

ArtsPower - Audition Side
"My Heart In A Suitcase"
Dec, '05

MUTTI & VATI #1:

(argument)

Berlin, Nazi Germany, 1938.
The Lehmann's Apartment.

(Note: Young Anne Lehmann used the German terms of endearment for her mother & father. Thus to her – her mother was Mutti; and her father was Vati.)

Vati & Mutti (Mr. & Mrs. Lehmann) are a Jewish married couple living in pre-World War II Nazi Germany. Life for Jews has become increasingly hard. Many laws have been passed that harshly discriminate against Jews. Vati can not work in banking anymore. Mutti can only shop at Jewish stores. Their daughter Anne can't go to public school anymore. Jews are barred from public places like restaurants, theatres, even a bench in the park. Vati has been increasingly anxious for his family and has been desperately trying to get them all out of Germany. The Lehmanns also have a college age son Gunter who is living on a student visa in England. Despite all Vati & Gunter's efforts, the Nazis won't let the Lehmanns emigrate.

VATI is a wounded veteran of World War I, having lost his arm (he wears a prosthetic arm) fighting for his beloved Germany. Here, Vati has just received a letter from the army saying it will not help Jews to emigrate. Vati feels betrayed. Vati is an intelligent, private, serious man. Lately an internal anger & embitterment has surfaced – feeling forgotten by his beloved Germany.

MUTTI is very warm, expressive, compassionate, intelligent, and loving. She is well aware of the dangerous outside world, but chooses to meet it with optimism that things will improve. VATI used to proudly play the violin. Here – having reached the breaking point, he has bitterly told Mutti to give it away.

(Note: In the play, Mutti writes letters to her son Gunter.)

MUTTI

(to Vati)(trying to be encouraging)(lovingly firm)

Vati, you mustn't give up your violin or your music. Why – it would be like... like you were giving up all hope.

VATI (embittered)(angry)

Hope? Don't be silly, Marta - there's no more hope!

MUTTI (quickly)(insistent)

Of course there is. We'll write to Gunter. I'm sure he can find...

VATI (cutting her off)(angry)(fed up)(shouts)

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

MUTTI (appalled)

Kill us?! Stop talking nonsense, Vati! This is 1938 Germany – not the Dark Ages!

VATI

(bitterly smiles)(pushed to the edge)(quickly)(angrily sarcastic)

But don't you see? It's so simple! We don't exist!

(his list of examples)(fast)(bitter)(angry)

...Jews never served in the German Army! I didn't sacrifice my arm for the Fatherland! I don't work anywhere! Our daughter doesn't go to school! You can't go shopping! I can't sit on a public bench!

(his natural conclusion)(angry)

...We're disappearing, Marta! Disappearing! The war is coming and when it does – the curtain will finally close around us. Then they'll just do whatever they want – simply drag us out of our beds in the middle of the night! What's to stop them, huh?! What is to stop them?!

MUTTI (angered, appalled)(strongly stopping him)

No - stop it, Vati! Stop it! I won't listen to this! Good people will come to their senses! You'll see!

(pause,...)(firm but lovingly – regaining some composure)

...Now,...now go to bed, Vati. You've had a long and disappointing day. Tomorrow you'll wake up and everything will be better. You'll see.

VATI (slower)

(bitter)(sarcastic)(ironic smile)(seemingly defeated)

Yes, ...tomorrow everything will be fine.

(starting to exit/stops)(defeated)(depressed)(more to himself)

..Maybe I'll wake up from this nightmare.

(Vati exits.)(Mutti watches him go – concerned.)

(Mutti turns out towards the audience)

MUTTI

(a letter to her son)

(not writing – just spoken out loud)

(concerned, trying not to be defeated)

Dear Gunter: Everyday it becomes harder and harder to hold onto the belief that good people will come to their senses; but we must hold onto that belief.

END OF SCENE.