

# Features

## Production illustrates life in Nazi Germany

### Review

By Thad Eckard  
Contributing Writer

Theatre UNCA's production of John van Druten's "I Am a Camera" closed Sunday after five days of performance. The play, directed by Elaine Hunter Meyers, is based on Christopher Isherwood's short story collection "Berlin Stories." The show ran from Feb. 18 through Feb. 22.

Isherwood, a British writer, went to Berlin in 1929, where he kept a diary of his relationships and experiences during his four years there.

"I Am a Camera" is based on that record of the author's struggle to stay detached as Nazis rise to power and as his Jewish friends are persecuted.

In the play, the audience is invited to follow Isherwood's self-portrait as a young writer living in 1930s Germany.

It is a harsh criticism of himself and everyone else who chose not to get involved prior to World War II, but at the same time it is an admission that love is often an indistinct thing against the overwhelming backdrop of society.

The actors performed excellently, even with the difficult British and Germanized-English dialects. Angelique Roberts seems to capture our sympathy for her character Sally Bowles, and Tracy Hackney brings us a character that feels very familiar as Christopher Isherwood.

We witness the trivialities of Sally, a young British woman with childlike dreams and Christopher Isherwood, a budding novelist with writer's block. Soon after the story opens, the friendship between Sally and Christopher evolves rapidly when Sally decides to

move into Christopher's apartment and he moves into the smaller one next door.

The flat is owned by the affectionate Fraulein Schneider, a lonely and well-meaning German woman. Christopher gives English lessons to supplement his income as a writer, but his students have dwindled down to only one, Natalia Landauer, a naive young Jewish woman.

Christopher watches with amusement while his other Jewish friend Fritz Wendel attempts to court Natalia. Sally regularly gives both the lovers bad advice.

Clive Mortimer is Sally's rich and boastful American boyfriend who has somehow profited when everyone else went the way of the stock market and the banks. Sally's mother, Mrs. Watson-Courtneidge, is a condescending manipulator.

The characters of Fraulein Schneider, Clive, and Mrs. Watson-Courtneidge are Isherwood's representatives of their nationalities. Each one embodies the typical spirit of their country just before the war. Fraulein Schneider personifies the average German citizen living in a country made poor by the victors of the first war.

In those uncertain times, the German people wanted to believe in myths, and they found the mythology of the perfect Nazi society appealing.

Clive is preoccupied America, and Mrs. Watson-Courtneidge is egotistical Britain with her misplaced values. All are fascinating subjects for Christopher the camera.

Christopher disregards the growing number of young toughs and the rising tide of violence. In his apartment, he is well above the anti-Semitic

rumors and thirst for revenge and he does not care about the worries and fears of the German people. Sally and Christopher are idle and relatively unworried even when the German bank closes and the nation loses even more stability.

The economic crises and racial tension enter Christopher's lens only indirectly through the troubles of Fritz and Natalia and through the anxiety of Fraulein Schneider.

As a spectator, he does little more than console Fritz when anti-Semites threaten his father. To stay focused, he must keep his distance when Fraulein Schneider's patriotism makes her vulnerable.

With Sally, though, he cannot resist forming attachment, but his fondness of her is something she cannot appreciate.

Sally is controlled by her environment, and her environment does not afford her the luxury of listening to her heart. She remains an insecure person dependent on her feminine charms to survive.

When she becomes pregnant, she briefly admits that she is frail when compared to the forces of society. With the aid of a doctor friend of Fraulein Schneider, Sally pays for a doctor's diagnosis that gives her permission to have the operation.

Clive appears and provides Sally and Christopher with an escape from their unfulfilled lives. He suggests they get out of boring Berlin and tour the world.

Just days before they are to leave, Clive sends word to them that he hopes to see them in Chicago. Awakened from their reverie, they see themselves as foolish for thinking they could fly away from their human responsibilities. The experience leaves



PHOTO COURTESY OF THEATRE UNCA

Angelique Roberts, Jana Millsbaugh, and Tracy T. Hackney starred in John van Druten's "I Am a Camera," which played February 18-22 in Carol Belk Theatre.

them both resolved to start living a more purposeful life, but the resolution is short-lived for Sally.

Christopher, however, takes his commitment more to heart. It is during this time that the crisis he tries so hard to simply observe comes to a head for him.

A conflict arises at a street corner when Natalia stands up to a gang and Christopher is forced to protect her. He finally chooses his integrity over his voyeurism.

Fraulein Schneider is shocked to find out Christopher was not fighting the Jews, but fighting for them.

Again, he must take a stand for what is right and lashes out at Fraulein Schneider for being ignorant and easily led.

For Sally's mother, the fight makes him unacceptable for a very different reason.

In the end, Sally agrees to go back home with her mother, but, before she leaves, she declares her love for him. Love, however, is not enough for them to be together.

Roberts is gifted as the leading lady, and Hackney leads us very naturally through four months on the life of Isherwood. Jana Millsbaugh is won-

derful as the excitable German landlady Fraulein Schneider, and we instantly respond to Jennifer Jamsky's effective portrayal of Natalia.

Joe Dawson accomplishes his apathetic American character skillfully as Clive, and Matthew Rossi slaughters the English language realistically as Fritz. Rae LeGrone brings with talent all the things that make up a bad mother-in-law.

Director Elaine Hunter Meyers, a lecturer in UNCA's drama department, will retire from directing and teaching in May after 17 years with the university.

## Salsa offers spicy cuisine, cramped atmosphere

By Renee Slaydon  
Features Editor

Anyone looking for a restaurant in downtown Asheville with spicy Mexican Caribbean cuisine, festive music, and cozy seating should try Salsa, located at 6 Patton Avenue.

The restaurant should satisfy any student's craving for nachos, burritos, enchiladas, and habanero hot sauce. Beware if you are on a budget, though, because the meal will cost you more than an adventurous late night trip to the nearest Taco Bell.

On the dinner menu, the cost of items range from \$3.25 for a toasted hemp seed nut dip appetizer to \$10.95 for a maravilla quesadilla filled with native smoked trout, wild mushrooms, spinach, caramelized plum garlic, and roasted sweet peppers.

My first visit to Salsa proved to be an interesting one. My friends and I were seated at a small, round table that provided a direct view into the kitchen window. Our server approached us and asked for a drink order.

Salsa offers RJ Corr sodas, Reed's Ginger Brew, imported beer, Highland Gaelic Ale and Oat Meal Porter, and a small wine list. I opted for water, and received a glass of lukewarm water without ice.

The menu items can be intimidating at first, with names like the Mongobongo burrito and Carambola quesadillas. All entrees can be prepared vegan-style, and soy cheese can be substituted at no extra cost.

I chose the Vaquero burrito, which contained sauteed flank steak, grilled

potatoes, mushrooms, red beans and spinach. The burrito is garnished with chips, salsa, and salad topped with mojo del dia. I have no idea what mojo del dia is, but it was spicy. The burrito was so large that I had to take

half of it home with me, and I found the filling to be a strange concoction but flavorful.

After dropping off our food, our server disappeared and returned to our table after we had finished our

meal. We had to steal a salt shaker off a nearby shelf once we realized that no one else was going to get it for us.

For patrons who like simply prepared foods and like to know exactly what you are eating, do not go to Salsa. The service is lax, and seating can be cramped once the dining area fills up. Beware if you happen to ask

from many of the local businesses to start it. For this reason, Salsa works with local farmers and merchants for the produce used in the recipes, said Tizzano.

Salsa differs from corporate restaurant chains because Diaz created the recipes on the menu and also works in the kitchen as a chef. He also created "Hector's Smokin' Habanero Sauce," which patrons can purchase for \$4.95 a bottle.

As far as atmosphere goes, Salsa should be avoided by anyone wishing for a quiet, private dining experience. The dining room is tiny, and the 17

small tables crammed into it leave much to be desired. Background music varies from Van Morrison and The Rolling Stones to bluegrass, folk, and salsa.

Salsa first opened about three years ago and began as a take-out restaurant. About a year ago, Diaz, who grew up in the mountains of Puerto Rico, expanded the restaurant to include a small seating area that measures about 400 square feet, according to Tizzano. A space that size is not much bigger than an efficiency apartment, so going to Salsa with a party of twenty is probably not a good idea.



PHOTO BY LISSA HALL

Salsa, located on Patton Avenue, serves an array of foods ranging from Mexican Caribbean "hot stuff entrees" to quesadillas. The restaurant began as a take-out service and expanded with a dining area last year.

### Review

for separate checks. Salsa automatically adds 20 percent gratuity to them.

Salsa uses hormone and steroid-free beef, pure canola oil, free-range chickens, herb-infused vinegars and oils, and organic cheeses and sour cream, which probably accounts for the somewhat expensive prices.

General Manager Tim Tizzano said that about 80 percent of the menu consists of fresh produce, everything is made from scratch, and no canned foods are used.

Owner Hector Diaz likes to think of Salsa as a community restaurant because he received financial support

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