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Cabaret Play Guide by Megan Sutton and Alina Burke, Education Associates. For questions about the guide, please contact education@arizonatheatre.org

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ABOUT ATC

The mission of Arizona Theatre Company is to inspire, engage, and entertain – one moment, one production, and one audience at a time.

Under new leadership – and now celebrating its 53rd-season – Arizona Theatre Company is truly “The State Theatre.” Our company boasts the largest subscriber base of any performing arts organization in Arizona, with more than 130,000 people each year attending performances at the historic Temple of Music and Art in Tucson, and the elegant Herberger Theater Center in downtown Phoenix.

Each season of carefully selected productions reflects the rich variety of world drama – from classic to contemporary plays, from musicals to new works – as audiences enjoy a rich emotional experience that can only be captured through live theatre. ATC is the preeminent professional theatre in the state of Arizona. Under the direction of Artistic Director Sean Daniels in partnership with Managing Director Billy Russo, ATC operates in two cities – unlike any other League of Resident Theaters (LORT) company in the country.

ATC shares the passion of the theatre through a wide array of outreach programs, educational opportunities, access initiatives, and community events. Through the schools and summer programs, ATC focuses on teaching Arizona’s youth about literacy, cultural development, performing arts, specialty techniques used onstage, and opens their minds to the creative power of dramatic literature. With approximately 450 Learning & Education activities annually, ATC reaches far beyond the metropolitan areas of Tucson and Phoenix, enriching the theatre learning experience for current and future audiences.

The Temple of Music and Art: The home of ATC productions in downtown Tucson
The Herberger Theater Center: The home of ATC productions in downtown Phoenix
INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

CABARET

Music by JOHN KANDER
Lyrics by FRED EBB
Book by JOE MASTEROFF
Directed by SARA BRUNER

Cliff Bradshaw, an American author working on a novel in Berlin, encounters Sally Bowles, a talented cabaret performer, at the seedy Kit Kat Klub where she sings. When she is fired by the club’s owner, also her jealous boyfriend, she moves in with Cliff and the two fall in love. As the Nazis begin taking control of the German government, the atmosphere of the Kit Kat Klub and the lives of Cliff and Sally begin to change dramatically. For all the exuberant song and dance, the most powerful aspect of Cabaret remains the political wallop that it delivers. The horror gains momentum around them, as too many characters stay locked in denial or self-interest. At its core, Cabaret is a devastating critique of apathy, and a clever and terrifying look at totalitarianism. Cabaret’s powerful story remains remarkably timely nearly 80 years after Isherwood’s original stories were published, which is why the piece continues to resonate with audiences more than 50 years after it debuted.

Rehearsal shot. Photo by Tim Fuller.
# CAST AND CREATIVE

## CAST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Megan Boehmcke</td>
<td>Swing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chanel Bragg</td>
<td>Frenchie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Caldwell*</td>
<td>Lulu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Dawson*</td>
<td>Fräulein Kost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean Patrick Doyle*</td>
<td>Emcee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon Espinoza*</td>
<td>Clifford Bradshaw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spence Ford*</td>
<td>Helga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Kelly*</td>
<td>Herr Schultz &amp; Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Kuhnen*</td>
<td>Victor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xander Mason</td>
<td>Bobby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenna Meadows</td>
<td>Swing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison Micucci*</td>
<td>Sally Bowles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonia Raye*</td>
<td>Fritzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaun-Avery Williams*</td>
<td>Texas &amp; Dance Captain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Scott Withers*</td>
<td>Ernst Ludwig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lori Wilner*</td>
<td>Fräulein Schneider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatumn Zale</td>
<td>Rosie</td>
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</tbody>
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## CREATIVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sara Bruner</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaclyn Miller</td>
<td>Choreographer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesse Sanchez</td>
<td>Music Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Lillenthal &amp; Rachel Fae Szymanski</td>
<td>Co-Lighting Designers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leon Rothenberg</td>
<td>Sound Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dom Ruggiero</td>
<td>Production Stage Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kris Stone</td>
<td>Scenic Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leah Piehl</td>
<td>Costume Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Morden</td>
<td>Dialect Coach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes members of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

ARIZONA ARTISTS INITIATIVE is a new initiative that furthers ATC’s commitment to our community and the artists who live in Arizona, were born in Arizona, return or move to
BEHIND THE SCENES

SCENIC DESIGN

Concept statement from Kris Stone, Scenic Designer for *Cabaret*:

Having been the assistant on the 1998 *Cabaret* at Studio 54 let’s just say this is NOT that *Cabaret*. This is the wild imaginings of the beautiful Sara Bruner and this *Cabaret* isn’t for your mamma.

I hope this looks like we walked into an unrestored party we wished we had attended the night before. A forgotten space, a place of love and acceptance, and then we get to experience it all over again.

The end is the beginning - we see the aftermath and land back in the aftermath.

It’s dilapidated and raw and real. It’s exposed and hidden at the same time. It’s reflective and cruel and honors those before us and after.

It’s designed to be a playground for the actors to explore and invent their own version and we cannot wait to see what they create.

Research
Renderings

These are just two of many renderings created by the designer.
BEHIND THE SCENES

Renderings

Photos of the set model
John Kander began his professional career in 1956 as the pianist for An Evening with Beatrice Lillie in Florida, as well as the pre-Broadway run for The Amazing Adele. He made the jump to Broadway as a substitute rehearsal pianist for Leonard Bernstein’s West Side Story, opening the door for him to the write the dance arrangements for the musicals Gypsy and Irma la Douce. In 1962, he made his Broadway debut as a composer with A Family Affair. The show flopped, but it introduced his talents to the show’s young producer, Harold Prince, who would later produce Cabaret, as well as an assortment of other successful Broadway musicals. Not long after, Kander was introduced to his future lyrical partner and life-long collaborator, Fred Ebb.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, Fred Ebb wrote material for nightclub acts and revues, as well as for the satirical television show, "This Was the Week That Was." By the time he met Kander, he too had experienced the agony of a musical flop. Morning Sun, for which he wrote the lyrics, closed after only eight performances. "We came to each other fresh from our failures," Ebb recalled. "Our neuroses complemented each other. It was a case of instant communication and instant songs." The duo’s first success came almost immediately with the song "My Coloring Book," recorded and released by Barbara Streisand in 1963. (John Kander). Ebb passed away in 2004 while he and Kander were working on their final collaboration, Curtains.

Joe Masteroff was born in 1919 and was always interested in writing. He studied journalism at Temple University, graduating in 1940. He joined the United States Military at the height of World War II, returning to New York in 1949 to study playwriting at the American Theatre Wing. Masteroff’s professional Broadway career started as an actor in the 1953 production of The Prescott Proposals, followed by his first written Broadway production, The Warm Peninsula, in 1959. His two biggest credits are Cabaret and She Loves Me, both of which won a Tony for Best Musical. Joe Masteroff never married and had no children. He died at the age of 98 in New Jersey.
Set in 1929-1930, *Cabaret* deals with fascism, love, and apathy through the lens of the Kit Kat Klub. The story is based on the book *Goodbye to Berlin* by Christopher Isherwood.

**From Goodbye to Berlin to Cabaret: A History and Analysis**

### Goodbye to Berlin

*Goodbye to Berlin* was published in 1945. The book and protagonist, Christopher Isherwood or “Chris”, are based on how the author experienced Berlin. Chris is simply a British writer and self-proclaimed unbiased observer passively noting the extraordinary people and events happening around him. The opening line of this book sets up how he is merely a spectator. It reads, “I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking”. While Isherwood and the main character share a name, he made it very clear that this book was not written to be wholly autobiographical. As the story progresses, Isherwood describes Berlin at this time to be “A city of self-indulgent pleasure where anyone rich enough can satisfy his most extravagant sexual needs, where dancing between men is permitted and where bars never close”. Berlin in the 1930s was perhaps one of the most liberating sexual societies. The night time was ruled by beautiful drag shows and cabarets filled by people unafraid to be themselves. Isherwood wanted to showcase how quickly violence and fear can transform people and societies, but also to preserve the beauty that was Berlin.

This book is episodic in that there are six short stories each focusing on a certain location or character. These chapters are beautifully strung together to create a full picture of Berlin pre-Hitler. In the first chapter, “A Berlin Diary (Autumn 1930)”, Chris meets the character of Fraulein Schroeder, a German woman who runs a boarding house where he stays, and Fraulein Kost, one of her tenants who supports herself by prostitution.

The second chapter “Sally Bowles”, is mainly about the iconic character that *I Am A Camera* and *Cabaret* centralize the story around. Her role in *Goodbye to Berlin* is significant, but not as central as it is in the play and musical adaptations. Isherwood describes Sally by stating, “She sang badly without expression, her hands hanging down at her sides, yet her performance was, in its own way effective because of her startling appearance and her air of not caring a curse what other people thought of her”. As the story progresses, Sally is shown to be a wildly sexual stubborn young woman who takes the position of the nagging older sister in Chris' life even though she is in fact younger than him. She becomes pregnant during an affair near the end of the book and Chris supports her decision to receive an abortion. Each character in this book stood for the archetypes most likely to be vulnerable to Nazi intimidation and violence. Sally is exactly the opposite of the type of woman Hitler wanted running around his country. She brags of her numerous affairs and is often too outspoken. However, because of her vivacious personality, Isherwood and Sally form a deeply passionate relationship and even live together at one point, but the relationship remains platonic. Though Isherwood's sexuality is never explicitly addressed, the obvious question is very present. In the 1930s Isherwood could never openly write about his homosexuality, so throughout the book his character feels slightly out of focus as to leave the reader to make its own conclusions.

In the final chapter, “Winter 1932-33” Isherwood is approached by an American boy at a nightclub who simply asks if he is queer. He responds with a frank answer of, “Very queer indeed”. Some people choose to take this as him being sarcastic since in this age of oppression it would be wildly difficult to be open about one's sexuality. This final chapter documents the heart wrenching rapid violent political changes at the hands of the Nazis. He describes public beatings and the humiliation of individuals who will not swear allegiance to the Nazi party.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

From Goodbye to Berlin to Cabaret: A History and Analysis

I Am A Camera

*I Am A Camera* was written by John Van Druten and it was adapted from Christopher Isherwood's *Goodbye to Berlin*. The show was published and made its way to Broadway in 1951. The title of this play was taken from the book’s opening lines. When comparing this piece of work to the novel it particularly focuses on the relationships during this time and focuses less on the ugly political realities of the time.

The play stays true to the book with the exception of a few changes. Fräulein Schroeder becomes Fräulein Schneider, but her personality for the most part stays the same. However, toward the end of the play, Chris terminates their friendship due to her antisemitism. In the book and play, Schroeder/Schneider does not have a love affair with a Jewish man, as she does in *Cabaret*. Instead a different character, Fritz Wendel, a German man and friend of Chris, falls deeply in love with a Jewish woman Natalie Landauer. The relationship struggles to survive at first, but then Fritz admits to his own Jewish ancestry and the two get married.

Sally again is central to the story, but not much of her character development is changed. Sally again becomes pregnant after an affair, however in the play, she convinces Chris to make a fake proposal to her in order to appease her mother (an added character). As the play wraps up, they do eventually decide to part ways, with Chris returning to England to fully pursue his writing career, and Sally moving to Rivera for her film career.

Cabaret

*Cabaret* originally premiered on Broadway in 1966 with a libretto written by Joe Masteroff, music composed by John Kander, and lyrics by Fred Ebb. The story is based on John Druten's play, *I Am A Camera*, which itself was adapted from Christopher Isherwood's semi-autobiographical book *Goodbye to Berlin*.

*Cabaret* opened on Broadway at the Broadhurst Theatre and ran on three separate Broadway stages, continuing for over one thousand productions before closing on September 6, 1969. The original production was directed by Harold Prince, who was chiefly interested in how the counterculture movements and anxieties of the 1960s America related to Pre-Nazi Berlin. At his first rehearsal, he showed a photograph of a Nazi soldier taunting a crowd of Jewish people, but it had actually been from a photograph from that year (1965) of a white man harassing a group of black tenants in Chicago. He loved how the stories of *I Am A Camera* and *Cabaret* beg the audience to see the reality of treating people with hate and how it consumes cultures and normalizes atrocity.

One of the biggest shifts from the play to the musical was the decision to make the club, Kit Kat Klub, a central location of the musical. In the book and play it was only mentioned a few times in relation to Sally. Highlighting the Kit Kat Klub as a location makes room for the MC to become a crucial character in the musical. In many ways the MC signifies Berlin itself because when Berlin hurts you see the MC become gradually more broken down, almost driven to insanity.
The Weimar Republic Era took place right after World War I until the rise of the Nazi party (1919-1933). The document that essentially put an end to the First World War was called the Treaty of Versailles. This treaty made Germany reduce its military and take responsibility for WWI, among other things. As one could guess, this didn’t go over too well with military and people on the left and it received much opposition. On top of, and because of, all this – Germany’s economy was suffering. The Weimar Republic became reliant on a steady money flow from America and was able to somewhat recover. Little did they know that America was about to enter into a Great Depression, which would in turn send Germany right back to financial ruin. This leads right into the rise of Nazi Germany as people were desperate and Hitler was convincing.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Rise of Nazi Germany

Adolf Hitler was a soldier who fought in World War I. After the war, he joined a group of people that were frustrated with the outcome of the conflict and wanted to promote German nationalism and anti-Semitism. This group was called the German Workers’ Party and eventually became the Nationalist Socialist German Workers’ (Nazi) Party. He proved a very convincing and charismatic speaker, gained a huge following, and in July of 1921, became the leader of the group. In 1923, Hitler attempted to grow his party even bigger by trying to take over the government in a state in southern Germany, but was unsuccessful and convicted for treason. He spent nearly a year in jail and during that time wrote his book, *Mein Kampf*. All of this only put Hitler more in the forefront of the public eye, which helped him rebuild the Nazi party once he was released from prison. In January of 1933, Hitler was appointed German chancellor and banned all political parties except his own. This is when death camps started to form and the slaughter that was the holocaust took place.

Further Reading:
Nazi Party | History.com
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The New Women

During the First World War, women were able to take some job opportunities that were previously only allotted to men. After the war ended in 1918, these women were not about to give up the bit of freedom and power that they had gained because of the war. Thus ushered in the 1920s—the era of the New Woman. The New Woman was independent and career-minded. She rode bicycles and used her newly-earned right to vote. Fashion trends for the New Woman were dramatically different from the impractical, giant dresses of the Victorian Era. The New Woman wore her hemlines short, and cut her hair even shorter—in the style of a bob. She wore men’s clothing, and boyish figures replaced the fabricated curves created by corsets.

The New Woman in Germany was not far from, but notably different than the American flappers and party girls. In Germany, the New Woman became a cultural phenomenon explored by female authors Elsa Hermann (So ist die neue Frau) and Irmgard Keun (Das kunstseidene Mädchen). The books were quintessential to understanding the modern German woman, and were later banned by the Nazis. The leading lady of Cabaret, Sally Bowles, only exists because of the space the New Woman created. Sally is wild, dominating, and she makes her own decisions. She runs away from commitment in a manner typically reserved for men. She is sexually liberated as well, which wouldn’t be possible without the discourse created by the New Woman’s movement.

Fashion Designer and Businesswoman, Coco Chanel wearing pants
Queer Subcultures in 1920s Berlin

In *Cabaret*, The Kit Kat Klub is a place of sanctuary for queer, sexually liberated individuals during the transition into Nazi Germany. In the 1920s and 30s, Berlin became the center of a homosexual subculture. Young people with similar ideologies flocked to urban places throughout Europe, and found unity in underground spaces and nightlife scenes. This included not only homosexuals, but anyone who expressed their gender in a way that deviated from what society had set as the norm. Here, anyone marked as different could easily see that they were not alone, even while facing discrimination in mainstream culture. The sense of belonging that Berlin as a city provided historically, and that the Kit Kat Klub provides in the show makes it all the more devastating when the Nazis come into power and kill anyone they perceived as deviant from their standards for normal. It’s important to note that almost all of the characters in *Cabaret* would have been killed in the Holocaust.

![Dancers at the Eldorado Nightclub in Berlin](image)
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Weimar Republic Era Nightlife

Whether in celebration of the end of the war, or a way to forget the war, the people of Germany partied hard from 1923 on. The cabaret scene of Berlin pitched any rules or decencies of the time. Gender rules were tossed out the window and sex, drugs, and murder were rampant. This decade-long party was fueled by all kinds of drugs, most famously cocaine. These drugs were legal and available to buy on the streets of Berlin. In order to make money many women of all ages turned to prostitution – which was deregulated. To get an idea of how big this operation was, Berlin grew by a factor of 13 from 1920 on. Some men, out of desperation, also turned to prostitution. This made Berlin a hotspot for homosexual men. Cross dressing became huge in the party scene, as people felt free to explore their fashion sense and sexuality. During this time anything went, cabaret shows would incorporate political messages within the eroticism and silliness. Pornography was being produced at a very high rate, not only for sexual purposes but also satirical. People were fascinated by homicide cases and murder was all too common, especially that of young pretty women. When the Nazi party came into power in 1933, the crazy nightlife quickly came to an end.

Further Reading:

17 Reasons Why Germany’s Weimar Republic Was a Party-Lovers Paradise | Historycollection.com
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Why We Need to Teach Queer History

*Cabaret* is a musical that shows a side of history we don’t normally see. The characters are all misfits and are sometimes misunderstood as vulgar, but ultimately they represent a fight for equality that we are still fighting. The director of ATC’s production of *Cabaret*, Sara Bruner, is dedicated to expanding the inclusivity of the story and adding a unique gender expression and identity to each character that is part of the Kit Kat Klub. Including genderqueer and gender-fluid characters as part of the show makes it even more relevant to our current culture. Our production of *Cabaret* not only offers poignant commentary on a significant moment in history, but encourages the audience to think about the aspects of the story that still ring true for queer people today. The story of this musical reveals a dark part of queer history, and although it may not be appropriate for some young audiences, that is no reason to shy away from teaching the truths it tells about the discrimination queer people have faced. Thank you for supporting Arizona Theatre Company as we explore the stories of demographics often overlooked.
Creative Team/Historical Context Sources


CLASSROOM GUIDE

Discussion Questions

1. What does each character want? How do they get what they want?
2. What is the overall theme of the play?
3. What does this play teach us about our history?
4. What moment from the play stuck with you the most?

The following questions are credited to Portland Center Stage at The Armory

5. What were your expectations for the play before seeing it? How was your experience of the production different from what you thought you were going to see? Can you think of things that it might have been helpful to know before seeing the play?
6. What would you say is the style of the production? Is it realistic or fantastic? Or both? How do the design elements influence the tone of the piece?
7. How did the actors’ performance shape your understanding of the play? Pick one character in the play and discuss how you might have played the role if you were cast in the play.
8. The story told in Cabaret has been published as a novella, portrayed in a stage play, and been the basis for a movie, in addition to being the core of the musical play you experienced. Which format do you think is most effective for telling the story?
9. Watch the film version of Cabaret before or after seeing the play. Which did you prefer? Which made you care more about the characters?
10. It is not uncommon in musicals for the songs to repeat themes developed in the dialogue. In Cabaret, major thematic elements are introduced and developed through the use of song. Consider and discuss how songs including, but not limited to, “Tomorrow Belongs To Me” and “Have You Seen Her”, are employed in the play, and how they reference the coming of Nazism.
11. The Nazis banned marriages between Jews and non-Jews during their rule (1933-1945). If you had been in an interfaith relationship in Germany in 1930, what would you have done? Discuss, referencing Fräulein Schnieder’s relationship with Herr Schultz.
12. Is any character in Cabaret a hero? What does “hero” mean to you? Have you ever admired someone, only to find out later that they weren’t as perfect as you thought?

Alan Cumming and The Kit Kat Girls in Cabaret.
**CLASSROOM GUIDE**

**Design Choices in Cabaret: a History/Theatre Arts-Integration Lesson:**

This lesson will use the design choices of *Cabaret* as a way to discuss some of the show’s deeper themes and symbolism.

**Age Range:** High School

**Materials:** White board, Markers, production photos of *Cabaret* (see step 2)

**Instructions:**

1. Write out the following vocabulary on the board: line, shape, scale (size), texture, color.
2. Based on the design elements (lighting, costumes, set, props, hair and makeup) have the students respond to the choices that were made by the designers. If they were to watch this show with no sound, what would they feel/observe just through the visual elements? Encourage them to use the vocab words to start the conversation.
3. If the students are having a hard time remembering ATC’s production, put up photos from any production of *Cabaret* that show off the design.
4. Split students into 5 groups and assign them one of the areas of design (lighting, costumes, set, props, hair and makeup).
5. One of the groups will be questioned by the rest of the students about aspects of “their design” and they will have to justify the choices made based on the story. Encourage the students to bring it back to the story as much as possible. This will repeat until every group has gone.
6. Have the students return to their own spot ask why these designers would work so hard to tell this “old” story.
   - Why is this story important?
   - How does this story relate to us now in the modern day?

This can be followed by a further discussion of *Cabaret*, here are some ideas to get the conversation started:

- How does the design affect the story?
- As an audience member, how did the story affect you?

**This activity fulfills the following standards:**

*Arizona Academic Standards in the Arts (Theatre):*

**TH.CR.3.HS1b** Justify technical design choices to support the story and emotional impact of a devised or scripted theatrical work. (e.g. lighting, sound, scenery, props, costumes, makeup, media).

**TH.RE.7.HS1a** Respond to what is seen, felt, and heard in a theatrical work to develop criteria for artistic choices.

*Arizona’s Social Science Standards (History):*

**HS.SP1.3** Evaluate the significance of past events as they relate to their own lives and the world
Cabaret

PLAY ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

PROTAGONIST
How is this story about them?

ANTAGONIST
In what ways does this character work against the protagonist?

THEME OF THE PLAY
What was the main idea/theme of the play?

What does it say about the time in which it was set?

Meaning of the Title – why this title, what does it mean/represent?
Often an idea is expressed through a feeling – what lies beneath the feeling?

MOOD OF THE PLAY
How does the mood start and how does it change throughout the show?

PERSONAL REACTION
What is your main take away? What did you like? What didn’t you like?

CHARACTER LIST:

Emcee - Master of Ceremonies, the host at the Kit Kat Klub
Clifford Bradshaw - An American writer traveling through Berlin.
Sally Bowles - A British Cabaret singer at the Kit Kat Klub.
Fräulein Schneider - An older woman who runs the boarding house that Cliff and Sally live in.
Herr Rudolf Schultz - A middle aged Jewish fruit shop owner who falls in love with Fräulein Schneider.
Herr Ernst Ludwig - A German man who befriends Cliff when he arrives in Berlin, later revealed to be a Nazi.
Fräulein Kost – Another of Frl. Schneider’s roomers
Kit Kat Klub Girls and Boys