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Exploring AND THEN THEY CAME FOR ME *Remembering the World of Anne Frank*

by James Still

Sept. 28 - Oct. 29, 2005 : Upperstage

In Someone Else's Shoes

And Then They Came for Me: Remembering the World of Anne Frank is a multi-media play that incorporates videotaped interviews with Holocaust survivors Eva Schloss and Ed Silverberg, friends of the young Anne Frank, with live actors on stage re-creating scenes from their lives in hiding and in concentration camps. Anne is the best known of the three because of the diary she kept while hiding from the Nazis; her brief life has been memorialized in numerous movies and stage plays. Eva and Ed are both Holocaust survivors with their own stories and remembrances of a time the world should never forget.

IRT playwright-in-residence James Still is one of the nation's leading writers for family audiences and the recipient of numerous awards. The IRT has produced six of his plays, including the world premiere of *And Then They Came for Me* in 1996. Since then, this play has been produced around the world in many different languages. In addition to his work in the theatre, Mr. Still was the head writer for the Nickelodeon series "Little Bear" and is currently the head writer for TLC's "PAZ."

"I read Anne Frank's diary when I was in the sixth grade while growing up in a tiny town in Kansas," says the playwright. "That first contact

with Anne's story was very important to me as a young person learning about the world. With *And Then They Came for Me*, I wanted to introduce other stories to young people and their families, stories they wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to hear. I wanted to create a theatrical event that could be approached as oral history, as multi-media, as educational.

emotionally connecting to Ed, Eva, and Anne—that young people will be driven to learn more about the Holocaust, to read more about the Holocaust, and to even seek out other survivors in their communities. In other words, I wanted to create something bigger, beyond itself."

Director Lynne Perkins wants the audience to view the story not just as history, but as a direct, personal experience in the here and now. The actors in the play will first be seen as contemporary teens. Entering the setting designed by James Schumacher, they will encounter broken windows and piles of rubble reminiscent of the piles of personal belongings confiscated from prisoners in the German camps. As they assume the roles of Anne, Ed, and Eva, they will exchange their modern clothes for 1940s period costumes designed by Wendy Meaden, literally "putting themselves in someone else's shoes" as playwright James Still has said.

One of the unique challenges of the play is to interweave the videotaped interviews with the action of the play. Timing is important; there are several times, for example, when the actors hold live conversations with the pre-taped videos. *And Then They Came for Me* is a unique presentation of one of history's most important stories: the Holocaust. ★



"But most of all I wanted the opportunity (and challenge) of creating a work of art that invited young people to have an empathetic experience with stories from the Holocaust. It is my hope that by putting themselves in someone else's shoes—by

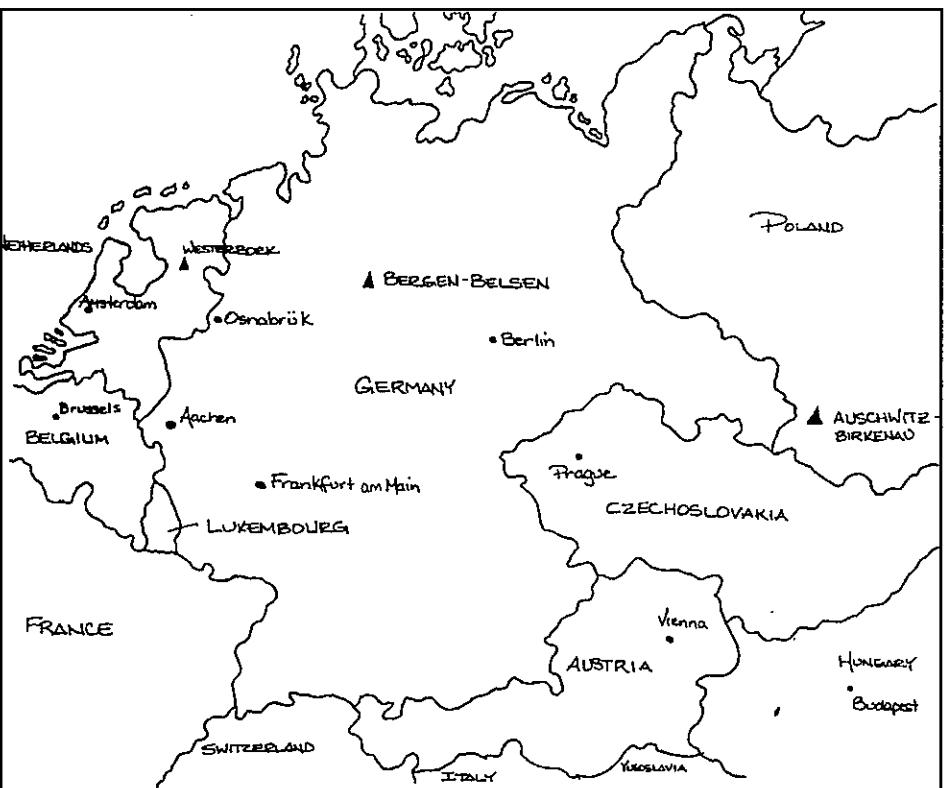
The 1919 Treaty of Versailles which ended World War I forced the German government to pay reparations for war damages.

The German economy faltered under this extreme financial burden, and inflation became extreme. Jobs disappeared; money became worthless; people became desperate for order in their lives. Into this void stepped Adolph Hitler, offering hope and solutions when no one else did. One of Hitler's beliefs was that Jews were responsible for the condition of the German economy, and therefore they should be driven from any position of authority. Hitler's party, the National Socialist German Workers' Party—Nazi for short—grew in popu-

The Holocaust

larity to become the largest party in the Reichstag, Germany's government body something like the U.S. Congress. In 1933 Hitler was named Chancellor, a position similar to prime minister or president. Now Hitler was in a position to advance his concepts of "ethnic cleansing," which would later become known as the Holocaust.

On November 9, 1938, Hitler's SS troops incited the citizens of German towns to pillage and burn 7,500 Jewish shops and syna-



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READ:

Eva's Story by Eva Geiringer Schloss
Night by Elie Wiesel, true story of surviving a concentration camp
Number the Stars by Lois Lowry, about the evacuation of Jews from Denmark
The Children of Willesden Lane by Mona Golabek & Lee Cohen, a memoir of the *kindertransport*

gogues. This event came to be known as *Kristallnacht*, or "Night of Broken Glass." As Germany expanded its borders through annexation or force, they brought this hatred with them. In each country, the Nazis placed restrictions on Jews: they were forbidden to shop at non-Jewish stores, to attend cinemas, theatres, or concerts, or to ride public transportation. Jews were required to wear the yellow Star of David on their clothing or risk arrest.

Hitler first expanded his area of dominion by annexing Austria and Czechoslovakia in 1938. After Britain and France negotiated with Hitler and gave him the fringe of Bohemia, he took the rest of the country by force. When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, World War II was officially started. In 1940, Germany invaded Holland. Jewish families who had fled there for refuge were now trapped again. Those who were caught were packed in trains and shipped to the Nazi death camps.

By the end of the war in 1945, six million European Jews had been killed as part of the "Final Solution," the Nazi code name for their genocide plan. Other victims included tens of thousands of Gypsies and 200,000 mentally or physically disabled people. Three million Soviet prisoners of war were murdered or died of starvation, disease, neglect, or maltreatment. Homosexuals, political dissidents, trade unionists, and Jehovah's Witnesses were also targeted. Many of these individuals died as a result of maltreatment. The rest were killed in the gas chambers. ★

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Eva's Story

Eva Geiringer was born in Vienna, Austria, on May 11, 1929. When Austria was annexed by Germany in 1938, Eva's father, Erich, left for the Netherlands to make a new home for his family. They joined him in Amsterdam in 1940, and it was there that Eva met Anne Frank. While they were the same age, Anne seemed mature to Eva; they were never close friends, merely acquaintances.

The Nazis invaded the Netherlands in 1940. In July 1942, Eva's brother, Heinz, was ordered to report to a work camp, and the family went into hiding. The men were sent to the countryside, and the women stayed in an Amsterdam home, where a hiding place was built in the bathroom. On the night the space was finished, the Germans raided the house, but Eva and her mother, Fritzi, were safely hidden.

The family remained separated for two years. On Eva's 15th birthday, the Germans burst in and arrested Eva and Fritzi. Heinz and Erich had also been arrested, the family having been betrayed by a traitor in the underground. Eva and her mother were imprisoned at Birkenau, a concentration camp in Poland. Despite illness and frostbite, both women survived the war; but Erich and Heinz died as prisoners of the Germans, as did many of their friends.

In the years that followed, Otto Frank became friends with Eva and Fritzi; and in 1953 Fritzi and Otto were married. Eva moved to Great Britain after the war, married (acquiring the surname Schloss), and had three children. Since *Eva's Story* was published in 1988, she travels frequently, talking to groups around the world about her experiences. ★



Anne's Story

Anne Frank was born in Frankfurt, Germany, on June 12, 1929. When Hitler rose to power in 1933, Otto Frank took his family and emigrated to Amsterdam. When the Nazis invaded Holland in 1940, the Franks developed a plan to go into

hiding. Otto designated the upper floor of his business office as a hiding place, which they called the Secret Annex. His staff agreed to assist them by bringing food and other supplies. In July 1942, the Franks, their friends the Van Daans, and a dentist friend went into hiding. This small space was home for eight people for the next two years. It was there that Anne wrote her diary detailing her maturation and her love of life.

In August 1944, the families were discovered and arrested. They were sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp, where Anne's mother died. Anne and her sister, Margot, were taken to another death camp in Bergen-Belsen, where they both died of typhoid fever. Otto Frank remained at Auschwitz until it was liberated by the Russians.

Otto's former typist, Miep, had found Anne's diary after the family's arrest, and she gave it to Otto. Anne's words moved him deeply, and with the encouragement of family members and friends, he published it. It quickly became a best seller, inspiring readers worldwide. ★



Ed's Story

Ed Silverberg was born Helmuth Silberberg on June 8, 1926, in Gelsen-Kirchen, Germany. In 1938 on *Kristallnacht*, a mob broke into the Silberberg home, looted the house, and beat Ed's mother. Ed's parents sent him on a train to Amsterdam to be with his grandparents, who had moved there when Hitler was elected in 1933. Mr. and Mrs. Silberberg eventually tried to join him, but they were unable to go any further than Belgium because the border between Belgium and the Netherlands was closed.

In Amsterdam, Ed and Anne Frank became friends. Their friendship ended abruptly in 1942 when the Franks went into hiding. Anne did not forget her friend Ed; he is mentioned several times in her diary by his nickname, "Hello."

One evening Ed was out past the curfew restriction for Jews and was arrested and loaded on a truck. He made a daring escape from the truck and hid for the rest of the night, returning to his grandparents the next day. Fearing for Ed's life, his grandparents felt he should be with his parents. A distant cousin trying to get to Switzerland agreed to escort Ed to the Belgian border, where he arranged for Ed to receive a false passport.

Once the family was reunited, a friend of Ed's parents hid the family in a house on the outskirts of Brussels for 26 months. The Silberberg family was liberated by

the British Army on September 3, 1944, the day that Anne Frank and her family were sent to Auschwitz.

After the war, Ed emigrated to the United States. He lives in Hackensack, New Jersey. ★



Questions for Discussion

Why do a play about the Holocaust today? What did you gain from viewing this production?

This play is based on interviews with Eva Schloss and Ed Silverburg. What do you think you would gain from listening to a grandparent or an elderly friend tell his or her life story?

How did you respond to the use of video in this play? How does this play compare to other mixed media you have experienced?

If you were forced into hiding, what would you miss most and why?

What do you think the non-Jewish German people thought about the Holocaust? Do you think they knew what was going on? If you were a German during World War II, what would you have done: enlisted? protested? hidden a Jewish family? stayed quiet? Why?

How did the design elements (costumes, set, lights, etc.) reflect the themes and ideas of the play?

What do you think gave the sick and starving people in the concentration camps their will to survive after experiencing so much cruelty?

What do the events of this play say about racism? How does it compare to racism today? What can be done to ensure that something like the Holocaust does not happen again?

Today there are Neo-Nazis and other racists with anti-Semitic, white supremacist, and anti-immigration views. How do you think such a person would respond to *And Then They Came for Me?*

World War II is often referred to as the last "good" war. Why? Discuss the act of war. Under what circumstances would you consider war to be necessary? Relate this discussion to the present war with Iraq.

Anne Frank's diary has been significant for young adults studying the Holocaust. What subjects in your journal or diary might be useful to students fifty years from now?

Vocabulary

Führer German word for leader that has connotations of tyranny. When used alone, it always refers to Hitler.

gas chambers The Nazis experimented with poisonous gas until they developed the idea of a chamber made specifically for murder. The chambers looked like shower rooms; prisoners never knew if they were about to get a shower or be killed.

Gestapo The official secret police of the Nazis run under the SS. They were to investigate any act of treason, espionage, and sabotage against Hitler, the Nazi Party, and Germany. They had the authority to imprison people without reason.

Hitler Youth An organization that trained the purest German youth to think like Hitler and act upon any order they received from a Nazi, SS, or Gestapo. They were taught hate, violence, and cruelty, and put through tests to prove their loyalty.

Nazis Members of the National Socialist German Workers' Party founded in 1919 and brought to power under Adolph Hitler in 1933. Nazism is associated with racism and fascism. They envisioned a world full of physically and mentally perfect people.

SS Guards A military group within the Nazi party but organized by their own rules. They were heavily involved in all aspects of the "Final Solution," including the running of the camps and border patrols.

yellow star The six-pointed Star of David is the traditional symbol of the Hebrew faith. The Nazis required Jewish citizens to wear a yellow star marked "Jude" (Jew) on their clothing. Each district had specific locations and measurements for the star, making it nearly impossible to follow all the rules all the time. Those who wore the star were persecuted; those who did not were arrested. ★

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