful post viewing. For example, while the structure, character breakdown and themes set up a context for viewing, the design elements are best understood after viewing. There are also lesson plans included for pre and post show activities.

**Feel free to contact us should you have any questions or comments at
416.536.5018 x242.**

Educator Programs are generously supported by:



simpl

“With our humour they laugh because...they can't help it. It's simple; it's that simple”.

About The Play

1. Synopsis
 2. Structural Elements
 3. Thematic Elements
 4. Canadian Content
 5. Design Elements
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Synopsis

simpl is based on the lives of Germany's brilliant comedic performer Karl Valentin and his gifted and devoted stage partner Liesl Karlstadt. Their 22-year partnership spans some of the most catastrophic events in German history: WWI and the German defeat; harsh and humiliating terms of peace that cripple the country's efforts to rebuild; runaway inflation and economic collapse; the violent clash of political extremists; the global depression of the 1930s; the triumph of Hitler and the Nazi regime, which institutionalizes racism and brutal repression; and the unprecedented death tolls and devastation of WWII. With the help of a musical accompanist/actor (the fictional character Gerhard Krachmann), Valentin and Karlstadt perform several pieces from their wide-ranging comic repertoire as the chronicle of the times in which they live unfolds.

simpl was developed through the National Arts Centre's New Play Development Programme and is an NAC English Theatre/Tarragon Theatre co-production.

Structural Elements

simpl is a two-act play made up of a series of short skits in the style of beer hall comics Karl Valentin and Liesl Karlstadt. These humorous skits are indicative of the type of popular entertainment in Germany between the 2 world wars. Actual Valentin and Karlstadt sketches, many performed for the first time in English, are mixed with original material to create this story.

Point of Interest

“Simpl” is a German word that can suggest many things:

It is the short form of “Simplicissimus” who was the main character in the picaresque seventeenth-century German novel *The Adventurous Simplicissimus* by Grimmelshausen (1621-1676). The hero, an innocent simpleton, finds himself increasingly drawn into involvement with worldly affairs during the Thirty Years' War. Despite his lack of cunning, Simplicissimus always manages to come out of potentially harmful situations unscathed, unwittingly turning the tables on his would-be persecutors. Ultimately he withdraws from the world and becomes a hermit.

The popular satirical journal *Simplicissimus* was published in Germany from 1896 to 1944. The journal's no-holds-barred attacks on government and the military made it the leading voice of dissent for liberal artists and intellectuals. On several occasions editors, writers and cartoonists were imprisoned for work that appeared in its pages. A number of “kabarets” (cabarets), inspired by the success of the journal, adopted the short form of the name and called themselves the *Simpl*.

Setting

The action in **simpl** is set in Germany between the years 1911 and 1947 on the stage of the *Café Simpl*.

Characters

Karl Valentin	A brilliant, multi-talented comedic entertainer and film star who rose to fame in his native Germany in a time of dire economic and political upheaval.
Liesl Karlstadt	A gifted actress, film star and writer, Valentin's longstanding creative and performance partner.
Gerhard Krachmann	A musician who provides the accompaniment for Valentin and Karlstadt's comic routines. This fictional character also assumes multiple roles as needed throughout the play. He comes to believe that Hitler can provide an answer to Germany's problems. This places him in sharp contrast to Valentin, who refuses to allow his art to serve political ends.

Thematic Elements

Politics

The turbulent political situation between the 2 world wars and during WWII affected the cultural landscape of Germany immensely. As eluded to in the play proper, many prominent German artists (Betholt Brecht, for example) relocated to alternative cultural centres to continue creating art free from the burden of the politics of the Third Reich. Valentin's choice to stay in Germany was, perhaps, a testament to his belief that art and politics were, and should have remained separate. The ultimate failure of his career is due, in part, to the fact that his comedy was no longer relevant after the damage of two world wars.

It is easy to understand that politics affects art but does art have to be a reflection of the current political situation or can it exist on its own?

Do artists have a responsibility to their public to become involved in politics?

The Role of the Artist

simpl calls into question both the role of the artist and the purpose of art. Through the relationship between Karlstadt and Valentin, playwright Peter Froehlich juxtaposes the 2 main beliefs of this question. Valentin's apolitical approach to his art, in his mind, ensures that the audience is laughing simply because they are enjoying themselves whereas Karlstadt's approach appreciates laughter as a commentary on the current social situation. Karlstadt also believes that audiences will use art to address the state of life in Germany whereas Valentin believes that they will use it to escape. Either way, art functions as a way to cope with contemporary life.

Is there a difference between an artist and a humourist?

Should theatre provide an escape or comment on the circumstances of your surroundings?

Does art still function today in the same way? Is it still used as an agent for social change?

Does Froehlich answer any of the questions he poses through the juxtaposition of Karlstadt and Valentin?

Patriotism

Patriotism is defined as love of country; devotion to the welfare of one's country; the virtues and actions of a patriot; the passion which inspires one to serve one's country. Closely linked to the theme of politics, patriotism is embodied in the character of Gerhard Krachmann. He is the 'perfect' German who believes that his country was mistreated and who feels they are ready for new and different leadership. Krachmann functions for the audience as a means of letting us know the political climate outside of the café-theatre.

Is Valentin unpatriotic?

Canadian Content

The Canadian content section of our study guide is a recent addition and it is meant to underscore the fact that while the plays we produce are set in locations around the world, in varying periods of history and may or may not include Canadian characters, there is something inherently Canadian about every piece that we choose to produce at the Tarragon.

There are numerous definitions of "Canadian theatre". Some people feel that it is only Canadian theatre if the playwright is Canadian while others feel that if it is produced by a Canadian company or includes an all-Canadian cast, that it is also Canadian.

While we are still developing a sense of how we define "Canadian-ness", we chose to include this section on how this piece is relevant in a modern Canadian context.

From a developmental perspective, **simpl** is a co-production between the Tarragon Theatre and the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. A co-production occurs when 2 (or more) companies work in association with each other – financially and artistically – in order to bring a work to fruition. Fairly common in Canada, co-productions lead to partnerships and new relationships amongst artists and arts managers alike. **simpl** was developed through the National Arts Centre's New Play Development Programme and Tarragon's artistic director, Richard Rose, directed the piece both in Ottawa and Toronto.

Although there is no particularly Canadian aspect of the content, the work that Valentin and Karlstadt were doing is comparable to the work that Canadian comedians Wayne and Shuster were doing from the 1940's onward. Here's a description of Wayne and Shuster's comedic style:

Their style, which consisted of a mixture of slapstick, pantomime, and groan-inducing jokes, depended heavily, at times excessively, on sets and props. Although Shuster tended to play the straight man, both played a variety of characters. In general, their comedy was literate, middle-brow, and up-beat. They always disdained cruel humor, preferring the "send-up" to the put-down. Wayne thought that the best description of their style was

the phrase "innocent merriment" from Gilbert and Sullivan's Mikado. By the late 1970s, some Canadian critics were complaining that the comic duo were merely going through the motions, that their comedy was hopelessly out of date, more sophomoric than sophisticated, and often embarrassingly bad. It was suggested that they had become too comfortable with the world, that they had lost the anger or frustration necessary for good comedy.

Ross A. Eaman

What connections can you make between the description of Wayne and Shuster and the characters of Valentin and Karlstadt?

Does Canadian comedy have a particular style? Can you think of current Canadian television shows that are stylistically comparable to Wayne and Shuster or Valentin and Karlstadt?

Elements of Design

The following section is intended to increase the awareness of production elements utilized in theatre. It combines general information about areas of design (including information from Tarragon production staff, design websites and the textbook: *Theatrical Design and Production* by J. Michael Gillette) with specific examples of how design elements have been employed in the production you are attending. A brief glossary is also included to assist with technical terms used in this section of the guide.

Design Overview

A script can be performed numerous times without ever being interpreted the same way. Although text stays the same from production to production, the way the piece is conceptualized changes. For instance, after you set the production design for this show imagine that it has recently opened in Regina with an entirely white design (costume, set, etc.).

The designers (set, costumes, lighting, sound, etc.) and director thoroughly discuss the play to ensure all parties share a similar vision of the play and explore how this vision will be represented through design. Design elements should create an environment for the play that supports the production concept: the creative interpretation of the script.

There are some artistic and practical considerations that apply to all areas of design. These include:

- mood and spirit of the production
- historical period of the production
- locale of each scene
- season of the year and time of day for each scene
- time, labour and material budgets
- health and safety
- needs of other designers

How do these elements affect the choices for each area of design?

Designers in each discipline submit their ideas to the production department for costing. This is the first introduction of the designers to the production manager and technical director. When

the costing is complete the director, design team and production team review the feasibility of the design and make any necessary adjustments necessary.

The production design for this show uses both a sense of period and the style of theatre as its inspiration. So, elements of cabaret theatre and elements of European design in the period between WWI and WWII have been incorporated. Also, workshops were held prior to the main rehearsal period in order to explore the comedic elements of the play and how they could be supported by the design.

Set Design

The set designer's job is to create a physical world, which helps the audience understand and enjoy a play by providing a visual representation of the production concept. Before rehearsals begin, the set designer meets multiple times with the director. From these meetings design drawings and a maquette (a scale model of what will be onstage) are developed. The model and drawings are used by the actors, stage managers and production staff to better understand the design goals; to imagine and replicate the space the production will be set in; and to build and decorate the set pieces.

Specific practical elements considered by the set designer are:

- the socio-economic level of the characters
- number and position of entrances and exits needed
- number and position of entrances and exits already in the space
- the seating formation of the theatre – is it malleable?
- the type of stage that comes with the theatre (i.e. proscenium, thrust, arena, catwalk etc.)
- is this a flyhouse?
- the duration of the run
- will the set tour after the first production

In addition to the scenery, the set designer is frequently responsible for designing the stage properties.

It will be interesting to take notice of the following:

- Where on the stage certain scenes take place
- How the mood and spirit of the production is relayed through the design
- How many different locales are represented on the stage
- What areas are used as exits and entrances
- What information the set gives about the characters

Set designer Yannik Larivée worked to adapt the Mainspace for the space constraints that would were common to cabaret theatres. In order to accomplish this two sets of curtains were used. The front curtain has three main purposes: it allows for the action of the play to take place either 'onstage' or 'backstage', it pushes the action downstage replicating the narrow stages often used by cabaret performers and it enables stage hands to set up the props for the next scene when the curtain is drawn. The upstage curtain serves two purposes: to give the appearance of a back wall (again cramping the available space) and to allow for space upstage to store the many props used during the performance.

A carpet was also placed between the two curtains to negate the sound bleed from the props being set. The carpet does not extend downstage of the first curtain because both the designer and director felt it was important to have the sound and feel of the 'boards' underneath the actors.

Other elements that were very tricky to create were: the front curtains that can travel side to side and swag from the middle; the desk and chair that must be sturdy enough to be sat upon and leaned upon but also frail enough to break or be sawed through very quickly; the red drop that must unfurl first and then release.

Point of Interest

The legs of the writing desk are held together by pieces of dowel that are replaced nightly. In order to take advantage of the comedic effect of 'sawing without any results', the teeth of the saw have been removed except for a set close to the handle. With this prop the actor can mime sawing and then move to the end of the saw when he is ready to actually remove the legs of the table or chair.

Point of Interest

The drops that are used with the scenery painted on them are actually common roller blinds from a regular blinds and drapery store. They were ordered in custom sizes, had scenic designs applied and then were mounted.

Sound design

Sound design has grown incredibly in the past few years. This is partly due to increased expectations created by film and television, the advancement of sound technology, and the prevalence of high quality personal sound equipment. Sound is now increasingly being used in the theatre to focus the audience's attention and reinforce (or counteract) the dominant emotional theme of the onstage material.

Sound design consists of music, effects and reinforcement (such as microphones).

The sound designer obtains a lot of information directly from the script i.e. "a phone rings", "it begins to rain", or "a sad song is heard through the window". S/he must think about the transitions between scenes and what sound elements will shift the audience from the mood of one scene to the next. Sound design also extends to the elements the audience hears when they first enter the theatre, during the intermission, and even the curtain call and post-show music.

Some practical elements the sound designer considers are:

- speaker and microphone placement
- live or recorded sound, or both
- volume of each piece
- length of scene changes
- equipment available

- existing ambient noise in the theatre

As well as establishing and reinforcing mood and atmosphere, sound elements also provide information to the audience:

- When you enter a theatre take a minute to listen to the pre-show music or soundscape – does it offer any clues about the nature of the show?
- What sound cues did you hear that helped establish time and place?
- Were any special effects used? Were they useful in moving the story forward? Why or why not?

In order to maintain the verisimilitude of cabaret theatre in early Germany, the musical director, John Millard, has placed the piano onstage and Peter Tiefenbach, as the character of Krachmann the pianist, creates a majority of the sound elements live. With the combination of the piano and the drum he is able to produce sound accompaniment, and other effects to inform the action of the play. An example of this is using the drum to represent the sounds of bombing.

In addition to the live sounds some recorded cues are used as well. These are primarily used when live music is not available, either because Peter Tiefenbach is backstage or onstage in a scene. An example of this is the cue of the marching German army (Peter Tiefenbach is onstage as a German soldier at the time).

Lighting Design

Effective stage lighting not only lets the spectators see the action of the play but also ties together all the visual elements of the production and helps create an appropriate mood and atmosphere to heighten the audience's understanding and enjoyment of the play.

The lighting designer wants to give information such as time and place, mood, and where the focus of a scene is. Lighting design is often not noticeable because it has been created in such a way as to enhance the mood of the play as unobtrusively as possible. However, many directors will employ unnatural lighting or hyper-realized lighting to add another layer to the production.

Lighting includes the use of coloured gels to create different effects; intensity to determine how dark or bright a scene is; direction to establish the angle at which the light hits the stage; and movement to decide the duration and components of cues.

Lighting and sound often work together to create an effect (i.e. a fade to black that is timed to a piece of music).

Lighting also works closely with set pieces when 'practicals' are used. These are light sources that are manipulated by the actors (i.e. a desk lamp). In this case the set designer will determine the look of the lamp and the lighting designer will decide how it functions.

Some practical considerations for a lighting designer are:

- the number of locations in a set
- the number of lighting instruments available
- the type of performance (i.e. drama, dance, opera, etc.)

- whether the lighting board is manual or computerized
- alternate light sources (i.e. video or slide projection)
- set materials requiring special lighting (i.e. a scrim or cyclorama)

Some lighting elements to notice are:

- when and how lighting indicates a change in time or location
- lighting changing the focus from one character to another
- how lighting interacts with sound elements
- how lighting is employed to reinforce a mood
- how colour is used in the lighting instruments

Like the other designers, Martin Conboy, has employed elements of lighting design that are reminiscent of the period in which the play is set. To reinforce the cabaret feel, Mr. Conboy – in conjunction with Mr. Larivée – has placed 6 chandeliers throughout the house and keeps them at a low level throughout the entire show.

Footlights are used as both an element of the set design and for lighting purposes. They give the stage the look of an early 20th century cabaret and the quality of lighting on the actors is also similar to that of the cabaret stages

Lastly, Mr. Conboy has actually employed the elements of lighting that were primarily in use at that time: he has hung instruments on either side with a warm and a cool colour at a 45-degree angle. Using lighting instruments in this way is limited but is derived directly from the time period and gives the piece a unique quality of light.

The piece tries to emulate the look and feel of lanternslides also, although a slide projector had to be used because the earlier technology is not available.

Costume Design

Costume design includes all clothing, underclothing, hairdressing, makeup and accessories such as hats, scarves, fans, umbrellas and jewellery, worn or carried by each character in a production.

A costume design suggests specific personal information about each character.

Through discussion with the director, the costume designer will decide whether or not to make the costumes 'period accurate'. The designer researches clothes of a period in many ways including: looking through store catalogues of the era (i.e. Sears or Eaton's); going to a reference library, art gallery and/or museum; perusing picture archives; or even looking at old family photographs. Similarly, if the costumes are contemporary, designers look to current fashion magazines, tv and film, and stores for research.

The designer also works from indications within the play's script and looks for hints into the characters' personality. S/he then makes artistic choices for the colour of the costumes, their shape, and the fabrics to be used.

Finally, the designer works with the costume team and the actors in fittings to make certain that the costumes are comfortable and as easy as possible to manipulate.

Some practical considerations in costume design include:

- The background and personality of the characters
- The limitations created by the set or staging (i.e. a raked stage makes spiked shoes impractical)
- The actors can move about on the stage as required (i.e. run up a set of stairs or engage in stage combat)
- The costumes remain effective under stage lighting
- Costumes that need to be changed quickly are built accordingly
- Costumes can last for an entire run and be laundered

Yannick Larivée designed costumes in addition to the set. In this production this choice makes particular sense since the props and wardrobe components are heavily interrelated.

The noses and other facial elements are built as props but must create a uniform look with the costumes in order for each character to make sense. The noses were each made after molds of the actors' noses were cast as prototypes. In this way the effect of the final product seems more real as they fit the actors so well.

The costumer also needed to be concerned with the number of quick-changes and the frenetic level of activity often reached in the scenes. Therefore, the costumes needed to be built so that they could be donned and doffed easily but in such a way as to prevent them from becoming undone during the activity onstage. Other challenges the costume designer faced were: water being poured on a wig and suit; a character on a bicycle, an actor who undresses and redresses onstage, and a man in a woman's dress just to name a few.

As well as the noses, wigs play heavily in the script and must be well-maintained throughout the run.

Lastly, because the space is open and people can be seen backstage both the apprentice stage manager and the stage management intern are costumed to keep the feel of the cabaret space.

Stage Management

One aspect of technical production that is too often overlooked is the area of stage management. The stage management team provides support, organization, information and leadership to all areas of a production including administration, technical production, front of house and the company of actors.

With regard to design, the stage manager plays a key role by providing a variety of information including: scene timings; costume requirements; and properties additions. The stage manager also 'calls the show', which means s/he coordinates when each design element will be used and tells the technical team, on a cue-by-cue basis when to "go". As a show naturally progresses throughout a run the stage manager must be the human element that determines when cues should happen in order to relate to the action on stage. S/he also works with the actors to remain aware of the choices that were made when the cues were set.

For the Toronto run of **simpl**, we had the opportunity to offer one of our co-op students a position as a stage management intern. Shawn Henry, from the City Adult Learning Centre joined the production when it arrived at the Tarragon and we are incredibly proud of the work that she has been doing and the level of professionalism she has achieved in a remarkably short period of time. Shawn has taken over the wardrobe responsibilities for the show in addition to working stage left during each performance. She is learning a great deal, which she plans to apply while studying technical theatre next year at Sheridan College.

Glossary of Useful Technical Terms

Acoustics	The sound transmission characteristics of a room, space or material
Cue	A directive for action (i.e. a change in the lighting, sound, or an actor's entrance)
Cyclorama	A large piece of scenic material used to surround the stage on to which colour can be projected
Gel	Generic name for the film used in lighting instruments to change colour. It can also be used as a verb (i.e. to 'gel' the lights)
Gobo	A thin metal template inserted into a lighting instrument in order to cut a pattern into the light that is projected onstage
Flyhouse	A theatre space with the ability to "fly" set pieces and/or backdrops from a fly gallery located high above the stage using ropes and cables
Maquette	A scale model 3-D representation of the set design
Plot	A scale drawing showing the placement of various elements (i.e. lighting instruments) relative to the stage configuration and theatre
Prompt book	A copy of the script with each actor's blocking, all the technical cues, and details/lists of all technical elements involved in the production
Raked stage	A stage that is higher at the back than at the front
Scrim	A scenic panel made from translucent gauze-like material
Stage Configurations	
Arena Stage	A stage configuration where the audience completely surrounds the playing space
Catwalk Stage	A stage configuration where the audience surrounds the playing space on 2 sides – also known as an Alley stage
Proscenium	A stage configuration where the audience watches the action through a rectangular opening that resembles a picture frame (proscenium arch)
Thrust Stage	A stage configuration where the audience surrounds the playing space on 3 sides

Additional Resources

1. About Peter Froehlich
2. Interview with Peter Froehlich
3. Historical Antecedent
 - a. Karl Valentin
 - b. Liesl Karlstadt
 - c. Popular Entertainment
 - d. Timeline of Events
4. Production Antecedent

About Peter Froehlich

Peter Froehlich has worked as a director and actor in theatres throughout Canada, including the Stratford Festival, the National Arts Centre, Centaur Theatre, Citadel Theatre, Alberta Theatre Projects, Mulgrave Road Theatre, Axis Mime Theatre, Toronto Free Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, and The Great Canadian Theatre Company. He has taught and directed for the School of the Contemporary Arts at Simon Fraser University (Vancouver), and for the National Theatre School (Montreal), and is currently a professor in the Department of Theatre at the University of Ottawa. Recent performances at the NAC include *The Winter's Tale*, *An Enemy of the People*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Hard Times*, and The "Vaudevilles" of Chekhov.

Interview With Peter Froehlich

What inspired you to write about the life and work of Karl Valentin?

I've been working a long time on what I call the illegitimate theatre. My interest in it comes out of having taught theatre history and realizing that, like my own teachers, I was really only teaching the history of masterpieces, which just isn't the whole story. The "great works" approach paints a picture of the history of theatre as the movement from one genius playwright to the next.

Besides that, all the genius dramatists were deeply influenced by what was going on in the streets -- the "theatre" that takes place outside of theatres, in the kabarets and circuses and brothels and prisons and coffee houses. Not only was Shakespeare aware of this, but he borrowed, stole, from the work these "illegitimate" performers were doing. His troupe was made up of these people. We think, oh yeah, there are 'real' theatre people, and then there are those buskers on the streets. But he took all his clowns off the street and adapted his writing for each one to incorporate their particular gifts. Molière, too, lived the life of an itinerant entertainer for a long period of time and drew on that experience in his plays.

For years I was looking for scripts from this kind of theatre and I was told, well, examples just don't exist -- and if they do exist, they're not very good; they don't compare with Aeschylus. But some of the texts I've discovered are phenomenal. So my work on Valentin is part of this much wider project I'm still working on.

Why has this material been neglected for so long?

For one thing, the dramaturgy is totally different so it's very hard to read these pieces if you don't know theatre intimately. You look at them and say, well, this is not literature. And it isn't!

But the piece in performance is designed to be a vehicle for a quick-change artist or an acrobat or for someone who does funny voices. Of course it's not going to work on the page! Academia, in so far as it cares about the theatre at all, assumes that there's a single dramaturgy, but that's not the case at all. I'm very interested in the possibilities of an illegitimate dramaturgy. I have a few notions about how such a thing might work.

Keep in mind as well that these pieces were performed in various places other than theatres, so they all put a strong emphasis on holding the spectators' attention. Say a certain piece was written to be performed on the stage of a kabarett. The actor/audience dynamic is very different there. It's not like everybody is sitting in total darkness facing the stage with only one thing going on -- somebody's serving food, somebody's yelling for orders to be picked up, there's a band playing in the corner, people are coming and going, scraping their chairs. If the performer loses the spectators' interest, it's completely gone. It's not like at the Arts Centre where people wake up on cue and applaud.

What was your first exposure to Valentin's comedy?

When my father died he left behind a pile of records. One of them was Valentin. I put it on and I was just floored, partly because it reminded me so much of my father. And I thought, maybe there's a piece here. I became fascinated with Valentin and started reading about his life. And the issues that emerged really captured my imagination. How does someone continue to be an artist in appalling times?

We have a certain number of versions of that period in history. We know the Third Reich -- or at least we think we do -- we know about the Nazis. As far as the artists go, we teach the émigrés and the resisters. More recently we've looked at the collaborators -- people like Gründgens and Hauptman -- and we use them as cautionary tales; but we all think, if I had had to make the choice as an artist, I would have been heroic. I would have been a Bertolt Brecht or a Kurt Weil and used my art to publicly denounce the rise of fascism. But in fact most artists were neither collaborators (quite) nor heroes (quite).

The story of Valentin is a new version of that history. He wasn't a hero, for sure, but he was not a collaborator either. He just tried to keep on doing what he did. Wherever we can test his politics, he's on the right side -- but not very far on the right side. And, yes, he did appear before Hitler and took great pride in being able to list him among his fans. But his fan base was all over the map politically -- right, left, in between, upper class, elitist class, and working class.

How would you describe Valentin's work? What's unique about him?

For one thing, his range of material was very broad. He could do routines based on verbal miscommunication, musical interludes and songs, comic situations and exaggerated characters, slapstick, prop comedy, disguises and quick changes. I don't touch about 50% of his material because it really can't be translated. Often the humour in those pieces depends on an understanding of the distinctive dialect in which they are written. There's an entire piece about two obsessed and not very bright people arguing about the correct plural of "dumpling" -- and it's a longish piece!

Obsessions, fixations, are a hallmark of Valentin's comedy. Communication between his characters usually fails because what one character is desperately trying to communicate to the other is entirely the product of his own mental constructions. I think he writes about ideology

itself -- not any particular ideology, but the overarching concept of the fixed idea that they all share. His characters come into the world with one fixed idea and they're constantly trying to make clear to other people why they are stupid for not getting it. Valentin's ideologues are laughable.

Of course this idea meets with resistance. In this sense I think he was very political. He wouldn't have thought of it as political. He didn't publicly take issue with Hitler's particular ideology, it's true; he took issue with the mental frailty that makes ideological thinking a fact of life.

Before 1960, Germans tended to see him as a pessimist. His take on the world was that being human is a mistake; it's all down the drain. His humour gets us laughing, but at the same time it touches the core of human misery. That pushes it, though. You can fit him into any number of constructs but he is beyond labels.

Notes on the title **simpl** from Peter Froehlich

Simplicissimus was the wise fool, the simpleton immune to the subterfuge of others because he doesn't get it, but there's also a strong association with courage that connects to the German satirical journal *Simplicissimus*, which was the organ of the resistance for 50 years. It was fearless, and everyone who was anyone wrote for it or drew for it.

To my mind, though, the connotation of the title that has the most to do with Karl Valentin is simply 'simple', as in simple-minded and straight ahead -- I do what I do, don't confuse me with political complexities. He's very clear headed. He recognizes where his gifts lie and the fact that he's not going to be good at something else.

Of course there's a kind of denial and self-absorption in Valentin's position, too. He knows he's a genius, but his genius becomes a license for him to do as he pleases. He doesn't treat people very well -- his partner, Liesl, for example. He's on his own road, he's on a roll, and he doesn't want her needs and personal struggles to screw him up or complicate his life. He loves her, but she just needs to accept that he has to keep doing what he does. He doesn't want to be sidetracked onto personal or political tangents.

Historical Antecedent

Karl Valentin (1882-1948)

The man who was to become a German cultural icon known as Karl Valentin was born Valentin Ludwig Fey on June 4th, 1882, in the Munich suburb of Au. His roots were solidly middle-class; his father owned and operated a small furniture-shipping firm. The young Valentin first worked as a cabinet-maker but left it after a few years to pursue a career as a music hall performer. The death of his father in 1902 compelled him to take over operation of the family business with his mother and put his ambitions on hold. The business was sold four years later.

Valentin went on to build his "Orchestrion", a fantastic musical machine that combined 20 different instruments and provided accompaniment to his comic routines. He toured with it around the Bavarian beer hall and *café-theatre* circuit, with little success. Consistent public recognition for his unique gifts came in 1908 as a result of repeated appearances at the Frankfurter Hof music hall in Munich.

Valentin re-worked the tradition of the Bavarian music hall performer, creating original songs, monologues and sketches and performing them in the guise of innumerable comic characters drawn from everyday life. In 1911 he discovered Liesl Karlstadt, a novice performer ten years his junior with her own outstanding comedic talents. Karlstadt, “*short, plump, dark, played both men and women of all ages; [Valentin,] lanky, scrawny, albino-hued, was always out of sync with his surroundings.*”^{**} The duo would work together for more than two decades.

Valentin and Karlstadt went on to an enormously successful engagement at the *Simplicissimus* kabarett in Munich. During this time, Valentin married Gisela Royes, already the mother of his two children and a former maid to the Fey family. In 1913, Valentin added film actor to his list of accomplishments, starring in a biting satirical short film called “*Karl Valentin’s Wedding*” that lampooned the institution of marriage. He racked up a career total of 29 films in all, most of them comedies, making his last appearance on film in 1941.

Valentin was exempted from military service in 1914 at the start of WWI for health reasons. He performed with Karlstadt over 120 times for the wounded in Germany’s military hospitals over the next few years.

Valentin’s popularity reached its apex in the 1920s with performances at fashionable kabarett throughout Vienna, Zurich and Berlin. Despite his own anti-intellectual stance, Valentin was admired by several of the leading literary figures and intellectuals of the day, including Bertolt Brecht, Herman Hesse and Karl Tucholsky.

In the 1930s, as the situation in Germany worsened and the prospect of another war loomed, Valentin experienced numerous personal setbacks. He opened his own theatre in Munich in 1931 but was forced to close it a few weeks later due to fire regulations. He struggled to realize his lifelong dream of creating a wax museum -- the “Panoptikum” -- featuring his own absurdist brand of humour in 1934-35, but it ultimately flopped which led to his and Karlstadt’s financial ruin. She threw herself into the Isar River in despair, survived, and sought treatment in a sanatorium.

By 1933, Hitler and the Nazi party gained control of the German government and proceeded to transform the country into a brutal police state. Many artists and intellectuals fled the new regime; Valentin stayed, complied with Nazi censorship laws, and continued to work until 1940, when the risk of performing became too great. Though impoverished and struggling to sustain himself and his family during WWII, Valentin continued writing sketches that he would never perform. He was reunited briefly with Karlstadt in 1947, and died on February 9th, 1948.

***Laurence Senelick, Cabaret Performance: Vol.1, p. 30**

Liesl Karlstadt (1892-1960)

Liesl Karlstadt was born Elizabeth Wellano in Munich on December 12, 1892, the fifth of nine children. Her first job was as a salesclerk in the lady’s undergarments department of the Tietz Department Store. She began performing -- yodelling, dancing, singing, playing music and acting -- in the beer halls and kabarett in Munich at 17.

She was discovered by Karl Valentin in 1911 and the comedy team of Valentin and Karlstadt was born. Though a gifted character actor and writer in her own right, Karlstadt remained “second banana” to the brilliant Valentin, who was ten years her senior.

By 1915 the pair had risen to great popularity in their native Munich. Through the 1920s Karlstadt worked alongside Valentin on the stages of café-theatres and kabarett all over Germany and appeared with him in numerous films. She took acting lessons in 1930 and appeared in the stage play *Storm in the Waterglass*.

Karlstadt later risked her own money backing Valentin's dream -- a wax museum/kabarett called the "Panoptikum"; it failed in 1935 and both were wiped out financially. She attempted suicide in April of that year and spent time in a psychiatric clinic at a time when Nazi laws called for the compulsory sterilization of mental patients. Her doctor wrote a letter on her behalf in which he claimed that there was no need for the surgery because Liesl Karlstadt was unable to bear children, which may or may not have been the truth.

By 1936 she was well enough to work with Valentin and director Jacob Geis on a film called *The Inheritance* that portrays a young couple who are so impoverished they own nothing but a candle stub. The film was banned by the Nazi's because of its pessimistic presentation of contemporary life in Germany. The incident cast a pall over Valentin's film career. Karlstadt did not work with him again until 1947.

Valentin died in 1948 from complications of a cold. Karlstadt continued a solo career, performing on the stage, in films, and in over two hundred episodes of the successful radio series, *Family Brandl*. She died on the 27th of July 1960, of a brain haemorrhage. She was 68.

Popular Entertainment

Beer Halls, Music Halls, Café-Theatres, and Kabarett (Cabarets)

An enormous range and variety of entertainment existed outside of the formal professional theatre in early 20th-century Germany. In the **beer halls** of a city like Munich, where Valentin got his start, patrons seated around long tables enjoying steins of brew and hearty German fare would also be entertained by traditional bands dressed in lederhosen playing the kind of oom-pah-pah music we associate with Oktoberfest festivities. Young women might sing traditional folksongs, yodel or play selections on tuned cowbells. Comics might tell jokes or perform short physical comedy routines.

Variety was the watchword for the offerings at **music halls** and **café-theatres**, where numerous brief sketches and musical interludes made up the program. Acts involving trained animals might share an audience with actors performing capsule versions of the classics, comedians, acrobats, jugglers, contortionists, singers and novelty acts of all kinds -- like Valentin's *Orchestrion*, a machine that could reproduce the sounds of 20 different musical instruments.

Nightclubs and dinner theatres called **kabarett (cabaret)** grew in popularity between the two world wars in the larger urban centres. These venues initially appealed to artists and intellectuals in search of more experimental, avant-garde and overtly political diversions. Here's a description of *The Eleven Executioners*, Munich's earliest kabarett: The Executioners rented the back room of an inn and decorated it with paintings and etchings by their contemporaries from Jugend to *Simplicissimus*, as well as an impressive collection of "instruments" of torture. The problem of censorship was solved by making the cabaret a private club. The programme began with the Executioners dancing and singing grotesquely on stage, throwing their blooded robes around with abandon. This was followed by a mixture of chansons, recitations, puppet plays, dramatic pieces and literary parodies.

After 1929, political hostilities between the left and the right combined with a severe economic depression took much of the social and political bite out of kabarett performances.

“It was left to the Master of Ceremonies, or conferencier, to meet any challenges from the audience and to inject the proceedings with the satirical edge that had become the form’s essence. Conferenciers had to be well-versed in literature, masters of improvisation, possess an acid wit and be fully in tune with the street politics ... When Hitler took power in 1933, cabaret was one of the first victims of Nazi terror. Some writers and performers were arrested and taken to concentration camps; some committed suicide; and others left Germany for America or other parts of Europe. The few [like Valentin] who tried to return to cabaret after the war found that it had lost the zest, the vitality and bite that had made it such a remarkable force during the early part of the century.”

*Original resource material is entitled “The German Cabaret” and can be found at:
http://www.nodanw.com/shows_c/cabaret_essay.htm#top*

Timeline of Events

1882

June 4th - Karl Valentin is born in Munich as Valentin Ludwig Fey.

1892

December 12 - Liesl Karlstadt is born in Munich as Elizabeth Wellano the fifth of nine children.

1897-1899

Karl Valentin apprentices as a Carpenter.

1902

Karl Valentin attends Komikerschule Strebel in Munich, he appears for the first time as Karl Valentin at the Variete in Nuremberg. The same year his father dies, he and his mother take over the family business Falk & Fey.

1907

Under the name Charles Fey, Valentin goes on tour with his "orchestration", a self designed and constructed one-man band. The tour was not a success so he returns to Munich and destroys his orchestration.

1908-1914

Karl Valentin achieves success as a comedian. having established his unique style, combining his elastic physical language with his playful verbal syntax. The subject of his humor being everyday life, authority and common man.

1909

At 17, Karlstadt begins to perform on folk stages and cabarets in Munich

1911

Karl Valentin and Liesl Karlstadt meet and form their legendary comic partnership, together over years producing approximately 400 sketches.

The same year Valentin marries Gisela Royes after the birth of their second daughter.

1912-13

Karl Valentin makes his first silent movie "Karl Valentin's Wedding"; it is a biting satire on the institution of marriage.

1914

The First World War begins. Karl Valentin is exempt from military duty- for health reasons

1915

Liesl Karlstadt and Karl Valentin have risen to great popularity in Munich.

1918

March - The Independent workers committee is formed in Munich; this is a predecessor to the Nazi party.

November - As Germany faces certain defeat at the hands of the Western Entente- France, Britain and the United States- revolution spreads throughout the country. The Kaiser abdicates, and Philipp Scheidemann, a Social Democrat, proclaims a new German republic.

1920.

Von Kahr government (rightist) rules in Bavaria.

April- Hitler resigns from the army to devote himself to the development of the party.

Aug.26- Erzberger, Minister of Finance, murdered by rightist extremists.

December- Purchase of the newspaper *Volkischer Beobachter*, which becomes the official newspaper of the Nazi party

1921

July - Hitler becomes the chairman of the Nazi Party (NSDAP)

Einstein receives the Nobel Prize for physics.

October - Organization of the Sturmabteilung (SA) for the purpose of guarding the Nazi meetings and the breaking up of those of the opposition.

1922

Valentin and Karlstadt appear in surrealist film "Mystery of a Combing Salon"

June 24 - Walther Rathenau, Foreign Minister, murdered by Rightist Extremists. A law to protect the Republic is directed against all extremist groups including the NSDAP.

June-July Hitler imprisoned for Violence against political opponents.

1923

The publication of *Der Sturmer*, an anti-Semitic hate sheet.

January - Inflation begins to assume disastrous proportions, One US dollar being equivalent to 4.2 billion Marks. Currency reform is introduced.

Publication of Arthur Moeller van den Bruck's *das Dritte Reich* (The Third Reich)

May 1 - 20,000 heavily armed SA men concentrate near Munich to smash May Day celebrations of the Communists and the Social Democrats. The army intervenes and Hitler calls off the attack.

October- The Reich government bans the Nazi newspaper *Volkischer Beobachter* for scurrilous attacks on leading Germans and orders the arrest of extremist leaders (Heiss, Ehrhardt and Rossbach, all of whom were living in Bavaria. The Bavarian government (Kahr) refuses to cooperate with Berlin.

Nov. 8 - A mass meeting is called by Kahr in the Munich Burgerbrau Keller is invaded by Hitler who proclaims the start of the "National Revolution". Kahr is forced to join a "National Government". During the night the Nazi's seize the Munich Reichswehr headquarters. Nazi Putsch fails. Two to three thousand armed SA men led by Hitler and General Ludendorff march to the centre of Munich. They are stopped by about 100 policemen as they enter the Odeonsplatz. The police open fire and the Nazi leaders including Hitler flee. Ludendorff and his aide are arrested and the Nazi Party is outlawed in Germany.

Nov.11 - Hitler is arrested and held at the Landsberg fortress.

Nov.15 - Inflation is ended by the introduction of the Rentenmark

1924-29 Years of Economic stability in Germany

1924

Valentin performs in Berlin has a great success

February 26 - The treason trial opens with Hitler and Ludendorff as the main defendants. Hitler turns the proceedings into a propaganda victory for his cause.

March 22 - Ludendorff is acquitted, Hitler receives the minimum sentence of five years.

May 4 - Reichstag elections. Communists and right extremists gain. The Nazis and the Volkisch groups receive 1,918,300 votes, 6.5% of the total votes cast, entitling them for the first time to seats in the Reichstag.

Dec. 20 - Hitler is released after having been imprisoned for nine months during which time he has completed the draft of volume I of *Mein Kampf*.

Unemployment reaches 2.6 million workers.

1925

February 24 - Refounding of the Nazi Party, after Hitler's release.

March 29 - Presidential elections, field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg elected president.
1925 Summer Volume 1 of *Mein Kampf* published.

October 5 -16 Locarno conference leads to reduction of tensions, Germany accepts her western borders, and receives British and Italian guarantees for them. Germany agrees not to use force in changing her borders with Poland.

October 22 - German nationalist ministers leave the government, as a protest against the Locarno agreements.

1926

Karl Valentin turns down an offer from Hollywood because he is reluctant to travel because of his health.

Sept. 8 - Germany admitted to the League of Nations.

October 22 - Hugenberg elected chairman of the German Nationalist Party (DNVP). He pursues a virulent nationalist policy of opposition to the foreign policy of the government.

August 19-21 - First Nazi party rally in Nuremberg.

1928

Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's *The Three-penny Opera* opens in Berlin.

1929

May 1 - Bloody May is marked by Communist demonstrations in Berlin and the beginning of a long series of confrontations between Nazis and Communists.

Hugenberg's huge publishing empire gives Hitler's speeches national coverage, through Hugenberg

Hitler meets other industrialists and financiers who contribute to his campaign and to the Nazi party.

June 30 - Rhineland occupation by the Allies is terminated.

September - Hitler's and Hugenberg's joint fight in the "National Unity Front" against the acceptance of the "Young Plan" ends in defeat but gains support for Hitler. Nazi voting support begins to increase.

Worldwide economic depression results in withdrawal of loans to Germany.

1930

The world depression begins to affect Germany. Unemployment rises sharply and continues to increase rapidly.

July 16 - President Hindenburg invokes Article 48 of the constitution, for emergencies: rule by presidential decree begins.

Sept. 14 - Reichstag elections. The Nazis receive 18.3% of votes and 107 out of 577 in the house. Nazi campaign stresses overthrow of the republic.

December - 4.4 million unemployed

In Thuringia, Wilhem Frick, Nazi minister of the interior, enacts an ordinance against "Negro Culture". Schultze-Naumburg orders the effacement of Schlemmer's murals in the Bauhaus and the removal of works by Barlach, Kandinsky, and Klee from the Schlossmuseum in Weimar.

Nazi's disrupt the Frankfurt performance of Brecht and Weill's *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* with stink bombs.

1931

January - Germany has 5.66 million unemployed.

Karl Valentin- opens his own theatre in the Goethe hall on Leopoldstrasse in Munich. He must close it again the same year because of conflict with the authorities over fire regulations.

October, right wing paramilitary forces, including the SA and the Stahlhelm, a veteran's organization form a coalition, the Harzberg Front.

The Kroll-Oper in Berlin closes for having habitually presented performances of music by Hindemith, Krenek, Schoenberg and other avant-garde composers.

Brecht, Piscator, Hans Eisler, John Heartfield, and Bruno Taut leave Germany to work in the Soviet Union

1933

January 30 - Hitler appointed chancellor, von Papen vice Chancellor while the majority of the cabinet are not Nazis.

February 22 - SA and SS men sworn in as auxiliary policemen.

February 27 - The Reichstag building is burned. Nazis accuse the Communists and claim that the Communists were about to start an up rising. Emergency measures are invoked; approximately 4,000 Communists are blamed and imprisoned.

February 28 - Presidential decree gives Hitler emergency powers, thus eliminating basic civil rights and launching the Dictatorship. Reign of terror against opponents. Establishment of SA concentration camps, mostly around Berlin.

March 5 - Reichstag elections. Despite a campaign of coercion, the Nazis fail to get majority receiving 43.95 of the total vote; however, the German Nationalist party adds its 52 seats to those of the Nazis, giving them a majority.

March 13 - Joseph Goebbels appointed Minister for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda.

March 23 - Enabling Act passed by the Reichstag allows the government to rule by decree, until April 1937. Renewed in 1937.

The process of *Gleichschaltung* begins: Lander governments are dissolved and reconstituted according to Reichstag elections. *Gleichschaltung* is the process of subduing all political, economic and social life that is not in step with Nazi thought.

April 1 - National boycott of Jewish business and professional people.

April-7 - Jews and those deemed "politically unreliable" are purged from government bureaucracies

May 10 - The Nazi's organize book burnings in Berlin and numerous University towns, as a strike against "un-German spirit".

Abomination exhibitions are held in Dresden and Mannheim. These are the first of a series of exhibitions designed to defame modern art.

Gropius, Kandinsky, Klee, Heinrich Mann, Thomas Mann, Toller, and Weill are amongst the exodus of artists from Germany.

Willi Baumeister, Beckmann, Dix, Karl Hofer, Kollwitz, Liebermann, Pechstein, and Schlemmer, are amongst those who lose their teaching posts for holding ideology that is not in sync with Nazi policy.

May 17 - Strikes prohibited.

June 2 - Beginning of public works program to reduce unemployment; Autobahn network to be built.

July 14 - NSDAP (Nazi) party declared the only legal party.

August - SA and SS dismissed as auxiliary police.

September 22 - Reich Chamber of Culture established, headed by Goebbels, to control press, music, theatre, motion pictures and radio.

October 14 - German withdrawal from the League of Nations.

November 12 - Reichstag elections 95.2% of all votes cast are for Nazis

1934

January 26 - Ten-year non-aggression pact with Poland.

April 20 - Reich leader of the SS, Himler, appointed chief of the Prussian Gestapo (Secret Police) Himler appointed head of all German police forces on June 17, 1936.

June 30 -July 2 Rohm purge. Rohm, chief of staff of the SA and one of Hitler's friends, murdered on Hitler's direct orders. Pretext; an imminent rising of the SA addressing concerns as to the numbers and the power of the armed SA, and Hitler's desire to eliminate divergent social and political views in the Nazi party. Murders were carried out by squads of the Leibstandarte. Also killed; general von Schleicher and his wife, and von Kahr, whose body was found hacked to pieces in a swamp near Dachau.

First official concentration camp established in March 1933 at Dachau near Munich. Subsequently the system was enlarged and administered by the SS; 1936 Sashsenhausen; 1937 Buchenwald; 1938 Flossenbug; 1939 Ravensbruck, and Mauthausen; 1940 Auschwitz I, Neuengamme, Natzweiler, and Gross-Rosen; 1942 Stutthof; 1943 Bergen-Belson, and Mittelbau. In addition there were 406 labor camps attached to these camps. By the end of the year there are 15 official concentration camps.

July 25 Attempted Putsch, by the Austrian Nazis fails. Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss murdered.

August 2 - President Hindenburg dies. The offices of the chancellor and the president are merged; Hitler becomes head of state (Fuhrer and Reich Chancellor), and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. All officers and men take a personal oath to Hitler, not to the constitution as in the past.

Hitler names Rosenberg his deputy in charge of "intellectual and ideological training".

Kokoschka emmigrates from Germany takes refuge in Prague.

October - Karl Valentin opens his bizarre museum the "Panoptikum" with exhibits of grotesque visual humor and nonsense. It closes in December the same year with great financial loss.

1935

Karl Valentin performs in Berlin.

March 16 - Conscription introduced to increase armed forces to 550,000 men. (This is a violation of the Versailles Treaty)

April 11 - Great Britain, France and Italy meet at Stresa and condemn Hitler's unilateral action. The Council of the League of Nations censors Germany.

June 18 - Anglo-German Naval Treaty. London unilaterally disregarding the Versailles treaty, agrees that Germany may build her Naval Strength up to 35% of British strength.

September - Nuremberg Laws against the Jews. This entails, among other deprivations of rights, loss of citizenship and prohibition of intermarriage.

Karl Valentin makes another futile attempt at opening the Panoptikum, it closes in a very short time both Valentin and Karlstadt's savings are lost.

Liesl Karlstadt makes an attempt at suicide the same year, she throws herself in the Isar River but is rescued

1936

Valentin and Karlstadt make the film "The Inheritance" with director Jacob Geis. This film shows the poverty of a married couple who own nothing but a candle stub. This film is banned because it depicts misery.

November 6 - Anti-Comintern Pact, (Rome-Berlin axis) between Italy and Germany.

November 17 - German-Japanese Pact; extension of the anti-Comintern Pact.

Germany hosts the Olympic games

November 26 - Goebbels bans art criticism.

1937

June 30 - Goebbels passes Hitler's command to Ziegler ordering him to begin the purge against "Degenerate Art" from Museums in order to create the "Entartete Kunst exhibit" (degenerate Art exhibit) this exhibit takes place in order to illustrate what is unacceptable German art and why so.

July 18 - At the opening of the Great German Art Exhibition in Munich's new Great German Art House, Hitler declares a "cleansing war" against modernist degenerate art.

July 19 - the Degenerate Art Exhibit opens in Munich across the park from the Great German Exhibit.

November 5 - Hossbach Memorandum; Hitler declares to his generals that Germany needs more territory; Austria and Czechoslovakia should be conquered.

The purging of German museums continues. Approximately five thousand paintings and sculptures and twelve thousand graphic works are confiscated and moved to a warehouse in Berlin.

1938

German aggression against Austria and Czechoslovakia

March 12/13 - Austria occupied. SS and Gestapo terror immediately unleashed.

May 20 - Czechoslovakia orders partial mobilization.

May 30 - Hitler orders execution of military "Operation Grun"; plan to crush Czechoslovakia, starting October 1.

September 12 - Czechoslovakia declares martial law in its border areas.

September 30 - The Munich agreement (made between heads of state Chamberlain-Britain, Daladier-France, and Mussolini-Italy, and Hitler) provides that the bordering territory of Sudetenland is to be occupied by Germany. In exchange the Germans are not to make any further territorial claims. The German claim is based on the predominantly German population of Sudetenland.

October 1 - Occupation of Sudetenland paves the way for the occupation of Czechoslovakia. This area contains Czechoslovakia's major defenses against Germany.

November 9/12 organized program against German Jews, ostensibly in "popular revenge" against the murder of a third secretary at the Paris embassy by a Jew. Businesses looted, synagogues burned, violence in the form of killings and beatings, and arrest of Jewish men to place them in concentration camps. Known as Kristallnacht-night of broken glass.

1939 - Beginning of World War II

March 15 - Occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Creation of the German protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, of Slovakia as a German "protected" state; territory given to Hungary and Poland. March 21 German occupation of Memel, a German city given to Lithuania after World War I.

April 28 - Germany cancels the Anglo-German Naval Treaty and the German-Polish non-aggression treaty.

May 22 - German-Italian Pact of steel signed.

May 23 - Hitler tells his generals that war with Poland is "inevitable".

August 23 - Nazi-Soviet Non-aggression Pact, with a secret agreement to divide Eastern Europe.

August 28 - Hitler sets the hour for the invasion of Poland: 4:45 a.m. September 1.

September 1 - Invasion of Poland, without a declaration of war.

September 3 - Declaration of war against Germany by England and France.

September 17 - Russian forces invade eastern Poland.

A policy of "euthanasia"-extermination of the mentally ill and others living "valueless lives"-is undertaken, later it is abandoned because of public outcry.

1940-47 During these years Karl Valentin and Liesl Karlstadt don't perform together.

1940

April 9 - German invasion of Norway and Denmark.

May 10 - German invasion of Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg and France.

1941-42 Extermination centres established in Poland: Auschwitz II, Belzec, Kulmhof, Maidanek, Sobibor, Trawniki, and Treblinka. Total victims 3,000,000- mostly Jews from all over Europe. In addition, 2,100,000 Jews perished in other places including 1,400,000 shot and gassed by SS mobile units after the invasion of Russia.

1941

April 6 - Germany attacks Yugoslavia and Greece.

June 22 - German attack on the USSR. Massacre of Jews at BabiYar, near Kiev

Dec.7 - The Japanese bomb Hong Kong, Malaya, Pearl Harbor, the Philippines, and Singapore. Within a week, the United States and the Axis powers have declared war against one another. Valentin retreats to Planegg, (a suburb on the outskirts of Munich) with his wife and children to escape the bombing of Munich

1942

January 20 - Wannsee Conference: final decision to exterminate all of Europe's Jews under the Euphemism: "The Final Solution of the Jewish Question."

1943

January 31 - German troops surrender at Stalingrad, thus sealing Germany's fate in the Soviet Union.

April - Warsaw Ghetto uprising, the heroic struggle ends with the SS destroying the Jewish residential quarter of the city.

July 25 - Mussolini is forced from power and arrested.

September 13 - A new Italian government, led by Pietro Badoglio, declares war on Germany.

1944

June 6 - Allied invasion in France starts- "D-Day"

July 20 - Attempt on Hitler's life, and coup by German anti-Nazi group fails. Thousands executed or imprisoned.

1945

April 30 - Hitler commits suicide as Soviet troops are taking Berlin.

May 7 - German armies surrender unconditionally to the Allies at Rheims.

1947

Karlstadt and Valentin work together again for the first time since the war began.

1948

December Valentin dies, weakened from malnutrition, he dies of a cold.

Liesl Karlstadt continues her career performing on the stage as well as film roles and a successful series on radio. She died on July 27 1960 of a brain hemorrhage

Pre Show Lesson Plan 1

Introduction to *simpl*

Expectations:

TH2.02: describe how movement and non-verbal communication can be used to portray character, to define relationships among characters, and to communicate dramatic tension;

CRV.01: use various ways to sustain a role within a drama;

ANV.02: use the vocabulary of dramatic arts to discuss, critique, and review drama presentations in the school and the community;

CRV.02: create and present an adapted dramatic work;

CR1.04: apply appropriate voice and movement techniques in rehearsal and performance;

AN1.06: identify the artistic choices made by the actors, director, designer, and technicians in a dramatic production, and assess the effectiveness of these choices;

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Warm up:

Go over theatre etiquette expectations.

Discuss encouraged behaviour versus what may be inappropriate.

Main Activity:

Looking at the layers in *simpl*

1. Exploring Physical Comedy

- Divide students into groups of two.
- Provide each pair with an item from the list below.
- The students devise a scene in which at least one character has an extremely difficult time as a result of his/her interactions with the given item:

Gum

A hose

A ladder

A hammer

Insects

Paint

A pair of eyeglasses

A fishing rod

A vacuum cleaner

Garbage

Wind

A plate of spaghetti

A frozen metal doorknob

A conveyor belt

A pizza

A musical instrument

Glue

- During the rehearsal phase all group members must reach consensus on who their characters are; the kind of relationship they have with each other; the details of where the scene will be set; and an outline of the basic action in the scene. NB: The players must use only their bodies and imaginations to create and manipulate the item onstage.
- Students present their work in front of the class.

2. Being Funny -- Let Me Count the Ways

Valentin's popularity and brilliance were due in part to the enormous range of his comedy. When viewing the performance, there is at least one specific instance of each of the following. Discuss with the students each comedic style. Try to come up with a modern parallel which such comedy. For instance, the "looking funny" component to Seinfeld's character Kramer.

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|---|--|
| a) Prop comedy | Comedy centered on a character's interactions with one or more objects |
| b) Comedy of miscommunication | "Who's on first?"- style verbal mix-ups and confusion |
| c) Black comedy | Comedy with a disturbing or macabre edge |
| d) Slapstick | Broad physical comedy like that of the <i>Three Stooges</i> where people get hit, fall down, get a pie in the face, etc. |
| e) Comic songs | Songs with funny lyrics like those of Tom Lehrer or Adam Sandler |
| f) Surreal observation | Surprising and slightly twisted versions of familiar things |
| g) Exaggerated and/or stereotypical characters | Especially people who "just don't get it" |
| h) Looking funny | Comedy based on outlandish make-up, costuming and/or physical appearance |

- Divide students into groups of two and ask them to pick one of the comedy styles.
- Students work for 15 minutes developing a small sketch true to this comedy.

Closure:

Questions for the class to consider after the sketches have been performed:

- 1) Did anything surprise you about this activity? Why? Be specific.
- 2) What was it exactly that made these sketches funny? Why do you think that is?

Extension Possibilities:

- Ask the students to track an example for each comedy style from watching *Simpl*
- When students return from the performance you can discuss the examples as a group.
- Ask the students to watch for and be prepared to comment on the complex way this production of **simpl** makes use of the other art forms of music and visual art.
- Students can also be on the lookout for ways in which the show makes technical demands of theatre professionals other than the actors. What challenges does **simpl** present for the lighting designer and technician? For the sound designer and technician? For the costume designer and the dressers? For the stage carpenter and the props master?
- **simpl** poses the question of what it can possibly mean to be a non-political artist in horrific times. Students can watch for how the characters of Karl Valentin, Liesl Karlstatdt and Gerhard Krachmann each respond differently to the personal and political challenges of the times they live in. Which response makes the most sense? Which character do you most sympathize with? Which of the three is a hero? A villain? A victim?

Pre Show Lesson Plan 2

Scene from *simpl*

Expectations:

TH1.01: demonstrate an understanding of the theory of “willing suspension of disbelief” both as performer and as audience;

TH1.02: identify and explain methods of creating and developing roles within a drama that accurately reflect the intentions of the performers and the circumstances of the drama;

TH3.03: demonstrate an understanding of historical and cultural origins of various dramatic forms (e.g., storytelling, pageantry, dance, mask making);

CRV.04: create and perform dramatic presentations, using knowledge of conventions, performance spaces, and audience perspectives

TH3.04: describe the social and historical contexts of the plays studied.

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Warm-up:

- Lead group physical warm up, stretching body etc. and guided imagery relaxation.

Materials:

simpl scene study attached herewith

Main Activity:

Scene Study

- Divide the class into groups of three (or four if you want one person to direct and give feedback)
- Distribute each student a copy of the scene “**Josef Goebbels and the Railway Porter**”
- The scene represents a crucial turning point in the action of **simpl**, the moment when Valentin realizes that the personal risk of continuing to perform in the face of ever more restrictive Nazi censorship laws is just too great.

Below are some aspects of the scene to explore:

a) Students read through the scene several times and come to agreement as to what each character most wants from the others (his or her objective or goal) and from the situation overall. Encourage students to utterly overplay their character’s goal in rehearsal in this exploratory stage. Things can always be scaled back later.

b) All the action in **simpl** takes place on the stage of a kabarett in front of a live audience. Ask your students to consider how this will affect the way they play the scene. Have them build in one specific moment when each of the characters clearly acknowledges the audience.

c) Have students isolate the stage directions and do a movement-only version of the scene. How much emotion and attitude can a character express through actions like sitting, standing, posture, being turned towards or away from another character, turning the pages of a newspaper, exiting the stage, etc.?

Extension Possibilities:

Ask the students to create a contemporary version of this scene reflecting current world political situation.

JOSEF GOEBBELS* AND THE RAILWAY PORTER (1939)

Valentin: So, write it down, the railway porter is standing on platform number two at the Hauptbahnhof and of course it's empty, no one travels anymore.

Karlstadt: *(Still sitting.)* So he's polishing his glasses.
Krachmann turns the page of his newspaper.

Valentin: Good, ja, that's good! And up runs . . . a stranger, a foreigner, and he's totally lost.

Karlstadt: *(She stands.)* A . . . Prussian professor ...

Valentin: . . .of philology, ja, ja, write it down, and he says, "Over here, quick, porter, hurry, I need you to carry these bags to platform number three . . ."

Krachmann: Did you read this?

Valentin: . . . my train is leaving in two minutes."

Krachmann: Goebbels has published another of his edicts.

Valentin: Shh-Shht. So the porter says . . .

Krachmann: *(Puts on his reading glasses :)* "Despite my repeated ordinances of 8 December 1937 and 6 May 1939 in which I urgently stated the requirement that cabaret and performance matters be assimilated to the demands of public taste . . ."

Valentin: Gerhard, we don't need music for this, you can go home to bed now. So, the porter says . . .

Krachmann: "I am informed from a multitude of sources that so called conferenciers** and kabaretists*** continue to practice their mischief . . ."

Valentin: So the porter says--Liesl, write it down -- "Before I can take your bags you are required to fill out a questionnaire, here, name, address, mother's maiden name, grandmother's maiden name ..."

Krachmann: ". . . They scoff at the measures necessary to safeguard the purity of our unique race, and thereby contribute to imperiling both the inner unity of the nation, which is the most important prerequisite for the victorious conclusion of this war. . . ."
(Liesl Karlstadt sits down again.) All performances commenting in any way on the circumstances of public life are forbidden . . ."

Valentin: That's not us! That's not us! That is aimed at the political kabaretists--they deserve what they get--not at the harmless work we do.

Krachmann: ". . . even if they are made in an allegedly well-intentioned manner."

Valentin: So, a professor of philology from Berlin comes running up to a railway porter at the Munich Hauptbahnhof.

Krachmann: "It is expressly forbidden to play off one city against another, one part of the Reich against another . . ."

Valentin: All right, so . . . a local professor runs up to a railway porter

Krachmann: ". . . or one social group or profession against another."

Valentin: So two railway porters meet on the . . . *(Pause, he fixes Krachmann in the eye.)*
Twins!

Krachmann: "At the Führer's behest, any and all cheap and frivolous vilification of the conditions of public life entailed by the necessity of war is unequivocally barred from the stage. *(Karlstadt exits.)* Transgressions will be punished with the harshest penalties." *(Krachmann exits.)*

Valentin: Two Munich railway porters meet on the . . . No, they don't meet. And the first one says . . . Absolutely . . . Nothing! *(With a significant look at the table of Nazi officials at the back on the left:)* We must still be allowed to say that!

* Josef Goebbels: Hitler's Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment.

** conferencier: the master of ceremonies in a kabarett.

*** kabaretists: kabarett performers

Post Show Lesson Plan 1 Second Scene Study

Expectations:

THV.01: demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of role playing and structuring dramatic works etc.

TH1.01: demonstrate an understanding of the theory of “willing suspension of disbelief ” both as performer and as audience;

ANV.03: explain how dramatic arts represent, influence, and contribute to culture and society;

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Warm up

Discuss the following within the context of having just attended a performance of *simpl*.

- What is the connection between art and entertainment? Explain the difference between an artist and an entertainer?
- What other functions beyond entertainment should art serve in society?
- Is art ever outside of or above politics?
- What is the connection between personal choices and political realities?
- Under what circumstances would you permit the government to censor the arts? Should artistic freedom be absolute?

Main Activity:

Looking more closely at Valentin’s theatre vision

- Distribute the following text attached herewith.
- As a class, brainstorm a mini-biography of the character who speaks these lines.
- Be as detailed and specific as possible in the choices you make regarding age, occupation, physical appearance, vocal qualities and mannerisms, daily routine/personal habits, and important relationships.
- Decide on a specific location for the delivery of this monologue. Who is the character addressing? What impact does the speech have?
- Ask for a student to volunteer delivering the speech. Give the character at least 30 seconds to enter the playing area and settle into place before speaking. What adverb best describes how the character moves into the playing area, i.e., tentatively; boldly; arrogantly; enthusiastically, etc.?
- Give the character another full 30 seconds on stage at the end of the monologue in which to take in and register the audience’s reaction in his/her body and facial expression. Decide once again on an adverb to describe the way the character walks off stage. Has there been any change?

Extension Possibilities:

Discuss with the students if they agree or disagree with Valentin’s statement.

How can one spark interest in theatre through obligation?

Education is currently funded by the state and is a mandatory exercise for young people. How would a government justify doing as such with theatre?

Could a variation on Valentin’s vision be realistically applied?

COMPULSORY THEATRE

Valentin (*speaking in character*): So *why* is it the theatres are empty? It's because the audiences don't go. And who is to blame? It's the government! Why don't they bring in compulsory theatre? If everyone *had* to go to the theatre, things would be different. I mean why did they introduce compulsory education? Do you think children would go to school if they weren't forced to? Even if it is politically difficult, it wouldn't be that complicated to set up the same system for the theatre. The combination of a little good will and the threat of prison can make anything happen.

Is the Theatre Not Also a School, Question Mark.

Compulsory theatre should begin from childhood. Work it out! In the big cities there are 100 schools; each school has 1000 pupils. That's 100, 000 children a day! Mornings in the classroom; afternoons in the theatre.

Think how many local actors would get work! Compulsory theatre, instituted province by province, would revive the national economy. It is not the same thing to say, "Do you want to go to the theatre this evening?" as to say, "We have to go to the theatre this evening." So, at the same time, as a result of this *theatre-duty* we are instantly relieved of all those stupid evening obligations, like skittles, bridge, beer-hall politics and adultery.

Citizens know in advance that they have to go to the theatre. The aggravation of choosing which play to see is completely eliminated; there's no uncertainty, no "Do I really want to see *Tristan and Isolde* tonight?" No. You are *required ... by law* to see *Tristan and Isolde* tonight!

You are obliged -- 365 times in a year -- to go to the theatre, whether you hate it or not. Students hate going to school, but they go willingly, because they have to. Ob-li-gation! Only through obligation will theatre audiences feel obliged to go to the theatre. We have tried the beautiful words for centuries, now; it has got us nowhere! All the enticements: upholstered seats, heated theatres, half-price tickets for the students and the military, free tickets for politicians and the very rich, none of this has managed to fill the theatres! All the publicity, the posters, the newspaper advertisements, which cost a large theatre hundreds of Marks every year. With compulsory theatre, all of that will become unnecessary. Same thing with the price of tickets, there'll be no more dividing the seating according to social and economic status; from now on it will be purely according to audience need. So:

- Rows 1 to 5 of the orchestra will be reserved for the hard of hearing and the nearsighted.
- Further back, rows 6 to 10 will be for those with nervous conditions and hypochondria.
- The back rows, near the doors, are for those with intestinal complaints and skin-diseases.
- And seats up in the balcony will be reserved for those with asthma and other respiratory afflictions.

In a city like Berlin, even if we exclude infants, the bedridden and the demented, that would still leave something like two million inhabitants subject to theatre-duty, Every Day, which is considerably higher than the current number of theatre-goers.

Nowadays, no one would argue that we should be relying on a volunteer fire department! We have learned through painful experience that a modern society requires modern, professional fire fighters. Why should it be any different with audiences?

Now, should the Universal Theatre Attendance Requirement Statutes, which I am proposing, be enacted, it would mean, as I have just explained, that we would have two million theatregoers every night. This would open a number of choices to a city such as Berlin. It would need to construct 20 theatres, each with 100, 000 seats; or 40 theatres, each with 50,000 seats; or 160 theatres, each with 12, 500 seats; or 320 theatres, each with 6,250 seats; or 640 theatres, each with 3,125 seats; or two million theatres, each with one seat.

What a magnificent feeling it would be every night to be in a full theatre with, let's say, even just 50,000 people. That is something only an actor can truly appreciate. But it will only be with tough measures that we can hope to fill these empty houses, not with free tickets, fancy posters and high art. It will happen only through compulsion, and a free citizen cannot be compelled except by the state.
