

Communications from the International Brecht Society. Vol. IV, No. 3 May, 1975

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COMMUNICATIONS

from the

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

May, 1975

FROM THE EDITOR

The year just drawing to a close, began with the International Brecht Congress in Montreal in October. Next year there may again be a Brecht symposium, but if so, it will be a small-scale event and come about on short notice (see page 7). Aside from the uncertainty of whether or not the Berlin Ensemble's visit to New York will materialize, the potential organizers of the meeting need the support of the membership in their efforts. Any suggestions you can make at this time, will be most helpful.

The long wait for the yearbook is over. Volumes III and IV are about to be delivered to the members (see page 5), and volume V is well on its way. On this happy note: a good and productive summer to all of you! geb

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SEMINAR ON BRECHT AND FILM

A petition for a seminar on "Brecht and Film" to be held at the next MLA conference in San Francisco, December 1975, has been approved -- subject to the availability of space.

As chairman of the seminar I am inviting you to submit suggestions and papers. Since the time allotted for such a seminar (75 minutes) will not allow for the showing of a feature film (although that would be ideal), we will have to limit ourselves to just talking about one or several of the following possible topics: Brecht's dramatic theory in relation to the theater and the film; reality versus illusion; Brecht's influence on modern film (cf. Godard, Fassbinder, Schlöndorff, Kluge, Straub, etc.); Brecht's film scripts; Brecht's use of film; Brecht's own films; etc. Note also the excellent Screen (Summer 1974) issue dealing with Brecht and film.

No papers may be read during the actual seminar, but a paper or article may be mailed beforehand to prospective participants and discussed during the seminar. Persons interested in this seminar either as passive or active participants (submit projects or ideas) should get in touch with me as soon as possible but no later than October 1st, 1975. Watch for announcements in the MLA Newsletter.

Renata Berg-Pan
Dept of German & Scand.
Queens College
Flushing, N.Y.

MORE ON THE BRECHT INDUSTRY: AUSTIN, TEXAS

by Betty Nance Weber

The 1974-75 year seems to have been a boom year for the Brecht industry in Austin. Most of the activities, however, are not those of cloistered scholars or uncritical Brecht devotees. The "many-too-many" in this industry are, for the most part, professional or amateur theater people who are confronting Brecht's work for its Materialwert and asking serious, often skeptical questions on whether or not this is the stuff of good theater.

Though there is no way of judging whether this trend will last, Austinites are no longer dependent on University and dinner-theater productions. Three new theaters, two of them in the last year, have opened with ambitious, creative programs. I would not imply that these efforts are mere satellites of the Brecht industry; their programs have not yet included one of the "master's" plays. More importantly, those concerned with building theater in Austin have studied and learned from Brecht. As a matter of course in their work, they discuss the effectiveness of Brechtianism for any given situation in the theater.

Many of the actors and directors involved in these creative experiments have had or have connections with the academic branch of the industry. In the Drama Department, Brecht's work has been institutionalized by being placed in the routine cycle of major productions; each generation of students should have experience with a Brecht production. This past fall one of the younger faculty members, Steve Wyman, directed a controversial, colorful production of A Man's a Man; Wyman and hist cast focused on the problem of the endangered male ego. In postmortem discussions with actors and other drama students, it became clear that this emphasis developed inadvertently, partially because the reference to Lenz in the castration scene was not recognized. No one, however, objected to Wyman's use of the play as a "basis for a contemporary statement." This is how he characterized the production in one of the press interviews after the play opened. "And I believe," he added, "Brecht would approve." Not unlike the young Brecht, much of Wyman's effort has grown out of dissatisfaction with established theater: "I hate 95 percent of the theater I see because no one takes any risks. When I see a play, and the safe route has been taken, I'm enraged." If the student review of A Man's a Man can be accepted as an accurate gauge of reception on the UT campus, the play was quite successful. David Dailey reported: "If there was ever any doubt of the continuing freshness and validity of the words of Bertolt Brecht, it should be laid to rest after the drama department's production of A Man's a Man.

(cont'd page 4)

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In the spring semester, the Department of Germanic Languages offered its first Brecht production, The Threepenny Opera, under the direction of Wolfgang Michael. Citing the difficulty of the piece and previous inadequate support for the music, Michael stated that he had long hesitated to attempt what he considers to be one of Brecht's best works. With a cast of amateur and even uninitiated actors who had had from two to six or eight semesters of instruction in German, the troupe played three evenings on the campus and toured the state. With this German-language production, there was no attempt to either reproduce the Schiffbauerdamm version from the twenties or to offer a startling interpretation—neither of these options could be expected from the cast of sometime actors. Instead, they performed with obvious gusto, taking genuine pleasure in their learning experience.

At various sites between the Sixth Street entertainment district where the new theaters are located (highlighted, by the way, in a contribution by Günter Kunert to Sinn und Form) and the campus drama building, a collective that calls itself the Bertold (sic) Brecht Memorial Guerilla Theatre (BBMGT) irregularly constructs stage and props to present mimed comment on local, national, and international news. After reorganization the players are no longer the impromptu group they were less than a year ago. With Wendell Jones as one of their principal writers, they have begun preparing scripts for performance and making plans to publish and distribute their work to troupes throughout the United States. During this past year they have turned their attention to effective audience appeal, designing material to inform a cross-section of the public concerning governmental and industrial activity. Locations and performances range from the steps of the state capitol and a park bandstand on Sunday afternoon to prisons and shopping centers.

Their major production for the year, A Cold Day in Hell, was intended as a piece of Brechtianism. The names of the characters, for example, could have been inspired by a play such as <u>Ui</u>. The list includes: Rip Doff, Rhea O. Pressed, Generals Haig and Motors, Victoria Vaseline (a welfare worker), Meter Reader, Pork E. Big, Irene Used, Mr. Dollar, Rocky and Krissy. The following is an account of the play quoted from "Brecht, Mass Appeal & Amerika," <u>The Rag</u>, IX (February 3, 1975): n.p.:

Rip Doff, one of the central figures in the sketch, is used to represent how the Brecht players would like to affect their audience. At first, he is seen as the true and "good" American, loyal and unquestioning. He extols his radical niece Rachel on the virtues of "our leaders" and refuses to let her take part in an anti-war demonstration. But later he is forced to

Due to the collapse of the Athenäum Verlag it has taken unconscionably long to get volume III of the yearbook into print. Finally, this last month, advance copies of the 1973 (!) volume were received by the editors. IBS members copies have been ordered and will be mailed from Wisconsin upon receipt of membership dues. We would like to mail copies of volume III (Athenäum) and volume IV (Suhrkamp), if at all possible, in the same package and cut down thereby on postage costs. Would those who have recently sent checks for 1974 dues please now send checks in payment of 1973 dues (never collected because of Athenäum's delay in publishing volume III).

Please send all checks to

Brecht-Jahrbuch, Department of Comparative Literature University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201, USA

If you have not yet asked your institutional library to order the annual volumes, please do so now. Dues remain this year at:

Student Member - \$7 (DM 20,--)

Regular Member - \$10 (DM 30,--)

Senior Member - \$18 (DM 55,--)

Sustaining Member - \$25 (DM 75,--)

Institutional M - \$18 (DM 55,--)

It is possible that dues will need to be modified for future years to reflect the difference in cost between publishing with Athenaum and publishing with Suhrkamp. This will be a decision that the membership should make as soon as the final Athenaum bills are paid and the financial status of the IBS can then be accurately determined.

Meanwhile, volume V of the <u>Jahrbuch</u> has gone to press and should be available for members very early in the next academic year when 1975 dues should be paid. When mailing your check or money order, please clearly identify on the check or money order itself your specific membership category and what dues year your payment is intended to cover. Now that we have a regular publishing agreement with a prompt and reliable publisher it is anticipated that we should never have to deal again with the problems attendant on receiving a yearbook two full years after it was supposed to appear.

The editors would like to thank all members for their patience and understanding during this whole difficult time.

PLANNED NEW YORK IBS MEETING

Following a suggestion made by the IBS membership at the last MLA meeting in New York, Andrzej Wirth of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York has (in conjunction with John Fuegi) been attempting to arrange to have CUNY host a major meeting of the IBS in New York in early 1976. It now would appear most unlikely that CUNY will be able to host the meeting. Stanley A. Waren, the Executive Officer of the Ph.D. Program in Theatre at the Graduate Center, recently wrote:

"Thank you for your carefully drawn-up letter of 24 March 1975 re the possibility of CUNY hosting a major Brecht symposium in New York in early 1976. I have discussed the matter carefully, and frankly, in these days of budget crisis, the sum of money needed to mount such a symposium properly -- particularly to invite a group of people from Europe and elsewhere -- is simply not available to us at this time. In view of the deadline, I think we should drop out as a possible host for your next congress. Possibly in later years we could try again."

Despite this setback in obtaining academic support for the enterprise, every attempt will now be made to work with some of the experimental groups in New York who are now producing a large number of Brecht plays. Hopefully, a strictly theatre oriented meeting in New York could be co-ordinated with a possible guest visit to New York by the Berlin Ensemble. As soon as more information on these possibilities is available, it will be distributed as rapidly as possible to IBS members.

J.F.

REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitutional Review Committee formed at the MLA meeting in New York has now received helpful comments from Professors Mittenzwei and Schumacher as to ways in which the IBS might be strengthened. Though they decline themselves to serve on the Review Committee itself, their comments will be given careful consideration. With the rush of the academic year now almost over, it is anticipated that a new draft constitution for the IBS can be completed during the summer for submission to members for comments and suggestions in early fall. Of particular help in the review process will be not only a draft constitution prepared by Professor Suvin of Montreal but any suggestions that members may wish to make at this time.

J.F.

NEW YORK MEETING -- YES OR NO? From members of the Action Committee

Lee Baxandall has been in touch with Harvey Lichtenstein, Executive Director of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, who is negotiating with the Berlin Ensemble for their possible visit. The chief obstacle apparently is money. If their visit materializes, the Ensemble will be in New York the first three weeks of December, 1975, according to Lichtenstein.

It seems to us that the International Brecht Society must come up with the fullest response possible to this opportunity if it comes about. This past year, performance of Brecht has been on the upturn in New York, with a great number of productions done at a remarkable level of sophistication. In other words, Brecht has been at the front, not of deferential interest but of EXPERIMENT as never before. Under these circumstances the Berlin Ensemble bringing to New York audiences Brecht's original performance approach, might not come across quite as it could, if people have the wrong expectations, or if the Ensemble's invaluable presence can not be properli utilized.

This is precisely where the Brecht Society's human resources come in. We can mediate between the "legacy" of Brecht and the present responses to Brecht's classical potency.

Obviously, it is unrealistic to expect that a "properly mounted" international congress could possibly be organized between now and December. However, a small-scale meeting focused on the visit of the Berlin Ensemble and the plays they would bring before us, should not be impossible to prepare. Why don't Lee Baxandall, Andrzej Wirth and John Fuegi join forces and develop contingency plans for such a meeting pending the realization of the Ensemble's visit, working with those members who are available, interested and willing to contribute their services? If local theatre groups can be brought in at the same time, so much the better. Our main consideration is that we should not let this opportunity go by even though we may have to operate on a very limited budget (or none at all) and therefore will not be able to satisfy everyone's idea of a Brecht symposium.

Those interested in participating and contributing are requested to write to Lee Baxandall, 2 Washington Square Village, Apt. 11-B, New York, N.Y. 10012.

L.B., G.B.

HOW TO OBTAIN FILMS

The following proposal has been received from R.G. Davis by a member of the Action Committee and passed on to the Managing Editor with the recommendation for a positive reply:

"I have an idea for a project in which I think I can get some development funds -- and serve the active spread of Brecht in the USA.

The plan: To obtain prints of films on or about or by the Berliner Ensemble: documentaries on the workings of the company, the musicians or the actors/actresses. For example I heard from W. Hecht that there were 2 Eisler films, 1 Dessau and 1 on the general workings of the Ensemble, in addition to the Weigel film. There are also other films made in West Germany, France and Italy from plays of Brecht.

We would first obtain materials from the DDR on the Ensemble, then expand to other countries.

The route: Obtain prints through the Pacific Film Archives, U.C. Berkeley, showing them at that facility, then publicize and distribute the films to members of the Brecht Society on campuses throughout the states. The Brecht Society members could book the films onto their campuses for lectures, class or public use.

In obtaining a grant I have permission to use the name of the Pacific Film Archives; a friend of mine, Tom Luddy, is interested in the project, he is that Archives' director.

How would I obtain official sanction from the Brecht Society? If in applying for a small grant, about 3000 or so... I had a letter of interest from the Society, the project would look more feasible.

There would be no cost to the Society proper, the films would be rented at a low cost -- mailing and distribution, etc. -- to each person desiring the use (rental) of a print or prints. All would be non-profit, of course."

A note from John Fuegi: "It is the view of the IBS officers who have been available for consultation that Ronnie should be given strong IBS support, and a letter to that effect is being sent to him."

ALIVE AND KICKING

A Musical Anthology of Brecht's Women
Performed by Eliza Ward - Accompanied by Chuck Mallett
Devised by John Willett - Directed by Max Stafford-Clark

This program was given at the Crucible Studio, Sheffield, in February, and will be presented elsewhere in England during the summer months. From the Sheffield Star review:

"John Willett has devised this excellent show, which looks at Brecht's work from an uncommon angle -- through the women in them. With song and dialogue Miss Ward goes from innocent love, through passion, childbirth, motherhood, to old age, by 26 pieces varying in mood and length. ...

Eliza Ward is a remarkable woman. ... she talks, sings, moves and laughs her way along -- petrifying her audience to their seats, because when she's not tantalizing them with torch songs, she's confiding in them as though they are friends -- and it's that personal bond that makes you fix your eyes on her. ...

Yes there are comparisons to be made in style -- Marlene Dietrich the most noticeable. ...

Eliza Ward would love to get dates in the US.

STUDY ABROAD?

In cooperation with the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Boston University has opened an Institute
for Musical Theatre in Hamburg. Special emphasis is on the
training of musical specialists and of "allround" performers.
Professor Norman Foster, Director of the Institute, strongly
believes in the "universality" of the performing arts as
applied in the musical theatre, and therefore eliminated the
"classical" separation of areas such as drama, singing, ballet,
choreography, etc. in the course of training.

In addition to a six semester study program in musical theatre, a School of Stage Training for advanced studies of theatre professionals has been established. An entrance exam for either course of study is obligatory. The fee per hour of instruction is DM 13.

Special workshops will be conducted during the summer months, with this year's guest being Gene Kelly.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- Drew, David, is compiling book of Kurt Weill's own writings.
- Manheim, Ralph & John Willett, completed a new translation of Threepenny Opera, to be included in the Random House edition of Brecht's Collected Plays.
- Willett, John, is preparing a book of Songs and Poems from Plays by Brecht (to supplement the BB Poems volume of the Collected Works edition now at the printers).
- _____. Erwin Piscator. Half a Century of Politics in the Theatre. To be published by Allen Lane Press, spring 1976

DISSERTATION

Bernath, Feter Andreas. Wesen und Funktion der Sentenz im Drama von Kleist, Büchner und Brecht. Adv. A. Arnold. German Dept., McGill University, June 1975

PUBLICATIONS

- Baierl, Helmut. Die Köpfe oder Das noch kleinere Organon. Edition Neue Texte. Berlin u. Weimar, 1973
- Brecht, Bertolt. Collected Plays, vol. 7, ed. by Ralph Manheim & John Willett. Vintage V-216, New York 1975 (Simone Machard, Schweyk, Caucasian Chalk Circle, Duchess of Malfi)
- Drew, David. (ed). Über Kurt Weill. Suhrkamp Taschenbuch 237
- Fleisser, Marieluise. Tiefseefisch. Spectaculum, vol. 21. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1975
- Ludwig, Karl-Heinz. Bertolt Brecht. Philosophische Grundlagen und Implikationen seiner Dramaturgie. (Abh. zur Kunst-, Musik- und Lit.wissenschaft, Bd 117). Bonn: Bouvier 1975
- Schuster, Ingrid. Storms Ein Doppelgänger und Brechts Der gute Mensch von Sezuan. Eine Gegenüberstellung. Schriften der Theodor-Storm-Gesellschaft, 23 (1974), 33-38.

- The Resistable Rise Of Arturo Ui Goodman Theatre Center,
 Chicago, Illinois, March 28 to May 1 (30 perf.).
 Transl.: G. Tabori. Music: H.-D. Hosalla (tape provided by Berlin Ensemble). Dir.: William Woodman. Sets: Joseph Nieminski. Arturo Ui: Kenneth Welsh.
- The Measures Taken Dept of Speech & Drama, University of New Hampshire, Durham, N.H. April 15, 1975 (1 perf.) Transl. E. Bentley. Music: Zane Weiner & Paul Bacon. Dir.: John C. Edwards. Design: Zane Weiner. Cast: John Andrews, Joel Stevens, Zane Weiner, James Sears, Robert Thomas, Paul Bacon, Joanne Moody.
- The Caucasian Chalk Circle Fisher Theatre, Exeter Academy, Exeter, N.H. May 9 to 11, 1975 (3 perf.). Dir.: David J. Baldwin, B. Rodney Marriott. Design: Nicholas B. Dawson. Grusha: Susan Morehouse; Azdak: Dave Brimmer.
- The Resistable Rise Of Arturo Ui Gates-Abegglen-Theatre,
 Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. May 15 to 24, 1975
 (6 perf.). Transl.: G. Tabori. Dir.: Bill Somers.
 Design: Michael Griffith, Geoffrey D. Fishburn. Arturo
 Ui: Hank Patrizi.

TRUMPETS AND DRUMS TO STRATFORD, ONTARIO

The Stratford, Ontario Shakespeare Festival 1975 has announced that Brecht's Trumpets and Drums will be performed starting July 29 and concluding September 13.

The translation is by Kyra Dietz and Alan Brown. The director is Robin Philips, who is also Artistic Director of the Festival. The design will be by Daphne Dare, and lighting by Gil Wechsler.

Featured performers are Brian Bedford, Jackie Burroughs, William Hutt, Tom Kneebone, Nicholas Pennell and Leslie Yeo.

WON'T YOU JOIN US?

The American Society for the Study of the German Democratic Republic is a membership organization seeking to accomplish the following tasks:

- 1. To promote amicable relations between the United States and the German Democratic Republic.
- 2. To promote wider knowledge and better understanding of the GDR.
- 3. To further exchanges and contacts on all levels between US and GDR institutions, organizations, and individuals.
- 4. To further trade, tourism, and cultural exchange with the GDR.

The Society's approach is primarily educational. Its main point of departure is that the German Democratic Republic is an independent and sovereign state, and a factor in international affairs of great and increasing importance.

The Society is supported entirely by membership subscriptions and contributions from individuals who feel that the continuation of its work is both necessary and desirable. The Society has no paid staff. All of its work is done by volunteers so that its resources can be applied exclusively to its educational activities.

The Society is a non-profit, non-political, tax-exempt organization and all contributions are fully tax-deductible.

Membership in the Society is open to anyone wishing to supports its work. We invite you to join us.

Sustaining Membership - \$25 annually
Regular Membership - \$10 annually
Student Membership - \$5 annually

THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC 777 United Nationas Plaza New York, N.Y. 10017

FOR MEMBERS

JANET KAFKA, who was killed earlier this year in an automobile accident, was the Random House editor responsible for the collected Brecht edition, but left at the beginning of the year to study at the University of North Carolina. She was a most conscientious and agreeable editor to work with, still young but with the character and good judgment to handle all non-literary problems without troubling her colleagues. She would certainly have done good work in the wider university field which she wanted to enter.

John Willett

Hennenberg in the U.S.

The time for Fritz Hennenberg's visit to this country (see last issue, page 2) has been set for May, 1976. If you would like to invite Dr. Hennenberg of Lelpzig, GDR, for a lecture on "Brecht and Music" or to conduct workshops (in German or English) with actors and singers on questions of interpretation, write to Mr. Becker (presumably of the Music Department of Cornell University) who is to coordinate his visit, according to Dr. Hennenberg.

(Since this information is not very complete, you may prefer to direct your inquiry to Leonard J. Lehrman who initiated the invitation, at 231 Risley, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850.)

Change of Address

Members often complain that they no longer receive their copies of <u>Communications</u>. In most cases this is due to the fact that they neglected to report their change of address, or that the notice did not reach the mailing office. Please report your change of address to:

Brecht-Jahrbuch, Dept of Comparative Literature University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wis 53201

(cont'd from page 4)

eject a welfare representative from his shanty and must undergo many an embarrassment and injury caused by "the leaders." Finally Rip rises from his unquestioning role at the bottom of the economic heap. ...

In an effort to create epic theater, the troupe constructed the play from rather independent scenes around the central theme of human beings preying on one another both economically and psychologically. The action is periodically interrupted by narration or song to remind the audience "that they are looking at the play, to keep them sharp, to keep them on edge for the message."

In addition to the local theater activity attesting to Brecht influence and industry, the playwright received notice through cinema when a commercial movie house included Joseph Losey's production of Brecht's Galileo in its American Film Theatre series. As far as press reaction was concerned, this film received severer criticism than any of the other pieces throughout the year. Vicky Bowles, a staff writer for the Daily Texan (the student newspaper), objected to the "overly professorial tone" of the film, the "disturbingly patronizing" effect of Galileo's (Topol's) direct addresses, and the words and music as "too discordant and jarring." Having termed the film "a sloppy, boring version of a weak, boring Brecht play," Bowles apparently still felt that the word "Brechtian" was synonymous with quality theater. Praise was allotted to certain aspects of the recantation scene and the street scene for their "solidly Brechtian touches."

The discussion and controversy precipitated by each of the Brecht productions has contributed to a continuing interest in Brecht among students. During the fall semester, a group of students from a German Literature in Translation class presented a dramatic reading of The Measures Taken as a semester project. Guided by Fred Behringer, a Ph.D. candidate in the Drama Department, and rendered by a group of students who had no acting experience, the presentation was of exceptional quality.

This English-language reading was complemented by another drama project, a German-language reading of Der Jasager and Der Neinsager presented by students from a second semester language class. In this case, the quality of the reading was less impressive than the creativity of presentation. Both plays were read simultaneously with pauses for separate action by two groups of readers where the texts differed. The two groups, one with white shirts and the other with blue shirts, were physically divided by a tall figure whose costume and make-up seemed to place him in both plays. At the conclusion of the two projects participating students discussed, criticized, and questioned the interpretations rendered in both projects.

Such projects and productions may, of course, be routine in other cities and universities. I would welcome information from members in other areas in order to have some measure of the impact Brecht is having on both amateur and professional theater.

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BATHRICK David R, Ger Dept, U of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706
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BORCHARDT Frank L, Ger Dept, Duke U, Durham NC 27706
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BREWSTER Townsend, Dept of Speech & Theatre, City Coll, CUNY
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