

Max Michaelis Ehrlich was born on 7 December 1892 in Berlin. He was murdered on 1st October 1944 at Auschwitz Concentration Camp.



Ehrlich began his career in the 1920s at various theatres, including leading roles in Max Reinhardt productions and revues. He appeared in 42 films, ten of which he directed, and on eight records. He wrote several books, including "From Adelbert to Zilzer" , his best-selling humorous collection of stories and anecdotes about sixty-two of his best known show business friends and colleagues.

In 1933, the National Socialists seized power and this eventually stopped Ehrlich and his other Jewish colleagues from working in Germany. As a result, he left for Vienna to appear with the Rudolf Nelson Revue. However, there too, Austrian anti-Semites interrupted the show with cries of "Jews, get out of Vienna." Consequently, the troupe left for The Netherlands, stopping en route for stage appearances in Switzerland.

In 1935, homesick for his native land, Ehrlich returned to Nazi Germany. Jewish entertainers once again were permitted to perform there but only within the framework of the Jüdischer Kulturbund (Jewish Cultural Union) and exclusively in front of Jewish audiences. Ehrlich was named director of the Kulturbund's light theatre departments. However, following the 1938 pogrom "Kristallnacht," he decided to leave Germany

definitively. Both of his farewell performances immediately sold out, so that a third presentation on 2 April 1939 was added. Here, in front of a full house of fans, calling out their affection and encouragement, Ehrlich made his final appearance in Germany.

Subsequently, he returned to the Netherlands once again and joined Willy Rosen's "Theater der Prominenten" (Theatre of Celebrities), until 1943. Following the German Invasion, Ehrlich like so many of his colleagues, was imprisoned in the Westerbork concentration camp. While at Westerbork, Willy Rosen and Erich Ziegler created "Camp Westerbork Theatre Group," with Ehrlich as Artistic Director. This cabaret troupe during its eighteen-month existence staged six major theatre productions, all within the camp's confines. A majority of the actors were famous Jewish show business personalities; prominent artists from Berlin and Vienna, such as Camilla Spira, and Kurt Gerron; or well-known Dutch performers, like Esther Philipse, Jetty Cantor, and Johnny & Jones. The group's total involvement over its life, counted 61 members, including a full team of musicians, dancers, choreographers, artists, tailors, and make-up, lighting, and other technicians, as well as stagehands. The Kommandant spared no expense, passes were issued allowing detainees to travel out of the camp to source materials.

Most of the shows, written by Willy Rosen, combined elements of revue and cabaret songs and sketches. On one occasion, the program included a revue-operetta, *Ludmilla, or Corpses Everywhere*, written by Rosen. It was a production whose theme sadly was a premonition of the actors' and other prisoners' fate. While some scenes were implicitly critical, of course, the Theatre Group at no time produced openly political cabaret or directly attacked the Nazi regime. To do so would have violated the most fundamental condition for the troupe's and its members' survival, as life in Westerbork was dominated by the persistent threat of deportation on the next transport to an unknown but deeply feared fate in the East. The Theatre Group, of necessity, limited itself to entertaining its audiences and to momentarily distracting them from the surrounding horrors. But in so doing, it also gave their captive audiences renewed hope and the courage to face an otherwise unbearable existence. It was however not without its critics amongst the detainees.

Doubtlessly, this artistic activity provided the means for everyone concerned, audiences and actors alike, to retain a small measure of humanity, to free their minds, momentarily, from the tragedy of daily life and nourish the illusion of survival.

During the summer of 1944, increasing numbers of transports carried Westerbork's prisoners and group members, to the extermination camps in the East. Of 105,205 camp inmates transported, only 2,197 survived transportation with a further 876 remaining behind in the camp when it was liberated. In the last-but-one transport to leave Westerbork, on 4 September 1944, XXIV/7 Ehrlich was number 151 on the list of victims, with 9 other members of the Cabaret. Of the group, 20 were sent first to Theresienstadt. Ehrlich and most of the Group members on the train stayed there for nearly a month but on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1944, Ehrlich and 4 others including Willy Rosen were sent to Auschwitz on train EI, Ehrlich was number 789. Ehrlich and Rosen were all gassed upon arrival. There is not any evidence to support the claim that Ehrlich was recognized upon arrival and told to tell a humorous story, before he was shot.



18 Members of the group survived the war, 12 of the cast and 7 of the backstage crew. Louis de Wijz was able to sing most of Willy's songs for Francesco Lotorro who then wrote them down, over 60 years later. Nothing remains of the scripts or music. Paper was put to other very mundane uses. A memorial concert was held at the Minerva Pavilion on May 18th 1947, shortly before the death of Erich Ziegler, entitled "Text und Musik von Willy Rosen", consisting of 26 scenes. It was performed by: Dora Paulsen, Alfons Fink, Carlo Reni and Erich Ziegler.



Darsteller, wenn nicht anders angegeben:

1926: In der Heimat, da gibt's ein Wiederseh'n!

1927: Familientag im Hause Prellstein

1927: Es zogen drei Burschen.../ Drei Seelen und ein Gedanke – Zwischentitel

1928: Mascottchen – Zwischentitel

1928: Liebfraumilch

1928: In Werder blühen die Bäume – Zwischentitel

1928: Ihr dunkler Punkt

1928: Fräulein Chauffeur – Zwischentitel

1928: Flitterwochen – Drehbuch, Darsteller

1928: Ein kleiner Vorschuß auf die Seligkeit – Drehbuch

1928: Die tolle Komteß – Drehbuch, Zwischentitel, Darsteller

1928: Die blaue Maus

1928: Die Wochenendbraut – Zwischentitel

1928: Das Haus ohne Männer – Zwischentitel

1929: Meineid

1928: Der schwarze Domino

1928: Wien, du Stadt der Lieder – Drehbuch, Darsteller

1930: Susanne macht Ordnung

1930: [Hokuspokus](#)

1930: [Die vom Rummelplatz](#)

1930: Die Marquise von Pompadour

1930: Der Tanzhusar

1930: Der Korvettenkapitän/Blaue Jungs von der Marine

1930: Der Greifer – Drehbuch

1931: Um eine Nasenlänge

1931: Kabarett-Programm Nr. 6 (Kurzfilm)

1931: Kabarett-Programm Nr. 2 (Kurzfilm)

1931: Goldblondes Mädchen, ich schenk Dir mein Herz – Ich bin ja so verliebt...

1931: Die schwebende Jungfrau

1931: Der Storch streikt  
1931: Der Schlemihl  
1931: Der Hochtourist  
1931: Schatten der Unterwelt  
1932: Wer zahlt heute noch? (Kurzfilm)  
1932: Wenn die Liebe Mode macht  
1932: Revierkrank (Kurzfilm) – Regie  
1933: Mord im Kohlenkeller (Kurzfilm) – Regie  
1933: Kaczmarek als Rosenkavalier (Kurzfilm) – Regie  
1933: Herr Direktor engagiert (Kurzfilm)  
1932: Die erste Instrukionsstunde (Kurzfilm) – Regie  
1932: Der falsche Hund (Kurzfilm) – Regie, Drehbuch, Darsteller  
1933: Hugo's Nachtarbeit (Kurzfilm) – Regie, Drehbuch

#### **Director**

- *Revierkrank* (short film, 1932)
- *Die erste Instrukionsstunde* (short film, 1932)
- *Kaczmarek als Rosenkavalier* (short film, 1932/33)
- *Hugos Nachtarbeit* (1933)

#### **Film writer**

- [\*It Attracted Three Fellows\*](#) (1928)
- [\*Honeymoon\*](#) (1928)
- [\*Miss Chauffeur\*](#) (1928)
- [\*In Werder the Trees are in Bloom\*](#) (1928)
- [\*The Weekend Bride\*](#) (1928)
- [\*The Crazy Countess\*](#) (1928)
- [\*The House Without Men\*](#) (1928)
- [\*A Small Down Payment on Bliss\*](#) (1928/29)
- [\*Mascots\*](#) (1928/29)
- [\*The Copper\*](#) (1930)
- *Hugo's Nachtarbeit* (short film, 1933)

Recordings:

[Silvesterfeier](#) Wilhelm Bendow & Max Ehrlich 1930

[Das klingt, als wenn's ein Märchen wär'](#) Max Ehrlich & Homocord-Orchester 1929

[Wer zahlt heutzutage?](#) Fritz Grünbaum & Max Ehrlich

[Die Mädis vom Chantant](#)

[Lieber Leierkastenmann](#)



### **Theatrical Apppearances**

1911 Max Reinhardt's Theater School

1912-1913 Deutsches Theater Berlin

Romeo und Julia

Hamlet

Der lebende Leichnam

Molière's George Dandin

1913-1914 Märkisches Wandertheater

1914/1915 Theater des Neuen Freien Bühne Berlin

1915-1920 Breslauer Schauspielhaus, Breslau

1919 Liebichkabarett, Breslau

1920 Reinhardt Deutsches Theater Berlin - Offenbach's Schöner Helena

Theater am Nollendorfplatz - Jettchen Gebert

Berliner Staatsoper - Sidney Jones' Geisha

Renaissance Theater, Berlin - Die Wunder-Bar

Lessing Theater, Berlin - Dreimal Hochzeit

1922 Bonbonniere, Zurich

Simpl, Vienna

1924 Hermann-Haller-Revue Theater am Admiralspalast, Berlin - Noch und Noch

1925 Hermann-Haller-Revue Theater am Admiralspalast, Berlin - Achtung!

Hermann-Haller-Revue Theater am Admiralspalast, Berlin - Immer feste druff

1926 Charlott Casino, Berlin

Tiergartenhof, Berlin

1927 Hermann-Haller-Revue - Wann und wo

1928 Lustspielhaus, Berlin

Kabarett der Komiker, Berlin - Kitty Macht Karriere

1929 Wintergarten, Berlin

Matinee der Prominenten

1929 Max Reinhardt Production - Von Monmarte zum Montklamott

1930 Rudolf Nelson Revue - Der rote Faden

1931 Kabarettabend, Berlin

- Winterhilfe Veranstaltung, Berlin  
Korso Kabarett - "Deutschlands führendes Kabarett"
- 1932 Kabarett der Komiker, Berlin  
Bendows Bunte Bühne  
Wintergarten, Berlin - Fünf im Käsewagen
- 1933 Prague  
Karlsbad - Rudolf Nelson Revue:  
Rudolf Nelson Revue, Ronacher Theater, Vienna (Closed)  
Rudolf Nelson Revue, Zurich
- 1934 Rudolf Nelson Revue, Louis David's Leidscheplein Theater, Amsterdam  
1000 Takte Nelson  
Louis David's Leidscheplein Theater, Amsterdam - Etwas für Sie  
Kurhaus-Cabaret Scheveningen  
Rudolf Nelson Revue, Scheveningen
- 1935 Yugoslavia

### **Jüdischer Kulturbund:**

- 1935 Berliner Theater - Kleiner Faust, was nun?  
Kleinkunst-Abend  
Spiel im Schloss  
Café Leon, Lehniner Platz, Berlin  
Kunterbunt (Willy Rosen)  
Herr Direktor-bitte Vorschuss (Willy Rosen)
- 1936 Brüdervereinshaus, Berlin - Alles dreht sich um Helena  
Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Düsseldorf  
Kleinkunsthöhne Café Leon, Lehniner Platz, Berlin  
Hamburg Jüdischer Kulturbund - Meine Schwester und ich  
Kleinkunsthöhne Schumann-Saal, Lützowstrasse, Berlin -Vorhang Auf! (Willy Rosen)  
Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Hamburg - Vorhang Auf!



- 1937 Kleinkunsthöhne Schumann-Saal, Lützwowstrasse, Berlin - Essig und Öl (Willy Rosen)  
 Kulturbund Chemnitz - Heiterer Abend  
 Kleinkunsthöhne Logenhaus, Kleiststrasse, Berlin - Bitte einsteigen! (Willy Rosen)  
 Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Hamburg - Herr Direktor-bitte Vorschuss  
 Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Rhein-Ruhr - Heiterer Abend  
 Bruedervereinsthaus Kurfuerstenstrasse - Bitte einsteigen!  
 Kleinkunsthöhne im neuen Kulturbundsaal, Kommandantenstrasse, Berlin - Von Romeo bis Streichquartett
- 1938 Kleinkunsthöhne Kulturbundsaal, Kommandantenstrasse, Berlin - Warum lügst du Cherie?  
 Theater der Jüdschen Schulen, Berlin - Das Extemporale
- 1938 Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Hamburg - Von Romeo bis Streichquartett  
 Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Berlin - Die Schöne Helena  
 Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Berlin - Drei Einakten Courtelines  
 Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Berlin - Arm wie eine Kirchenmaus  
 Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Rhein-Ruhr - Arm wie eine Kirchenmaus  
 Kleinkunsthöhne Kulturbundsaal, Kommandantenstrasse, Berlin - Gemischtes Kompott (Willy Rosen)
- 1939 Jüdischer Kulturbund (Kubu), Berlin - Shakespeares, Wintermärchen  
 Kulturbundtheater, Berlin - Revue der Revuen (Three final performances)  
 Willy Rosen's Prominenten Cabaret, Spa Season in Scheveningen - Volle kracht vooruit  
 Willy Rosen's Prominenten Cabaret, Summer Season in the Lutine Palace, Scheveningen - 1000 Worte Humor or Juist verschenen  
 Willy Rosen's Prominenten Cabaret, Summer Season in the Lutine Palace, Scheveningen - Melodie des Lachens  
 Willy Rosen's Prominenten Cabaret, Summer Season in the Lutine Palace, Scheveningen - Tempo! Tempo!  
 Willy Rosen's Prominenten Cabaret, Summer Season in the Lutine Palace, Scheveningen - Scheveningen Lacht
- 1941 De Kamerspielers – Muzieklyceum Alb. Hahnplantsoen 2-4, Amsterdam  
 Hun Tweede Cabaret-Programma

Willy Rosen's Prominenten Cabaret, Amsterdam Hollandsche Schouwburg,  
Amsterdam - Spiel im Schloss

Willy Rosen's Prominenten Cabaret Hollandsche Schouwburg, Amsterdam -  
Die Fee

Willy Rosen-Revue Theater van der Lach, Amsterdam - Luna-Park

Willy Rosen-Revue Theater van der Lach, Amsterdam - Confetti

Theater van der Lach, Amsterdam - Grootte Kinderrevue

1942 Willy Rosen-Revue Theater van der Lach, Amsterdam Allemal op de fiets!

Willy Rosen-Revue Theater van der Lach, Amsterdam Carnaval

Willy Rosen Presenteert een Operette Theater van der Lach, Amsterdam - De  
Kuische Suzanna

Rudolf Nelson Revue - Joodsche Schouwburg, Amsterdam - Sensatie!

Joodsche Kleinkunst Ensemble, Amsterdam Joodsche Schouwburg,  
Amsterdam - Vuurwerk

Joodsche Kleinkunst Ensemble, Amsterdam Joodsche Schouwburg,  
Amsterdam - Dat Smaakt

### **Westerbork Concentration Camp:**

July-August 1943 Bunter Abend (1)

September 1943 Humor und Melodie

October 1943 Bravo! Da Capo

November 1943 Bunter Abend (2)

April 1944 Bunter Abend (3)

June 1944 Total Verrückt

