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COMMUNICATIONS

from the

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

March, 1974

FROM THE EDITOR

The ballots are in, and our congratulations go to Hans Mayer who was elected IBS President by an impressive majority, as well as to Walter Sokel, newly elected Vice-President. Outstanding scholars as they are, they will add distinction to our organization and provide new impetus for its growth.

At the same time we want to express our thanks and appreciation to John Willett and Grace Allen for their contributions and their service as the first officers of the IBS.

Participation in the election was much better this time: 62 members returned their ballots before the deadline. Of these, Hans Mayer received 44 votes, Walter Sokel 22, Herbert Knust 21, and Grace Allen 18. In addition, the following write-in candidates received one vote each: Bernard Dort, Reinhold Grimm, Otto Münsterer, Manfred Wekwerth, Andrzej Wirth, Gisela Bahr.

After the good news, a disappointing note: Brecht Heute III which we had expected in the mail months ago, still is not ready. It is not the post office but the publisher who is deficient, and to date we have no indication whatsoever when we can count on having the yearbook. We will keep you posted. geb

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TWO CONFLICTING CONFERENCES

University of Wisconsin-Madison: April 3-6
 SYMPOSIUM ON MODERN FORMS IN FILM AND THEATRE

Participants to include Arrabal and Nathalie Sarraute (France); Jerzy Grotowski, Jan Kott, Mrozek (Poland); Carlos Solorzano (Mexico); José Ruibal (Spain); Hans Mayer (Germany); Peter Wollen (England), and the American specialists John Simon, Germaine Brée, Roger Shattuck, J. H. Matthews, Edward Czerwinski, Bruce Morrisette, Naomi Greene, Oreste Pucciani.

Additional information can be obtained from Professor Alexander Kroff, Department of French, 636 Van Hise Hall, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri: April 5-7
 SYMPOSIUM ON THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIALISM: THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC
 REPUBLIC IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

Participants to include Jörg Bilke (Archiv für DDR-Literatur, Mainz), Peter Ludz (Munich University) and Robert Weimann (Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR, Berlin), as well as Jost Hermand, David Bathrick and a Student Collective from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Frank Hirschbach (University of Minnesota), Frank Trommler (University of Pennsylvania), Jack Zipes (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) and Patricia Herminhouse, Peter Hohendahl, Paul Michael Lützeler, Egon Schwarz of Washington University.

Additional information can be obtained from Paul Michael Lützeler Dept. of Germanic Languages and Literatures, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

 COMMUNICATIONS - The Brecht Newsletter - Vol. III No. 2 (1974)

Published by the International Brecht Society

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TWO RECENT AMERICAN PREMIERES AND THEIR AUDIENCES by Leonard J. Lehrman

(Ed. note: Mr. Lehrman not only directed both plays but also translated them (Roundheads with Gesa Valk) and had a hand in the productions as such (Commune with Philip Kanof). At our request he concentrated his report on the question what effect the two productions had on their particular audiences at the time.)

The Days of the Commune (Die Tage der Kommune) received its American premiere at Harvard University in March, 1971 (see Brecht Heute, 1971, p. 25 n. 19). The occasion was the 100th anniversary of the Paris Commune, and in the packed crowd at Sanders Theatre could be found virtually everyone in Boston with any interest whatever in musical theatre, political theatre, just theatre or just politics.

The same was true, on a smaller scale, of the November, 1973 American premiere of The Roundheads and the Pointedheads (Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe) at Cornell University. Ithaca is a much smaller city than Boston, of course, and the political currents were very different this time, but many aspects of both productions were quite similar.

In both cases we had plays of Brecht which had never made it as far as American audiences were concerned, being too long, too large, and too didactic for the tastes of most commercially or academically oriented audiences. But the net results of both productions were overflow houses, tight but successful financial returns, and critical notices ranging from quite favorable to quite unfavorable.

No question but that these were amateur performances. But in retrospect I do not think anyone who saw either of them would disagree that both revealed in the plays themselves, the production experiences, and the audience responses, a great deal not only about Brecht but also the time in which we live. Both plays showed the sorry state of Left movements -- from the Paris Commune to the Weimar Republic and willy-nilly, the respective similarities of each to our own peace movement and anti-Watergate efforts.

The main theme of The Days of the Commune for a 1971 student audience full of desperation and frustration, still writhing in the agony of strikes, riots, on-campus murders, stacked elections, and an inhuman draft forcing personal crises of conscientious objection or non-objection was the theme of tactical revolutionary debate: the question of violence or non-violence: napalming draft files, burning

(cont'd next page)

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banks, getting guns, seizing power or working for peace and decency through peaceful and decent means. Or, from another point of view: the conflict between those who urge violent revolutionary methods and those who shrink from them.

Many in the audience had already found their own answers to the question and were eager to communicate that fact to those assembled more clearly than the play. They were encouraged to do so by members of various political organizations like the November Action Coalition (a splinter group of SDS), which fortunately or unfortunately had unintentionally served to discourage a number of "apolitical" people from being in the play -- people who were afraid of their father's losing his security clearance, and so on. The politically charged audience threw fruit at the villains, hooted at lines bearing the slightest hint of male chauvinism, passed out leaflets, and even tried making speeches and pleas for donations for their causes between the acts.

The Roundheads and the Pointedheads is in many ways more didactic and unwieldy than Days of the Commune. The Cornell production was artistically more successful than the Harvard, though of course the political response was considerably milder. (Anything would have had to have been a comedown after that Boston audience.)

The main reason for the success was probably the fact that Roundheads would have run well over three hours without our having cut it down. Brecht himself wrote voluminous notes on the play, pointing out scenes that did not work and others which he himself cut for the first production at Copenhagen in 1936. We made those cuts and, for the sake of further plot tightening, expanded even further a character Brecht had expanded in his notes, and used elements from Shakespeare's Measure for Measure to remedy some of the work's problems of inconsistency and unwieldiness.

The play's biggest problem, however, was its pretending to be a general parable on the importance of economic as opposed to racial status, when actually, in its eighth and final draft, it is a very specific indictment of Hitler and his racial theories as seen from the point of view of a Marxist in Germany between the wars. Thus, for example, in the manner of Charlie Chaplin's "The Great Dictator," the S.A. are treated in comical, almost sympathetic fashion; and the term "concentration camp" is used obviously with no knowledge of what was actually happening at such places.

We did not, therefore, feel unjustified in cutting or underplaying most of the specific references which point directly at the similarities between the tyrannical Angelo Iberin and Hitler as well

as the minority Pointedheads and the Jews. For a similar reason, the revolutionary movement which Brecht originally called "the Black Flags" and later "the Sickie" we called simply "the Movement." The overall effect was a generalizing of the parable, not an "updating" of the play, but rather an attempt at "un-dating" it.

During the months of Watergate revelations while we were working on preparing the play and the production, many members of the cast and staff began feeling more and more that "it could have been written some time this year." As in the production of Days of the Commune, this feeling was encouraged, though this time a bit more subtly. No Viet Cong or red flags, no peace symbols, no "Internationale," and only occasional projected flashes of Billy Graham, Nixon, Kissinger, Ehrlichman et al. at appropriate moments, plus a brief paragraph among the program notes: "Ideally, any audience would tend to see itself mirrored in this play in one way or another. It is not too hard, for example, to see George Wallace's contempt for 'pointy-headed pseudo-intellectuals' mirrored and foreshadowed in Iberin's hatred of Pointedheads."

The audience response to our production was largely favorable though decidedly mixed. The critical notices, though sparse, were more favorable than any other productions of the play have yet received (Copenhagen, 1936; Hanover, 1962; Halle, 1964). But of course the Berliner Ensemble has not yet tackled it.

More dramatically even, multi-leveled, and sophisticated than Days of the Commune, Roundheads and Pointedheads drew a slightly more sophisticated and of course much more reserved, less desperate -- though not much less frustrated -- audience (and cast). Part of this was the times. Many had participated in or come to see Days of the Commune in hopes of its being a rallying point for a spring offensive of some sort. Many obviously understood the play only on a gut level, while such a level was much harder to come by in Roundheads. Part of it was the play, and part of it was that, in the words of one radical, "People today just aren't rallying like they used to."

Also at least partially responsible was the economic crunch and the resurging value being placed on the value of making money, however corruptly and cynically. Brecht's "Lied der belebenden Wirkung des Geldes" along with many other songs of Roundheads and Pointedheads, many of them variants on the same theme, seems more relevant every day.

But the whole point of the history of the Movement in Days of the Commune, in Roundheads and Pointedheads and in America in the late '60s is that "the Revolution" did not come off, both because of the corrupt but strong external forces in power, and because of the internal uncertainties and disunities which sowed seeds of possibly

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MAHAGONNY AT YALE

In the New York Times of February 17, 1974, Julius Novick gave quite a favorable review of the Yale Repertory Theater's recent production of Mahagonny, done in a new translation by Michael Feingold under the direction of Alvin Epstein.

"There is very little comedy in 'Mahagonny'," Novick said, "and the satire is sometimes over-obvious and banal. ... But it has a kind of heavy-footed, cumulative power; what moves us is not the action or the characters, but the anger and despair in the work as a whole." According to Novick, the production reminds the audience of the fact that the work is more than four decades old, and permits them "to reflect on how much disintegration has taken place since Brecht and Weill created their metaphor of disintegration in a world that was, even then, disintegrating all around them. ... Mahagonny is all our cities."

DRUMS IN THE NIGHT IN LONDON

In the Village Voice of November 29, 1973, David Zane Mairowitz reported on a London production of Drums in Cecil P. Taylor's adaptation, calling it "a stab at Brechtianizing" the play, and a successful one. Here is his description:

It begins outside the context of the written play, framing the action in one of Brecht's songs concerning a dead soldier. A piano player and a waiter establish a cafe-cabaret metaphor from the outset and introduce political themes which are only mentioned in the actual text. Rosa Luxembourg's speeches are recited at the audience and then counterpointed with fascist and anti-Spartacist ones. This continues between most of the written scenes which make no attempt to relate directly to an audience. A macabre drinking song, "Come, Rosa, Come. Come, Rosa, Come. Come. Come to the Officers' Ball" continues the historical line, giving far more weight to the 1918 uprising than the young Brecht did. In the end, the actor who makes the political speeches replaces his Rosa Luxembourg pill-box hat with an S. A. cap and fires a bullet through the former.

Mairowitz's conclusion is that the London production "manages to throw some light on what the play might have been in its first incarnation, and how just a few small turns might have sent the good burghers screaming from their seats." Kragler was played by Stephen Rea who "provided a fascinating portrait [of] the unfinished character."

Report

A BILINGUAL COURSE ON BRECHT by Louise H. Bronner

Last Fall (1973), it was suggested to offer a Brecht course in German, and the following entry appeared in the catalog of the University of Massachusetts at Boston:

Bertolt Brecht is the most popular playwright of this century. He is politically engag ; yet, at the same time an accomplished poet. Reading his works in the original German rather than in translation will lead to an appreciation of his poetic skill and diction, as well as illuminate his clever play with every possible semantic facet of word or phrase. Brecht's best known plays, poems, stories (Kalendergeschichten), and an introduction to his theories for theater and poetry will be offered during the course.

However, a few students, who did not know German, had enrolled in the course. It was then decided to conduct the course bilingually. English texts as well as their original German version were used in class; discussions took place in English. From time to time sections of the translations were compared with the original text. The class became aware when lyrics were rendered too glibly, or when Brecht's play with words could not be reproduced in English; some students tried their own hand at translating poems and prose by Brecht. A translation represents at the same time an interpretation, and the German speaking group of the class benefited by hearing portions of plays read in English. Had the course been offered only in German, we probably would have missed Eric Bentley's introductions to his editions, or Lotte Lenya's foreword to the Threepenny Opera (Eric Bentley and Desmond Vesey, tr.).

Two students of the Theater/Arts department stimulated the class to engage in the performance of scenes of the various plays. The course wound up with a bilingual presentation of excerpts of scenes of Brecht's plays, and a selection of his prose and poems. The following translation of the poem "Lob des Lernens," and the opening of Scene XV of the German version of Galileo may serve as illustrations.

LOB DES LERNENS

Lerne das Einfachste! F r die
Deren Zeit gekommen ist
Ist es nie zu sp t!
Lerne das Abc! Es gen gt nicht, aber

Lerne es! Lass es dich nicht ver-
driessen!
Fang an! Du musst alles wissen!
Du musst die F hrung  bernehmen.

PRAISE OF LEARNING

Learn the Basics! For those
Whose Time has come
It is never too late!
Learn the ABC's! It is not
enough but
Learn them anyway! Don't become
disenchanted!
Start! You have to know everything!
You have to lead the way.

(cont'd next page)

Lerne, Mann im Asyl!
 Lerne, Mann im Gefängnis!
 Lerne, Frau in der Küche!
 Lerne Sechzigjährige!
 Du musst die Führung übernehmen!
 Such die Schule auf, Obdachloser!
 Verschaffe dir Wissen, Frierender!

Hungriger, greif nach dem Buch: es
 ist eine Waffe.
 Du musst die Führung übernehmen.

Scheue dich nicht zu fragen, Genosse!
 Lass dir nichts einreden
 Sieh selber nach!
 Was du nicht selber weisst
 Weisst du nicht.
 Prüfe die Rechnung
 Du musst sie bezahlen.
 Lege den Finger auf jeden Posten,
 Frage: wie kommt er hierher?
 Du musst die Führung übernehmen.

From:

Bertolt Brechts Gedichte u. Lieder
 ed. Peter Suhrkamp (Berlin &
 Frankfurt/Main, 1961), p. 21.

Learn, old man!
 Learn, prisoner!
 Learn, housewife!
 Learn, old woman!
 You have to lead the way.
 Go to school, you who are homeless!
 Grasp the knowledge, you who are
 freezing!
 You who are hungry, pick up the
 book: it is a weapon.
 You have to lead the way.

Don't hesitate to ask, brother!
 Don't be hoodwinked
 Look it up yourself!
 What you do not know yourself
 You do not know.
 Check the bill
 You have to pay it.
 Put your finger on every item,
 Ask: What's this for?
 You have to lead the way.

Translated by class of Advanced
 Conversation and Composition

The Nightwatchman-Song, which opens Scene XV of the German version of Galileo, should be spoken in a kind of singsong. If sung, it should take its direction from the melody of "Hört, ihr Herrn, und lasst euch sagen..."

Single voice:

Liebe Leut, gedenkt des End's
 Das Wissen flüchtete über die Grenz.

Wir, die wissensdurstig sind
 Er und ich, wir blieben dahint!

Hütet nun ihr der Wissenschaften Licht
 Nutzt es und missbraucht es nicht

Dass es nicht ein Feuerfall
 Einst verzehre noch uns all
 Ja, uns all.

Dear folks, think of the end
 Knowledge crossed the border.

We who are thirsty for knowledge
 Could not follow!

Now take good care of the light
 of science
 Use it, but don't abuse it

So that it may not grow into a
 fireball
 Which at one time may engulf us all
 Yes, us all.

To bring out the "Echo" effect of the last line, it is repeated, like in canon-singing that two groups set in after one another, but end at the same time.

FORUM

(Ed. note: Here is John Willett's response to Manfred Wekwerth's thoughts on IBS, Diderot-Gesellschaft, and dialectics printed in Communications III, 1, p. 7)

Many thanks for the latest Communications. I've the highest regard and liking for Manfred Wekwerth, so I'm naturally sorry that the reports of my remarks at the Rutgers conference should have led him to look askance at the Brecht Society, with whose policies I have, as you know, not had all that much to do. Being undialectical is, I realise, a dreadful offence in the German Kulturkreis, though personally I think what matters is accuracy or inaccuracy, and that this is more important than the method ostensibly employed. I.e. I would rather talk sense than talk dialectically (apart from anything else, it's easier for the listener and much more economical of words). But leaving aside this basic cultural difference (which is one that any international society has to face) I think that Wekwerth has misinterpreted what I actually said. I didn't talk about Brecht's effect on young people in the DDR and West Germany but about the very different situation in Eastern Europe, particularly Czechoslovakia and Hungary, where I was surprised and pained a few years ago to find Brecht being looked askance at. (Maybe this has changed; I'd be interested to know.) As for Brecht's theory, I don't think I said that it bore no relation to his practice, but that (a) it can be an obstacle to the realisation of his plays, and (b) it didn't determine his way of writing but arose from it, providing a justification and explanation of the plays and of their limitations. Not that I think Wekwerth is any more right about what Brecht said: this is the first time I've seen it suggested that he launched the idea of the Diderot Society in order to preserve "dialectics". See the prospectus, GW SzT p. 305, which was incidentally addressed to a number of persons who would never have considered themselves dialecticians, though they might have felt interested in an accurate representation of the world, the aim which Brecht proposed.

NB. The reason why I'm allergic to talk about dialectics is that when dialectical thinking becomes deliberate and conscious, like M. Jourdain's prose, it tends to become over-simple. Any good modern historian or scientist or sociologist thinks dialectically, in that he sees many conflicting elements in a situation and knows that it is never static. In the early 19th century, when Hegel formulated his concept, hardly any did so. But emphasising it today too often leads to a turgid vocabulary and to an oversimplification of conflicts which, while effective in the theatre, can be hopelessly misleading in real life. At least this is so in France and the English-speaking countries, where very few of the best scholars and scientists consciously set up to be dialecticians. The proof of the pudding is ... well, anyway not in one's method of handling the spoon and fork.

John Willett

WORK IN PROGRESS

Dickson, Keith A. Towards Utopia. A Study of Brecht. Book, to be completed by fall 1974.

Gorelik, Mordecai. On Brechtian Acting. Article, to be completed by fall 1974, and to be published in Quarterly Journal of Speech.

DISSERTATIONS

Fischbach, Fred. L'évolution politique de Brecht, de 1918 à 1933. Doctorat de 3^e cycle, Univ. of Lyon II. April 1972.

Nussbaum, Laureen K. The Image of Woman in the Work of Bertolt Brecht. University of Washington. Completion expected by June 1975.

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Bristol, M. & D. Suvin, eds. A Production Note Book to 'St. Joan of the Stockyards'. 250 pp + 6 photo pp. Montreal: McGill University, 1973.

Bronner, Luise H. Brecht-Gedichte im Unterricht. Die Unterrichtspraxis VI, 1 (Spring 1973).

Fischbach, Fred. Bertolt Brecht à la découverte de Lénine. La Pensée, CL (April 1970), 36-50.

_____. Deux versions de "Tambours dans la nuit", de Bertolt Brecht. La Pensée, CDVI (April 1971).

Hoover, Marjorie L. Meyerhold: The Art of Conscious Theater. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, April 1974.

Marx, Henry, Exiltheater in den USA 1933-1945. Theater heute XV, 2 (Februar 1974), 1-4.

Nelson, G. E. Brecht's 'Learning Play' Die Massnahme: The Birth of Tragedy out of Pedagogy. The German Quarterly XLVI, 4 (Nov. 1973), 566-580.

Obermeier, K.W. Aspekte einer Ulmer Forschungsarbeit: Bertolt Brecht in Augsburg (w. photos). Ulmer Forum, Heft 27 (Herbst 1973), 2-11.

Knust, Herbert & Siegfried Mews, eds. *Essays on Brecht: Theater and Politics*. UNCSGL&L 79. Chapel Hill: 1974.

Contents

- I. Reinhold Grimm - *Naturalis and Epic Drama* (Translated by Siegfried Mews and Carolyn Ann Wellauer)
 Karl-Heinz Schoeps - *Epic Structures in the Plays of Bernard Shaw and Bertolt Brecht*
 Herbert Knust - *Piscator and Brecht: Affinity and Alienation*
 - II. Hans Mayer - *Brecht's Drums, A Dog, and Beckett's Godot* (translated by Jack Zipes)
 Siegfried Mews and Ray English - *The Jungle Transcended: Brecht and Zuckmayer*
 James K. Lyon - *Kipling's "Soldiers Three" and Brecht's A Man's a Man*
 Darko Suvin - *Saint Joan of the Slaughterhouses: Structures of Slaughterhouse World*
 Gisela E. Bahr - *Roundheads and Peakheads: The Truth About Evil Conditions*
 Grace M. Allen - *Senora Carrar's Rifles: Dramatic Means and Didactic Ends*
 Ralph J. Ley - *Francis Bacon, Galileo, and the Brechtian Theater*
 John Fuegi - *The Alienated Woman: Brecht's The Good Person of Setzuan*
 - III. Andrzej Wirth - *Brecht: Writer Between Ideology and Politics*
 David Bathrick - *Brecht's Marxism and America*
- Brecht's Work in English: A Select Bibliography

GEORGE GROSZ CATALOGUE

Copies of the exhibition catalogue (see *Communications* III, 1, p. 10) "Theatrical Drawings and Watercolors by George Grosz" are still available. The 48 pp catalogue contains brief essays by Hedy B. Landman (on George Grosz) and Herbert Knust (on Grosz' contribution to the Berlin *Schwejk* performance of 1928) and describes sixty of Grosz' drawings (45 for Hasek-Piscator-Brecht's *Schwejk*, the other for Mehring's *Orestie*, Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* and *Androcles and the Lion*, Goll's *Methusalem*, Kaiser's *Nebeneinander*, Zech's *Das trunkene Schiff*, Zweig's *Grisha*.) 44 of the 60 drawings are reproduced (b/w) in the catalogue.

If interested, please send order (and check for \$2.00) to Inge Rose, Secretary, Program in Comparative Literature, 2070 Foreign Languages Building, University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Brecht/Weill's Ocean Flight, in an English translation by Lys Symonette, will have its New York premiere at the Avery Fisher (Philharmonic) Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City, on May 17, 1974. The work will be performed by the New York Choral Society, with Robert DeCormier conducting. There is also the possibility that the performance will be broadcast by National Public Radio, at some time after the premiere.

The San Francisco Mime Troupe has been performing Brecht's The Mother since September 1973, and recently toured it largely to Mid-west colleges with great success. The Mime Troupe is now back in S.F., but will make another tour in the Autumn of 1974, going to the East Coast, with a Spring 1974 tour also possible to other parts. Those interested in booking the Mother should write to Denny Stevens of the Troupe at 450 Alabama St., San Francisco.

Fritz Hennenberg, Leipzig, lectured on "Brecht and die Musik" in Rotterdam, Utrecht, and den Haag, Holland, last September. Having a few US contacts, he would like to organize a lecture tour to this country in 1974 or 1975. In addition to the lecture (in German or in English) he can offer workshops on how to sing Weill's, Eisler's and Dessau's songs. Dr. Hennenberg who has been collaborating closely with Paul Dessau on numerous projects, was one of the speakers at the Eisler Colloquium held in Berlin last fall. If you are interested, or know of somebody else's interest in getting Fritz Hennenberg here, you can write him at: 7035 Leipzig-DDR, Zum Harfenacker 2. German Democratic Republic.

(cont'd from p. 5)

inevitable dissolution from within. Brecht's plays can help us to see this, if we let them. They can also urge us, in the manner of morality plays, to believe and to continue to believe in the eventual social progress of mankind through struggle, somehow, in this age of little hope. "Steh' auf!" are the last words of Die Rundköpfe und die Spitzköpfe. Die Massnahme's "Change the World, It Needs It" was our finale for Days of the Commune. Whether we will or not, and how, still remains to be seen, I guess.

TO: GISELA E. BAHR, DEPT. OF GERMAN, RUSSIAN & EAL, MIAMI UNIV., OXFORD, OHIO 45056

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