

LIFT
UP
YOUR
HANDS

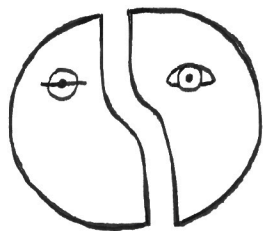
WORD SOUP
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BLEIBT
DRAN.

A HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH
FANZINE

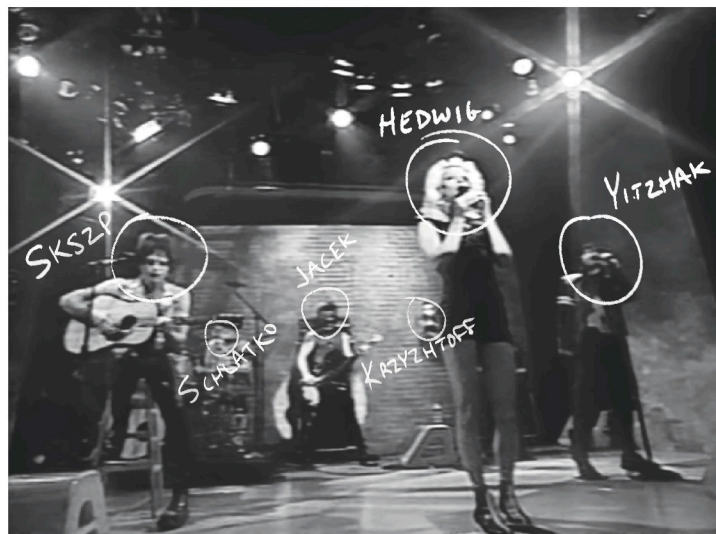


WORTSUPPE
DEZEMBER 2025
AUSGABE 12



people are occasionally surprised when they learn that I like musicals. I guess I do not seem like the type of person that would enjoy them. and to be fair, I'm not a super avid fan; I have my very short list of musicals that I like so so much, and thats enough. I don't need to know any more of them, I am quite content with the ones I already know.

but several years ago, I was very into what andrew rannells was up to. I got extremely into falsettos (the 2016 revival) through him, and thought I would watch more shows that he was in. so I watched a bootleg of him in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. I was vaguely aware of this show, but really knew nothing about it. and I watched it for the first time. it's hard to talk about your first experience with something that ended up having a big effect on you. it was unlike anything I'd really seen before; it was funny and dry, it was so tragic, it was open ended, it was very to-the-point, it was just very special. and then I watched every version I could find (this includes the film, the off broadway show, all of the different actors that performed during the revival). so I just want to share some thoughts I've had about this show, because I've had a lot.



SETLIST
TEAR ME DOWN
ORIGIN OF LOVE
SUGAR DADDY
ANGRY INCH
WIG IN A BOX
WICKED LITTLE TOWN
~~LONG GRIFT~~ *** hedwig on backing vocals
HEDWIG'S LAMENT
EXQUISITE CORPSE
WICKED LITTLE TOWN REP. *** (crisis)
MIDNIGHT RADIO



HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH

was written and created by JOHN CAMERON MITCHELL, who also originated the role of Hedwig. STEPHEN TRASK wrote the music and lyrics for the show. It first debuted Off-Broadway on Feb 14, 1998, and was adapted into a film in 2001. The show got its Broadway debut in 2014. Hundreds of productions have been performed all over the world.

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE ORIGINAL SHOW FOLLOWS:

we, the audience, are here to watch recent tabloid-celebrity Hedwig perform as she follows rock icon Tommy Gnosis' tour across america. between songs, Hedwig tells us her life story. she begins in east berlin as a son, Hansel, to a single mother, and becomes obsessed with the idea of finding her *other half**. as a young adult, Hansel marries an american soldier in an attempt to escape east berlin, but must become a woman to do so. her sex reassignment surgery is botched, and she is left with a mound of flesh between her legs. soon after arriving in america, her husband leaves her for someone else. hedwig chooses to embrace her new life, and forms the band The Angry Inch. she then meets Tommy, who starts as her musical protégé, and later becomes her successor. the two fall in love, and Hedwig is convinced that Tommy is her other half. their relationship and songwriting partnership is going well until Tommy learns of Hedwig's 'angry inch.' he leaves her, and becomes extremely successful with the songs that Hedwig wrote. this brings us back to the current day; Hedwig is forced to confront all that has happened to her, eventually leading to her mental/physical/metaphysical breakdown. calamity ensues.

*as a child, Hedwig learns 'the origin of love' as told by Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*. in short, it tells that ancient humans were round creatures with two faces, four hands, four feet, etc. these creatures came to be too powerful for the gods to handle, so Zeus cut them each in half. the wounds on their backs were sewn up and turned to their stomachs, so that they would always be reminded of their wrongdoings. the two halves were left in a constant state of longing for their other half, wanting desperately to become whole again.



Rivka Katvan

TO BE FREE, ONE MUST GIVE UP A LITTLE PART OF ONESELF



Rivka Katvan

to be free, one must give up a little part of oneself.
this idea shows up a few different times throughout the show, building an association between sacrifice and happiness.

it is first told to hedwig by luther, and is immediately affirmed by her mother. *to walk away, you've gotta leave something behind.* in order to escape berlin and pursue your own happiness, you must give something up.

hedwig later repeats this message to her now-husband yitzhak. when they first meet, yitzhak is a talented and well-loved drag queen who wants to be with hedwig. hedwig, threatened by yitzhak's talent, agrees to marry him on one condition:

I said to him, "Krystal, to walk away, you gotta leave something behind. I'll marry you on the condition that a wig never touch your head again." He agreed and we've been inseparable ever since.

hedwig actively creates a cycle of resentment and manipulation under the guise of fairness.

this trade of sacrifice and happiness seems to inform hedwig's view of the world and her place in it. she acts as though she is entitled to a life of fame and comfort, but this is only because she has given up so much of herself throughout her life.

they cut me up into parts

I gave a piece to my mother

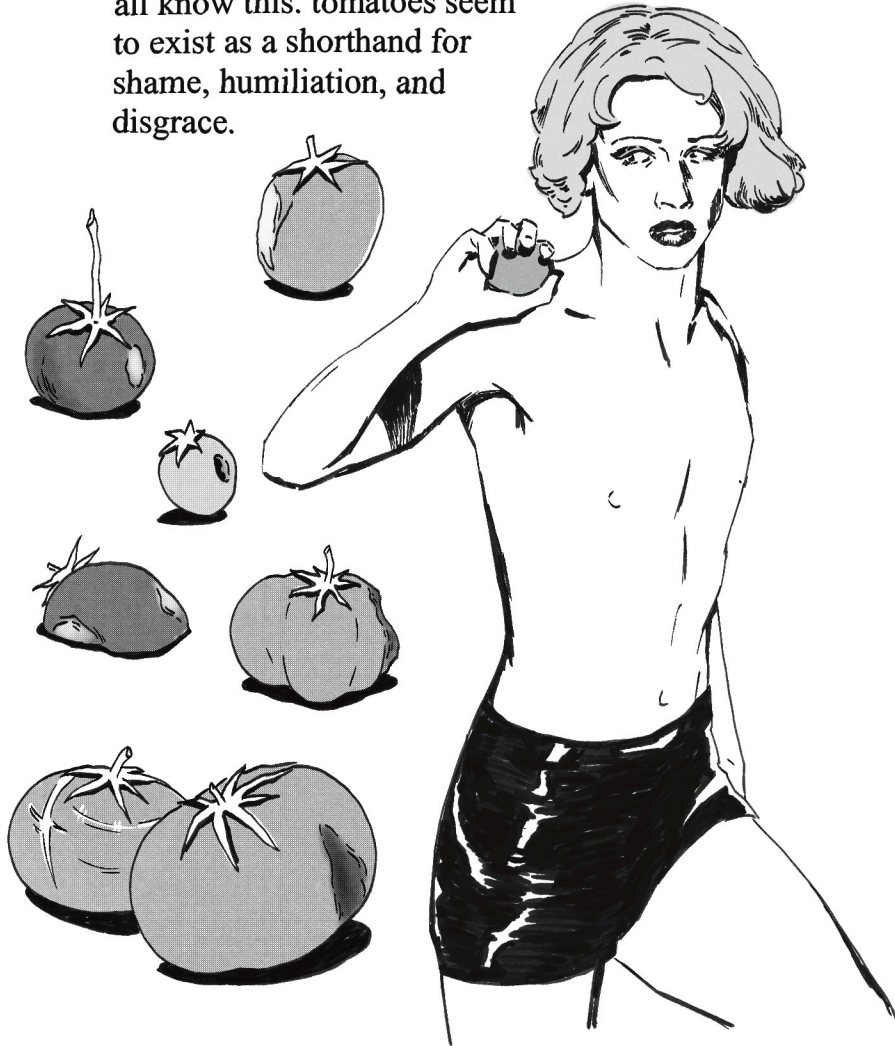
I gave a ounce to my man

I gave a piece to the rock star

he took the good stuff and ran

she sees happiness as transactional, and is slowly coming to realize that this idea is just another lie she has come to believe in.

it's an odd sentence to type, but I love the use of tomatoes in this show. it's a very minor thing, so much so that I don't think I noticed their final appearance until my fifth-ish watch. rotten tomatoes, historically, were thrown at performers and performances deemed bad by the audience. we all know this. tomatoes seem to exist as a shorthand for shame, humiliation, and disgrace.



they are first mentioned as hedwig narrates her childhood. she couldn't resist singing along to a favorite song. a moment brought on by joy and self-expression was immediately met with shame.

I sang along. But never with the melody. How could I do it better than Toni or Debby? Once I couldn't resist: (*singing from You Light Up My Life*) "It can't be wrong, if it feels so—!" Mother threw a tomato at my head.

they are again referenced as she discusses her life later in berlin.

I had recently returned to my first love, music. I had tried singing once back in Berlin. They threw tomatoes. After the show I had a nice salad.

in this case, hedwig seems to have some power over the discouragement that she faces. she eats the tomatoes; she is no longer bothered by these sorts of responses.

the final appearance of the tomatoes comes at the height of hedwig's breakdown (at the end of exquisite corpse).

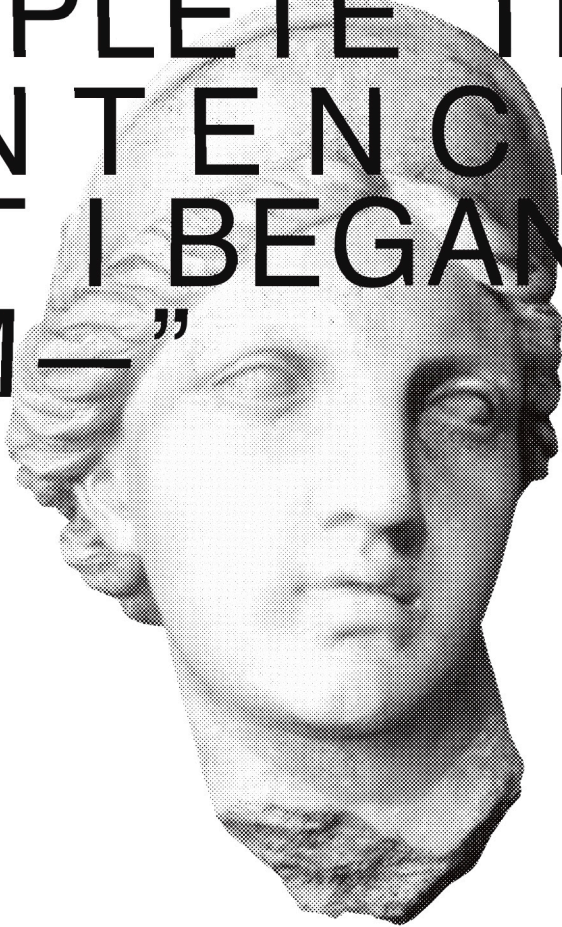
[She tears open her dress and pulls two tomatoes from her bra. She smashes them on her body and crumples to the floor. The BAND glories in her collapse.]

hedwig pulls off her clothes, revealing that she has been carrying tomatoes with her for the entire show. the tomatoes, the shame, are a part of her. they are built into her persona. she carries them with her constantly. and finally, she hurtles them against her own body.



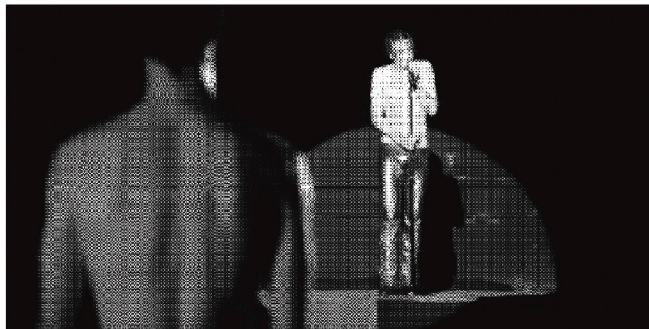
hedwig and her head wigs

THE WORDS TO COMPLETE THE SENTENCE THAT I BEGAN, “I AM—”



there is a line in the show that I think perfectly summarizes the entire story being told. and it's kind of mumbled in every performance. a line so succinct and concise just hiding in the middle of a monologue. why did they do this. at this point in the show, hedwig has just realized/decided that tommy is her other half; the one that will make her whole again. she describes tommy as *the words to complete the sentence that I began, "I am..."*. and if that isn't a perfect summary of hedwig's worldview, then I don't know what is! to see oneself as an unfinished sentence, searching your whole life for the words that will complete the idea. only for the sentence to already be complete. "I am." she yearns to be *something*, not realizing that it is enough to just *be*. and it's always treated like a throwaway line! it barely even makes it into the movie; it's thrown into the chaos at the end of *exquisite corpse*, crunchy and inaudible with distortion. I love this line. I love that the answer is in front of hedwig the whole time, and that she is the one to say this line. she's too wrapped up in her own quest to notice that the quest is, and always was, in vain.

I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the music in this show. it is a musical after all. I am overwhelmed by how much I like the music in this. it feels authentic in a way that many 'rock' musicals don't; it's rock music played as rock music, not rock music translated into broadway music.

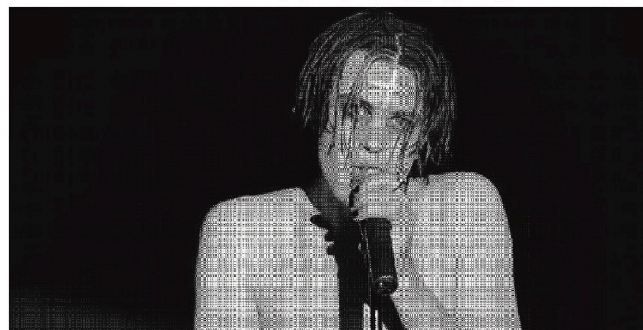


THE ORIGIN OF LOVE is a definite standout. there's a moment in the song where the vocals pause, as if the singer is anticipating their being cut in half. and in certain performances, they somehow manage to put that feeling of desperation and fear into the song. that seems very difficult to do. but they do it (sometimes).

THE LONG GRIFT... look how they massacred my boy... love the original version. it's a very whiney 90s pop sounding song with really cool chords. and then..... they made it into the big dramatic song for the revival shows. I get it. I get why they did that. lena hall obviously sings it extremely well. but that is not my boy. my boy was not meant to be a piano ballad.

EXQUISITE CORPSE is actually exquisite. absolutely no notes. it rips. HEDWIG'S LAMENT is also great. what more can I say.

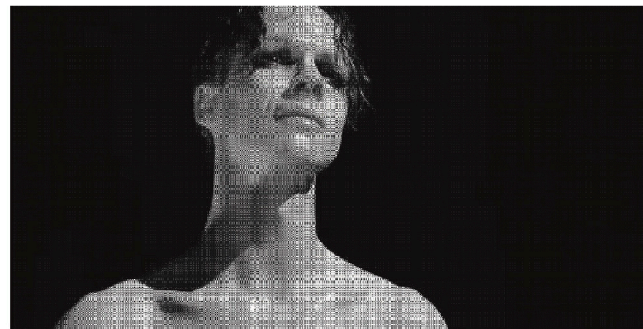
MIDNIGHT RADIO sure is a song. please watch a bootleg of lena hall performing this in the show. when she sings "...nona and nico and me" I believe her. this song could come across as so cheesy and so nothing (and it might if you don't care about the show idk). but I think it is close to a perfect song. maybe.



and now... *wicked little town*. the song so nice you hear it twice. if *midnight radio* is close to being a perfect song, then *this* is the perfect song. I don't have the words to express how much this song makes me foam at the mouth. both in terms of melody and plot points, there is just so much to love about this song. I keep saying 'this song.'

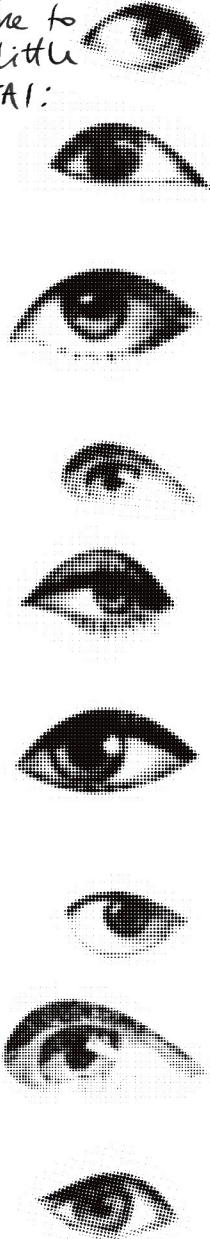
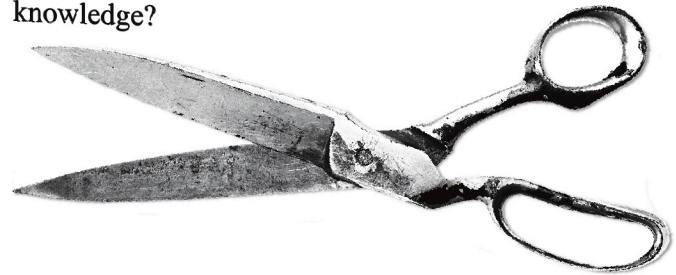
GOODBYE
WICKED
LITTLE TOWN

I mean both of them. hedwig's version is so bittersweet and melancholic. but the tommy version is. devastating. that is one song where I might prefer the film to the stage show. there's such a sense of catharsis. congratulations to stephen trask for writing a perfect song. and kudos for knowing that it deserved two spots in the show.



THE STRANGER'S ALWAYS YOU

the film adaptation of the show is generally quite good. I definitely prefer the stage show to it, but it's great to have as a more accessible, set version of the story. but the film loses something in the translation from live show to recording, that being: perspective. the film is more objective: we see flashbacks of hedwig's life, seemingly as they happened. we see her interact with other people, and vice versa. it is understood that the events being shown are generally how they actually happened. but in the live show, none of this is the case. hedwig is telling us her story from her perspective, however biased it may be. when we hear luther or tommy's words from live hedwig, they are being translated through hedwig. she is an inherently unreliable narrator. throughout the show, she shows herself to be bitter, manipulative, and micromanaging, among other things. we really have no reason to take what she says at face value. but regardless of all that, I believe her when she says that she has suffered. her actions are driven by survival instincts and a false creation myth; this doesn't make her behavior justified by any means, but it does mean that she is able to recognize these factors and take them into consideration. at the end of the show, we see her reckon with a simple question: "what if I'm wrong?" what if the story that I've built my life around is just a story? what if I've treated others poorly because of it? how do I move forward with this knowledge?



In the true spirit of Hedwig, I would like to take the opportunity to complain a little bit. Here are my grievances with HATAI:

—I don't like neil patrick harris' voice and I think he was bad in the role. also michael c hall.

—the outfits and wigs for the 2014 revival are ugly. one of the reasons I like hedwig so much is because it felt genuinely glam and diy. every 'rock' broadway show feels very artificial and pop punk flavored (ie. rent, american idiot). the leather jackets are too clean, the patches too intentionally placed, everything is too pretty. the original show and film are both very dingy in the best way.

—tommy is 16/17 when he meets hedwig and that's weird.

—I think the casting choices for the 2014 revival are weird; it could be coincidence, but it seems like they chose very muscley, masculine looking men for the role of hedwig. this is especially noteworthy considering that they started referring to hedwig as a transwoman around this time, even though she was stated to be an explicitly nonbinary/androgynous character in previous interviews. the marketing really played on the spectacle of having these big male actors dress up in a little skirt. but I digress.

—the movie cuts out all of yitzhak's backstory, so there is no real payoff for him in midnight radio. also they cut the long grift >:(

—there is no recording of jinkx monsoon in the role and that's just a shame for me personally.

Thank you for your time.

HERE'S TO PATTI AND TINA AND YOKO ARETHA AND NONA AND NICO AND ME

Leute, wir improvisieren
jetzt! nicht dran.

to be free, one

must give up a little
part of oneself

amongst relayed to hedwig as she
tries to leave east Berlin in 1961
she it is meant to be physically and
emotionally hedwig later uses the same
phrase to get witzke to stop performing -
it creates a cycle of resentment and
manipulation, all under the guise of 'fairness'
trade.

HERE'S TO PATTI

AND TINA

AND YOKO

ARETHA

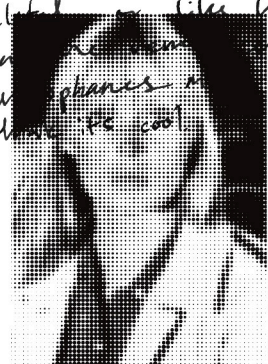
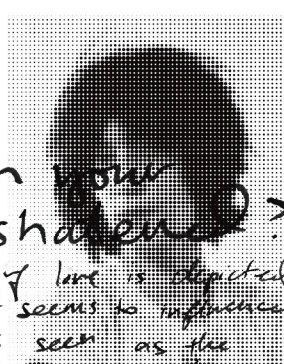
AND NONA

AND NICO

AND ME

probably unintentional but in the off Broadway
show, Hedwig's mic pack/song is placed up
her back, which becomes revealed at the end
of the show. and it looks like something

sketched on like huge stitches
that are meant to be there
as aphanes m... and
there it's cool



What happens when your
world seems is shattered?
Hedwig's belief in the origin of love is depicted
as a very serious thing it seems to influence
many of her actions and is seen as the
ultimate goal of her life. she is incomplete