

INSIDE OUT

A DEEP DIVE FOR PATRONS

THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH



Illustration by Kyle Mullins

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INSIDE OUT

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The Happiest Man on Earth

By **Mark St. Germain**

Based on the Memoir by **Eddie Jaku**

Directed by **Ron Lagomarsino**

Starring **Kenneth Tigar**

SEP 19 – NOV 2

SINGLETON THEATRE

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SYNOPSIS

This one-man play follows Holocaust survivor Eddie Jaku as he recounts his extraordinary life story to an audience in a theater in Australia. Born Abraham “Adi” Jakubowicz in Leipzig, Germany, Eddie grows up in a loving Jewish family. His idyllic childhood is shattered when the Nazis rise to power. Expelled from school for being Jewish, Eddie assumes a false identity to continue his education in engineering. Despite his academic success, a visit home during Kristallnacht (November 9–10, 1938, when German Nazis and sympathizers attacked Jewish persons and property) leads to his arrest and internment in Buchenwald (one of the biggest of the Nazi concentration camps established in Germany).

Eddie’s survival is marked by ingenuity, resilience, and the kindness of others. He escapes once, only to be recaptured and eventually deported to Auschwitz with his parents. There, he is separated from his mother

and later learns both parents were murdered. Enduring unimaginable cruelty, Eddie survives multiple brushes with death, including near-executions and the brutal Death March.

Throughout his ordeal, Eddie finds strength in friendship—especially with fellow prisoner Kurt—and in his engineering skills, which make him “economically indispensable.” After escaping again and being liberated by American forces, Eddie rebuilds his life in Belgium, where he reunites with Kurt and meets Flore, the woman who becomes his wife.

Eventually, Eddie and Flore emigrate to Australia, where they raise a family and build a successful life. Despite the horrors he endured, Eddie chooses happiness, believing it to be a conscious decision. He dedicates his life to sharing his story, honoring the memory of those lost, and spreading a message of hope, resilience, and the enduring power of love and family.

AUTHOR, PLAYWRIGHT, & DIRECTOR BIOS

Eddie Jaku, author of *The Happiest Man on Earth: The Beautiful Life of an Auschwitz Survivor*
April 14, 1920 – October 12, 2021

Eddie Jaku was born Abraham Jakubowicz in Germany in 1920. In World War II, Eddie was imprisoned in Buchenwald and Auschwitz concentration camps. In 1945, he was sent on a “death march” but escaped. Finally, he was rescued by Allied soldiers. In 1950, he moved with family to Australia where he lived for over 60 years. Eddie was married to his wife Flore for 75 years, and they had two sons, four grandchildren and five great grandchildren. In 2013, Jaku was honored with the Medal of the Order of Australia. He died peacefully in October 2021, at the age of 101.

Mark St. Germain, playwright, *The Happiest Man on Earth*

Mark St. Germain has written the plays *Freud’s Last Session* (Off Broadway Alliance Award), *Camping with Henry and Tom* (Outer Critics Circle Award and Lucille Lortel Award), *Forgiving Typhoid Mary* (Time magazine’s “Year’s Ten Best”) and *Becoming Dr. Ruth*, the story of Dr. Ruth Westheimer. He’s written *Eleanor*, starring Harriet Harris, and *Relativity*, starring Mike Nussbaum, as well as the plays *Best of Enemies*, *Ears on a Beatle*, *Out of Gas on Lover’s Leap* and *Forgiveness*. His play *Magdalene* was just seen at the Chester Theater and the Contemporary American Theater Festival. *The Happiest Man on Earth* was recently produced in London and will be seen at the Denver Center Theatre Company this Fall. With Randy Courts, he has written the musicals *The Gifts of the Magi*, *Johnny Pye and the Foolkiller*, and *Jack’s Holiday*. Mark’s musical, *Stand by Your Man*, *The Tammy Wynette Story*, was created for Nashville’s Ryman Theater. With John Markus he wrote the comedy with music, *The Fabulous Lipitones*, and with Josh Bergasse co-created the dance musical, *A Crossing*. Great Barrington Public Theater premiered his plays *Dad* and *Public Speaking 101*. Mark wrote the screenplay for the film adaptation of *Freud’s Last Session*, which starred Anthony Hopkins and Matthew Goode. He co-wrote the screenplay for Carroll Ballard’s Warner Brothers film, *Duma*. His play, *The God Commitee*, has been made into a film with the same name. He directed and produced the documentary *MY DOG, An Unconditional Love Story*,

featuring Richard Gere and Glenn Close among others. Television credits include “The Cosby Show” and Dick Wolf’s “Crime and Punishment.” His books include the comedic memoir “Walking Evil” and the thriller, “The Mirror Man.” He is a member of the Dramatists Guild, the Writer’s Guild East and an Associate Artist at the Barrington Stage Company. Barrington Stage named their second stage “The St. Germain Stage.”

Ron Lagomarsino, Director

Ron Lagomarsino most recently directed *The Happiest Man on Earth* at London’s Southwark Playhouse, following the staging of its world premiere at Barrington Stage Company (multiple Berkshire Theater Critics Awards, including Best Director; Broadway World Award). He helmed the world premieres of Alfred Uhry’s *Driving Miss Daisy* (Drama Desk Award nomination, Pulitzer Prize) and *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* (Tony Award for Best Play, Pulitzer finalist). The national tour of *Driving Miss Daisy* (Helen Hayes nomination) starred Julie Harris and Brock Peters, and Dame Wendy Hiller led the West End cast. For his productions of *Daisy*, Christopher Durang’s *Laughing Wild*, and Timothy Mason’s *Only You* he received the Outer Critics Circle Award. He directed Joseph Dougherty’s Chester Bailey at Irish Repertory Theater in New York (Outer Critics Award nomination for Outstanding Play) following its acclaimed run at Barrington Stage (NY Times Critics Pick; multiple BTC Awards, including Best Director) and its world premiere at A.C.T. in San Francisco (multiple Theater Bay Area Awards including Best New Play, Best Production). Other premieres include works by John Patrick Shanley, Beth Henley, Jane Anderson (Ovation nomination for *Looking for Normal*), and Joseph Dougherty’s Digby (Drama Desk nomination). On Broadway, Ron directed the Joseph Dougherty/Lynn Ahrens/Stephen Flaherty musical *My Favorite Year*. His own play *Jerome* was a finalist at the Eugene O’Neill National Playwrights Conference and twice workshopped at NY Stage & Film. His extensive television credits include the pilots of David E. Kelley’s Emmy-Winning “Picket Fences” (Directors Guild of America Award) and “Homefront” (Emmy Award nomination). Favorite episodic work includes

“thirtysomething,” “My So-Called Life,” “Ally McBeal,” and “Pretty Little Liars.” Ron served as Co-Executive Director of “Ravenswood,” the spin-off of “Pretty Little Liars.” Movies for TV include the Hallmark Hall of Fame *My Sister’s Keeper*, starring Kathy Bates and Lynn Redgrave (National Association for Mental Illness Media Award for Direction). The recipient of a National

Bios appeared in Applause magazine.

Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, Ron has served as Resident Director of Hartford Stage Company and Associate Artistic Director of Berkshire Theater Festival. A native San Franciscan, he is a graduate of Santa Clara University (valedictorian) and New York University School of the Arts.

DIRECTOR’S NOTE

Don’t walk behind me, I may not lead.
Don’t walk in front of me, I may not follow.
Just walk beside and be my friend.

—Anonymous

So Eddie Jaku begins his best-selling memoir, *The Happiest Man on Earth*, published when he was 100 years old, just a year before he passed away.

Why do we need another story of the Holocaust? Haven’t we heard enough? As the last of the survivors are fast dwindling in number — and with antisemitism on the rise throughout the world, including Denver’s own backyard — these stories are as vital and relevant as never before. The well of human experience runs deep; it will never run dry.

The life story of Eddie Jaku is unique. It is harrowing, it is horrific, but it is also ineffably moving and ultimately an inspiration. He is the unlikely of heroes, but a hero is indeed what he is. When playwright Mark St. Germain sent me the first draft of his adaptation, I was gobsmacked. Can this all be true? How could anyone survive what he endured? I bought the book and devoured it as well. I decided it must all be true because you can’t make this sh*t up.

At its heart the play is about survival and the indomitability of the human spirit. “Why go on?” Eddie

asks, in one of his darkest moments. On a day-to-day basis, everyone’s life can be hard enough, but when faced with such unimaginable horrors as Eddie faces during WWII, where would we possibly find the will to go on? While many would rely on their faith, others may ask, what kind of a God allows such evil to exist?

We have only to look at the state of the world to grasp the darkness mankind is capable of. You barely need to scratch the surface to discover that qualities such as character, decency, and compassion have fallen out of favor in our politics, our civic life. Morality and integrity — and absolute truth — are all relative values in certain quarters. And, with apologies to Aristotle, human nature abhors a vacuum. Fill in the blanks to suit your needs.

Not so for Eddie Jaku. He concludes his memoir, “Never give up hope. It is never too late to be kind, polite, and a loving human being.” Coming from anyone, that’s a message to be taken, deeply, to heart. Coming from a man who has seen what Eddie Jaku has seen, it is nothing short of miraculous. And a beacon of light for us all.

Ron Lagomarsino
Director

September 2025

A CHARACTER LIST

Reprinted with permission of Barrington Stage Company

Although *The Happiest Man on Earth* is a one-person play, there are several characters introduced and even played by Kenneth Tigar. Here is a list of characters that appear during the performance.

EDDIE JAKU (1920-2021) Our protagonist was born Abraham Jakubowicz in Leipzig, Germany. Jaku is a Holocaust survivor who dedicated his life to promoting kindness, tolerance and resilience. Jaku published his autobiography *The Happiest Man on Earth* at the age of 100 and passed away in 2021 at the age of 101.

FLORE MOLHO (1923-2022) Eddie’s wife who he met after being liberated from the Nazis. She had been transported to France by the Belgian resistance but returned to Brussels after the war.

ISIDORE An immigrant from Poland and Eddie Jaku’s father.

LINA Eddie Jaku’s mother.

LULU Eddie’s dachshund

HELMUT HOER An engineering student, and Eddie’s only friend at Jeter and Scheerer Engineering Academy.

DR. MENGELE The Nazi doctor at Auschwitz extermination camp (1943-45) who selected prisoners for execution in the gas chambers and conducted medical experiments on inmates as part of pseudoscientific racial studies.

KURT HIRSCHFELD Eddie’s friend at Auschwitz, whom he is eventually reunited with after the war.

PROFESSOR NEUBERT A neurosurgeon, who offered Eddie a job manufacturing the specialized operating tables used in neurosurgery.

WILHELM KRAUSS A man who worked delivering drums of food to prisoners at the factory.

DR. KINDERMAN A prisoner in Block 29 at Auschwitz who helps remove the bullet from Eddie after he has been shot.

SS HAUPTSCHARFÜHRER The hangman of Buchenwald

NURSE EMMA An American nurse who attends to Eddie once he is liberated. Eddie had to be treated for Cholera and Typhoid.

SOLO SHOWS

By Moira O'Sullivan, Literary and Artistic Coordinator, Barrington Stage Company

The Happiest Man on Earth is a great example of a solo show, or storytelling with only one person commanding the stage, recounting his experiences for the audience. Solo shows are their own special challenge but offer a lot of exciting possibilities. When creating a one-person show, the writer must consider how to keep it interesting for the audience, who may be used to seeing dialogue between multiple characters and watching the story unfold from the outside looking in. In *Happiest Man*, the main character speaks directly to the audience, inviting them to share in his memories. This makes the experience feel intimate and personal and makes it easy to develop empathy with the character.

The technical design of a solo show can help bring the story to life. In this play, the scenic designer chose to create a set that could transform into many different locations. By using wooden planks on the walls and a single basic chair, table, and bench, the actor could use his physicality and movement to make us imagine all the places he goes in the story. For a play like *Happiest Man*, which travels through many countries, cities, and buildings, this kind of set is perfect for sparking the audience's imagination.

What aids this even more is the lighting design. The cracks between wooden planks on the walls allow different colored lights to shine through, which, when combined with varying brightness and movement, can create the illusion of a train passing in the night or a building catching fire. There are also many different colored lights used throughout to set the mood of a specific scene; blue lights for a sad, lonely moment, or bright amber for a moment of joy or hope. Lighting

can transform a set and help create the suggestion of specific places.

The last key element to a one-man show like this is the sound design. As the actor brings the audience inside his memories, there are sound effects that make it feel more real, like gunshots or radio announcements. These realistic sound cues, along with some orchestrated music, can underscore the story being told so that we can dive even deeper into the experience of really being there.

As the actor playing Eddie recounts his experience, he goes in and out of speaking directly to the audience (also known as direct address) and speaking as some of the characters he encounters (jumping in with lines spoken by his father or his friend at the camp). To make sure that these moments are clear to the audience, the performer uses different voices (cadence, pitch, or accents) as well as physicalities (the way they stand, their hand gestures). Everyone has their own ways of behaving, and being as specific about those small details as possible helps the actor to switch characters moment to moment and helps viewers understand who he is playing at any given time.

While extremely challenging, solo shows offer a new way to interact with a story. In *Happiest Man*, writing it for one performer made it possible to tell a story that spans years and miles all while in the same room. As you watch, consider what elements especially transported you, and which moments made you feel like you were really there with Eddie.

A TIMELINE

Historical Timeline. Reprinted with permission of Barrington Stage Company

Important dates and events through Eddie Jaku's life.

1920-1933

- 1920 – Eddie Jaku born Leipzig, Germany Abraham Salomon Jakubowicz; 14 April 1920
- 1933 – Hitler came to power. Jaku is kicked out of school in Leipzig

1934-1938

- Attends Jeter and Shearer, an engineering academy, in Tuttlingen while assuming the identity of a gentile, Walter Schleif.
- November 9, 1938. After graduating from school with First Honors, Eddie returns home to encounter Kristallnacht and is taken by the Nazis and sent to Buchenwald.

1939-1940

- Father is ordered to take Eddie to an aeronautical factory in Dessau, but instead they attempt to escape to Brussels. During the attempt to escape, Eddie is separated from his father.
- May of 1940, Germany invaded Belgium. Eddie arrives in Dunkirk in an attempt to escape but is unable to board a ship to England. He walks for 2 and a half months from sunup to sundown to the South of France.

1941-1943

- In Lyon, he is arrested and put on a train to Auschwitz. He steals engineering tools and is able to use them to escape the train car and jump the train. Once free from the train, he jumps other trains back to Brussels where he is reunited with his parents.
- Winter of 1943, Jaku's apartment is raided by the Belgian police. He was moved with his parents to a transit camp in Malines, where they stayed for months until they rounded up 1500 Jews for deportation. He was again sent to Auschwitz, where his parents are killed and Eddie meets Dr. Mengele.

1943-1944

Eddie obtains work at the IG Farben Factory and makes a friend, Wilhelm Krauss, who helps him escape.

1944-1945

After escaping, Eddie is shot and ends up sneaking back into Auschwitz where he is treated for his bullet wound by fellow prisoner, Dr. Kinderman.

1945

- January 18, 1945, Eddie is part of the evacuation of Auschwitz and the Death March. Upon reaching the city of Gleiwitz, the prisoners were divided up and he and Kurt were separated.
- Eddie is loaded onto a train to Buchenwald but eventually escapes the Death March and evades capture. Eventually he is found by an American tank and rescued.
- May 9, 1945 in Berlin, the German High Command signed the acts of unconditional surrender of the German Armed Forces.

Beyond 1945

- After the liberation, Eddie sets off on foot for Belgium looking for any remaining family. He is reunited with his friend Kurt and meets his future wife Flore and has his first child.
- In 1950, he emigrates to Australia where he passed away in October 2021

GLOSSARY

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ADOLF HITLER, also known as Der Führer (German: "The Leader"), was the leader of Germany's Nazi Party, and one of the most powerful and notorious dictators of the 20th century. Hitler took absolute power in Germany by 1933. Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939 led to the outbreak of World War II, and by 1941, Nazi forces had used vicious "blitzkrieg" military tactics to occupy much of Europe. Hitler was anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish), racist and promoted the idea of ethnic purity, which he then used to justify the genocide of approximately 11 million people deemed racially inferior, including 6 million Jews.

ALLIED POWERS, also called Allies, were the countries allied in opposition to the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey) in World War I or to the Axis powers (Germany, Italy, and Japan) in World War II. The major Allied powers in World War I were Great Britain (and the British Empire), France, and the Russian Empire. In World War II the chief Allied powers were Great Britain, France (except during the German occupation, 1940–44), the Soviet Union, the United States, and China.

APTITUDE TEST is designed to assess what a person is capable of doing or to predict what a person is able to learn or do given the right education and instruction. It was used to predict or steer people towards certain careers or occupations.

AUSCHWITZ was Nazi Germany's largest concentration and extermination camp. Located in southern Poland, Auschwitz was actually three camps in one: a prison camp, an extermination camp, and a slave-labor camp. As the most lethal of the Nazi extermination camps, between 1.1 and 1.5 million people died at Auschwitz; 90 percent of them were Jews.

AUSCHWITZ TATTOO The numbered tattoos that have today become an identifying mark of Holocaust survivors originated in Auschwitz, the largest Nazi concentration camp in Europe. There, incoming prisoners went through the infamous selection (selection process). An SS officer would sort the prisoners into two lines: those sent to the right were immediately killed in the gas chambers, those sent to the left were put to work in the forced labor camps. After their heads were shaved and their personal possessions removed, the prisoners were officially registered by being given a numerical tattoo on the inner forearm. These tattoos were just one of the ways in which the Nazis dehumanized their prisoners. Despite the perception that all Holocaust prisoners were given tattoos, it was only the prisoners of Auschwitz after 1941 who were branded this way.

BAYONET is a knife, dagger, sword, or spike-shaped weapon designed to fit on the end of the muzzle of a rifle, carbine, musket or similar firearm, allowing it to be used as a spear-like weapon.

BUCHENWALD was one of the biggest of the Nazi concentration camps established on German soil. Its name means "beech forest" in German, and it stood on a wooded hill about 4.5 miles (7 km) northwest of Weimar, Germany. Set up in 1937, it initially housed political prisoners and other targeted groups, including Jews.

CHOLERA is an acute diarrheal illness caused by infection of the intestine with *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria. People can get sick when they swallow food or water contaminated with *cholerae* bacteria. The infection is often mild or without symptoms, but can sometimes be severe and life-threatening

CONCENTRATION CAMPS are an internment center for political prisoners and members of national or minority groups confined for reasons of state security, exploitation, or punishment, usually by executive decree or military order. Persons are placed in such camps often on the basis of identification with a particular ethnic or political group. The first German concentration camps were established in 1933 for the confinement of opponents of the Nazi Party, many of whom were Jewish. After the outbreak of World War II the camp inmates were required to work for their wages in food; those unable to work usually died of starvation, and those who did not starve often died of overwork. The most shocking extension of this system was the establishment after 1940 of extermination centers, or “death camps” where the mass genocide of millions of people were carried out.

DEATH MARCHES were massive forced transfers of prisoners from one Nazi camp to other locations, which involved walking long distances resulting in numerous deaths of weakened people. Towards the end of the war, hundreds of thousands of prisoners, mostly Jews, from Nazi camps near the Eastern Front were moved to camps inside Germany to continue the use of prisoners’ slave labor, to remove evidence of crimes against humanity, and to keep the prisoners from bargaining with the Allies. Prisoners were marched to train stations, often a long way; transported for days at a time without food in freight trains; then forced to march again to a new camp. Those who lagged behind or fell were shot. The largest death march, referenced in the play, took place in January 1945. Nine days before the Soviet Red Army arrived at the Auschwitz concentration camp, the Germans marched 56,000 prisoners toward a train station at Wodzisław, 35 miles away, to be transported to other camps. Around 15,000 died on the way.

DR. JOSEPH MENGELE was the Nazi doctor at Auschwitz extermination camp (1943-45) who selected prisoners for execution in the gas chambers and conducted medical experiments on inmates in pseudoscientific racial studies. Mengele’s experiments often resulted in the death of the subject. He is referred to as the “Angel of Death.”

“ECONOMICALLY INDISPENSABLE JEWS” If you say that someone or something is indispensable, you mean that they are absolutely essential and other people or things cannot function without them. During the Nazi regime, this designation was given to Jewish people who were of high value to the Nazi party due to their skills or training.

FASCIST Someone who believes in fascism, a political ideology and mass movement that dominated many parts of central, southern, and eastern Europe between 1919 and 1945.

Fascist parties and movements differed significantly from one another, but they had many characteristics in common, including extreme militaristic nationalism, contempt for electoral democracy and political and cultural liberalism, a belief in natural social hierarchy and the rule of elites. At the end of World War II, the major European fascist parties were broken up, and in some countries they were officially banned.

GAS CHAMBERS During the Holocaust, Nazi Germany employed gas chambers for the purpose of killing Jews and other targeted groups. The chambers were established at concentration camps and usually disguised as bathhouses. Men, women, and children were herded into the chambers after being told that

they were going to take showers. The doors were closed, and poison gas was released.

GENTILE A person who is not Jewish

GERMAN PANZERS were a series of battle tanks fielded by the German army in the 1930s and '40s. The six tanks in the series provided the striking power of Germany’s panzer (armored) divisions throughout the war.

GESTAPO (German: “Secret State Police”), the political police of Nazi Germany. The Gestapo ruthlessly eliminated opposition to the Nazis within Germany and its occupied territories and was often responsible for the roundup of Jews throughout Europe for deportation to extermination camps.

GOY Hebrew and Yiddish term for a non-Jewish person; synonymous with “gentile.”

HERMAN GOERING was a German politician, military leader, and convicted war criminal. He was one of the most powerful figures in the Nazi Party, which ruled Germany from 1933 to 1945. Following the establishment of the Nazi state, Göring amassed power and political capital to become the second most powerful man in Germany. In September 1939, Hitler gave a speech to the Reichstag designating him as his successor.

THE HOLOCAUST Name given to the systematic state-sponsored killing of six million Jewish men, women, and children and millions of others by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during World War II. The Holocaust was notable for its especially brutal, systematic, and premeditated nature.

KRIEG “Total war,” or a war which is unrestricted in terms of the weapons used, the territory or combatants involved, or the objectives pursued, especially one in which the accepted rules of war are disregarded. In a total war, there is no regard for civilian losses.

KRISTALLNACHT (German: “Crystal Night”) the night of November 9–10, 1938, when German Nazis and sympathizers attacked Jewish persons and property. More than 1,000 synagogues were burned or damaged. Rioters ransacked and looted about 7,500 Jewish businesses, killed at least 91 Jews, and vandalized Jewish hospitals, homes, schools, and cemeteries. The attackers were often neighbors. Some 30,000 Jewish males aged 16 to 60 were arrested. To accommodate so many new prisoners, the concentration camps were expanded. After the pogrom or mob attack ended, it was given the name: Kristallnacht — meaning “crystal night” or “night of broken glass.” After Kristallnacht, the Nazi regime made Jewish survival in Germany impossible.

LATRINE PIT A pit latrine is a large hole in the ground that collects human waste.

NAZI PARTY was the political party of the mass movement known as National Socialism. Under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, the party came to power in Germany in 1933 and governed by totalitarian methods until 1945.

SHABBOS DINNER Shabbos or Shabbat is the Jewish Day of Rest. It happens each week from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. One constant theme in Shabbat observance across time and territory is the centrality of home life with family members and guests. Friday night dinner is the most popular Shabbos meal. Family meals are occasions for singing, studying,

and celebrating together, as well as for consuming distinctive Shabbos foods. Typical Shabbos foods include challah (braided bread) and wine, which are both blessed before the meal begins.

SS is an abbreviation of Schutzstaffel which means “Protective Echelon” in German. They were the black-uniformed elite corps and self-described “political soldiers” of the Nazi Party. Founded by Adolf Hitler in April 1925 as a small personal bodyguard, the SS grew with the success of the Nazi movement and gathered immense police and military powers.

SWASTIKA is an ancient religious and cultural symbol in many cultures but was appropriated by the Nazi Party and by neo-Nazis. In Nazi Germany, the swastika with its arms turned clockwise became the national symbol. On September 15, 1935, the black swastika on a white

circle with a red background became the national flag of Germany. This use of the swastika ended in World War II with the German surrender in May 1945, though the swastika is still used by neo-Nazi groups.

THIRD REICH The official Nazi name for their regime in Germany from January 1933 to May 1945. They considered themselves the successors of the medieval and early modern Holy Roman Empire of 800 to 1806 (the First Reich) and the German Empire of 1871 to 1918 (the Second Reich).

TYPHOID is a life-threatening infection caused by the bacterium *Salmonella Typhi*. It is usually spread through contaminated food or water. Once *Salmonella Typhi* bacteria are ingested, they multiply and spread into the bloodstream. Symptoms include high fever, flu-like symptoms and diarrhea.

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS IN OUR COMMUNITY

According to a 2018-19 study by Brandeis University, there are an estimated 90,800 individuals of the Jewish faith in the Denver metro area. A number of service organizations, educational institutions, cultural non-profits, and advocacy groups exist to preserve, protect, and honor the history and traditions of these individuals.

JEWISHcolorado jewishcolorado.org

300 S Dahlia St, Denver, CO
Mobilizes resources to ensure Jewish culture remains vibrant, secure, and accessible in Colorado and abroad. Offers philanthropy, advocacy, and community programming.

Staenberg-Loup Jewish Community Center (JCC Denver) jccdenver.org

350 S Dahlia St, Denver, CO
Offers inclusive programs in fitness, wellness, arts, education, and recreation. Serves individuals and families of all backgrounds, rooted in Jewish values.

Jewish Family Service of Colorado jewishfamilyservice.org/services

Provides over 30 programs including food security, housing stability, mental health counseling, aging care, refugee resettlement, and employment support.

EDUCATION & ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Denver Jewish Day School denverjds.org

2450 S Wabash St, Denver, CO
A pluralistic PreK-12 Jewish day school offering dual curriculum in secular and Judaic studies. Focuses on ethical living and academic excellence.

Denver Academy of Torah datcampus.org

6825 E Alameda Ave, Denver, CO
K-12 Modern Orthodox Jewish day school emphasizing both Judaic and general studies, with strong ties to Israel and community leadership.

Center for Judaic Studies – University of Denver liberalarts.du.edu/center-for-judaic-studies

Offers undergraduate and graduate programs in Jewish history, philosophy, literature, and culture. Hosts scholars, artists, and Holocaust survivors.

CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Mizel Arts and Culture Center jccdenver.org/macc

350 S Dahlia St, Denver, CO
Provides performing, visual, and literary arts programming. Hosts exhibitions, concerts, film festivals, and theatrical performances.

Holocaust Awareness Institute – University of Denver
liberalarts.du.edu/center-for-judaic-studies/hai
Established in 1983, it promotes Holocaust education through lectures, curriculum development, and survivor testimony.

Golda Meir House Museum aurariacampus.edu/auraria/golda-meir-house/

1146 9th St, Denver, CO
Preserves the Denver home of Golda Meir, Israel's first female Prime Minister. Offers historical exhibits and educational programming.

SOCIAL JUSTICE & OUTREACH

Ekar Farm ekarfarm.org

6825 E Alameda Ave, Denver, CO
Jewish urban farm promoting food justice and sustainability. Distributes fresh produce and offers educational programs on farming and ecology.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE HAPPIEST MAN ON EARTH

Based on *The New York Times* best-selling memoir by Eddie Jaku, *The Happiest Man on Earth* tells a remarkable story of survival, revealing a paradox of joy built on a foundation of grief. This Denver Center Theatre Company production is playing September 19 through November 2, 2025 in the Singleton Theatre.

1. Character and Identity

How does Eddie Jaku's identity evolve throughout the play, from his childhood in Leipzig to his life in Australia? What role does his name change to "Walter Schleif" play in this transformation?

2. Family and Legacy

Eddie's father tells him, "Family first, family second, family last. And we are all family." How does this philosophy shape Eddie's decisions and survival throughout the play?

3. Moral Dilemmas

Eddie faces several moral decisions, such as whether to steal a dead soldier's uniform or whether to return to Germany to save his mother. How do these moments reflect his values and humanity?

4. Friendship and Survival

Discuss the role of friendship in Eddie's survival, particularly his relationship with Kurt. How does their bond contrast with the cruelty around them?

5. Resilience and Hope

Despite enduring unimaginable suffering, Eddie calls himself "the happiest man on earth." What does this reveal about his perspective on life and the power of choice?

6. Historical Context

How does the play use personal narrative to illuminate the broader history of the Holocaust and World War II? What moments stand out as particularly impactful?

7. Transformation and Healing

How does Eddie's relationship with Flore help him begin to heal from his trauma? What challenges does he face in learning to live again?

8. Memory and Testimony

Why does Eddie choose to share his story publicly for the first time? What does the play suggest about the importance of bearing witness?

9. Title Reflection

In what ways does the title *The Happiest Man on Earth* challenge the audience's expectations? How does the play redefine what happiness means?

Extended Discussion: For Readers of the Book and Viewers of the Play

1. Narrative Style and Tone

How does Eddie Jaku's tone in the memoir compare to his character's tone in the play? In what ways does the theatrical adaptation amplify or soften the emotional impact of his story?

2. Themes of Forgiveness and Hatred

In the book, Eddie emphasizes that hatred is a prison. How is this idea dramatized in the play, and how does it evolve through Eddie's interactions with characters like Helmut and the SS guards?

3. Friendship and Loyalty

The memoir and the play both highlight Eddie's friendship with Kurt. How do their shared experiences differ between the two formats, and what does their bond reveal about the human capacity for resilience?

4. Survival Strategies

Eddie's engineering skills play a crucial role in his survival. Compare how these skills are portrayed in the book versus the play. What do these moments say about the intersection of intellect and instinct in life-or-death situations?

5. Legacy and Message

Eddie's decision to speak publicly about his experiences is a central moment in both the book and the play. How does each format handle this turning point, and what message does Eddie ultimately hope to leave for future generations?

Questions compiled using Microsoft Co-Pilot.

RESOURCES

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum - <https://www.ushmm.org/>

NPR: Eddie Jaku, Holocaust survivor and self-proclaimed happiest man on Earth, dies at 101 - <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/13/1045685012/eddie-jaku-obituary-holocaust-survivor-happiest-man-on-earth>

ADL's Holocaust education program, Echoes and Reflections, <https://echoesandreflections.org>

Timeline of the Holocaust <https://timelineoftheholocaust.org/>

Death Marches: Evidence and Memory - <https://wienerholocaustlibrary.org/exhibition/death-marches-evidence-and-memory/>

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