

# Confronting the Past through Popular Musical Theatre: The Effects of Austrian Postwar Cultural Policies on the Reception History of Musicals

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## Abstract

Exploring the effects of Austrian postwar cultural policies on the reception history of popular musical theatre, I analyze the role of the *Opfermythos* narrative and *Kulturation* concept in the critical response to Broadway musicals after World War II. Because of their fictional portrayal of National Socialism, I focus on the Austrian premieres of *Cabaret* (1970), *The Sound of Music* (1993), and *The Producers* (2008). How does each musical figure into the Austrian discourse on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*? Do they challenge the narrative of the *Opfermythos*? I argue that the anti-American undercurrents in the reviews of *Cabaret*, numerous references to Austria's image in the reviews of *The Sound of Music*, and the resurgent bias against musicals in the political conflict over funding behind the premiere of *The Producers* are all part of a pattern that points toward the cultural elitism and cultural protectionism inherent to the *Kulturation* politics favored by the founding fathers of the *Zweite Republik*.



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# The Origins of the *Kulturation* Policy

In order to create ideological and moral distance between the newly re-founded Republic of Austria (*Zweite Republik*) and the Third Reich, Austrian government representatives carefully crafted the country's image as a nation of culture (*Kulturation*) in the years immediately following World War II.<sup>[1]</sup> Building on the Enlightenment notion of culture and barbarianism as mutually exclusive antipodes, the adoption of the *Kulturation* policy signaled a return to civilization to the rest of the world because it positioned the *Zweite Republik* in diametrical opposition to the barbaric Nazi regime.<sup>[2]</sup> Whereas Germany accepted its liability as a Nazi successor state, Austria disavowed any legal, moral, or political responsibilities by hiding behind the myth of being Hitler's first victim (*Opfermythos*). Instead, the founding fathers of the *Zweite Republik* located the young nation in the long-standing cultural tradition of the Austrian Habsburg empire, which reaches all the way back to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–91) and Franz Grillparzer (1791–1872).<sup>[3]</sup> Within this continuity, the Nazi years could be reduced to a mere blip on the historical radar.<sup>[4]</sup>

In this sense, the narrative of the *Kulturation* policy is consistent with the *Opfermythos*:<sup>[5]</sup> When the Nazis occupied Austria, they also hijacked its cultural institutions and art treasures. Accordingly, artists were forced or duped into collaborating with the new regime, which is one reason why well-known figures like Herbert von Karajan (1908–89) or the Viennese acting family Hörbiger were quickly de-Nazified and put back to work at Vienna's two premier houses, the Staatsoper and Burgtheater respectively.<sup>[6]</sup> It was pertinent for the young nation to reclaim its cultural heritage and institutions from the Nazis and (re-)contextualize both as distinctly Austrian—also to justify its independency as a nation: “Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Burgtheater, Staatsoper, Philharmoniker, Wiener Sängerknaben and Salzburger Festspiele” became the tenets of Austrian cultural identity politics both at home and abroad.<sup>[7]</sup> Consequentially, the time period between 1938 and 1945 could be treated as a temporary abnormality that many people just wanted to leave behind so they could return to “normality.”

Since part of the idea behind the *Kulturation* policy was to eclipse any responsibilities pertaining to the Nazi regime,<sup>[8]</sup> Austrians dealt with war crimes and anti-Semitism for decades only very reluctantly.<sup>[9]</sup> The prevailing narrative, however, that Austria was the first victim of Hitler's aggressions could no longer hold up to public scrutiny in the face of the 1986 allegations against presidential candidate Kurt Waldheim (1918–2007).<sup>[10]</sup> Although the former Secretary-General of the United Nations denied any involvement in war crimes, people increasingly had a hard time believing Waldheim's protestations that he did not have any knowledge of war crimes, as he got caught up in a series of half-truths and contradictions. Frustrated by the lack of critical engagement with the past, a group of playwrights associated with the Burgtheater began to challenge the *Opfermythos* in the 1980s, resulting in a series of scandals. While Elfriede Jelinek's *Burgtheater* (1985), George Tabori's *Mein Kampf* (1987), and especially Thomas Bernhard's *Heldenplatz* (1988) have received considerable attention from scholars and journalists alike,<sup>[11]</sup> little research has been carried out about musicals in Austria that deal with the portrayal of Nazi themes,<sup>[12]</sup> even though the German-language premiere of *Cabaret* at the Theater an der Wien preceded Jelinek's *Burgtheater* and the Waldheim affair by fifteen years.

Within this context, the Austrian reception history of the stage musicals *The Sound of Music* (1959), *Cabaret* (1966), and *The Producers* (2001) deserves further special consideration, because each show deals with different aspects of National Socialism in the plot.<sup>[13]</sup> *The Sound of Music* by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II recounts the story of the Trapp family from

Salzburg, which was forced into exile by the Nazis after the Anschluss. *Cabaret* by John Kander and Fred Ebb chronicles the experiences of a young US novelist in Berlin as he witnesses the rise of Nazism. The titular protagonists of Mel Brooks and Thomas Meehan's *The Producers* resort to staging a Nazi play in postwar New York City in order to affront Broadway audiences, but their ingenious plan to recoup their investments with a sure-fire flop backfires when theatregoers mistake the Nazi revue for satire. Despite their different approaches to (staging) Nazism, each musical pushes Austrian audiences to reflect on and come to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*).

Published interviews and archived personal correspondence by the theatre impresarios Rolf Kutschera (Theater an der Wien), Hans Gratzner (Schauspielhaus Wien), and Kathrin Zechner (Vereinigte Bühnen Wien) provide insight into the motivations behind bringing each Broadway musical to Vienna for the first time: the German-language premiere of *Cabaret* at the Theater an der Wien on November 14, 1970, the Austrian premiere of *The Sound of Music* at the Schauspielhaus Wien on February 27, 1993, and the German-language premiere of *The Producers* at the Ronacher on June 30, 2008. In order to analyze the critical response to each musical more accurately, I will contextualize the productions within their respective sociopolitical circumstances and the contemporary discourse on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. How do *Cabaret*, *The Sound of Music*, and *The Producers* fit into or challenge the *Kulturnation* policy's agenda?

## The *Kulturnation* Policy's Effects on Popular Musical Theatre

As a compound noun, the term *Kulturnation* consists of the German words for culture and nation in their singular form. Thus, the concept is based on the presupposition that a nation is united by one common culture.<sup>[14]</sup> Disregarding the lived plurality of (sub-)cultures, *Kulturnation* pursues the idea of a special, albeit imagined, homogeneous culture.<sup>[15]</sup> Under the conservative leadership of the *Österreichische Volkspartei* (ÖVP) in the 1950s and 1960s, this culture became synonymous with serious or highbrow art.<sup>[16]</sup> This meant an unabashed preference for historic art treasures and decidedly Austrian cultural heritage.<sup>[17]</sup> With little room left for contemporary art forms, such as the Broadway musical, which was imported from the United States in the 1950s, the ÖVP's conservative, nostalgic cultural policies account—among other things—for the slow acceptance of this genre as an artistic force to be reckoned with among Viennese critics.<sup>[18]</sup> The review of Leonard Bernstein's *A Wonderful Town* in the government-owned *Wiener Zeitung* illustrates how the *Kulturnation* policy pitted highbrow arts and lowbrow entertainment against each other:

Art institutes as well as popular theatre are necessary because people need art as well as entertainment. It is important, though, that the two happen at the right place, the right time, and to the appropriate extent. Up to now, the Volksoper belonged to the former category. The new musical-era, however, has brought changes and let the house plummet to "the first floor of art life."<sup>[19]</sup>

Tied down to its origins as musical comedy, the Broadway musical would remain relegated to the domain of entertainment in Austria for decades to come, despite such groundbreaking musical plays as *West Side Story* (1957) or *Man of La Mancha* (1965), which dealt with serious subject matters. Thus, when in 1970 *Cabaret* premiered at the Theater an der Wien, critics still considered National Socialism too serious a topic to be dealt with in musical theatre.<sup>[20]</sup>

Another review of *Wonderful Town* in *Neues Österreich*, which was jointly published by the ÖVP, the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs* (SPÖ), and the *Kommunistische Partei Österreichs* (KPÖ) in the 1950s, betrays the nationalistic slant behind the *Kulturnation* concept:

We confess that we oppose the genre of musical because it is entirely foreign, un-Viennese and musically inferior. But if the *Volksooper* wants to remain true to its name and mission, it has to carefully cultivate *Spieloper*, *Singspiel*, and classic operetta, too, which was neglected this year. Austrians are tolerant and we do not want a committee on “un-Austrian activities.” But the import of American surplus goods must not push native art into the background.<sup>[21]</sup>

Part of *Kulturnation* policy, then, was also to guard Austrian national treasures and cultural heritage from undue outside influences. To ward off Soviet influence in postwar Austria, the United States continued its efforts to re-educate the Austrian people by running its own newspapers (*Wiener Kurier*, 1945–54), radio stations (*Rot-Weiß-Rot*, 1945–54), and libraries (*Amerika-Häuser*).<sup>[22]</sup> Along with rock’n’roll and Hollywood movies, US troops brought Broadway musicals to Vienna. Marcel Prawy (1911–2003), who emigrated to the US during the Nazi regime, returned as a cultural officer to Vienna, where he introduced locals to the new genre via radio shows and concert-lectures. In the American occupation zone, Austrians had to go along with “the American way of life” in many respects, but when it came to arts and theatre, they stood their ground. And apparently Viennese critics chose the Broadway musical as their hill to die on. On both sides of the political spectrum, anti-American sentiments lingered on for many years after the war ended,<sup>[23]</sup> which were often expressed in a perceived inferiority of the US cultural sector, which catered to mass tastes.<sup>[24]</sup>

The effects of *Kulturnation* politics, I argue, are prevalent in the critical response to *Cabaret*, *The Sound of Music*, and *The Producers*: Many reviews condemned *Cabaret* simply on the basis that it originated in the United States and therefore should not deal with serious Austrian subject matters. Furthermore, the discussion of *The Sound of Music* below exemplifies how much of Austria’s image and international reputation hinged on the narrative of a victimized *Kulturnation* until the 1990s. Maintaining the image of a *Kulturnation* costs the Austrian government a pretty penny in the form of subsidies to theatres on national, regional, and local levels, among other things. Conflicts over the proper allocation of funds between political parties are inevitable, as the case study of *The Producers* will show.

## ***Cabaret* (1970)**

It was a gamble by Rolf Kutschera (1916–2012) to present *Cabaret* at the Theater an der Wien in 1970. The musical play challenges the black-and-white picture many Austrians probably had of the Nazi regime due to the *Opfermythos* by portraying conflicted protagonists whose actions make them equally victims and enablers of the regime. “When I purchased the rights for this play I knew that the theme would be difficult for people having lived through this time and that not everybody would appreciate it,” Kutschera wrote in a letter to lyricist Fred Ebb after the premiere:

What made me finally decide to produce “CABARET” in Vienna was the fact that my theatre is subsidized ... and that I think it my duty to present beside pure entertainment like “Hello, Dolly” and “My Fair Lady”, etc., musicals dealing with problems of our time, musicals penetrating into the literary sphere, as, e.g., “CABARET.”<sup>[25]</sup>

Concerns over *Cabaret*’s offensive potential for Austrian audiences must have weighed into

Robert Gilbert's translation of the musical play. For instance, he toned down Fräulein Schneider's confrontation with Cliff in the second act, turning her song "What Would You Do?" into "Wie geht's weiter?" ("What comes next?"). As a result, the disconcerting effects of the recurring dissonances on the word "you" are lost in translation, too. The nature of the song also changes in the German translation from self-resignation to self-interest, because rather than challenging Cliff—and by extension the audience—to take a stance, Fräulein Schneider is now only interested in what will become of her. Furthermore, Gilbert opted not to translate Fred Ebb's original punch line for the song "If You Could See Her through My Eyes," which was "she wouldn't look Jewish at all," and went with the safer version "she isn't a meeskite at all," which became "dann säht ihr mein Miesnick ist schön" in German.<sup>[26]</sup>

The song is a flaming indictment of human prejudices by the Emcee (or Conférencier as the character is called in the Viennese production), who provokes audiences with his relationship with a dancing gorilla. During *Cabaret's* New England tryouts, Jewish communities had accused director-producer Hal Prince of comparing Jewish women to gorillas, so he had the line changed for the Broadway premiere.<sup>[27]</sup> However, Joel Grey, who originated the role of the Emcee, slipped the original punch line in whenever he felt that he could get away with it.<sup>[28]</sup> Although it was restored for—and even included in the cast recording of—*Cabaret's* West End transfer, the offensive joke was dropped in London after a few weeks, too.<sup>[29]</sup> Probably anticipating a veritable scandal in Vienna if the gorilla were to turn out to be Jewish in the song "Säht ihr sie mit meinen Augen," the decision was made to go with the Jewish word for "ugly person" in the German translation.

As expected, the reviews reflect the mixed audience reactions: Whereas Rudolf U. Klaus commented in the tabloid *Kurier* on the "stone-cold silence"<sup>[30]</sup> which followed the Nazi hymn "Der morgige Tag ist mein" (orig. "Tomorrow Belongs to Me") in the musical, the party newspaper of the ÖVP in Upper Austria, the *Linzer Volksblatt*, raved about the "rapturous applause at the first two performances."<sup>[31]</sup> Gotthard Böhm from the conservative newspaper *Die Presse*, meanwhile, attributed the clapping to a well-placed clique.<sup>[32]</sup> In his letter to Ebb, Kutschera elaborated further:

People over fifty who have seen that time, also in Austria, refuse the theme. Young people, up to thirty and thirtyfive [*sic*], accept the show, the sophistication, the wit and the esprit it offers and are not offended by the theme, for what they know of that time is only what their parents told them, and that is to a great extent very subjective. On the contrary, the young people's reaction to the theme is very positive.<sup>[33]</sup>

In light of the latent anti-Semitism during the parliamentary elections earlier that year, maybe some had even begun to question the official *Opfermythos*.

Incumbent chancellor Josef Klaus (ÖVP) had campaigned with the slogan "Chancellor Dr. Klaus—a real Austrian,"<sup>[34]</sup> an innuendo about his opponent Bruno Kreisky's (1911–90) Jewish heritage.<sup>[35]</sup> The leader of the SPÖ had fled after the Anschluss and spent his exile in Sweden, whereas Klaus (1910–2001) had stayed and was drafted into Hitler's army. Following the elections on March 1, 1970, the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) suddenly found itself in the role of kingmaker. After negotiations for a coalition between SPÖ and ÖVP fell through, Kreisky opted for a minority government with the support of the FPÖ. A successor to the *Verband der Unabhängigen* (VdU), the FPÖ had become a home for incorrigible Nazis who could not or did not want to subscribe to either the ÖVP's conservative Catholicism or the SPÖ's social-democratic ideology.<sup>[36]</sup> Moreover, Kreisky's cabinet included five former NSDAP members, over whom the chancellor held his



protective hand.<sup>[37]</sup>

It is important to view *Cabaret*'s premiere at the Theater an der Wien on November 14, 1970, in the context of these political developments. To that effect, the Jewish artist Gerhard Bronner (1922–2007), who had fled the Nazi regime as a young adult, wrote in his program notes that people should not view *Cabaret* as “yet another Nazi play” but as a topical metaphor:

The danger which the actors in “CABARET” ignore consciously or unconsciously is almost analogous to the danger we live in today; and just as analogous is the reaction of the majority of people who live in prosperity. ... If you then see “CABARET” tonight, do not look at it as a tendentious work, nor should you look at it as the dichotomy between the good and the bad guys. Try to project that which you see onto our times! No longer feel lulled into the false sense of security that the menace that is performed for you today has been overcome. The threat is stronger than ever. May “CABARET” help us all react to this threat somewhat more correctly.<sup>[38]</sup>

Among critics at least, Bronner's appeal fell on deaf ears, since none of them addressed *Cabaret*'s potential as a present-day parable in their reviews. Only Gerhard Brunner complained in the tabloid *Kronen Zeitung* that Bronner's words made the whole evening worse.<sup>[39]</sup> Although Vienna staged a near replica of the original Broadway production, none of the critics commented on the role of the audience doubling as patrons at the Kit Kat Klub.

By contrast, many of their US colleagues—such as Walter Kerr from the *New York Times*,<sup>[40]</sup> the *Washington Post*'s Richard L. Coe,<sup>[41]</sup> Haskel Frankel from the *National Observer*,<sup>[42]</sup> the *Boston Herald's* Samuel Hirsch,<sup>[43]</sup> and Harold V. Cohen from the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*<sup>[44]</sup>—pointed to the trapezoid mirror in Boris Aronson's set design. Mounted to the fly tower, it reflected audience reactions back into the auditorium and confronted them with their entertainment through such songs as “Der morgige Tag ist mein” or “Säht ihr sie mit meinen Augen,” although the former song at least did catch the attention of some critics. Fritz Walden referred to it as “Witchcraft 101” (“Hexeneinmaleins”), sung by a brown Lorelei, in the SPÖ's official party newspaper *Arbeiter-Zeitung*,<sup>[45]</sup> and Ruediger Engerth compared it to the “marching songs of the brown battalions” in the conservative regional newspaper *Salzburger Nachrichten*.<sup>[46]</sup> Böhm considered it somewhat problematic that Kander could conceive of such a beautiful melody for a Nazi song, of all things, and was sickened by the waiters and whores singing it together at the Kit Kat Klub, completely bypassing its dramaturgical function at the engagement party of Fräulein Schneider and Herr Schultz.<sup>[47]</sup> Only Klaus documented the audience's reaction going into intermission after that song has been revealed to be a Nazi hymn at the engagement party: stone-cold silence.<sup>[48]</sup>

Equally telling is the critics' reluctance to discuss the portrayal of anti-Semitism in *Cabaret*. Böhm merely mentioned the “Jewish fruit shop owner, whom the Aryan Fräulein Schneider does not want to take”<sup>[49]</sup> in his plot summary, as if that explained the problematic portrayal of Nazism in the musical play. Similarly, Walden included “the melancholic love episode between the older boarding lady Fräulein Schneider and the non-Aryan fruit shop owner Schultz”<sup>[50]</sup> in his plot synopsis. Neither of them discussed how *Cabaret* portrays anti-Semitism beyond this superficial juxtaposition of the couple's ethnicities. Lothar Nesch went one step further in the conservative, regional paper *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* and cited a concrete example of how anti-Semitic sentiments affect the couple's relationship: During their engagement party “a storm trooper informs the bride that it would not be expedient to marry a Jew.”<sup>[51]</sup> But that is also the full extent of his discussion of anti-Semitism in the play. On the contrary, the *Linzer Volksblatt* linked the elderly couple's breakup to “clinking window panes announcing the persecution of Jews,”<sup>[52]</sup> referencing another scene in which someone throws a brick through Herr Schultz's

window. Most notably, Engerth drew a direct line from bricks in windows to the gas chambers of Auschwitz and the smell of burnt human flesh.<sup>[53]</sup> In contrast to his colleagues, Brunner did not even broach the subject. Not one newspaper printed the word anti-Semitism in its review, probably because most Austrian critics conflated the discussion of anti-Semitism in the musical play with that of Nazism.

Far from disappearing from Austrian society after the war, anti-Semitism had simply been relegated from the public sphere to the private one<sup>[54]</sup> as a result of the *Opfermythos* and *Kulturnation* politics, which had favored efforts to hush up the Nazi years altogether. Historian Gerhard Botz (\*1941) refers to a “paranazistic popular tradition” that was allowed to develop in the semi-public sphere of pubs, alongside the official historical viewpoints promoted by the political parties.<sup>[55]</sup> Since Nazism and anti-Semitism had never been properly dealt with by Austrians, they continued to lurk in the shadows for decades, surfacing only occasionally, for example in the campaign against Kreisky.

This also explains the covert Nazism and latent anti-Semitism that can even be detected in the reviews of *Cabaret*, although most critics went to great lengths to distance themselves from the Nazi regime. Brunner, for instance, referred to *Cabaret* as “one of the most bizarre spawns of the entire genre” in the polemical *Kronen Zeitung*.<sup>[56]</sup> In view of the fact that the original creative team behind *Cabaret* consisted predominantly of Jews, his rhetoric walks a fine line between anti-Semitism and professional review, coming dangerously close to the Nazis’ preferred terminology of “degenerate art” (*entartete Kunst*). And Böhm even reverted to victim blaming and shaming for the conservative *Die Presse*:

The certainly sincere anti-Nazi tendency of the play can turn into the opposite. Berlin was like that in the 1930s? Then it is no surprise that Hitler came. The cheap honkytonk establishment is no loss. A few whores, a few pimps less. So what?<sup>[57]</sup>

For all his complaints about the superficial treatment of Nazism in his review of *Cabaret*, Böhm himself trivializes it. Essentially, he is saying that people with vulgar lifestyles and loose morals forfeit their freedom and right to live. His words are reminiscent of the Nazis’ justification that they had to clean up the human race. The residual elements of Nazism in Brunner’s and Böhm’s rhetoric are arguably rather a sign of the authors’ lack of critical reflection on their word choice than of their actual beliefs. Still, they are symptomatic of the poor *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* at the time. Convinced by their collective victimhood, many Austrians did not even entertain the possibility of remnants of Nazi ideology clouding their judgments, failing to recognize anti-Semitism routinely.

Most critics agreed that National Socialism was too serious a topic for musical entertainment. According to Böhm, *Cabaret*’s superficial treatment of Nazism was built into the musical play, since neither of its literary templates—John van Druten’s straight play *I Am a Camera* (1951) and Christopher Isherwood’s book *The Berlin Stories* (1945)—could do it justice either. Similarly, Brunner complained that the creators’ artistic ineptitude reduced Nazism to “a kind of stimulating backdrop,”<sup>[58]</sup> which led Nesch to the conclusion that “catastrophes and musicals do not go together.”<sup>[59]</sup> Accordingly, all three of them saw *Cabaret* as evidence of the rift between arts and entertainment, which was intensified by *Kulturnation* politics in Austria:



The German tragedy, this *Götterdämmerung* of a people, is not suited for cheap entertainment. For those who were in doubt, there is now proof. How superficial everything becomes, how questionable. No, this is no way of dealing with this gory subject matter. The musical's dramaturgy is bound to founder.<sup>[60]</sup>

Apparently not even the Viennese premieres of *West Side Story* at the Volksoper Wien (1968) or *Man of La Mancha* at the Theater an der Wien (1968) had been able to overcome the bias that serious subjects should be reserved for the high arts. A few critics, like Engerth, stayed out of this debate in their reviews. And although Walden did not think that Broadway musicals should be automatically precluded from tackling the gravest chapter of Austrian history, he qualified that its nature as a song and dance routine made it harder to do: "While it is possible to represent the fear and misery of the Third Reich on stages, even if they symbolize revue-like hell, it is more difficult to sing and dance them."<sup>[61]</sup> Considering his employer, the SPÖ, Walden's position should be contextualized within the shifting political powers between the ÖVP and SPÖ at the time. Beginning under Kreisky in 1970, the SPÖ democratized access to the arts and widened the ÖVP's narrow definition of culture to include mass culture and contemporary arts.<sup>[62]</sup>

In a variation of the debate on the depictability of the Shoah,<sup>[63]</sup> Böhm argued in his review that not even documentaries can really capture the horror of the Nazi takeover, which is partially why *Cabaret* was doomed to fail from the start. Many Holocaust-survivors, like Elie Wiesel (1918–2016), also categorically ruled out fiction of any kind about the Shoah, because it inevitably trivializes the Holocaust.<sup>[64]</sup> To be sure, *Cabaret* takes place during the rise of Nazism, effectively ending shortly before the Nazi takeover. Yet, informed audiences knew exactly what kind of fate lay in store for the musical's protagonists. Whereas Sally Bowles could end up the toast of many an SS party, as Engerth suggests in his review,<sup>[65]</sup> Herr Schultz and the Emcee would likely end up in a concentration camp.<sup>[66]</sup> So like Engerth, who drew parallels to Auschwitz in his review, Böhm put the events depicted on stage into their historical context, without spelling it out.

Although some would rightly argue that Nazism should never be discussed without considering the Holocaust, equating life under Nazi rule with the Shoah might be equally offensive to others. One reason why the *Opfermythos* worked so flawlessly for such a long time in Austria was because the vast majority could identify with it; even Nazis and their collaborators who fancied themselves victims of the denazification efforts, which often left them unemployed or interned:

We were all victims of fascism. Victim was the soldier, who experienced the war at the front in its most terrible form. Victim was the population who was waiting in the hinterland full of horror for the call of the cuckoo in order to flee to their shelters and who, with longing, wished for the day which would take this fright from them. Victims were those who had to leave their native country to carry the mostly sad lot of the emigrant. Finally, we were victims, who in prisons, penitentiaries and concentration camps were defenseless prey of the SS.<sup>[67]</sup>

The general threat of deportation looming over the heads of everyone living under Nazi rule was also frequently invoked in the narrative of the *Geist der Lagerstraße* (spirit of the camp street), which had the founding fathers of the *Zweite Republik* bonding over their collective suffering as political prisoners in the concentration camps at the hands of the Nazis, thus overcoming their political differences.<sup>[68]</sup> Equating the suffering of the Jews with the experiences of resistance fighters, widows, and orphans on the home front and repatriated prisoners of war reached new levels of perversion in 1947 with the *Opferfürsorgegesetz*—a law intended to provide welfare to victims of political persecution and avoid payment of damages to victims of religious, nationalist,

and racist persecution.<sup>[69]</sup>

A convenient side effect of the argument that Nazism is too serious for musical entertainment was that it could also be used as a pretext to avoid or abort a serious and critical engagement with the past that might otherwise emerge. Since the *Kulturnation* policy encouraged the belittlement of the genre, it indirectly preempted a potential debate on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, or at least contributed to it, in this case. The cursory treatment of the topic by the critics seems to confirm this. Rather than discussing how *Cabaret* fails in its portrayal of Nazism, critics often reverted to another strategy of *Kulturnation* politics: cultural protectionism.

In doing so, they fixated on the fact that the events in *Cabaret* are told from a US perspective. Walden complained about the distortion of historical perspectives caused by geographical distance,<sup>[70]</sup> and Brunner mused that the plot might as well be set in Berlin, New Hampshire.<sup>[71]</sup> By comparison, a great deal of Broadway reviews celebrated the authenticity of *Cabaret*'s Berlin, for which Lotte Lenya (1898–1981), Kurt Weill's widow and Fräulein Schneider in the original Broadway cast, vouched as a German living in exile.<sup>[72]</sup> Even Böhm referred to the tremendous success the musical had there, but then he wondered if "maybe people have different eyes and stronger nerves on Broadway than in a country that lived through the aftermath. That aftermath, which was so abominable. No, this is nothing worth applauding."<sup>[73]</sup> There seems to have been a common consensus amongst reviewers that the prerogative of, or definitive authority over, narrating the Nazi period should lie with "people who were there" rather than foreigners.

Considering the meticulously maintained official narrative of the *Opfermythos* and the nationalistic protectionism behind the *Kulturnation* policy, it hardly comes as a surprise that Austrians struggled with such a delicate chapter of their history being handled by a group of US-Americans, even in a fictionalized version. Fifteen years after the allied occupation of Austria, anti-American undertones could still be detected in the reviews. Walden compared the genre to "frozen goods,"<sup>[74]</sup> and Brunner described *Cabaret* as one of "those run-of-the-mill products by cunning manufacturers, whose sole purpose it is to keep the cogwheels of show business turning."<sup>[75]</sup> Granted, similar prejudices can be found in German media as well, which viewed Broadway musicals as commercialized entertainment rather than art,<sup>[76]</sup> but the *Kulturnation* policy exacerbated the situation in Austria. It reinforced the impression that Americans, who lack culture, produce cheap entertainment, while Austrians create art.<sup>[77]</sup> *Cabaret* could have become an opportunity for younger generations, who did not know how to ask the older generations questions about the Third Reich, to open up a dialogue.<sup>[78]</sup> But the pressure in Austrian society to eschew any discussion about Nazism was still too big. Perhaps the message in *Cabaret* that complacency allows fascist regimes to grow hit a little too close to home for Austrian critics, who were still content with the *Opfermythos* and therefore preferred to sweep any real critical engagement with the past under the carpet.

## ***The Sound of Music* (1993)**

In September 1992, the manager of the Schauspielhaus Wien came under fire due to dwindling audience numbers. Therefore, Hans Gratzler moved up the Austrian premiere of *The Sound of Music*, which he had already optioned two years earlier,<sup>[79]</sup> and included it in the 1992/93 season.<sup>[80]</sup> Not everyone approved of his decision; some reproached Gratzler for straying off course, that is, presenting world premieres and first nights of modern, contemporary dramas.<sup>[81]</sup> These critical voices were probably unaware of the fact that *The Sound of Music* had never been

staged in Austria before, despite its plot being set in Salzburg. It was precisely this thirty-four-year-long gap in the reception history which piqued Gratzner's interest.

He reinterpreted the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic from the 1950s as a story about exile, drawing parallels to contemporary migration in the 1990s:

The intention is to make a play about exile. Back then, when it was written, people saw the ending of the musical as a happy departure to America. Today, this is viewed more seriously. Is there any country left where one can go to? That is a scary question.<sup>[82]</sup>

In the wake of the Yugoslav Wars, many refugees fled across the border to Austria in the 1990s, which fueled the xenophobic rhetoric of the FPÖ. In the last week of January 1993, party leader Jörg Haider initiated a petition for a referendum on immigration laws. With fewer than 500,000 signatures, the initiative "Austria First" (*Österreich zuerst*), which demanded legislation to stop immigration and promoted government-sanctioned ostracism of foreigners, fell short of Haider's expectations.<sup>[83]</sup> In return, over 200,000 people took a stand against rising xenophobia by forming a sea of lights (*Lichtermeer*) at the Heldenplatz in Vienna—the very same square Hitler had used to proclaim the Anschluss fifty-five years prior—on January 23, 1993, just a month before *The Sound of Music* opened at the Schauspielhaus Wien.<sup>[84]</sup>

In light of these developments, Gratzner's interpretation revolved around the question of how joining different groups might change a person:

The topic "participation" is especially important to us. It is a story about participation. Another pointer is the various systems of order: family, military, abbey, Nazi regime. It's about the question: How do you not join? The character of Maria is some kind of anarchist in this arrangement. She has difficulties with subordination at the abbey; she breaks with the Baron's military drill and flees with her family from the Nazis. We don't want to show a sweet person but a brave one.<sup>[85]</sup>

Accordingly, his portrayal of Nazism focused on what partaking in that kind of collective behavior does to people: In this version of *The Sound of Music*, the Nazis do not goose-step across the stage; they regress into primates as they lose their humanity and ability to think freely. This approach is a consequent continuation of the cartoonish depiction of Nazism chosen by the authors of the musical. Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Howard Lindsay, and Russel Crouse restricted the Nazi characters to speaking roles only. This is most obvious in the transition of Rolf Gruber: He starts out as an impressionable young telegram boy who shares a love duet with the Captain's oldest daughter, but he loses his singing privileges as he joins the SS, and his text is reduced to spoken lines only, just like the rest of the Nazis in the musical. Gratzner went even one step further and robbed them of the ability to speak altogether by putting primordial sounds into their mouths.

Whereas twenty years earlier most critics had shunned any direct discussion of Nazism in *Cabaret*, this time reviewers critiqued the depiction of Nazis in *The Sound of Music* openly. While Heinz G. Pribil (*Wiener Zeitung*),<sup>[86]</sup> Roland Koberg (*Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*),<sup>[87]</sup> Kurt Kahl (*Kurier*),<sup>[88]</sup> and Michaela Knapp (*Die Presse*)<sup>[89]</sup> commended Gratzner's Nazi portrayal, some old arguments shone through between the lines in the reviews of Renate Wagner and Helmut Schneider. Wagner mused in the *Neues Volksblatt*, the official newspaper of the ÖVP:

Gratzer handles the Nazis with less care, distorting and stylizing them (the swastika becoming a kind of giant spider) and making them act like great apes—it figures that he did not want to let the over-earnest gravity of history bleed into his fun interpretation of the play, which sometimes crosses the line.<sup>[90]</sup>

And Schneider concluded in the *Salzburger Nachrichten* that Gratzer's depiction trivialized Nazism:

By contrast, the Nazis were made by the director to look too harmless, like prosimians in the guise of humans. The traitors squat on the park bench, beating their chests and babbling unintelligible primordial sounds. The swastika became a lightning bolt. The meaning of this historical inaccuracy is unclear.<sup>[91]</sup>

The inspiration for the stylized swastika, which must have looked, according to Wagner's and Schneider's descriptions, like a giant spider with lightning bolts as its legs, comes straight out of the libretto: Marta, one of the Trapp children, describes the flag of the Third Reich innocently as "the flag with the black spider on it."<sup>[92]</sup> Maybe Gratzer flinched from putting a swastika on stage, even if the laws regulating the use of Nazi symbols (*Abzeichnungsgesetz*) would have allowed it. Keeping in mind Gratzer's words about exile today, however, the adaptation of the sign is more likely supposed to reflect the changing of the guard. The NSDAP may be forbidden by law, but the FPÖ took up the mantle from the Nazis and uses any legal loophole they can find to propagate the same racist ideas and agitating rhetoric.

Astonishingly none of the critics picked up on the parallels Gratzer drew between Hitler's anti-Semitic rhetoric and Haider's xenophobic baiting. Even though the critics in *Der Standard*, *Kronen Zeitung*, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, and *Salzburger Nachrichten* pointed to the exile of the Trapp family, they did not connect their fate to that of hundreds of contemporary refugees living in exile in Austria, against whom the FPÖ instigated. Only Kurt Kahl noted in the *Kurier* that "the success of the family choir in America remains a mere assertion: the plot breaks off with the passage."<sup>[93]</sup> He sensed that Americans did not exactly roll out the red carpet for refugees in the 1930s either, and the Trapp family struggled during their first years in exile. It seemed safer to discuss historic exile in reviews rather than contemporary migration.

Austrian media were much more interested in the positive effects the Trapp family and *The Sound of Music* had on the image of Austria abroad.<sup>[94]</sup> In foreign policy, the *Kulturation* agenda manifested itself in a picture-postcard idyll of Austria, which promoted Austrian cultural brands like the Wiener Philharmoniker or the Wiener Sängerknaben amidst historic heritage sites and beautiful landscapes.<sup>[95]</sup> In his review, Koberg quotes Johanna von Trapp, whose contribution to the Schauspielhaus's program notes shows how well the *Kulturation* policy worked even for Austrian emigrants: "only *The Sound of Music* dramatized for the average American 'that we are not Germans but a peaceful and talented small nation in one of Europe's most beautiful places.'"<sup>[96]</sup> This serene picture of Austria had suffered enormously in the wake of the Waldheim affair and was still only slowly recovering in the 1990s.<sup>[97]</sup>

However, as Koberg, Knapp, and Wagner observed, the best advertisement for the country had not come from Austria itself anyway but rather by way of the famous Hollywood film adaptation of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical.<sup>[98]</sup> Knapp commented in *Die Presse* on the paradox that the Trapp family story is even more popular than Arnold Schwarzenegger in the United States, whereas in Austria *The Sound of Music* had remained virtually unknown.<sup>[99]</sup> Reading the reviews of *The Sound of Music* at the Schauspielhaus Wien in 1993, one could almost get the impression that the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic saved Austria's reputation from the ruins in the

aftermath of the Waldheim affair:

The story of Lieutenant Commander Georg von Trapp, who ..., as a committed Austrian, fled from Hitler with his seven children to the United States, where he won the hearts of Americans with his family choir, has probably done more for improving the image of our country overseas than Sangerknaben and Lipizzaner combined.<sup>[100]</sup>

The *Kronen Zeitung's* critic praised the Trapp family for their integrity: "They did not let Hitler's propagandamachinery co-opt them but emigrated to the USA."<sup>[101]</sup> This observation could be construed as a veiled remark about Waldheim's infamous statement that he had "only done his duty" (*Pflichterfullung*).<sup>[102]</sup> Trapp could have stayed and answered Hitler's call of duty to command a submarine, yet he chose to defy the Nazis. Waldheim's selective memory, in contrast, made it look as if he had let the Nazis use him. Where Waldheim displays moral ambiguity, Trapp shows strength of character, which makes them the perfect foil for each other in this context. In another example of taking the former Austrian president to task, without ever once referring to Waldheim directly, Koberg extolled pointedly that "the savior of Austria's image in America is Baron von Trapp."<sup>[103]</sup> The disgraced former Austrian president was an easier target for critics than the rising political star Jorg Haider, although he and his FPO would further tarnish Austria's reputation as a racist country in the coming years, culminating in the sanctions by the European Union when the OVP under Wolfgang Schussel's leadership formed a coalition with Haider's FPO in 2000.

## **The Producers (2008)**

Mel Brooks's musical about two Broadway producers who try to create a flop with the tasteless Nazi revue *Springtime for Hitler* but instead land a success when audiences consider it a successful parody was chosen on purpose by Kathrin Zechner (\*1963) to reopen the Etablissement Ronacher after its expensive remodeling into a modern musical theatre. Zechner, who headed the musicals branch of the Vereinigten Buhnen Wien (VBW) from 2004 until 2011, wanted to take a stand in the commemorative year (*Gedenkjahr*) 2008, which marked the 70th anniversary of the Anschluss:

More than 60 years later, a satirical treatment must be possible, too. At the beginning of the coping process stands despair, followed by speechlessness and finally debate. Another step further can be satire as an art form. ... I see myself as part of a scene in theatre, film, music, and visual arts which do their bit: Tabori's *Mein Kampf* is just as necessary as Helge Schneider's film. My part is to approach it from the perspective of musicals.<sup>[104]</sup>

The question whether musicals are equipped to deal with serious subject matters in *Cabaret*, which evolved into a discussion of how musicals can depict serious subjects with *The Sound of Music*, becomes a matter of whether or not one can/should/may make fun of Hitler.

The polarizing nature of the debate had not changed and some of the arguments were still the same, too. In the regional newspaper *Kleine Zeitung*, which is run by the conservative Catholic publisher Styria in Carinthia and Styria, philosopher Peter Strasser (\*1950) took stock of the "Hitler boom" (*Hitlers Frauen, Hitlers Kinder, Speer und Er, Der Untergang, Mein Fuhrer*, etc.) in the media:

I could not say what is more obnoxious: serious Hitler or fun Hitler. ... Any kind of laughing about Hitler engenders inappropriate proximity to the perpetrator. ... All I know is that one should not depict him as a figure onto which feelings of greatness or tragedy can be projected.<sup>[105]</sup>



Strasser's argument brings up the old concerns about fiction trivializing Nazism and the Holocaust, dressed up in the question whether Hitler the monster can and/or should be humanized for any reason. In an interview with the *Kurier*, however, Mel Brooks (\*1926) countered that "Hitler was an actor anyway. He fooled an entire people into being its leader. A role that was actually out of his league, which he covered up. He was in the same business as we are: he created illusions."<sup>[106]</sup> Thus, as Ernst Trost observed in the *Kronen Zeitung*, Brooks "succeeds in exposing the grotesque and kitsch in Hitler's staging of power, or any other totalitarian regime or system, using extreme hyperbole."<sup>[107]</sup> And Derek Weber argued in his review for the *Salzburger Nachrichten* that Brooks and Zechner reduced the debate over parodying Hitler to a rhetorical question, which they utilized as a marketing tool.<sup>[108]</sup> Considering that *The Producers* had to close early in Vienna due to low ticket sales, this marketing strategy apparently backfired.

In light of Austria's past involvement with the Third Reich and its subsequent reluctant efforts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, several critics paid particular attention to audience reactions on first night. Peter Schneeberger from the weekly news magazine *profil*, which played an active role in uncovering Waldheim's past, observed that "the patrons' laughter very nearly died on their lips when the SS proudly formed themselves into a swastika."<sup>[109]</sup> Similarly, Werner Rosenberger pointed towards "a few people leaving during intermission with an angry 'hogwash' on their lips" in his review for the *Kurier*.<sup>[110]</sup> Like Weber, Christian Höller from the *Jüdische Allgemeine* exposed the superficiality of the debate in Austrian media:

The staging of *The Producers* in a city where Jews had to clean the sidewalks on their hands and knees while citizens cheered in 1938 should warrant a debate about Nazism in Austria. In other countries, even less affected ones like Argentina, South Korea, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Finland, and Australia, the play caused quite the stir and incited fierce discussions on whether and when one may laugh about Hitler. In Vienna, however, one is keen to nip any critical engagement with the content in the bud.<sup>[111]</sup>

Indeed, Austrian media were much more interested in the costly renovation of the Ronacher, to an extent that it is sometimes hard to distinguish reviews from op-ed pieces and news coverage.

During a major theatre reform in 2004, the City of Vienna restructured the VBW, through which it has run its three music theatres since 1987:<sup>[112]</sup> The Raimund Theater would continue to play musicals, while opera would move into the Theater an der Wien, beginning with the Mozart year 2006. Meanwhile, the Ronacher Theater would undergo major renovations, after which it would produce modern urban musical entertainment. The crux of the matter was that the city government actually lacked the funding for the €34.1 million modernization project, which is why it took out a loan to finance the restoration, whereupon the costs soared to a total of €46.8 million.<sup>[113]</sup> Against the will of the opposition, the SPÖ pushed the plans through city council due to its absolute majority.<sup>[114]</sup>

Brought on by the subprime mortgages in the United States in 2007, the global financial crisis hit during the renovation<sup>[115]</sup> and was still in full swing when the Ronacher reopened on June 30, 2008, with *The Producers*.<sup>[116]</sup> Thus, the discussion about the waste of public funds on arts and entertainment had never come to a stop and found its way into half of the reviews. Barbara Petsch, who had opposed the project from the start due to unemployment numbers and uncertainties about pension funds,<sup>[117]</sup> wrote in *Die Presse*:



Fortunately for politicians, they do not have to finance their passions for patina out of their own pocket, unlike private persons. The first Ronacher renovation cost roughly 140 million schillings; the current one burned through 46.8 million euros. With the result that the beautiful Ronacher, all dressed-up and sterile, resembles the ugly Raimund Theater more and more. In return, the stage can handle all the tricks of the trade now.<sup>[118]</sup>

Her colleague from the westernmost regional newspaper, *Vorarlberger Nachrichten*, pondered more neutrally: “Whether Vienna absolutely needs two stages for musicals remains to be seen.”<sup>[119]</sup> The critic of *Der Standard*, Ljubiša Tošić, would have preferred if the popular musical theatre had been reined in, so he railed against the cultural policy ambitions of the SPÖ:

It enacted the renovation of the old establishment, which is how the Musical-Theater an der Wien rose like a phoenix from the ashes of subsidies at the Ronacher. While it may not have a roof that can be opened, a lot of “money was spent nonetheless,” as deputy mayor Renate Brauner noted a little bit defiantly at the prelude to the *Producers* premiere, which members of the Green Party and FPÖ skipped. Out of protest over the 46.8 million Euro renovation.<sup>[120]</sup>

In 2006, the opposition had zeroed in on the VBW’s leadership for mismanagement of funds,<sup>[121]</sup> redirecting its conflict with the SPÖ to Franz Häußler, Kathrin Zechner, and Roland Geyer, who were in charge of finances, musicals, and opera, respectively.<sup>[122]</sup> In the process, old familiar arguments resurfaced, on which Wolfgang Kralicek commented in the liberal weekly newspaper *Falter*: “The critics of the VBW always imply condescension to an art form they deem to be substandard, and which is for badly dressed bus tourists, who have been a thorn in the side of the bourgeois bohemians at the Naschmarkt for a long time.”<sup>[123]</sup> Marie Ringler, the Green Party’s spokesperson for cultural affairs in Vienna, saw no future for the genre in the city<sup>[124]</sup> because “the musical has run its course; too many recent productions in Vienna have been flops.”<sup>[125]</sup> Similarly, the spokesman for cultural affairs of the ÖVP Wien, Andreas Salcher, claimed that “money is being invested in a globally stagnating or declining sector.”<sup>[126]</sup> The reviews by Petsch and Tošić clearly reflect that line of argument. The FPÖ, which would have preferred to team up with a private investor for the renovation in the first place,<sup>[127]</sup> called for an official investigation into the VBW’s finances by the city’s comptroller a few months before the reopening.<sup>[128]</sup> The comptroller’s office published the results of their audit just in time for the grand reopening, revealing irregularities, so the opposition felt vindicated.<sup>[129]</sup> As a result, the Viennese FPÖ and Green Party spurned the premiere of *The Producers*. Tošić implied in his review that the boycott may have actually been quite a handy excuse to not watch the show for the FPÖ Wien:

And finally, the play within the play, *Springtime for Hitler*, where revue girls wear beer steins, sausages and Valkyrie helmets as crowns and Hitler comes across as a ridiculous dreamer, a touchy-feely laughingstock. A shrinkage treatment for anything heroic, beautifully dismal. One would have loved to see the representatives of the Viennese FPÖ laughing—or maybe not laughing—in the audience.<sup>[130]</sup>

Christoph Irrgeher observed in the *Wiener Zeitung* that “because this opening is a big event after all (just like the amount in question is the red in the face of the opposition), theater is happening here even before the curtain rises.”<sup>[131]</sup> In a rare instance of complete agreement, the FPÖ and Green Party had staged a boycott, transferring the conflict from city hall to the theatre. As a result, anyone present at the event, from President Heinz Fischer to Councilman of Cultural Affairs Andreas Mailath-Pokorny, showed their support for musicals quasi automatically by their sheer presence, whereas those staying at home sent a strong message that public funding for the arts needed to be overhauled. Therefore, almost all critics recapped the political debate over

the Ronacher renovation, if they did not open their reviews with it.

The negative news coverage of the Ronacher and VBW in the months preceding the premiere may have had an adverse effect on ticket sales for a musical with a tough subject to sell. The open campaigning against the genre eclipsed the mostly positive reviews of the show: With the exception of Barbara Petsch, who compared *The Producers* to a museum in *Die Presse*, the mixed reviews in the *Wiener Zeitung*, *Kurier*, and *Salzburger Nachrichten* were mostly about the slow beginning and ending, while lauding the cast, translation, and choreography, among other things. Petsch's negative attitude toward the genre and renovation may have clouded her judgment, preventing her from understanding that *The Producers* is actually a persiflage of all those retro numbers, which she calls museum-like, reminiscent of early Broadway musicals. Meanwhile, *Kronen Zeitung*, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, *Format*, *profil*, *Neue Vorarlberger Tageszeitung*, and *Tiroler Tageszeitung* all published glowing reviews.

## Conclusion

Each case study demonstrates the far-reaching effects of the *Kulturnation* policy on the reception history of musicals in Austria, especially those that deal with the Third Reich. In their reviews of *Cabaret*, many critics followed the *Kulturnation* policy's default parameters: cultural protectionism and cultural elitism. As a result, *Cabaret's* role in the emerging artistic discourse on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* has gone largely unexplored. Any claims to a national prerogative of historical interpretation and depiction of Nazism seem to have vanished by the time *The Sound of Music* premiered in 1993. On the contrary, Austrian media welcomed the Americanized retelling of the Trapp family history, since it put a positive spin on the nation's image, even in the wake of the Waldheim affair. The positive reactions to *The Sound of Music* reflected the inchoate *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, whereas the negative responses to *Cabaret* mirrored the lack of willingness to engage critically with the past. Zechner's approach with Mel Brooks's *The Producers*, in turn, suggests that, now that Austrians had come to terms with their past, they could laugh about Hitler and parody him. However, once again *Kulturnation* politics detracted from the issue at hand, because the staged boycott by FPÖ and Green politicians dominated the media coverage of the German-language premiere. The drawn-out political conflict took up so much space in many reviews that hardly any room was left to discuss the moral question of spoofing Hitler. In all three case studies, the impresarios went beyond entertaining their patrons with repertoire from popular musical theatre, grasping the opportunity to intentionally challenge their audiences intellectually with topical issues, even if not everyone was always willing and ready for this kind of confrontation. The failure of critics to recognize the productions as artistic attempts to further the discourse on *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* constitutes a missed opportunity to explore their full potential as cautionary tales for the repeat of history.



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Heldenplatz," *European Studies: A Journal of European Culture, History & Politics* 30, no. 1 (2012): 271–300; Petra Paterno, "Vom 'Kriegerl' und 'Hoamatl': Elfriede Jelineks 'Burgtheater' ist Leerstelle und Identitätsstück; ein Symposium ergründet das Stück," *Wiener Zeitung*, April 28, 2017, accessed July 14, 2020; and Pia Janke, Teresa Kovacs, Christian Schenkermayr, and Bettina Chybiorz, eds., *Elfriede Jelineks Burgtheater: Eine Herausforderung*, Diskurse, Kontexte, Impulse 18 (Vienna: Praesens, 2018). ↑

12. The film adaptation of *The Sound of Music* has drawn most attention from international scholars: Ruth A. Starkman, "American Imperialism or Local Protectionism? *The Sound of Music* (1965) Fails in Germany and Austria," in *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 20, no. 1 (2000): 63–78; Ulrike Kammerhofer-Aggermann and Alexander G. Keul, eds., *The Sound of Music zwischen Mythos und Marketing*, Salzburger Beiträge zur Volkskunde 11 (Salzburg: Salzburger Landesinstitut für Volkskunde, 2000); Raymond Knapp, "History, *The Sound of Music*, and US," in *American Music* 22, no. 1 (2004): 133–44; and Olaf Jubin, "The Hills are Alive with ... My Songs, My Dreams? *The Sound of Music* in Germany and Austria," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 7, no. 2 (2013): 135–56. Because of their different plots and target audience, however, film and stage versions of a musical should be treated as two separate distinct entities, and caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions from one about the other. The German-language stage productions of *The Sound of Music*, *Cabaret*, and *The Producers* are discussed in Susanne Scheibelhofer, "The Singing Nazi: Representations of National Socialism in Broadway Musicals" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2014); and Nils Grosch and Susanne Scheibelhofer, "'Ev'ry Hotsy Totsy Nazi Stand and Cheer:' Cultural Sensitivity to Musicals About the Third Reich," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Global Musical*, ed. Olaf Jubin and Robert Gordon (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2023). ↑
13. Since many other musicals that incorporate Nazi themes in their plots, such as *Marguerite* (2008), *Soldaat van Oranje* (2010), and *El diario de Ana Frank, un canto a la vida* (2008), still await performances in Austria, this article focuses on the Austrian premieres of *Cabaret*, *The Sound of Music*, and *The Producers* in this chronological order. ↑
14. Friedrich Dieckmann, "Kulturnation und Nationalkultur: Von alten und neuen Herausforderungen," in "Transformatorische Kulturpolitik," ed. Norbert Sievers, Patrick S. Föhl, and Tobias J. Knoblich, special issue *Jahrbuch für Kulturpolitik* (2015/16): 149–59, accessed February 4, 2022. ↑
15. This conservative concept of Kulturnation in Austria is challenged by Wolfgang Zinggl, "Was ist eine Kulturnation? Ein Einwurf aus Anlass eines Symposiums in Wien," *Der Standard*, April 12, 2002, accessed August 29, 2021; and Michael Wimmer, "Noch einmal 'Kulturnation' und ich schreie", in *Wimmers Kommentar*, May 3, 2021, accessed February 4, 2022. Wimmer also discusses the political implications of the Kulturnation concept in his blog entry of the same title: "Noch einmal 'Kulturnation' und ich schreie", in *Wimmer's Blog*, June 13, 2021, accessed February, 2022. For a discerning discussion on concepts of culture, see Wolfgang Welsch, "Transkulturalität: Zur veränderten Verfassung heutiger Kulturen," in *Hybridkultur: Medien, Netze, Künste*, ed. Irmela Schneider and Christian W. Thomsen (Cologne: Wienand, 1997), 67–90; Andreas Reckwitz, *Die Transformation der Kulturtheorien: Zur Entwicklung eines Theorieprogramms* (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2006); Wimmer, *Kultur und Demokratie*, 42–83; and Susanne Scheibelhofer, "Kultur," in *Musik und Migration: Ein Theorie- und Methodenhandbuch*, ed. Wolfgang Gratzer et al. (Münster: Waxmann, 2023), 91–93. ↑
16. Sabrina Schwarz, "Kulturförderungsverwaltung: Kunstförderung auf Bundesebene in Österreich," (master's thesis, University of Vienna, 2012), 14–19, accessed September 10, 2021. Cf. Wimmer, *Kultur und Demokratie*, 52 and 74. For a more detailed account of how conservative forces helped shape a *Kulturpolitik* that championed past cultural achievements over contemporary ones in postwar Austria, see Kerschbaumer and Müller, *Begnadet für das Schöne*, 117–204. The focus on musical heritage in public policy, however, precedes World War II, as research by Martina Nußbaumer, *Musikstadt Wien: Die Konstruktion eines Images*, Edition Parabasen 6 (Freiburg: Rombach, 2007), shows. ↑
17. In 1955, for instance, a council of ministers overturned Burgtheater director Alfred Rott's decision to reopen the newly rebuilt house on the Ring with Goethe's *Egmont* and ordered to have Grillparzer's *König Ottokars Glück und Ende* to be played instead—on the grounds that it was more Austrian. This

anecdote subsumes the extent and scope of the ÖVP's *Kulturnation* in a nutshell. For more background information on this debate, see [Gerald Heidegger, "Ewig menschlich österreichisch," ORF.at, September 12, 2010](#), accessed August 29, 2021. ↑

18. For a more detailed discussion of the various factors in the German-speaking reception history of Broadway musicals, see *Die Rezeption des Broadwaymusicals in Deutschland*, ed. Nils Grosch and Elmar Juchem, Veröffentlichungen der Kurt-Weill-Gesellschaft Dessau 8 (Münster: Waxmann, 2012) and Susanne Scheibelhofer, "Zwischen Nachkriegspropaganda, Kulturimperialismus und Kulturkritik: Marcel Prawys Lecture-Performances am Wiener Kosmos-Theater Anfang der 50er Jahre," in *ACT: Zeitschrift für Musik & Performance* (forthcoming). ↑
19. Norbert Tschulik, "New York besteht vor allem aus Wirbel, *Wonderful Town* heißt das musikalische Show-Programm in der Volksoper," *Wiener Zeitung*, November 11, 1956, as cited by Wolfgang Jansen, *Cats & Co: Geschichte des Musicals im deutschsprachigen Theater* (Leipzig: Henschel, 2008), 29. Original wording: "Sowohl Kunstinstitute als auch Unterhaltungstheater sind notwendig, weil die Menschheit sowohl die Kunst als auch die Unterhaltung braucht. Wichtig ist nur, dass beides im richtigen Ausmaß, zur rechten Zeit und am rechten Ort geschieht. Bisher zählte die Volksoper zur erstgenannten Kategorie. Die neue Musical-Ära hat jedoch einen Wandel geschaffen und das Haus in 'das Parterre des Kunstlebens' absinken lassen." ↑
20. *Ibid.*, 103. ↑
21. Y., "Volksoper: *Wonderful Town*," *Neues Österreich*, November 11, 1956, as cited in *ibid.*, 29. Original wording: "Wir bekennen, der Gattung des Musicals ablehnend gegenüberzustehen, weil sie völlig landfremd, unwienerisch und musikalisch minderwertig ist. Aber wenn die Volksoper ihrem Namen und ihrer Mission treu bleiben will, muss sie, was heuer viel zu wenig geschah, auch Spieloper, Singspiel und klassische Operette sorgfältig pflegen. Die Österreicher sind tolerant, und wir wollen kein Komitee zur Bekämpfung 'unösterreichischer' Aktivität. Aber der Import amerikanischer Surplusgüter darf die bodenständige Kunst nicht in den Hintergrund drängen." ↑
22. Today, only the *Amerika-Haus* in Vienna remains. The outlets in the federal states were closed in the 1950s and 1960s. Officially, the *Amerika-Häuser* were called United States Information Centers (USIC). ↑
23. Notice the unmistakable reference to the House Committee on Un-American Activities in the review of *Wonderful Town* quoted above, where the KPÖ's influence clearly shines through in the veiled criticism of Senator McCarthy's (1908–57) witch-hunt of communists in the United States. The critics insinuate that U.S. citizens might be less tolerant than Austrians, while at the same time holding on to their own nationalist ideologies. ↑
24. Nils Grosch, "Das Musical in der Rezeption durch die deutschsprachigen Wissenschaften" and Wolfgang Jansen, "Das Musical kommt nach Deutschland, 1945–1960," in Grosch and Juchem, *Broadwaymusicals*, 12–15 and 36–38. ↑
25. Rolf Kutschera, letter to Fred Ebb, December 16, 1970, Box 11 (album), Fred Ebb Papers, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. ↑
26. "Meeskite" (orig. Mieskeit) or "Miesnick" are Yiddish for "ugly person." ↑
27. For more information on this controversy, see [Scheibelhofer, "The Singing Nazi," 148–50](#). ↑
28. *Ibid.*, 150. ↑
29. *Ibid.*, 222–24. ↑
30. Rudolf U. Klaus, "Einen 'Oscar' für die Aubrey! Das Musical von Masteroff und Kander in Kutschera-Maurer-Inszenierung," *Kurier*, November 16, 1970, cited after Jansen, *Cats & Co*, 103: "The audience, too, reacted with stone-cold silence to the racial chant of the glorious 'tomorrow.'" Original wording: "Auch das Publikum reagierte mit 'eisigem Schweigen' auf den 'völkischen' Chorgesang vom glorreichen 'Morgigen Tag.'" ↑



31. is, "SA marschiert im Tangoschritt: *Kabarett*—ein politisch angehauchtes Musical," *Linzer Volksblatt*, November 17, 1970, 7: "The first two performances received rapturous applause." Original wording: "Die ersten beiden Aufführungen wurden mit stürmischem Beifall quittiert." ↑
32. Gotthard Böhm, "Es war leider nur peinlich: Deutschsprachige Erstaufführung von *Cabaret* im Theater an der Wien," *Die Presse*, November 16, 1970, 4: "No matter how well-placed the claque was in best opera tradition, the applause did not come close to that for *Anatevka*." Original wording: "Doch so raffiniert, nach guter alter Opernmethode, die Claque auch platziert war—der Applaus kam nicht in *Anatevka*-Nähe." ↑
33. Kutschera, letter to Ebb, December 16, 1970. ↑
34. For an image of the election poster, see VGA: Verein für Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung: "[Dr. Klaus—ein echter Österreicher.](#)" ↑
35. For more information about Kreisky's ambivalent feelings toward Jewishness, see Karin Stöger, "Bruno Kreisky: Antisemitismus und der österreichische Umgang mit dem Nationalsozialismus," in *Kreisky—Haider: Bruchlinien österreichischer Identitäten*, ed. Anton Pelinka, Hubert Sickinger, and Karin Stöger (Vienna: Braumüller, 2008), 25–110. ↑
36. For more information on the political re-integration of (former) Nazis into the party system of the *Zweite Republik*, see Robert Knight, "Der Waldheim Kontext: Österreich und der Nationalsozialismus," in *Kontroversen um Österreichs Zeitgeschichte: Verdrängte Vergangenheit, Österreich-Identität, Waldheim und die Historiker*, ed. Gerhard Botz and Gerald Sprengnagel, Studien zur historischen Sozialwissenschaft 13, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt: Campus, 2008), 78–88. ↑
37. The full list reads: Otto Rösch (Minister of the Interior), Johann Öllinger (Minister of Agriculture until May 22, 1970), Oskar Weihs (Minister of Agriculture from May 22, 1970, on), Erwin Frühbauer (Minister of Infrastructure), and Josef Moser (Minister of Buildings and Technology). For more information on the Öllinger and Rösch controversies, see the articles from the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*: "[So weit zurück,](#)" *Der Spiegel* 22 (1970): 137–38, accessed August 2, 2020; and "[Armer Teufel,](#)" *Der Spiegel* 24 (1970), 82, accessed August 2, 2020. And for more information on the handling of former Nazis in Austrian administrations, see Rathkolb, *Paradoxe Republik*, 295–300. ↑
38. Gerhard Bronner, "Schon wieder ein Nazi-Stück?" *Cabaret Program* (Vienna: Theater an der Wien, 1970), [2]. Original wording: "Die Gefahr, welche von den Akteuren des Stückes 'CABARET' bewußt oder unbewußt ignoriert wird, ist fast analog zur Gefahr, in der wir uns heute befinden, und ebenso analog ist die Reaktion des größten Teils der Menschheit, soweit sie im Wohlstand lebt. ... Wenn Sie also heute 'CABARET' sehen, betrachten Sie es nicht als Tendenz-Stück, betrachten Sie es auch nicht als den Zwiespalt zwischen den guten und den bösen Menschen. Versuchen Sie das, was Sie sehen, auf unsere heutige Zeit zu projizieren! Wiegen Sie sich nicht mehr in der Scheinsicherheit, daß die Ihnen heute vorgeführte Bedrohung längst überwunden sei. Die Bedrohung ist heute stärker als je. 'CABARET' möge uns allen helfen, auf diese Bedrohung etwas richtiger zu reagieren." Many thanks to Renate Rieder, head archivist at the Vereinigte Bühnen Wien, for making this text available to me. ↑
39. Gerhard Brunner, "Und man nimmt, was man kriegt...: Zur deutschsprachigen Erstaufführung des Musicals *Cabaret* im Theater a. d. Wien," *Kronen-Zeitung*, November 16, 1970, 10. ↑
40. Walter Kerr, "Cabaret Opens at the Broadhurst," *New York Times*, November 21, 1966, 2. ↑
41. Richard L. Coe, "Atmosphere is the Theme," *Washington Post*, November 21, 1966, D10. ↑
42. Haskel Frankell, "A Triumph of Mood over Matter, Cabaret Is a Nonstop Party," *National Observer*, November 28, 1966, 24. ↑
43. Samuel Hirsch, "Musical Cabaret at Shubert Opens with Lotte Lenya at Best," *Boston Herald*, October 11, 1966, 16. ↑
44. Richard V. Cohen, "Memorable Musical," *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, December 13, 1966, 16. ↑



45. Fritz Walden, "Der Broadway auf einem langen Weg: Deutschsprachige Erstaufführung von *Cabaret* im Theater an der Wien," *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, November 17, 1970, 8. For a discussion of the Lorelei myth in connection with this song, see Susanne Scheibhofer, "'Tomorrow Belongs to Me:' The Journey of a Show Tune from Broadway to Rechtsrock," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 11, no. 1 (2017): 5-22. ↑
46. Ruediger Engerth, "Auschwitz zwischen Girlbeinen: Deutschsprachige Erstaufführung des Musicals *Cabaret* im Theater an der Wien," *Salzburger Nachrichten*, November 17, 1970, 7. Original wording: "Marschliedern der braunen Bataillone, denen 'die Straße frei' zu geben war." This was probably a reference to Hans Baumann's Nazi song "Es zittern die morschen Knochen." ↑
47. Böhm, "Es war leider nur peinlich," 4. Unlike some of his U.S. colleagues, Böhm failed to recognize the similarities to Silcher's setting of "Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten," more commonly known as the "Lorelei." For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Scheibhofer, "Tomorrow Belongs to Me," 8-9. ↑
48. Klaus, "Einen 'Oscar' für die Aubrey." ↑
49. Böhm, "Es war leider nur peinlich," 4. Original wording: "Es bleibt auch der jüdische Obsthändler allein, denn das arische Fräulein Schneider mag ihn nicht nehmen." ↑
50. Walden, "Broadway auf einem langen Weg," 8. Original wording: "die melancholische Liebesepisode zwischen der ältlichen Zimmervermieterin Fräulein Schneider und dem nichtarischen Obsthändler Schultz." ↑
51. Lothar Nesch, "Katastrophen passen nicht zum Musical: Deutschsprachige Erstaufführung von *Cabaret* an der Wien," *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, November 19, 1970, 8. Original wording: "Da findet sich eine ältliche Jungfer mit einem Obsthändler, aber bei der Verlobungsfeier macht ein SA-Mann die Braut darauf aufmerksam, daß es nicht zweckmäßig wäre, einen Juden zu heiraten." Nesch exaggerates here a bit and might conjure up the wrong image. While Ernst Ludwig is certainly a card-carrying, swastika-wearing member of the NSDAP, he does not show up in a storm trooper's uniform, an image Nesch's exaggeration might conjure up. ↑
52. is, "SA marschiert im Tangoschritt," 7. Original wording: "und mit klirrenden Fensterscheiben kündigt sich die Judenverfolgung an. Eine Zimmervermieterin trennt sich vom jüdischen Obsthändler, der sie heiraten wollte." ↑
53. Engerth, "Auschwitz zwischen Girlbeinen," 7. ↑
54. Knight, "Waldheim Kontext," 87. ↑
55. Gerhard Botz, "Krisen der österreichischen Zeitgeschichte," in Botz and Sprengnagel, *Österreichs Zeitgeschichte*, 26. ↑
56. Brunner, "Und man nimmt," 10. Original wording: "Und zugleich eine der absonderlichsten Hervorbringungen der ganzen Gattung." ↑
57. Böhm, "Es war leider nur peinlich," 4. Original wording: "Die gewiß ehrliche Antinazitendenz des Stückes kann sich ins Gegenteil verkehren. So war Berlin 1930? Dann ist es ja kein Wunder, daß Hitler kam. Und um das billige Tingeltangeltablissement ist nicht schade. Ein paar Huren, ein paar Zuhälter weniger. Na und?" ↑
58. Brunner, "Und man nimmt," 10: "Unable to master the topic artistically, the authors content themselves with utilizing Nazism as a kind of stimulating backdrop. Thus, they rob themselves of their only chance to find something legitimately and compellingly new." Original wording: "Dazu unfähig, das Thema künstlerisch zu bewältigen, bescheiden sich die Autoren damit, den Nazismus als eine Art Reizkulisse zu verwenden. Damit berauben sie sich der einzigen Chance, legitim und zwingend Neues zu finden." ↑
59. Nesch, "Katastrophen passen nicht zum Musical," 8. ↑
60. Böhm, "Es war leider nur peinlich," 4. Original wording: "Die deutsche Tragödie, die Götterdämmerung

eines Volkes, eignet sich nicht für die Amüsierbühne. Wer daran zweifelte, dem wird es nun bewiesen. Wie oberflächlich wird da alles, wie fragwürdig. Nein, so kann man diesen blutigen Stoff nicht behandeln. Die Dramaturgie des Musicals muß an ihm scheitern." ↑

61. Walden, "Broadway auf einem langen Weg," 8. Original wording: "Nun sind Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reichs auf Brettern, die eine kabarettistische Hölle bedeuten sehr wohl darstellbar; schwerer schon, zu singen und zu tanzen." ↑
62. Schwarz, "Kulturförderungsverwaltung," 19-25. ↑
63. The debate seems to flare up whenever an artist makes a foray in a new genre: Similar concerns were voiced ahead of the Broadway premieres of *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1955), *The Sound of Music* (1959), and *Cabaret* (1966). In the 1990s, Hollywood's suitability to tell stories about the Shoah was challenged over Steven Spielberg's (\*1946) reliance on common Hollywood conventions in *Schindler's List* (1993), which negated the singularity of the Holocaust; and when Roberto Benigni's (\*1952) *La vita è bella* (1997) was released, critics wondered whether the use of comedy qualified the Shoah. For more information, see [Andreas Schmoller, "Die Darstellbarkeit der Shoah," in Handbuch Jüdische Kulturgeschichte, ed. Zentrum für jüdische Kulturgeschichte der Universität Salzburg, accessed August 2, 2020.](#) ↑
64. Elie Wiesel, "Art and the Holocaust: Trivializing Memory," *New York Times*, June 11, 1989, accessed August 2, 2020. ↑
65. Engerth, "Auschwitz zwischen Girlbeinen," 7. ↑
66. Sam Mendes made this unequivocally clear for younger audiences at the end of his 1993 revival of *Cabaret*, when the Emcee reveals his concentration camp uniform beneath his clothes. ↑
67. Rosa Jochmann as cited in Brigitte Bailer, "They Were All Victims: The Selective Treatment of the Consequences of National Socialism," in Bischof and Pelinka, *Austrian Historical MEMORY*, 106. ↑
68. Rathkolb, *Die paradoxe Republik*, 51-52. ↑
69. See Bailer, "They Were All Victims," 107-11, for a detailed discussion about the many amendments this law required to improve reparations for Jewish victims. ↑
70. Walden, "Broadway auf einem langen Weg," 8: "Distance clouds historical perspectives more than time, which clarifies many a thing! *Cabaret* begins on New Year's Eve, when the golden twenties in Berlin turned into the brown years of the following decade—as seen not only on the stage through the eyes of the American writer Clifford Bradshaw, who is on a literary expedition, but also from the point of view of the American authors, geared towards a simplifying musical effect." Original wording: "Mehr als die Zeit—die manches viel klarer hervortreten läßt—trübt Entfernung historische Perspektiven! 'Cabaret' beginnt mit jener Silvesternacht, in der in Berlin die goldenen zwanziger Jahre in die braunen des folgenden Dezenniums übergehen, nicht nur auf der Bühne gesehen mit den Augen des amerikanischen Schriftstellers auf literarischer Entdeckungsreise Clifford Bradshaw, sondern auch durch die Brille der amerikanischen Autoren, auf vereinfachenden Musicaleffekt ausgerichtet." ↑
71. Brunner, "Und man nimmt," 10: "It appears almost touching how Broadway tries to bring Berlin in the late twenties or early thirties to our minds. The local color could not be any more bland or wrong. Save for the occasionally mentioned Nollendorfplatz, one might think that *Cabaret* takes place in Berlin, New Hampshire." Original wording: "Es mutet fast rührend an, wie uns der Broadway das Berlin der späten zwanziger oder frühen dreißiger Jahre gegenwärtig machen will. Farbloser und falscher könnte das Kolorit kaum sein. Wäre nicht hin und wieder vom Nollendorfplatz die Rede, so könnte man fast glauben, 'Cabaret' spiele in Berlin, New Hampshire." ↑
72. Whitney Bolton, "Cabaret Defended as Accurate, Honest," *Morning Telegraph*, November 28, 1966; Frankel, "Triumph of Mood over Matter"; Richard Gilman, "I Am a Musical," *Newsweek*, December 5, 1966; Kevin Kelly, "Cabaret Has the Makings of a Rare Musical," *Boston Globe*, October 11, 1966; and

William A. Raidy, "Add Cabaret to Hit List," *Long Island Star Journal*, November 21, 1966. ↑

73. Böhm, "Es war leider nur peinlich," 4. Original wording: "Mag sein, daß man am Broadway andere Augen und stärkere Nerven hat als in einem Land, das jenes Danach erlebte. Jenes Danach, das so abscheulich war. Nein, zum Applaudieren ist das nichts." ↑
74. Walden, "Broadway auf einem langen Weg," 8: "The worldwide export of Broadway musicals, which has gained momentum, resembles that of frozen goods a little bit: They are delivered seemingly ready made and only need to be defrosted." Original wording: "Der in Schwung gekommene Broadway-Weltexport von Musicals gleicht ein wenig dem von tiefgekühlten Konserven: Man bekommt sie scheinbar fix und fertig geliefert und braucht sie nur aufzutauen." ↑
75. Brunner, "Und man nimmt," 10: "Whoever dedicates themselves so exclusively to Broadway the way our Theater an der Wien does, certainly one of the best managed stages far and wide, must bear the risk of taking on a flop along with the chance of capitalizing on the big hits. This is not about the looming 'turkeys' of tryouts but rather about those run-of-the-mill products by cunning manufacturers, whose sole purpose it is to keep the cogwheels of show business turning. *Cabaret* is one of these products. And at the same time one of the most bizarre spawns of the entire genre." Original wording: "Wer sich dem Broadway so ausschließlich verschreibt wie unser Theater an der Wien, ganz gewiss eine der best geführten Bühnen weit und breit, handelt mit der Chance, die großen Erfolge auszuschlachten, leider auch das Risiko ein, an den Pleiten teilzuhaben. Damit sind natürlich nicht jene Durchfälle ('turkeys') gemeint, die sich bereits bei den provinziellen Tryouts abzeichnen, sondern jene mittelmäßigen Fabrikate gerissener Konfektionäre, deren einzige Bestimmung es ist, das Räderwerk des Show Business in Gang zu halten. 'Cabaret' ist eines dieser Produkte. Und zugleich eine der absonderlichsten Hervorbringungen der ganzen Gattung." ↑
76. For more information on anti-Americanism and popular musical theater, see Grosch and Juchem, *Broadwaymusicals*, 12–15, 36–38, 64–67, 78–83, and 101–106; and Scheiblhofer, "Nachkriegspropaganda, Kulturimperialismus und Kulturkritik." ↑
77. Rathkolb, *Paradoxe Republik*, 240–41. ↑
78. Botz, "Krisen der österreichischen Zeitgeschichte," 29. ↑
79. LH, "Sound of Music im Wiener Schauspielhaus," *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, February 26, 1993, 16. ↑
80. Barbara Petsch, "Halbes Ultimatum: Hans Gratzler kämpft gegen Pasterk," *Die Presse*, September 12, 1992. ↑
81. Michaela Knapp, "Edelweiß im Pop-art-Rausch: *The Sound of Music* im Schauspielhaus," *Die Presse*, March 1, 1993, 16; and Roland Koberg, "Edelbunte Edelweiße: *The Sound of Music* hatte in Gratzers Wiener Schauspielhaus Premiere," *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, March 1, 1993, 16. ↑
82. Blanche Robbe-Lasalle, "Dem Regenbogen entgegen," *Die Bühne*, n.d., 30. Original wording: "Die Intention ist, ein Stück übers Exil zu machen. Damals, als es geschrieben wurde, sah man den Schluß des Musicals als fröhlichen Aufbruch nach Amerika. Das wird heute ernster gesehen. Gibt es heute überhaupt noch ein Land, wohin man gehen kann? Das ist eine beängstigende Frage." ↑
83. Staff writer, "Wenig Andrang auf FP-Volksbegehren: Erste Hochrechnungen: Nur 500.000 Unterschriften?" *Die Presse*, January 30/31, 1993, 1. ↑
84. Eva Linsinger, "Das Lichtermeer war mehr als nur ein Strohfeuer," *Der Standard*, January 21, 2003, accessed February 20, 2022. ↑
85. Robbe-Lasalle, "Dem Regenbogen entgegen," 30. Original wording: "Für uns ist das Thema 'Mitmachen' besonders wichtig. Es ist eine Geschichte übers Mitmachen. Ein anderer Anhaltspunkt sind die verschiedenen Ordnungssysteme: Familie, Militär, Kloster, Nazi-Regime. Es geht um die Frage: Wie macht man nicht mit? Die Figur der Maria ist in diesem Gefüge so eine Art Anarchistin. Sie hat

Schwierigkeiten, sich im Kloster unterzuordnen, bricht den militärischen Drill des Barons und flieht mit ihrer Familie vor den Nazis. Wir wollen da keine süße Person zeigen, sondern eine mutige.“ ↑

86. H[einz] G. Pribil, “Nonnen, Nazis und Edelweiß: Schauspielhaus: *The Sound of Music*,” *Wiener Zeitung*, March 2, 1993, 4: “All the protagonists—brilliantly directed—captivate with their exuberant enthusiasm for acting: from Maria to the drolly cloying, lemur-like, stylized Nazis (and that without any swastikas).” Original wording: “Sämtliche Protagonisten—blendend geführt—faszinieren durch ihre überschäumende Spiellust: von Maria bis zu den urig übersteigerten, lemurenhaften, stilisierten Nazis (und das ohne Hakenkreuz).” ↑
87. Koberg, “Edelbunte Edelweiße,” 16: “callous people, who turn under the direction of Hans Gratzler and Barbara Spitz into ever more apish Nazi henchmen, the closer the Anschluss gets.” Original wording: “stumpfes Volk, das sich in der Regie von Hans Gratzler und Barbara Spitz, je näher der Anschluss kommt, in desto affigere Nazi-Schergen verwandelt.” ↑
88. Kurt Kahl, “Edelweiß zum Lachen: Eine Hetz im Schauspielhaus; *The Sound of Music*,” *Kurier*, March 1, 1993, 12: “the Nazis behave like a horde of apish creatures.” Original wording: “die Nazis führen sich auf wie eine Horde äffischer Kreaturen.” ↑
89. Knapp, “Edelweiß im Pop-art-Rausch,” 16: “Even the chapter ‘Anschluss and Resistance’ is resolved effectively rather than obtrusively. Relentlessly right on target. Gratzler’s ‘brown threat’ appears in the form of lemurs, nearly speechless creatures that gather around a Tarzan.” Original wording: “Selbst das Kapitel ‘Anschluß und Widerstand’ ist nicht penetrant, sondern effektiv gelöst. Gnadenlos treffsicher. Gratzers ‘Braune Gefahr’ zeigt sich in Form von Lemuren, nahezu sprachlosen Wesen, die sich um einen Tarzan scharen.” ↑
90. Renate Wagner, “Kampfansage an den Kitsch: Wien; Hans Gratzler spielt im Schauspielhaus *The Sound of Music*,” *Neues Volksblatt*, March 1, 1993, 9. Original wording: “Weniger zaghaft geht Gratzler mit den Nazis um, die er verfremdet und stilisiert hat (das Hakenkreuz zu einer Art Riesenspinne) und die sich wie die Menschenaffen aufführen müssen—logisch, daß er den allzu blutigen Ernst der Geschichte nicht in seine Jux-Interpretation des Stücks hineinlassen wollte, die manchmal zu weit geht.” ↑
91. Helmut Schneider, “Schnitzel with Noodles oder die Sanierung einer Bühne: Wien; Die weltberühmte Trapp-Familie gastiert endlich in einem österreichischen Theater,” *Salzburger Nachrichten*, March 1, 1993, 7. Original wording: “Die Nazis wurden hingegen von der Regie zu Halbaffen im Menschengewand allzu sehr verniedlicht. Die Verschwörer hocken—sich auf die Brust schlagend—auf der Parkbank und stammeln unverständliche Urlaute. Aus dem Hakenkreuz wurde ein Blitz. Wozu diese historische Ungenauigkeit dient, ist nicht einsichtig.” ↑
92. Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Howard Lindsay, and Russel Crouse, *The Sound of Music: A New Musical Play* (New York: Random House, 1960), 118. ↑
93. Kahl, “Edelweiß zum Lachen,” 12. Original wording: “und der Erfolg des Familienchors in Amerika bleibt lediglich Behauptung: Mit der Überfahrt bricht die Handlung ab.” ↑
94. Kerschbaumer and Müller, *Begnadet für das Schöne*, 275–77. ↑
95. Oliver Rathkolb, for instance, discusses Mozart as the example of Austrian cultural export after 1950 in his contribution “Austriakischer Kulturexport” to Kerschbaumer’s chapter “Das musikalische Riesenrad,” in Kerschbaumer and Müller, *Begnadet für das Schöne*, 67–73. ↑
96. Koberg, “Edelbunte Edelweiße,” 16: “Johanna von Trapp, the only member of the seven-sibling choir living in Austria today, notes in her original contribution to the program notes for the Schauspielhaus that only *The Sound of Music* dramatized for the average American, ‘that we are not Germans but a peaceful and talented small nation in one of the most beautiful spots in Europe.’” Original wording: “Johanna von Trapp, das einzige heute in Österreich lebende Mitglied des siebenköpfigen Geschwisterchors, stellt in einem Originalbeitrag für das Programmheft des Schauspielhauses fest, daß erst ‘The Sound of Music’ für den Durchschnittsamerikaner dramatisierte, ‘daß wir keine Deutsche seien,

sondern eine friedfertige und begabte kleine Nation auf einem der schönsten Flecken Europas.” ↑

97. Rainer Stephan, “Hat die österreichische Geschichtsforschung Mitverantwortung an den derzeitigen Image-Problemen Österreichs im Ausland?”; and Félix Kreissler, “Vielschichtige Österreichbilder,” in Botz and Sprengnagel, *Österreichs Zeitgeschichte*, 105-12 and 511-22. ↑
98. Koberg, “Edelbunte Edelweiße,” 16. Original wording: “Die Lebensgeschichte des Salzburger ‘Trapp-Familien-Chors,’ der 1938 vor Hitler nach Amerika flüchtete, prägte als Musical ‘The Sound of Music’ und noch mehr in dessen Verfilmung als einer der größten Kassenschlager in der Geschichte Hollywoods das Bild von Österreich in den USA nachhaltiger als jeder geschenkte Lipizzaner.” ↑
99. Knapp, “Edelweiß im Pop-art-Rausch,” 16. For more information on the ambivalent and complex relationship Austrians have with *The Sound of Music*, see Kammerhofer-Aggermann and Keul, *Zwischen Mythos und Marketing*. ↑
100. Schneider, “Schnitzel with Noodles,” 7. Original wording: “Die Geschichte des Korvettenkapitäns Georg von Trapp, der sich in das gesangsfreudige Kindermädchen Maria verliebt und als überzeugter Österreicher vor Hitler mitsamt seinen sieben Kinder in die USA flieht, um dort mit seinem Familienchor die Herzen der Amerikaner zu erobern, hat wahrscheinlich mehr an Imagegewinn für unser Land in Übersee gebracht als Sängerknaben und Lippizaner [*sic*] zusammen.” ↑
101. HS, “Kitsch macht Spaß,” *Kronen Zeitung*, March 1, 1993, 14. Original wording: “Die Trapp-Familie steht neben dem Welterfolg auch für Charakterfestigkeit: Sie ließ sich von Hitlers Propagandamaschine nicht verwursten, sondern emigrierte in die USA.” ↑
102. Rathkolb, *Paradoxe Republik*, 301. ↑
103. Koberg, “Edelbunte Edelweiße,” 16: “The savior of Austria’s image in America is Baron von Trapp. On the day of the Anschluss, the former royal and imperial navy officer and patriot knows: ‘We’re standing at the open grave of Austria!’ Instead of joining the Wehrmacht, the family of nine emigrates to the USA and delights [people] there with Alpine folk tunes.” Original wording: “Der Retter von Österreichs Image in Amerika ist Baron von Trapp. Am Tag des Anschlusses weiß der ehemalige k. u. k. Marineoffizier und Patriot: ‘Wir stehen am offenen Grabe Österreichs!’ Statt zur deutschen Wehrmacht wandert die neunköpfige Familie in die USA aus und beglückt dort fortan mit alpenländischen Weisen.” ↑
104. Werner Rosenberger, “‘Das war ein absoluter Glücksgriff’: Gespräch mit der Musical-Intendantin Kathrin Zechner, die mit *The Producers* den Broadway ins Ronacher bringt,” *Kurier*, June 22, 2008, M2. Original wording: “Nach mehr als 60 Jahren muss auch eine satirische Verarbeitung möglich sein. Am Beginn des Verarbeitungsprozesses steht die Verzweiflung, darauf folgt die Sprachlosigkeit und schließlich die Diskussion. Ein weiterer Schritt kann die Satire als Kunstform sein. ... Ich sehe mich da als Teil einer Szene von Theater, Film, Musik und bildender Kunst, die dazu ihren Beitrag leistet: Taboris *Mein Kampf* ist genauso notwendig wie Helge Schneiders Film. Die ‘musical’-sche Herangehensweise ist dabei mein Part.” ↑
105. Peter Strasser, “Hitlerspaß und Hitlerernst,” *Kleine Zeitung*, March 16, 2008, 108. Original wording: “Ich wüßte nicht zu sagen, was widerwärtiger ist: der Hitlerernst oder der Hitlerspaß. ... Jede Art von Lachen über Hitler [erzeugt] eine unangebrachte Nähe zum Täter. ... Ich weiß nur, dass man ihn nicht als eine Figur darstellen sollte, auf die sich Gefühle der Größe und Tragik projizieren lassen.” ↑
106. Werner Rosenberger, “Ich hatte wirklich Mäsel mit Hitler,” *Kurier*, June 19, 2008, 31. Original wording: “‘Wir stellen Hitler auf die Bühne,’ sagt Brooks, ‘weil er ohnehin ein Schauspieler war. Er konnte einem ganzen Volk vormachen, sein Führer zu sein. Dabei war ihm diese Rolle im Grunde ein paar Nummern zu groß. Doch er überspielte dieses Manko. Er war in der gleichen Branche tätig wie wir: Er hat Illusionen geschaffen.’” ↑
107. Ernst Trost, “Lachen mit Hitler,” *Kronen Zeitung*, July 2, 2008, 6. Original wording: “Aber auch ihm gelingt es, durch krasse Übertreibung das Groteske und Kitschige in den Machtinszenierungen Hitlers, aber auch all der anderen totalitären Regime und Systeme bloßzustellen.” ↑



108. Derek Weber, "Mit Herz an die Grenzen des Humors," *Salzburger Nachrichten*, July 2, 2008, 12. ↑
109. Peter Schneeberger, "Gute alte Schule: Musical; Das Wiener Ronacher wurde mit Mel Brooks' *The Producers* fulminant wiedereröffnet," *profil*, July 7, 2008, 99. Original wording: "Als sich die SS-Soldaten stolz zum Hakenkreuz formierten, blieb den Gästen tatsächlich fast das Lachen im Hals stecken." ↑
110. Werner Rosenberger, "Die Schlachtplatte einer Kitschkomödie: Broadway in Wien; Jubel und Standing Ovationen für *The Producers* am Montag im wiedereröffneten Ronacher," *Kurier*, July 2, 2008, 30. Original wording: "Einige rauschen in der Pause ab mit einem erbosten 'Schwachsinn' auf den Lippen." ↑
111. [Christian Höller](#), "Der Führer in Wien," *Jüdische Allgemeine*, July 17, 2008, accessed August 2, 2020. Original wording: "Eine Aufführung von *The Producers* in einer Stadt, in der Juden unter Jochen der Bevölkerung 1938 auf Händen und Knien die Trottoirs putzen mussten, müsste eigentlich angetan sein, eine Debatte über Nazismus auch in Österreich anzuheizen. In anderen Ländern, auch weniger betroffenen, wie Argentinien, Südkorea, Tschechien, Ungarn, Finnland und Australien, erregte das Stück die Gemüter und entfachte heftige Debatten, ob und wann man über Hitler und die Nazis lachen darf. Doch in Wien war und ist man peinlich darauf bedacht, eine inhaltliche Auseinandersetzung erst gar nicht aufkommen zu lassen." ↑
112. The Staatsoper Wien and Volksoper Wien are federally owned. ↑
113. [Thomas Trenkler](#), "Ronacher-Umbau als 'Wahnsinnsaktion': Sanierung wird 47 Millionen Euro kosten," *Der Standard*, September 7, 2004, accessed August 17, 2020. ↑
114. [N.](#), "Die Subvention wurde beschlossen: Ronacher im Wiener Gemeinderat," *Wiener Zeitung*, September 24, 2004, accessed August 17, 2020. ↑
115. Staff writer, "US-Immobilienkrise weitet sich aus Österreich: Industrie rechnet mit Rückgang," *Der Standard*, December 31, 2007, 1, 15, and 26. ↑
116. Anonymous, "US-Kreditkrise: Banken fallen wie die Fliegen," *Wiener Zeitung*, July 29, 2008, 22. ↑
117. Barbara Petsch, "Teure Leidenschaft fürs Musical," *Die Presse*, July 1, 2004, 33. ↑
118. Barbara Petsch, "Ronacher-Eröffnung: Ein Schmatz vom Schatz auf den Latz," *Die Presse*, July 1, 2008, 35. Original wording: "Ein Glück, dass Politiker, anders als Private, ihre Passion für Patina nicht aus der eigenen Tasche finanzieren müssen. Rund 140 Millionen Schilling hat die erste Ronacher-Renovierung gekostet, die jetzige verschlang gleich 46,8 Millionen Euro. Mit dem Ergebnis, dass das schöne Ronacher, geschniegelt und steril, dem hässlichen Raimundtheater immer ähnlicher wird. Dafür spielt die Bühne jetzt alle Stückerln." ↑
119. Anonymous, "Frechheit mit Hitler," *Vorarlberger Nachrichten*, July 2, 2008, D6: "Whether Vienna absolutely needs two stages for musicals remains to be seen. In any case, the Vereinigte Bühnen Wien have decided to restore the Ronacher (at the expense of €46.8 million) in order to have a second house for musicals besides the Raimundtheater, after they lost the Theater and der Wien to opera." Original wording: "Ob Wien unbedingt zwei Musical-Bühnen braucht, sei dahingestellt. Jedenfalls haben sich die Vereinigten Bühnen Wien nach dem 'Verlust' des Theaters an der Wien an die Oper, nun zu einer 'Funktionssanierung' des Ronacher (Kostenpunkt 46,8 Millionen Euro) entschlossen, um neben dem Raimundtheater ein zweites Musicals-Haus zu gewinnen." ↑
120. [Ljubiša Tošić](#), "The Producers: Geborgte Broadway-Scherze," *Der Standard*, July 1, 2008, accessed December 12, 2021. Original wording: "Es beschloss die Sanierung des alten Etablissements, wodurch das Musical-Theater an der Wien im Ronacher wie ein Phoenix aus der Subventionsasche wiederauferstand. Nun hat es zwar kein Dach, das sich öffnen lässt, aber viel 'Geld hat man dennoch in die Hand genommen,' wie Vizebürgermeisterin Renate Brauner ein wenig trotzig beim Präludium zur Producers-Premiere feststellte, bei der Grüne und FPÖ fehlten. Aus Protest über die 46,8 Millionen teure [sic] Funktionssanierung." ↑
121. [Thomas Trenkler](#), "'Völliges Chaos' bei den Vereinigten Bühnen," *Der Standard*, June 8, 2006, accessed



August 19, 2020. ↑

122. B[arbara] P[etsch], "Aufregung um 'Finanz-Chaos,'" *Die Presse*, May 30, 2006, 28. ↑
123. Wolfgang Kralicek, "Musical in Wien? Ja, aber besser!" *Falter* 47, November 17, 2004, 23: "Bei den Kritikern der VBW schwingt immer etwas Herablassung gegenüber einer als minderwertig erachteten Kunstform für schlecht angezogene Bustouristen mit, die dem Naschmarkt-Bobo schon längst ein Dorn im Auge sind." ↑
124. Thomas Trenkler, "'Musical ist kein Zukunftsfaktor!' Opposition gegen Ronacher-Umbau," *Der Standard*, June 3, 2005, accessed August 17, 2020. ↑
125. Eva Male and Gerhard Bitzan, "Ein Denkmal für den Kulturstadtrat?" *Die Presse*, September 18, 2004, 11. Original wording: "'Das Musical hat sich überlebt; viele Produktionen in Wien seien zuletzt ein Flop gewesen,' sagt Riegler." ↑
126. [Christoph] Irr[geher], "Leichte Muse unter neuem Dach: Ronacher wird um 34 Mio. Euro saniert," *Wiener Zeitung*, June 22, 2005, accessed August 19, 2020. Original wording: "'Hier wird Geld in eine Branche, die weltweit stagniert oder rückläufig ist, investiert,' entrüstet sich Andreas Salcher, Kultursprecher der Wiener ÖVP." ↑
127. N., "Die Subvention wurde beschlossen." ↑
128. Klub der Freiheitlichen Pressestelle, "FP-Stefan: Umbau des Ronachers muss durch Wiener Kontrollamt überprüft werden," APA-OTS, press release, January 21, 2008, accessed August 17, 2020. ↑
129. Thomas Trenkler, "Kontrollamt: Herbe Kritik an den Vereinigten Bühnen Wien; Opposition fühlt sich bestätigt: 'Großmannssucht,'" *Der Standard*, May 30, 2008, accessed August 19, 2020. ↑
130. Tošić, "Geborgte Broadway-Scherze." Original wording: "Und schließlich das Stück im Stück, Springtime For Hitler, wo Revuedamen Bierkrüge, Würste und Walkürenhelme als Kronen tragen und Hitler als lächerlicher Träumer, als schmusige Witzfigur daherkommt. Eine Schrumpfkur alles Heldischen, schön kläglich. Da hätte man Vertreter die [*sic*] Wiener FPÖ gerne im Publikum lachen—oder vielleicht auch nicht lachen—gesehen." ↑
131. Christoph Irrgeher, "Das Musical—ein Handwerkersieg: Das Wiener Ronacher wurde nach langer Funktionssanierung mit Mel Brooks' *The Producers* wiedereröffnet," *Wiener Zeitung*, July 1, 2008, accessed Dezember 16, 2018. Original wording: "Weil diese Eröffnung nun einmal ein Großereignis ist (ebenso wie der besagte Betrag das Rot im Gesicht der Opposition), passiert hier Theater, noch bevor sich der Vorhang hebt." ↑

Cover picture: Silhouette of a showgirl with hat splintering a swastika on the floor with a dancing stick, against the background of a collage of various newspaper reviews of the Austrian premieres of "The Sound of Music," "Cabaret," and "The Producers."