

**Helmut Qualtinger** (1928 – 1986) was the multi-faceted acting genius of Austria's post-war political cabaret, which blossomed thanks largely to his involvement. An exceptional talent, he first appeared in the ensemble of Gerhard Bronner's Cabaret Without a Name, and from 1961 on, he was all the rage with solo programs and readings. His play *Herr Karl*, co-written with Carl Merz, still ranks as the ultimate psychological portrait of the eternal Philistine. "The most important Austrian satirist since Karl Kraus," as Erich Fried called him, explored the dark underbelly of the Austrian soul not only in his role as an author, but also as an actor in films and on stage.

"His voice could jump suddenly from screaming rage to the faintest whisper; his facial expression could change fast as lighting from that of a tyrant to a pathetic fellow, from a man with a heart of stone to a whining loser. Nobody mastered the fine nuances of such subtle transitions from sentimentality to brutality as perfectly as this thin-skinned, vulnerable giant with the delicate, sensitive soul." (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1986)

