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## THE PLAY

It is 1940 and the effects of World War II are being felt around the world. However, just outside of Washington, D.C., the wealthy **Fanny Farrelly** and her son **David** live a sheltered life where breakfast is served every day at 9 a.m., and the dangers of the world seem far from their front door.

Fanny is anxiously awaiting the return of her oldest daughter, **Sara Müller**, whom she hasn't seen in 20 years. Sara has planned a lengthy visit with her three children and German husband, **Kurt Müller**. Kurt has bullet scars, shaking hands and a locked suitcase. The children speak many languages and talk of having lived many places in Europe. There is something strange and secretive about the Müllers.

They may be less mysterious, though, to Fanny's other houseguests, who have overstayed their welcome.

After being displaced from Romania, **Count Teck de Brancovis** and his wife **Marthe de Brancovis** were invited to stay at the Farrelly's. Tensions are high as the couple fights and their bank account drains. While Teck is trying to regain his status among the powerful in Europe, the Müllers walk through the door.

The more questions that are asked about the Müllers, the more questions arise. With hidden agendas and lives at stake, Fanny may not be able to keep the world away much longer.

**“FOR EVERY MAN WHO LIVES WITHOUT FREEDOM, THE REST OF US MUST FACE THE GUILT.”**

— Sara Müller

# WATCH ON THE RHINE

BY **LILLIAN HELLMAN**  
DIRECTED BY **JACKIE MAXWELL**



**NOW PLAYING ON THE FICHANDLER STAGE  
FEBRUARY 3 - MARCH 5, 2017**

Illustration by Roberto Parada.

*Watch on the Rhine* is generously sponsored by Margot Kelly, Decker Anstrom and Sherry Hiemstra and the David Bruce Smith Foundation. The Hellman Festival is generously sponsored by Beth Newburger Schwartz. The D.C. Ticket Partnership is generously sponsored by the Paul M. Angell Family Foundation. Additional support is provided by Rockwell Collins.

# MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT



Lillian Hellman (1905-1984) is an American literary icon, political activist and rabble-rouser, who shocked audiences with her liberal views. She was born in New Orleans, Louisiana to a well-off family of social climbers. She drew inspiration for some of her most infamous characters from family and acquaintances.

After studying briefly at Columbia University and New York University, Hellman worked at a publishing house. In 1934, Hellman found instant success with her play *The Children's Hour*. She wrote *The Little Foxes* in 1939 and *Watch on the Rhine* in 1941. While *The Little Foxes* received great acclaim for its depiction of America's ruthless capitalists, Hellman started to receive criticism for her radical political views. She was labeled a communist and was blacklisted.

Hellman left theater and film and focused her literary talents on writing memoirs. These memoirs did not improve her reputation. Many critics called the three-part memoirs untrue, claiming that some of the stories Hellman shared as her own were stolen from friends and colleagues.

Although Hellman made great contributions to American literature both on stage and off, her reputation was tarnished and her literary importance was discounted. However, today she is remembered and respected as an influential writer who was awarded two New York Drama Critics Circle Awards for Best American Play, two Academy Awards nominations for her screenplays, and a National Book Award.

# LILLIAN HELLMAN FESTIVAL



Andrew Long as Kurt Müller and Lise Bruneau as Sara Müller. Photo by Tony Powell.

Arena Stage celebrates the work of playwrights we call "American Giants." This is the year we showcase Lillian Hellman. Arena Stage produced two of her plays: *The Little Foxes* and *Watch on the Rhine*. There will also be readings of her other plays and even professional chefs making dishes from Hellman's recipe book. In the past Arena Stage has honored Edward Albee (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), Arthur Miller (*Death of a Salesman*) and Eugene O'Neill (*A Long Day's Journey into Night*). This is the first time our American Giant is a woman. It is a big year for female playwrights at Arena Stage. Seven of our ten plays were written by women.

"You write as you write, in your time, as you see your world. One form is as good as another. There are a thousand ways to write, and each is as good as the other if it fits you, if you are any good. If you can break into a new pattern along the way, and it opens things up and allows you more freedom, that's something." - Lillian Hellman

# FASCISM AND RESISTANCE

Fascism is a political philosophy, and Adolph Hitler's National Socialist or Nazi Party was a fascist group. Fascism calls for a strong central government led by a dictator, a leader with absolute power. This leader has control over all aspects of the country: manufacturing, military, education, etc.

Fascism encourages people to be very nationalistic and believe their country is superior to all others. Citizens must be unwaveringly loyal to their country - or at least appear to be.

Leaders achieve this loyalty a number of ways. They rouse extreme patriotic feelings in people through parades, rallies and speeches. Hitler was known as an excellent public speaker, who could whip a crowd into a frenzy cheering for the greatness of Germany.

A fascist government also controls the media and the messages it sends. It circulates lies and misleading information called "propaganda." These posters and programs often blame a group of people for the country's problems and glorify the leader. (continued on next page)



Members of the Hitler Youth, caught up in the fervor of fascism, salute Hitler. Image licensed through Alamy.com. All rights reserved.



# THE UNITED STATES AND WORLD WAR II



A map of the countries Germany and its allies took over in Europe and the north of Africa. The white countries remained neutral during the war. The other half of World War II was against Japan in the Pacific.

World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, which officially ended the war, devastated Germany's economy, dismantled its military and humiliated the German people. In this **treaty**, other countries forced Germany to take full responsibility for World War I including the millions of people who died.

Germans believed their government had failed them. The poverty, unemployment and anger they felt created the perfect opportunity for Adolph Hitler and the Nazi Party to come into power in 1933.

Hitler blamed Germany's problems on Jewish people. He thought

blonde-haired, blue-eyed Germans were racially superior to Jewish people. As a result, Hitler began the persecution, imprisonment and systematic extermination (killing) of six million Jewish people and six million others, including the disabled, Romani, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses and political prisoners. Reports about these murders caused Great Britain to take in 10,000 Jewish children.



As he gained power, Hitler began taking over neighboring nations, including Austria and Czechoslovakia. He believed Germans needed space to fulfill their destiny. Europe was just the beginning.

On September 3, 1939, two days after Germany invaded Poland, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.

Germany's allies (cooperating countries), Italy and Japan, were known as the Axis Powers. They were also at war. Italy invaded Albania and what is now Ethiopia. In Asia, Japan attacked China.

The United States was aware of these actions. However, the U.S. did not enter the war until December 8, 1941, the day after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Why did the United States wait so long?

Over 100,000 U.S. soldiers died on the European battlefields of World War I. The country did not want to get involved in another distant war so soon. Also, the U.S. was still recovering from the Great Depression, which had left over 13 million unemployed. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had promised to focus on the U.S.'s own problems.

Even though he opposed the events unfolding in Europe, Roosevelt signed the U.S. Neutrality Act. This stated that the U.S. would not send money, aid or weapons to any of the warring countries. This policy is an example of isolationism. Ironically, the industry required when the U.S. entered World War II was what finally stabilized the economy.

Lillian Hellman's play *Watch on the Rhine* premiered in 1941, before the U.S. entered the war. Roosevelt ordered a performance of it at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C. What impact do you think the play had on audiences? What message was Hellman sending?

**Treaty** – an agreement between countries



A 1940s political cartoon against the U.S. policy of isolationism.



Learn more about World War II through videos and articles:

<http://tinyurl.com/wwiitopic>

## FASCISM AND RESISTANCE (CONTINUED)

Fascist leaders censor anything that opposes them. The Nazis would regularly burn thousands of books, destroy works of art or silence radio programs.

Fascists also target children early on. The Nazi Party made its beliefs part of the school curriculum and picture books. Teachers had to join the Nazi Teachers Association. Young people were also taught to be "good" Germans by joining the Hitler Youth. The Hitler Youth looked like a club, like the Boy Scouts, but was actually a Nazi training ground.

Fascism also relies on fear. People who oppose the government are threatened, arrested, tortured or killed. Spying on one's neighbor and turning them into the Nazis was encouraged.

Some people were immediately wary of Hitler. People fled Germany and neighboring countries. The size of this migration led to stricter U.S. immigration laws, resulting in a significant decrease in legal immigration from 1933-1945. Others decided to wait and see how far Hitler would go. In some cases the delay cost them their lives.

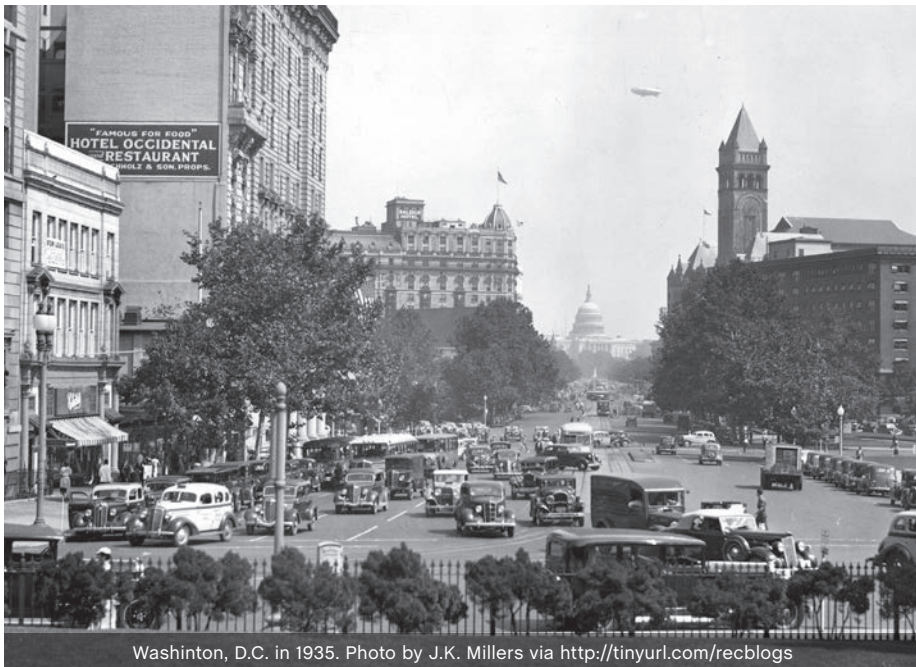
The anti-fascist movement within Europe was carried out in part by civilians who felt a sense of duty to fight what was happening. These brave civilians risked their lives to be spies, smugglers, nurses and other resistance workers. Some assumed multiple identities and crossed borders without detection. The best of them could hide in plain sight. Others pretended to be loyal fascists while obtaining valuable information. Others hid people targeted by the fascists.

These people were essential in defeating the Nazis and their allies. Sometimes they looked down on those who did nothing about the injustice and crimes committed by the Nazis within their own countries.

# WASHINGTON, D.C. IN 1940

In 1940, the United States had not fully entered World War II. However, after Hitler came to power in 1933, the number of immigrants fleeing Europe increased significantly. Washington, D.C., as the U.S. capital, had its share of political and civilian refugees

Among D.C.'s wealthy families and political officials, enemy operatives and refugees alike could find crucial war information. People who became friendly with members of the foreign embassies could be rewarded for sharing information about new refugees or any buzz in their social circles. This made it very difficult to identify who could be trusted.



Washington, D.C. in 1935. Photo by J.K. Millers via <http://tinyurl.com/recblogs>



Read about five famous World War II secret operations:  
<http://tinyurl.com/spywwii>

# THREE BIG QUESTIONS

1

What responsibilities do civilians have to themselves, their country and their families in times of war?

2

What would you risk your life for?

3

When are people obligated to act?

# HELPFUL HINTS FOR THEATER AUDIENCES

As an audience member at the theater, YOU are part of the show! Just as you see and hear the actors onstage, they can see and hear you in the audience. To help the performers do their best, please remember the following:

- Arrive at least 15 minutes early.
- Visit the restroom before the show starts.
- Sit in the exact seat on your ticket. Ask the usher for help finding it.
- Before the show begins, turn off your phone, watch alarms and any other electronic devices. If anything rings by accident, turn it off immediately.
- Do not use your phone for texts, calls, games or pictures.
- You cannot take pictures or make recordings in the theater, even before or after the play.
- There is no food allowed in the theater.
- Do not talk, whisper, sing or hum, unless invited by the performers to do so.
- Keep your feet on the floor and off the seat in front of you.
- Avoid getting up during a show. If you must leave, wait for a scene change and exit quietly and quickly.
- Respond to the show; you can laugh, cry and gasp. However, don't repeat lines out loud or talk to the performers on stage.
- Be sure to applaud at the end!

# RESOURCES

"Lillian Hellman, Playwright, Author, and Rebel, Dies at 77"

*The New York Times*

<http://tinyurl.com/nythell>

*American Masters: The Lives of Lillian Hellman*: PBS

<http://tinyurl.com/lilpbps>

"Lillian Hellman, The Art of Theater No. 1"

*The Paris Review*

<http://tinyurl.com/parisint>

"The Scandalous Lillian Hellman"

*The Guardian*

<http://tinyurl.com/guardlil>

www.History.com: World War II History

<http://tinyurl.com/hiswwii>

World War II: 1939-1945

*Encyclopedia Britannica*

<http://tinyurl.com/britwwii>

Buildup to World War II: January 1931 – August 1939

How Stuff Works Culture

<http://tinyurl.com/wwiibuildup>



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