

Held in high esteem during his lifetime, Arthur Schnitzler's (1862-1931) work faded after the 1914 cataclysm (World War I) swept away the foundations of his culture. His plays, while reflecting the rise of realism, convey the subtle flavor of a fin de siècle Viennese culture that was soon to become a charming and sophisticated obsolescence in modern Europe. His dramas explore the tenor of this society, particularly its amoral leisure classes, revealing wistfulness and melancholy beneath the frivolity. He continually illustrated the elements of playacting and games in his worldlings, whose glossy surface activity masks vacuity and futility. Schnitzler possessed a melancholic awareness of the limitations of human experience that led him to reject all dogmatism and religious faith. Fatalistically, he attributed man's frailty, treachery, and promiscuity to his multiple nature, to the "thousand soul's within him."

The play was written in 1924 under the original title of "KOMÖDIE DER VERFÜHRUNG" and premiered at the Burgtheater in Vienna on October 11, 1924. This production is the American premiere of the play and the first dramatic translation by Judith Greene.