

A one-act play based on the book by Anne L. Fox

Generously funded by Anonymous with additional support from **Panasonic**

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ArtsPower National Touring Theatre

Gary W. Blackman • Mark A. Blackman
Executive Producers

My Heart in a Suitcase
Based on the book by
Anne L. Fox

Play by
Greg Gunning

Music by
Richard DeRosa

Costume Design & Construction by
Fred Sorrentino

Set Construction by
Tom Carroll Studios

My Heart in a Suitcase Performance Study Buddy

Written by
Dr. Rosalind Flynn

Designed by
Tony Gibson

Please photocopy any or
all of the following pages
to distribute to students.

Preparing for the Play

Note to Teachers:

This study guide is designed to help you and your students prepare for, enjoy, and discuss *My Heart in a Suitcase*. It contains background information and cross-curricular activities to complete both before and after the performance.

Based on the memoirs of Anne L. Fox, this play is a dramatization of the experiences of real people in a real period of history. While parts of the play are light and upbeat, students should know that they will see and hear evidence of discrimination and violence.

To present historically accurate visual images, this production incorporates symbols and gestures that are now considered universally offensive: the Nazi swastika and uniform, the "Heil, Hitler" salute, and the six-pointed yellow Star of David inscribed with the word "Jew."



Visual images and symbols are used in the stage production of *My Heart in a Suitcase*

The Plot of *My Heart in a Suitcase*

To help students understand the action of the play, read this plot summary to them. The characters' names appear in **boldface** type.

Anne Lehmann is a young Jewish girl in Berlin, Germany. Since her older brother Gunther moved to England, she is the only child living with her parents. She calls her father **Vati** (VAH-tee), and her mother **Mutti** (MOO-tee). Up until the fall of 1938, Anne went to school and played regularly with her best friend **Dorit**. Life for Anne and all Jewish people in Germany begins to change under the rule of the Nazi Party. Anne's father loses his job and no one will hire him. Anne's teacher, **Mrs. Waldenburg**, tells Anne that she is no longer permitted to attend German public school. Even Dorit becomes lost to Anne when she joins a Nazi Youth Group—the Union of German Girls.

Anne's family is forced to wear six-pointed yellow stars that identify them as Jews. Mutti believes that this persecution will stop and good people will come to their senses, but after a terrifying night of brutal attacks on Jews, the Lehmann family makes an important decision. They register Anne for the *Kindertransport*—a program that permits Jewish children to leave Nazi-occupied countries and re-settle in Great Britain. With only one small suitcase, young Anne boards a train alone and says good-bye to her parents forever.



The actual suitcase that Anne L. Fox carried with her on the *Kindertransport*. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC.)

Resources

To read the book that inspired this play, look for: Fox, Anne L. *My Heart in a Suitcase*. Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 1996.

To read the letters Anne's parents wrote her and her brother in England, look for: Fox, Anne L. *Between the Lines: Letters from the Holocaust*. Atlantic City, NJ: ComteQ Publishing, 2005.

For more stories of the *Kindertransport*, watch: "Into the Arms of Strangers," the 2000 Warner Brothers Academy Award-winner for Best Documentary Feature produced by Deborah Oppenheimer and Mark Jonathan Harris.

For information about the *Kindertransport* and the children involved, visit:
www2.warnerbros.com/intothearmsofstrangers and
www.kindertransport.org

The Characters

DRAMATICALLY Speaking

While 12-year-old Anne speaks these lines, the other characters create a tableau (tab-BLOW). A tableau is a stage picture made by actors who freeze in poses. They remain silent and still—like a living photograph.



In groups of three, create a tableau of this moment from the beginning of the play: Anne's mother, father, and best friend spot Anne stepping off the train after being away for three weeks.

Decide on your poses, practice remaining still and silent, and share your tableau with classmates.



Anne left her home in Berlin when she was just 12 years old. Pictured is actress Christina Doikos.

ANNE

Sometimes your heart wants certain moments to stay forever—knowing somehow it's an important moment—not wanting it to end—holding onto it like some important picture—like a photograph or something. That's the way I felt seeing them all standing there—my mother and father—who I called Mutti and Vati—and Dorit—my best friend.



Anne and her best friend Dorit shared a love of the movies, Shirley Temple, Charlie Chaplin and Mickey Mouse. Anne and Dorit have remained friends to this day.

HISTORICALLY Speaking

Anne (Annemarie) **Lehmann** was born to Jewish parents in Berlin, Germany in 1926.

Eugen Lehmann, Anne's father - called Vati by his family - served as a German soldier in World War I. His left arm was amputated at the elbow because of a gunshot received in combat. Before the war, he played the violin.

Marta Lehmann - "Mutti" - was Anne's mother. In addition to being the loving mother of two, she was a photographer who took many photos that Anne still has.

Dorit Sasse was a childhood friend of Anne Lehmann. Her religion was Protestant and she and Anne shared their religious holidays—Christmas and Chanukah. They also shared a love of the movies, Shirley Temple, and Mickey Mouse.

Günter Lehmann was nine years older than his sister, Anne. He emigrated to England in the summer of 1938. He does not appear in the play, but is mentioned frequently in letters read aloud.

Mrs. Waldenburg is a character created to represent a variety of Anne's teachers.

Power and Persecution

DRAMATICALLY Speaking

A theatre convention is a practice that is accepted in the presentation of a play. Reading letters aloud on stage is a centuries-old theatre convention.

Throughout *My Heart in a Suitcase*, you will hear characters read letters to Anne's brother Günter. The letters reveal information and emotions that help the audience understand the play.



The first set of lines on this page are from Vati's letter to Günter. They express concern about unfair rules. What rule do you think is unfair to you? Write the first five or six sentences of a letter to a friend explaining the rule and your feelings about it. Read your letter aloud to classmates.



The actress Christina Doikos as Anne in ArtsPower's production of *My Heart in a Suitcase*.

VATI

Dear Günter—Our situation under this Nazi government grows worse. Every day they pass more laws which take away our rights. I still can't find a job—no Jews are allowed to work in banking. Now I'm even beginning to fear for the safety of your mother and sister.

DORIT and WALDENBURG
"Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!"

VATI

The Nazis aren't going to let us leave the country! They're going to kill us!

MUTTI

Kill us? Stop talking nonsense! This is 1938 Germany—not the Dark Ages!

VATI

We're disappearing....The war is coming. And when it does—the curtain will finally close around us. Then they'll do just what they want. They'll simply drag us out of our beds in the middle of the night. What's to stop them?

HISTORICALLY Speaking

The Nazi government was in power in Germany from 1933-1945. Nazi is short for the National Socialist German Workers Party. Its leader, Adolf Hitler, was a dictator—he had complete control over law-making, police, military, and people's public and private lives. The Nazis passed laws saying that Jewish people were no longer citizens. They were banned from all professional jobs. Their children were prohibited from attending public schools. Without basic citizens' rights, Jews could be mistreated, robbed, and imprisoned.

Sieg Heil! or "Victory and Hail" was a common Nazi exclamation. The phrase was usually chanted three times, accompanied by the Hitler salute: right hand held upward, either at a right angle to the chest or slightly raised.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2005, Anne L. Fox published the letters her parents wrote to her and her brother Günter after their arrival in England in the book, *Between the Lines: Letters from the Holocaust* (published by Comteq Publishing, Margate, New Jersey).



Politicians salute dictator Adolf Hitler - "Sieg Heil!"

Reproducible Student Activity Page

Juden Verboten

DRAMATICALLY Speaking

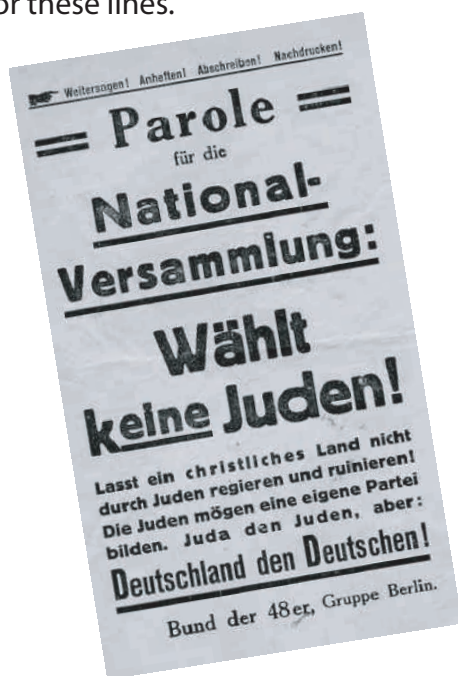
Carefully read the lines of dialogue printed on this page. Notice all the negative words—words that communicate “No Jews.”



Echoes

Assign a reader for each line on this page. As each reader reads the lines aloud with expression, have the rest of the class softly echo any negative words or phrases. Practice several times, working together to create a vocal collage with a serious tone.

During the performance, listen for these lines.



“Our national motto - NO JEWS.”

MRS. WALDENBURG

Anne, when you leave school this afternoon, take all your belongings with you....You will not be coming back....Our new directive number 238 bans all “undesirable persons” from attending German public schools.

ANNE

It’s this stupid star! It even says “Jew!” I don’t want to wear it!

MUTTI

Anne, you know the law. If they caught you out in public without it, you’d be arrested. Now leave it alone.

ANNE

The sign said Jews were forbidden to sit there....I think we’re supposed to go sit on the benches painted yellow. Those are the ones for Jews.

VATI

I lost my arm in the Great War fighting for Germany! Yes! A Jew! A Jew who gave his arm in the war and would gladly have given his life for the Fatherland! But now—now I can’t sit on a park bench in a public place on an autumn afternoon?!

HISTORICALLY Speaking

Juden verboten—“No Jews”—signs began appearing in German towns, villages, restaurants, and shops in 1935. Jewish businesses, doctors, and lawyers were boycotted. Jews were forbidden to hold jobs they had been educated for and to frequent places they had always gone.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Nazis made it mandatory for all Jewish people to wear a yellow Star of David with the word “Jew” on the left chest of outer clothing. This visual labeling clearly distinguished Jews from non-Jews. The “Jewish Badge” made it easier for those in power to discriminate against and persecute Jews.



The Nazis forced Jews to wear yellow stars on their clothing.

Kristallnacht

DRAMATICALLY Speaking

Anne's lines of dialogue on this page are spoken as a monologue. A monologue (also called a *soliloquy*) is a speech by one actor. Monologues allow the audience to receive information and hear a character's thoughts and feelings.



Actors experiment with ways to interpret and deliver monologues. Examine the first set of Anne's lines on this page. Take turns delivering her monologue in the following ways:

- Whisper.
- Speak slowly, as if you are in shock.
- Begin softly and grow louder and more frantic.

As you read, speak, and listen to the monologue, visualize the scenes the words describe. Discuss which interpretation seems most effective.

During the performance, listen for this and other monologues.

ANNE

But it went on into the night—breaking glass—shouting—crying. I looked out one of our windows—to the sidewalk where Dorit and I used to play: Men running by with torches—whole families—neighbors pulled out into the street—spit on, kicked, beaten, or just taken away. I...I couldn't believe it—that this was happening in Berlin...It was all like some kind of a ... a nightmare or something!

VATI

Dear Günter—No synagogues exist anymore in the whole of Germany which were not burned down or burning still.

ANNE

But something else was destroyed on this "Kristallnacht," this "Night of Broken Glass"—you no longer felt safe—not even in your own home.

HISTORICALLY Speaking

On the nights of November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis organized mobs throughout Germany and Austria to freely attack Jews in their streets, homes, and places of work and worship. Close to 100 Jews were killed. Thousands of Jewish businesses, synagogues, cemeteries, schools, and homes were damaged or destroyed. Thirty thousand Jews were arrested and sent to concentration camps—huge prisons in which prisoners were mistreated, starved, overworked, tortured, and killed.

In German, *Kristall* translates to "crystal," meaning broken glass, and *Nacht* means "night." Because of the huge amount of shattered store windowpanes that covered German streets, these violent attacks came to be called *Kristallnacht*—"Night of Broken Glass."



Passersby examine the damage done to a Jewish owned store by the Nazis during *Kristallnacht*.

Kindertransport

DRAMATICALLY Speaking



The lines of dialogue on this play are a “cutting”—a short portion—from the script. In pairs, read and rehearse the short scene in the center of this page. Try different ways of delivering each character’s lines. Mutti may speak as a strict, no-nonsense mother or she may be nervous and emotional. Anne may react to her words with panic or with a calm disbelief. How else might actors interpret these lines? Experiment with several interpretations. Share your scene with classmates.

During the performance, listen for this scene.

MUTTI
Your father and I have decided to...to register you so that you can leave the country....

ANNE
Register me?

MUTTI
Because of unfavorable world reaction, the Nazis have agreed—and the British government has agreed—to allow some children under the age of seventeen to go to England.

ANNE
But what about you and Vati?

MUTTI
No...no parents would be allowed to leave.

ANNE
But why only children?

MUTTI
Well, most countries like England are afraid that a flood of working adults would take jobs away from their own citizens. But children would only be going to school....
Now—they will only allow you to take one small suitcase.

HISTORICALLY Speaking

Kinder is the German word for children. From December 1938 to September 1939, 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi-occupied countries were transported to Great Britain. The efforts of the small number of organizers of the *Kindertransport* and the generosity of the British government saved them from certain death.

The children lived in British homes or orphanages. Although most never saw their parents again, many of these adult survivors report great joy in survival. They made new lives, families, and contributions to their communities and countries.

For information about the *Kindertransport* and the children involved, visit:

www.kindertransport.org
www2.warnerbros.com/intothearmsofstrangers



Children traveled without their parents on the *Kindertransport*.



A boy of the *Kindertransport* departs for freedom.

Write to Us

Reproducible Student Activity Page

After you attend *My Heart in a Suitcase*, please share your thoughts with ArtsPower, or visit ArtsPower online at www.artspower.org and click on "Contact Us" on the top tool bar.

Teacher's Name: _____

Your School: _____

City, State: _____

Date: _____

ArtsPower National Touring Theatre
39 South Fullerton Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042-3354

I saw *My Heart in a Suitcase* at _____. Here's what I learned by attending this performance : _____

Here's what I would like to tell Anne L. Fox : _____

Sincerely,

Your Name: _____