

Ute Lemper - Berlin Cabaret Songs (1997)

Written by bluelover

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01. *It's A Swindle* 02. *Sex Appeal* 03. *Peter, Peter* 04. *The Smart Set* 05. *When The Special Girlfriend* 06. *I Am A Wamp!* 07. *L'heure Bleue* 08. *Take It Off Petronella!* 09. *Chuck Out The Men* 10. *The Washed-up Lover* 11. *O Just Suppose* 12. *I Don't Know Who I Belong To* 13. *The Lavender Song* 14. *Maskulinum – Femininum* 15. *A Little Attila* 16. *A Little Yearning* 17. *Oh, How We Wish That We Were Kids Again* 18. *Munchhausen* Ute Lemper, vocals Matrix Ensemble Jeff Cohen, piano Robert Ziegler, arranger

"Entartete Musik," of which 18 examples in English adaptation are provided here, includes, in the definition of producer Michael Haas, among other things, "important works lost, destroyed or banned by the political disruptions of the twentieth century," in particular, the Third Reich of Nazi Germany. Specifically, these are cabaret songs of the years of the Weimar Republic (1918-1933), written by such composers as Friedrich Hollaender (who became Frederick Hollander when he followed Marlene Dietrich to Hollywood) and Mischa Spoliansky. They reflect the decadence and unfulfilled hopes of a temporary oasis in German history marked by runaway inflation and agitations of the Left and Right, matters treated in the lyrics. The album contains material that provides the perhaps unrealized source of later re-creations like the score for the Broadway musical Cabaret. Ute Lemper (who has performed extensively in that show) gives bravura readings of songs that treat corruption, homosexuality, and a doomed social idealism with music, provided by the Matrix Ensemble, that recalls Kurt Weill and hot jazz. The looming Nazi era is inescapable in such Hollaender songs as "Oh, How We Wish That We Were Kids Again" and especially "Münchhausen." The latter bears some similarity to the folk song "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream," except that we know what happened in Germany instead of the dream of peace and social justice Hollaender proposes. More than a mere history lesson, Berlin Cabaret Songs reawakens a lost era that engages issues of tolerance, sexual confusion, and political uncertainty that continue to affect listeners. It also contains some extremely funny numbers. Jeremy Lawrence's English lyrics, based on translations by Alan Lareau, Kathleen L. Komar, and Haas, are amazingly deft, retaining the German flavor but singing well in their adoptive language. --- William Ruhlmann, Rovi

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