



Old Wicked Songs



WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY
JON MARANS



GABLESTAGE





OUR PLAYWRIGHT & DIRECTOR

JON MARANS is a playwright, librettist, lyricist and story editor. His play *Old Wicked Songs* was a Pulitzer Prize and Drama League Finalist. It was first presented by the Walnut Street Theatre before moving to New York, where it ran for a full season. In England, *Old Wicked Songs* started at the Bristol Old Vic, before transferring to London's West End at the Gielgud Theater starring Bob Hoskins and James Callis. The play has been produced throughout the U.S. and has been translated and produced in over a dozen countries. For Michael Douglas's Stonebridge Productions, Jon was a story editor and for the New Carol Burnett Show, he was a writer/lyricist. Mr. Marans is a graduate of Duke University in mathematics with a minor in music. His play *The Temperamentals*, ran for eight months off-Broadway and is in film development. Mr. Marans is a recipient of a 2013 Guggenheim Fellowship.

The Habsburgs:

A Dynasty Like No Other

Any narrative about Vienna inevitably leads us into the grandeur of the Habsburgs, a dynastic powerhouse that left an indelible mark on European history for over six centuries. The Habsburg dynasty, originating in the 13th century, evolved into one of the most influential and enduring ruling families in Europe.

At the zenith of their power, the Habsburgs' vast realm extended across a mosaic of territories, encompassing not only the heartland of Austria but stretching to Spain, the Low Countries, parts of Italy, and even

the Americas. The breadth of their dominion forged a complex tapestry of cultures, languages, and influences that characterized the Habsburg Empire.



ABOVE: An artist's impression of the majestic Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna

BELOW: The Grand Hall of the Austrian National Library, which was commissioned by the Habsburg Family





The Habsburgs, patrons of the arts and patrons of diplomacy, played a pivotal role in shaping the cultural landscape of Europe. Vienna, as the imperial capital, became a thriving center of intellectual and artistic achievement under their rule.

An example is of their influence on Viennese culture includes their patronage of education and intellectual pursuits. Established in 1365 by Duke Rudolph IV (right), the University of Vienna is one of the oldest universities in the German-speaking world. The Habsburgs, recognizing the importance of education and intellectual advancement, played a crucial role in shaping the university into a leading center of learning. They provided financial support, granted privileges, and attracted renowned scholars to the Institution. The university became a focal point for the exchange of ideas,

cultural enrichment, and academic excellence under Habsburg patronage.



LEFT: The facade of the University of Vienna



RIGHT: The Main Ceremonial Hall

I. StraÙe. Judenplatz.

Antisemitism & Vienna

In 1420-1421, Duke Albert V, a member of the House of Habsburg, faced financial troubles and, influenced by anti-Jewish sentiments, collaborated with locals to persecute Jews in Vienna. This led to the expulsion of poor Jews to Hungary, while wealthier ones were tortured for money. Forced conversions were attempted, but most Jews resisted. Some even chose suicide in the synagogue, which was later destroyed, its stones used for the University of Vienna. The Pope criticized the forced conversions, and on March 12, 1421, the duke ordered the execution of the remaining Jews, accusing them of desecrating religious objects. A tragic outcome ensued, with at least 210 men and women burned at the stake, resulting in the destruction of the Jewish community and the transfer of assets to Duke Albert.



ABOVE: Remains of the synagogue at the Judenplatz that was destroyed in 1420-1421



VIENNA: *The City of* MUSIC

Vienna, renowned as the capital of classical music, owes its musical legacy to the prolific Great Composers of the 18th century. During this era, artists and musicians flourished with the patronage of the Habsburgs and other imperial court aristocrats. The city was home to some of the greatest composers in history, including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Ludwig van Beethoven, Franz Schubert, Johann Strauss II, and Joseph Haydn. Their compositions and innovations in music significantly shaped the classical and Romantic periods.



ABOVE: A young Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart entertains the Emperor Francis I and Empress Maria Theresa

BELOW: The Wiener State Opera House



Vienna boasts world-renowned musical institutions that have played a pivotal role in shaping its musical identity. The Vienna State Opera, which boasts the record for the highest number of opera productions per year globally, presents approximately 70 different productions annually and the Musikverein is home to the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.

Check out our Production Playlist!➔



LOVE & MADNESS



Robert Schumann was a German Romantic composer and influential figure in the 19th-century music scene. His compositions for the piano, exemplified by works like *Carnaval* and *Kinderszenen (Scenes from Childhood)*, not only showcased technical prowess but also demonstrated an unparalleled ability to evoke emotions and narratives through music. Schumann's life was marked by a profound and often debilitating struggle with mental health issues. In 1833, a hand injury shattered his aspirations of a virtuoso piano career.

At the core of Schumann's emotional universe was his profound and enduring love for Clara Wieck, an accomplished pianist and composer in her own right. Their relationship encountered substantial challenges, including opposition from Clara's father, yet their union in 1840 marked the merging of artistic souls.

On February 27, 1854, Schumann made a suicide attempt by leaping off a bridge into the Rhine. Fortunately, boatmen rescued him. After the suicide attempt, he insisted on being admitted to an asylum for the well-being of both himself and his family, where he spent the final years of his life until his death on July 29, 1856.



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BELOW: “Dichterliebe” performed by pianist Jeanie Chung, baritone Alexander Dobson and dancer Laurence Lemieux at FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre



Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe* (A Poet's Love) uses the poems from Heinrich Heine's collection, *Buch der Lieder* (Book of Songs).

Lieder (pronounced "LEE-duh") is a German term that translates to "songs" in English. In the context of classical music, particularly in the Romantic era, "Lieder" refers to a genre of classical music where poetry is set to music for voice and piano. The piano not only emphasizes the text but often comments on it.



ABOVE: Tenor Ian Bostridge and pianist Brad Mehldau performed Schumann's “Dichterliebe” at Carnegie Hall

The words of Schumann's *Dichterliebe* were written by the Jewish poet Heinrich Heine. Heine, a prominent German post-Romantic poet, contributed profoundly to the literary and cultural landscape of the 19th century. His evocative and

often melancholic poetry build the expressive and intricate musical tapestry of *Dichterliebe*. His renowned collection, *Buch der Lieder* (Book of Songs), was composed in the aftermath of unfulfilled romantic relationships with two of his younger cousins.



**I bear no grudge, although my heart is breaking,
Love lost to me forever, I bear no grudge.**

**You are radiant with diamonds in your splendor,
there falls no light into the darkness of your heart.**

**I knew this long ago. I saw you, yes, in a dream,
And saw the night that's come within your heart's
chamber,
And saw the serpent that is gnawing at your heart,
I saw, my love, how wretched you really are.**

ABOVE: English translation of "Ich Grolle Nicht" by Heinrich Heine

A close-up portrait of Kurt Waldheim, an elderly man with thinning hair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The image is partially obscured by a large, jagged red tear that runs diagonally across the page.


VIENNA 1986: SECRETS & LIES

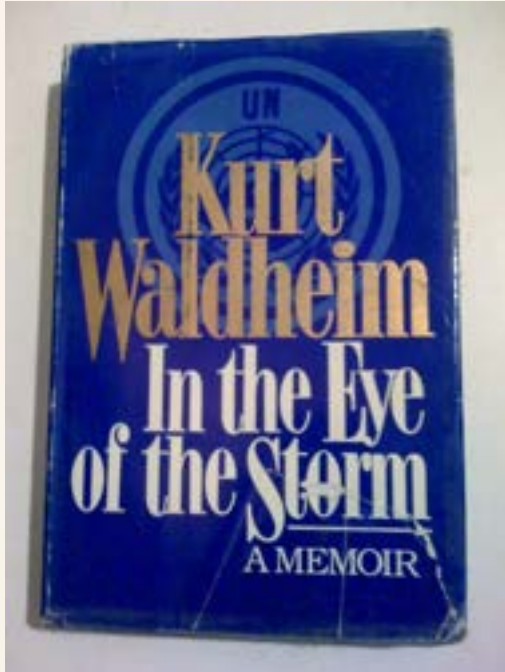
Kurt Waldheim (1918–2007) was an Austrian diplomat and politician who served as the Secretary-General of the United Nations from 1972 to 1981 and as the President of Austria from 1986 to 1992. While he had a long and distinguished international career, Waldheim's later political life was marred by controversy due to revelations about his wartime activities during World War II.

Waldheim served in the German Army during World War II and was stationed in the Balkans. In 1986, during his presidential campaign, information surfaced about his involvement in the German army's intelligence division in the Balkans, where war crimes were committed. He was accused of having knowledge of, and possibly participating in, actions against civilians and partisans.

Accusations of concealing wartime activities, providing deceptive information, and questions about his honesty led to international condemnation. The United States placed Waldheim on a "watch list," and he was denied entry. Protests and opposition mounted both within Austria and abroad, emphasizing the discord over someone with a potentially controversial wartime record holding high political office.

Despite the controversy, Waldheim was elected President of Austria, but his presidency was marked by diplomatic isolation and a tarnished international reputation, showcasing the lasting impact of the Waldheim affair on Austria's political history.

A decorative floral pattern in shades of green and yellow, featuring intricate scrollwork and leaf motifs, located in the bottom right corner of the page.



Waldheim's autobiography, *In the Eye of the Storm: Kurt Waldheim* was published in 1986. Interestingly, his book only briefly touches on his early years and deliberately omits any mention of his controversial service with the Wehrmacht during World War II. The narrative offers a selective glimpse into his life, focusing on specific aspects without delving into the contentious periods that have since become subjects of scrutiny.



Waldheim speaks in his role as UN secretary General (1972 - 1981)



This May 22, 1943 file photo released by the World Jewish Congress shows former United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, centre, at an airstrip in Yugoslavia.

Adolf Hitler (left) and Nazi officials parading through Vienna during the German occupation of Austria, 1938.



A “GREATER” GERMANY

The Anschluss & WW2

On March 12, 1938, Nazi Germany, led by Adolf Hitler, annexed Austria, effectively absorbing it into the German Reich in an action known as the Anschluss. The events unfolded with the entrance of German troops into Vienna, marking the beginning of Austria's incorporation into Nazi Germany.

After the Anschluss, Vienna found itself at the center of a political and ideological shift - it not only altered the geopolitical landscape of Europe but also brought profound changes to Vienna's identity - effectively erasing its national identity virtually overnight. In the subsequent days, weeks, and months, Austrian and German Nazis systematically imposed Nazi ideology on every facet of Austrian society. Numerous Austrians fervently embraced and actively participated in this endeavor. In the aftermath of the Anschluss, segments of the Austrian population engaged in the persecution of their Jewish fellow citizens, implementing Nazi policies, and contributing to the larger context of World War II. Some Austrians were also involved in the mass atrocities against Europe's Jewish population.

"Austria has the peculiarity of having been part of the German Reich. This makes it the only European country besides Germany that has an explicit history of perpetration."

- Heidemarie Uhl
Austrian Historian



On this balcony of the Hofburg, the Habsburgs' former principal palace at Heldenplatz (Heroes Square), Adolf Hitler delivered his Anschluss speech, announcing the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in 1938.

Approximately 100,000 Austrians gathered for his inaugural address at Vienna's Heldenplatz, a significant segment of the city's 1.9 million population, which included around 170,000 Jews.



Between 1945 and approximately 1988, Austria portrayed itself as a victim rather than a perpetrator of the Nazi regime. This victim narrative was geopolitically advantageous for Austria to avoid reparations and international condemnation similar to West Germany. This complicated inheritance and historical perspective have strongly influenced Austria's self-perception and global image.



Jewish men and women were forced to scrub the streets to remove political slogans that were critical of Germany's annexation of Austria.

Further Reading

Books

***I Belong to Vienna: A Jewish Family's Story of Exile and Return* by Anna Goldenberg**

A personal and insightful exploration of Vienna through the eyes of Anna Goldenberg, capturing the essence of the city's history, culture, and identity. In autumn 1942, Anna Goldenberg's great-grandparents and one of their sons are deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Hans, their elder son, survives by hiding in an apartment in the middle of Nazi-controlled Vienna. But this is no Anne Frank-like existence; teenage Hans passes time in the municipal library and buys standing room tickets to the Vienna State Opera. Goldenberg reconstructs this unique story in magnificent reportage.

***A Concise History of Austria* by Steven Beller**

Steven Beller's gripping and comprehensive account traces the remarkable career of Austria through its many transformations, from German borderland, to dynastic enterprise, imperial house, Central European great power, failed Alpine republic, German province, and then successful Alpine republic, building up a picture of the layers of Austrian identity and heritage and their diverse sources.

***Schumann: The Faces and the Masks* by Judith Chernaik**

Judith Chernaik's biography offers a nuanced portrait of the renowned composer Robert Schumann, delving into the complexities of his life, relationships, and artistic contributions.

***Music in Vienna: 1700, 1800, 1900* by David Wyn Jones**

This book explores the history of music in Vienna, focussing on three different epochs, 1700, 1800 and 1900, an approach which allows the very different relationships between music and society that existed in each of these periods to be distinguished. Patronage, social function and audience are key considerations, set within wider political and cultural developments.

Further Reading

FILM

The Waldheim Waltz - Directed by Ruth Beckermann

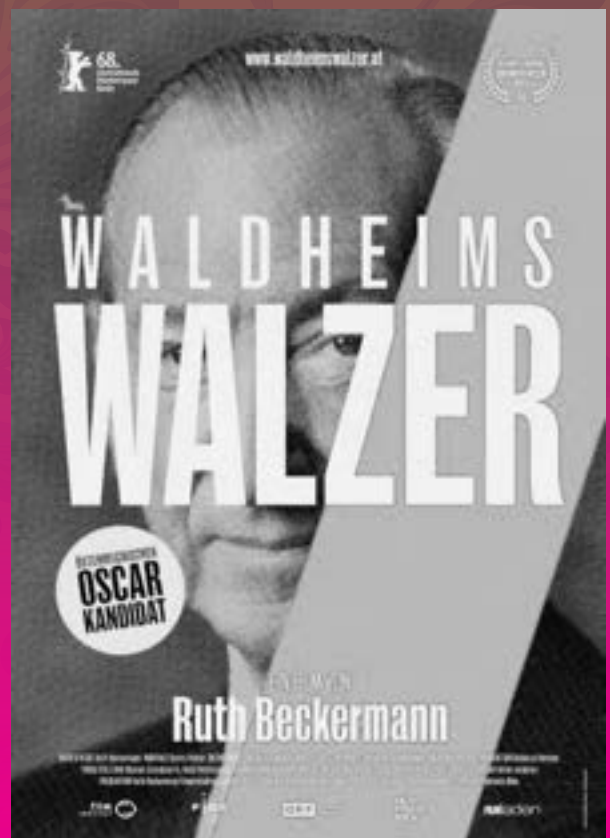
A documentary that critically examines the controversial political career of Kurt Waldheim, a former UN Secretary-General and Austrian president, against the backdrop of Austria's post-World War II history.

Vienna: Empire Dynasty and Dream - BBC Documentary Series

A captivating documentary series by the BBC that unfolds the rich tapestry of Vienna's history, exploring its imperial past, cultural achievements, and enduring legacy.

The Third Man - Directed by Carol Reed

A 1949 production of the Graham Greene novel, featuring Orson Welles. Set in post-World War II Vienna, capturing the atmosphere of a divided city and the moral ambiguities of its characters.



Exercises

#1 - Design Research

Creating a striking scenic design for any given play relies on the designer being thoughtful and intentional in their research. Using the text of *Old Wicked Songs*, students will gather insights into its historical context, themes, and visual components to inspire a creative design research packet:

Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a specific research focus:

- Historical context of the play (time period, cultural influences)
- Thematic analysis (key themes, symbolism)
- Character analysis (personality traits, relationships)
- Visual elements (set descriptions, costumes, lighting cues)

Allow groups to dive into their research using library resources or online platforms.

- Encourage students to take detailed notes on their assigned topics, gathering information that will enrich their understanding of the play's design potential.

Bring the groups together, and have each share their findings with the class.

- Discuss how each element discovered can contribute to the overall scenic design of the play.

Exercises

#2 - Scenic Design

Based on the design research from the previous exercise, students will now create a site specific scenic design of *Old Wicked Songs* for the performance space at GableStage:

Have students individually read the selected scene from the play.

- Organize small group discussions focusing on the setting, mood, and specific script details influencing the scenic design.

Create an inspiration collage or mood board for the look of the play.

- Supply magazines or printed images for students to explore.
- Instruct them to create collages featuring images or words that inspire the desired mood, colors, or elements for their envisioned scene.

Create a basic sketch for the stage space, and the present to the class

- Consider the placement of key elements and incorporating specific script details.
- When presenting their work, have students explain the rationale behind their choices and how these contribute to the overall storytelling.
- Encourage students to think of the space and sight lines.