

## A LITTLE BABY'S HEAVEN

Oasis of Happiness in the City of Despair

### WHO WILL SAVE THE LITTLE ONES?

By Our Special Correspondent in Vienna

During the last mile of my walk to the Home for Infants and Mothers, I passed dozens of weary wood-carriers trudging back to Vienna, bent under loads of wood that seemed far beyond their strength.

It was a pitiful sight—a purgatory of weariness and pain. And when I entered into the beautiful white Home for Infants, I felt as if I had passed from purgatory into paradise. Here everything was spotless and fresh; one might hunt all day to find a single speck of dust, and before Dr. Moll, the archangel who presides over this paradise, took me round, he made me don a white coat.

#### Indoors and Out

In beautiful little wards I saw a hundred happy little babies. Though many of them were ill, and some were only recovering from starvation, they were so warm and comfortable, and so well looked after by kind nurses, that during the whole round I never heard a cry or a whimper. When the babies required special warmth little frames were put over them and electric lamps in the frames were lit to give the necessary heat. What a contrast! Outside in the muddy streets, half-starved, cold, tired men and women bowed under cruel burdens; inside all was light and sweetness and warmth.

Not only were the happy babies tended by kind and specially trained nurses, not only had they a famous doctor to treat

them, but thirty of them had their own mothers with them in the home. If ever I am born again, and have a second babyhood, I hope that some kind person will send me to Dr. Moll's home, and that Dr. Moll will still be there.

#### Dr. Moll's Big Family

Most of the babies are the children of poor parents—perhaps the children of the men and women I saw in the street—and they are taken free or for a nominal sum; but a few are children of people comparatively well-off. One was pointed out to me as the grand-daughter of a former mayor of Vienna.

After we had finished our round, Dr. Moll showed me pictures of various children who had come in as piteous spectacles, and had, under treatment, become fine, healthy babies.

Not only does Dr. Moll look after all these happy babies, but in another part of the building he gives advice to all the mothers who bring babies to him. I was lucky enough to see that part of his work too. The babies are weighed and carefully examined, and the mothers are told exactly what to do. Alas! most of the babies were very thin and ill-looking, and some of them had rickets, and most of the mothers were emaciated, for only the very rich can get enough to eat in Vienna now, when even an egg costs five to eight shillings.

It seems very hard that, just when a mother should be full of happiness in the possession of a baby, she should have to face starvation, and should have not only to starve herself, but to see her child starve.

Hunger, day after day, week after week, month after month; must be a terrible thing to face, and even more terrible must it be to see a beautiful baby, wasting away. The women were kindly, patient, and refined, and were plainly devoted to the babies.

# felicitas

Written & Performed by

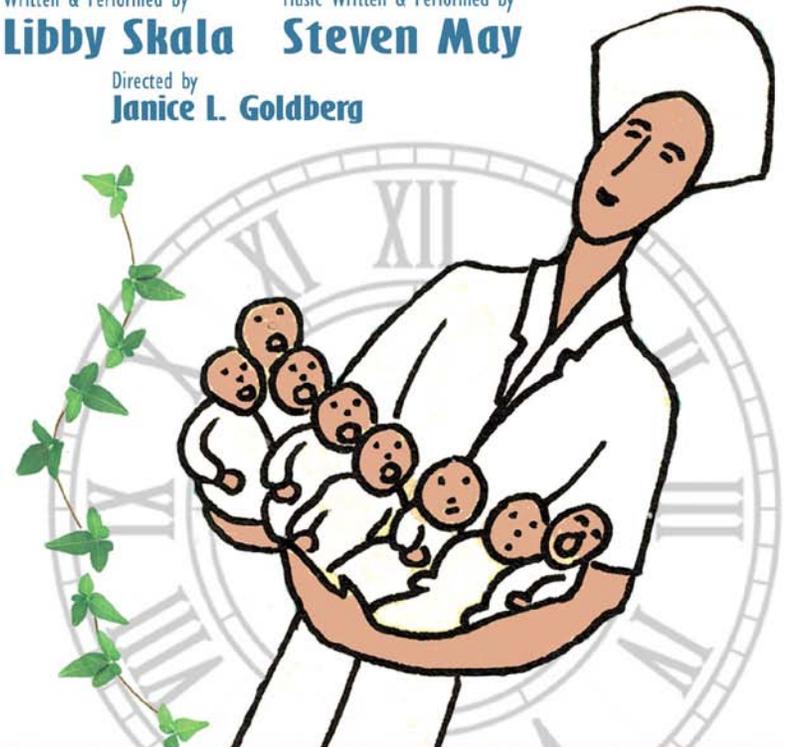
**Libby Skala**

Music Written & Performed by

**Steven May**

Directed by

**Janice L. Goldberg**



True story of a gifted Austrian nurse who escapes the Third Reich to nurture order in American society one baby at a time...

*FELICITAS* was developed in part through The Field's Artward Bound residency program, Fieldwork and through Artistic New Directions' development program Anything Goes.

[www.felicitas.libbyskala.com](http://www.felicitas.libbyskala.com)

## PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES

Felicitas Sofer was my great aunt Lizi and I am "one of her babies." Her nursing territory included my NJ hometown, where she attended my home birth and squarely oriented me to my new surroundings. As I grew up, her professional devotion meant I rarely saw her. When I did, she never spoke about her work. After she was gone, I was invited to perform *Lilia!* on Nantucket and discovered that my hostess and sponsor, Jean Burgdorff, had been one of the mothers Lizi served as baby nurse. "Write a show about Lizi!" Jean urged. The seed was planted. "With what material?" I wondered. "Is a baby nurse stage-worthy?" Interviews ensued with family, friends and mothers she'd worked with who assured me *she* most certainly was. I owe them endless thanks for the Lizi who emerged and I fell in love with.

– Libby Skala

## BIOS

**LIBBY SKALA** (Playwright / Performer) has charmed audiences internationally with critically-acclaimed solo plays: *Lilia!*, about her Oscar-nominated actress grandmother Lilia Skala, *A Time to Dance*, about her great aunt Elizabeth Polk, an award-winning dance therapy pioneer, and now *Felicitas*, about Lizi, the youngest of the three sisters, a tough-love baby nurse. *Lilia!* ran Off-Broadway, produced by Mirror Repertory Co at the Arclight Theatre, *A Time to Dance* won "Best Solo Performer Award" at The London Fringe Festival. All three shows have toured North America and Europe. Libby's newest play *Irena Sandler: Rescuing the Rescuer* premiered at the London Fringe Festival. Other stage work includes Viola in St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival's *Twelfth Night* and appearing in the film *Birth* with Nicole Kidman. Libby is a graduate of Oberlin College and is an award recipient of the Pandella Cultural Fund in Switzerland. [www.LibbySkala.com](http://www.LibbySkala.com)

**STEVE MAY** (Composer/Musician) has been playing music since the tender age of three, when he made his first make-shift violin out of a ruler taped to a cereal box in his native Kentucky. His background includes classical, country, Celtic, bluegrass, folk, jazz, and Brazilian music. On fiddle, he alternates between an acoustic and an electric 7-string with the range of violin, viola and cello. On the mandolin, he alternates between an acoustic and baritone electric. That versatility allows him to switch seamlessly between traditional sounds and

crunchy rock and hip hop grooves. His interest in various musical traditions has led him to a variety of recording and performing projects. Credits include: Erica Sunshine Lee; Beltaine's Fire; Steve Ferguson and Midwest Creole Ensemble; The Clearing; Three at Last; and Lisa Redfern. [www.SMay.net](http://www.SMay.net)

**JANICE L. GOLDBERG** (Director) was recently awarded The Kennedy Center Gold Medallion Award for her work with new plays. She has directed over 75 new works, uptown and down, across the country, from university to Off-Broadway. Recent: *Speedball* at the Kennedy Center, *The Last Frontier Theatre Conference* in Alaska, *The Stop Gun Violence Now Theater Festival*, *Autumn Run* (also co-author) and *These Shining Lives* at Adelphi University. For FringeNYC she directed *That Dorothy Parker* and *After Anne Frank* (both award winners and selected for Fringe Encores) and *The Gathering Room*. She directed the Off-Broadway premiere of *Rose Colored Glass*, which she co-authored and is published by Samuel French, Inc. For Artistic New Directions: *The Rubber Room*, *Human Resources*, many *Eclectic Shorts* and *Go Solos!* She serves as Artistic Co-Director of Artistic New Directions. [www.JaniceLGoldberg.com](http://www.JaniceLGoldberg.com)

**STEPHEN STEVO ARNOCY** (Video Design) is a freelance media designer native to New York City. He attended NYU (TSOA '04-'08) He is an associate video designer at Imaginary Media Artists and the company video designer for The Dance Cartel. Recently he's worked with: Stein|Holum Project, Fresh Ground Pepper, Ping Chong Company, Liz Lerman, Sleep No More, and Maya Ciarrocchi. His work has been seen in NYMF (New York Musical Festival), and at 3LD, Theater Row, XL Nightclub, Kent 285, The Living Theater, The Bushwick Starr, and Ars Nova. His video design for *BIO-HAZARD: A Relative Comedy* starring Sarah Elizabeth Greer won the 2013 United Solo Festival Award for BEST MULTIMEDIA.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO:

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