

LOTTE LENYA REMEMBERS THE CABARETS

The wife of the late Kurt Weill, Lotte Lenya moved in Berlin theatrical circles until they left Germany in 1933. Spunky at seventy, she was in London recently for the opening of a production of The Three-penny Opera where she recalled the hey-day of German cabaret satire for SR assistant editor Dena Kaye.

"It was highly amusing, rather daring. I remember one night in particular. Hitler was already in power. An actor onstage raised his hand in the Nazi salute and said, 'Heil, now what was his name?' He took a big chance."

"The performers/writers were very open about criticizing—they weren't afraid of the Nazis. Nobody knew how very, very grim it would be. We thought it would pass."

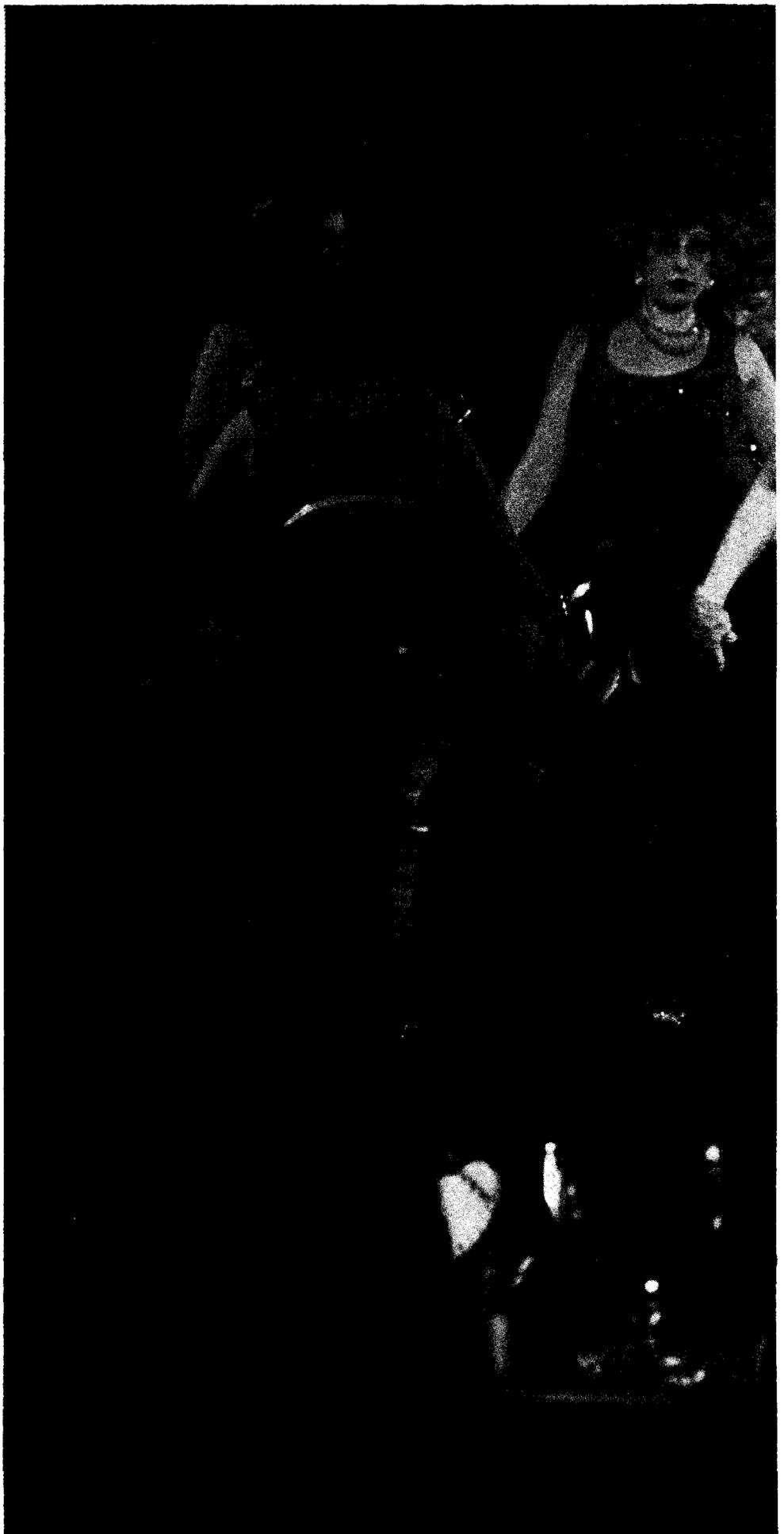
"Cabaret was in old cellars, not very elaborate. It was the equivalent of Off-Broadway. Today's garages, lofts, churches. Everybody who read the papers, who was informed, went. We all wanted to see what would be attacked. It was a combination of a satirical political column and a social gossip diary. And we all went to see the new programs. I remember a place called *Katakombe*. God, I haven't thought about that name in fifty years! Most of the performers were young. That's when you rebel."

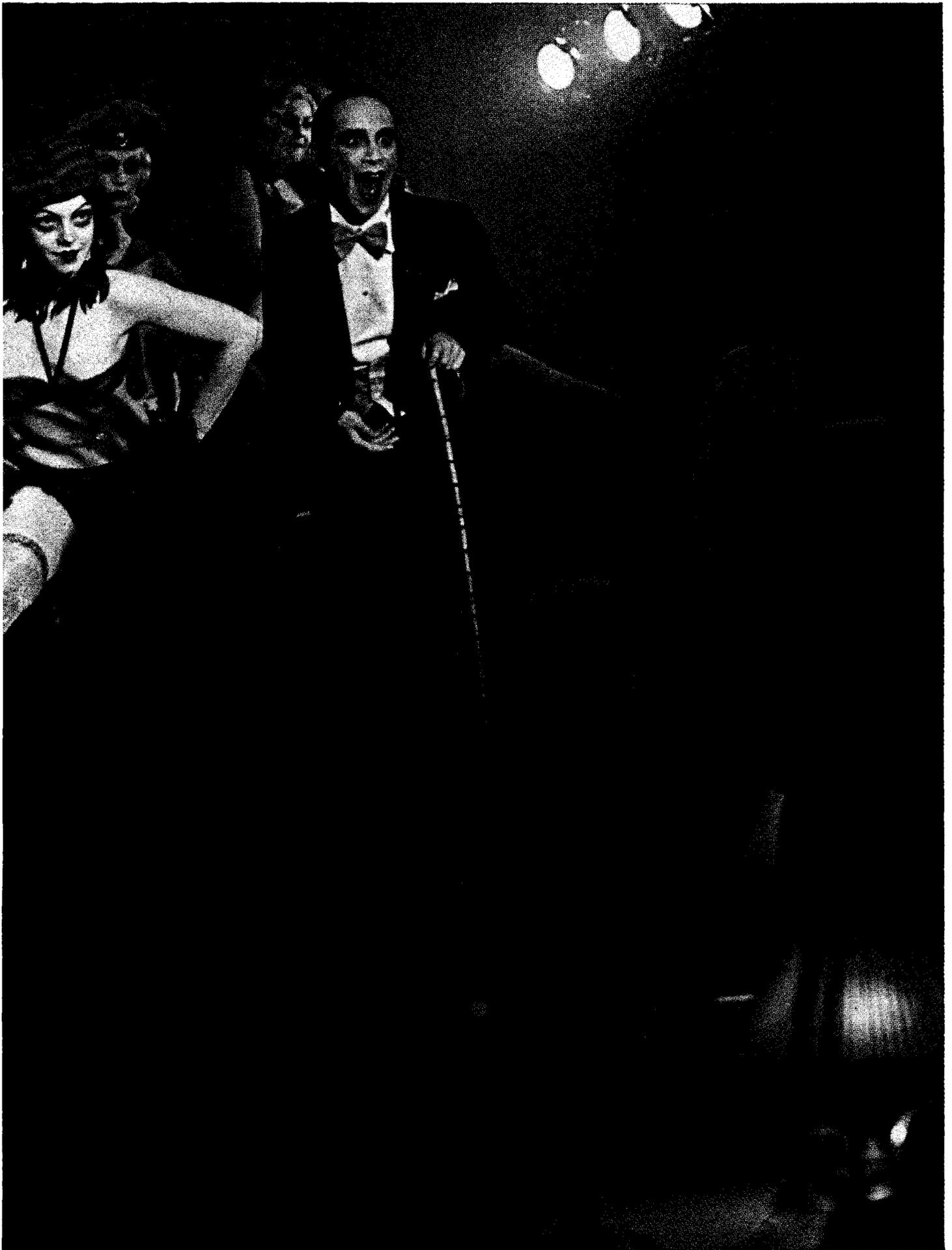
"The Broadway production of *Cabaret* was very close to the feeling of cabaret in the Thirties. The cabarets were possibly less elaborate in reality."

"The last time I was in Berlin to see a cabaret was in 1962. I found it much the same as it had been before the war. I went to a place called *Die Stachel-schweine* [The Porcupines]. They just attacked different subjects."

"I think cabaret satire is more a European than an American form. Americans have a great sense of humor, but men like Mort Sahl are sustained only for a certain time. And Bob Hope is more of an institution. I think television has taken part of the snap out of satire, because it has to appeal to more of a varied audience. In Berlin in the Thirties, the audience was presold. They knew what to expect. The audience was won over from the beginning. And it was more than just gags."

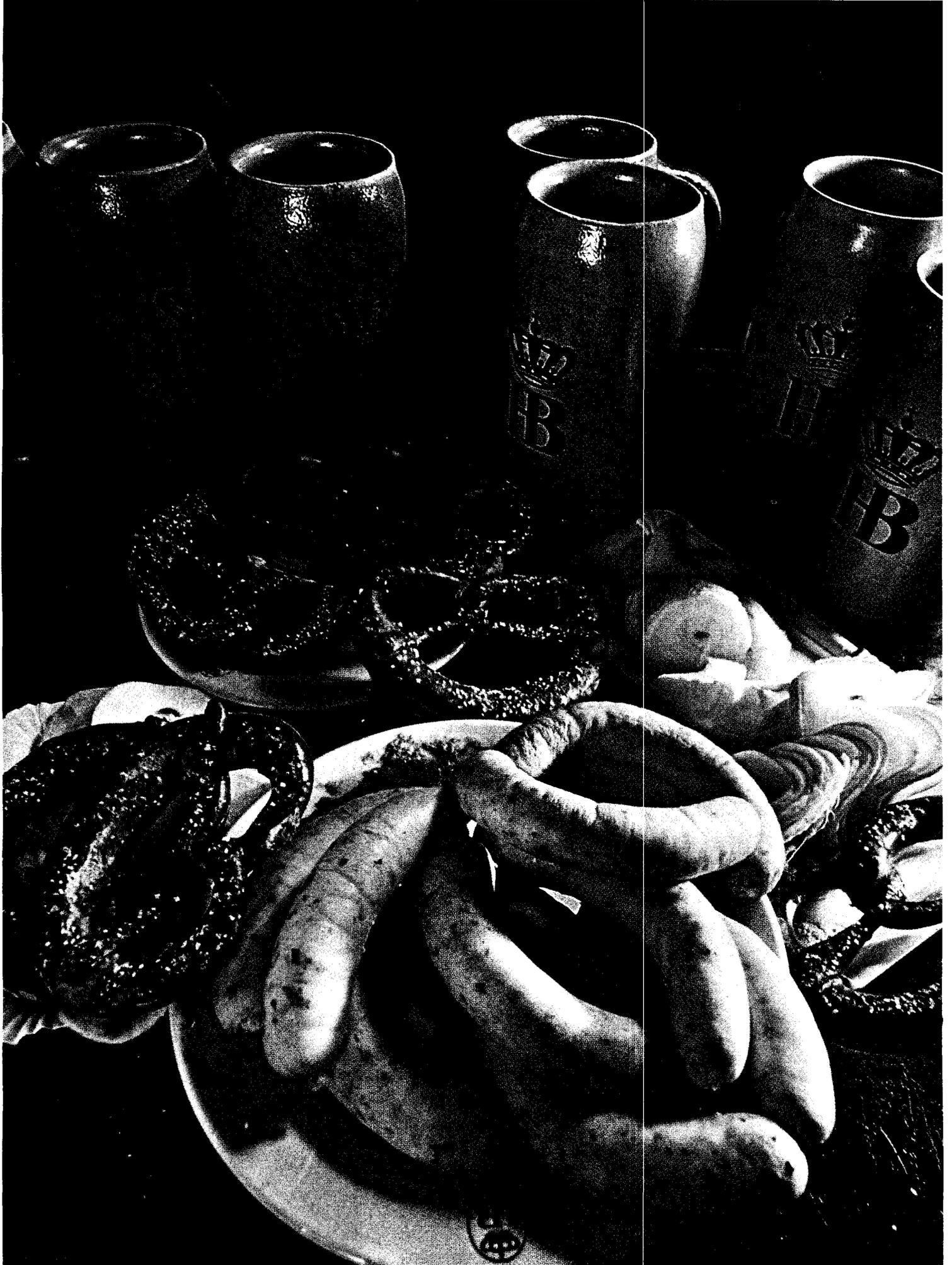
"Wouldn't it be marvelous to have a political cabaret in New York?" □





Joel Grey and dancing girls in the new film "Cabaret" evoke the smoky hues of the German Kabarett of the Thirties.

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A LOAF OF LEBERKÄSE, A JUG OF LÖWENBRÄU, AND THOU

A champagne-and-caviar
“second breakfast”
and a musical festival
to asparagus are among
German odes
to the art of eating.

To many Americans, German cooking means sauerbraten and potato pancakes, sauerkraut and sausages. The truth is that it means much more: Good German cooking can be very good, even if it doesn't approach the harmonious simplicity of bourgeois cooking in France and will never touch the supreme refinement of *la grande cuisine*; even if it doesn't have the lightheartedness of good Italian cooking. For, under the often overcast skies of Germany, people have large appetites for more robust dishes and, at its best, German cooking has character, distinction, flavor, and quite a few surprises.

It is no accident that of some 180 restaurants listed in the German version of the *Guide Michelin* none in Germany is awarded more than one star. There is justification for this, and also some arrogance. The *Michelin* is not as near perfect outside of France as in its homeland. In many cases, the one-star awards in Germany make little sense, and there are a few places that deserve more than one.

Many Germans eat five times a day. Some have a copious breakfast, with eggs, sausages, and even cheese, followed around 10 a.m. by *Gabelfrühstück*, “second breakfast”—anything from the worker's simple sandwich to caviar with champagne (*Sektfrühstück*) in high-class expense-account circles.

The *Mittagessen* (lunch) always begins with soup, clear or creamy, then

Munich's culinary specialty is Weisswurst, fluffy as a veal soufflé and packed like a sausage. Huge one-liter stein holds beer, the lifeblood of Bavaria, quaffed with wurst, pretzels, and salted white radishes. Scene was photographed in Munich's Hofbräuhaus, whose trademark appears on mugs.

meat with vegetables and potatoes, and afterward dessert; rarely more than three courses. The Germans grow almost forty different kinds of potatoes. The early spring potatoes are delicious boiled in their skins and served with fresh butter.

Around 4 p.m., there is *Kaffee*, favored by the ladies, which translates as a nicely set coffee table with weak coffee and a piece of *Kuchen* (cake), preferably surrounded by whipped cream and gossip. At night supper is often cold cuts, cheese, a glass of beer.

Contrary to a widespread misconception, sauerkraut is far from being the daily food of the German people, as the *Michelin* rightly states. The Germans' favorite vegetable is actually asparagus. The French, the Belgians, and the Dutch may be proud of their asparagus, but the *kultur*-conscious Germans even built a musical festival around the lovely *Spargel*. In Schwetzingen, near Heidelberg, people enjoy asparagus with Mozart and Rossini. Asparagus is boiled, not too soft, rather what the Italians call *al dente*. It is served with ham and melted butter, or with sauce Hollandaise, or with melted butter and fried bread crumbs, or cold on toast. In the great restaurants it is often presented ceremoniously.

Many restaurateurs complain that their guests eat too fast to be able to enjoy their food. The late Kaiser Wilhelm II was famous as a fast eater. His idea of a great banquet was eight courses in less than fifty minutes. Wonderful lobster from Helgoland or *Masthuhn*, capon stuffed with *foie gras* and truffles, was served, but just as the guests were beginning to enjoy these sublime dishes, His Majesty had finished, and, naturally, the guests' plates would be removed along with his. After a state banquet the guests were often so hungry that they would rush to a favored restaurant to have a good dinner savored in leisure.

Despite their predilection for hurried mealtimes, the Germans love decorative dining rooms. At the Adler in Bad Godesberg you are surrounded by old paintings, lace curtains, crystal chandeliers, autographs of Heine and Goethe, letters from various Kaisers. There are castle-hotels with pompous dining rooms, the walls hung with tap-

estries, and gilded candlesticks on the table. Here the border line between elegance and pretense is close. But there are also beautifully honest rathskellers where *Gemütlichkeit* is the dominating ambience; there, tables are large, and strangers join strangers after a perfunctory greeting.

Good German cooking is highly regional. The specialties of Berlin and Hamburg are quite different from those of Baden and Bavaria. Fine German cuisine is often derived from the best bourgeois dishes that you would make at home. Contrarily, the greatest French restaurants seldom serve a *blanquette de veau* or other dishes better left to the home cooks.

German cooking is rarely very subtle and rarely simple. Even good German restaurants offer something called veal fillet *nach Diplomaten-Art*, the excellent meat surrounded by a confusion of ragouts, kidneys, scrambled eggs, asparagus, and a sauce, the whole thing gratinéed with Parmesan cheese. A fine saddle of venison might arrive with almond croquettes, glazed chestnuts, Brussels sprouts, orange salad, and red currants.

In Hamburg and Bremen *Labskaus* is traditional seafarers' ragout made of beef, salt pork, salt herrings, potatoes, onions; in Westphalia they make a fine ragout, *Töttchen*, of calf's head and brains with many spices. Many restaurants offer *ragout fin*, meat, sweetbreads, veal tongue, mushrooms; or *Pichelsteiner Fleisch*, a mixture of various meats and vegetables; or *Hoppelpoppe*, diced ham or bacon, eggs, onions, potatoes; and there is always an *Eintopf* (one-pot), a stew of meats and vegetables.

When in Berlin, go to Hardtke in Meinekestrasse and eat a *Riesenbratwurst* (giant bratwurst), or *Eisbein*, which is not “iced bone” but pig's knuckles with sauerkraut and a purée of peas. Elsewhere, order the delicacy *Königsberger Klopse*, soufflé-like poached meatballs made of veal and pork, served in a light lemon-and-caper sauce with potatoes. And wherever you go, order game, a glory of German cooking—either a tender *Rehrücken* (a saddle of deer, roebuck, or doe), hare, wild boar, partridge, or pheasant.

Munich is Germany's culinary capi-