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COMMUNICATIONS

EDITOR: NORMAN ROESSLER

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY 39 / 2010

NO DANCING

THIS PROJECT STARTED IN CONFUSION AND WILL END IN DISARRAY

11:11

PUMP PUMP PUMP IT UP!

TRAGEDY OVER TIME EATS COMEDY!

GOLDEN FOWELL

BROWN GIRL IS ALWAYS UNDER ESTIMATED

VENTURING INTO BLACKNESS IS A LONELY BUSINESS

ANY EPIPHANY

UPN TAVIS CAN'T SHOW IT

MEAT ME AT THE EDGE OF THE REPPRESSED BARRIER

PEOPLE GOT MORE UNKNOWN THAN KNOWN

ECHO THE FICTION OF MY IDENTITY

PUT THE ELEPHANT BACK IN THE ZOO!

THE GREEN CORN IS GOOD BEFORE HARVEST

LIGHT AND ALL THAT SOMEONE MADE BUT

NOBODY MADE THE DARKNESS!

I KE TURNER

BITCHES ALL OF THEM BITCHES!

THE PLAN IS ELEGANT AND VICIOUS...

TELL A STORY TELL IT ENOUGH

THE STORY BECOMES YOU!

SHE'S MESSY AND LOUD JUST LIKE HER WORK!

SOUND MAKE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE IN OUR REVENUE

TAKE THE JACKASS BACK TO THE FARM!

WARNING: THE MISTRESS OF MISINFORMATION CAN NOT BE SHAMED OR SILENCED!

IN SPIRIT OF THE RAIN THE PARADE CONTINUES!

IT WAS & IT IS & IT AIN'T! IT WILL & IT WON'T IT DOES & IT DON'T!

GUESS WHAT? THIS ANY FUNNY!

WIGGLE THE SHOULDERS

WE IS ONE OF THE 201 & ONE OF THE 401

IT'S ALWAYS HIGH OR WE WON'T NEED LIGHT

THE PLAN IS ELEGANT AND VICIOUS...

THE PLAN IS ELEGANT AND VICIOUS...

WHAT IS A NEGRO WITH A PHD?

ELIE ELIE BELIEVE IT

ELIE ELIE BELIEVE IT

ELIE ELIE BELIEVE IT

ELIE ELIE BELIEVE IT

BONNAGE DEED PROMISED LAND!

WE'VE BEEN CHEWIN' DRY BONES AND SWALLOWIN' BITTER PILLS LONG ENOUGH!

WE'VE BEEN CHEWIN' DRY BONES AND SWALLOWIN' BITTER PILLS LONG ENOUGH!

WE'VE BEEN CHEWIN' DRY BONES AND SWALLOWIN' BITTER PILLS LONG ENOUGH!

WE'VE BEEN CHEWIN' DRY BONES AND SWALLOWIN' BITTER PILLS LONG ENOUGH!

WE'VE BEEN CHEWIN' DRY BONES AND SWALLOWIN' BITTER PILLS LONG ENOUGH!

WE HAD A VISION THAT MUSIC HEALED THE UNIVERSE

WE HAD A VISION THAT MUSIC HEALED THE UNIVERSE

WE HAD A VISION THAT MUSIC HEALED THE UNIVERSE

WE HAD A VISION THAT MUSIC HEALED THE UNIVERSE

WE HAD A VISION THAT MUSIC HEALED THE UNIVERSE

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE

CONFUSE THE ISSUES DISCOUNT THE CLAIMS FOCUS ON A SMALL POINT AND FORGET THE REST!

CIBS

www.ecibs.org

EDITOR

NORMAN ROESSLER
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

**COVER IMAGE: CARL POPE, THE
BAD AIR SMELLED OF ROSES.
MEDIUM RESISTANCE EXHIBIT AT
THE ICEBOX IN THE CRANE ARTS
BUILDING, PHILADELPHIA, PA/
USA. MARCH 5 - APRIL 3, 2010.
PHOTO: PHILIP GLAHN.**

CIBS 39 / 2010

Edited by Norman Roessler

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Membership: All IBS members receive *The Brecht Yearbook* and CIBS from the *International Brecht Society* as a benefit of membership and are invited to participate in the Society's symposia. The Society is officially multi-lingual; CIBS welcomes contributions in English, German, Spanish, and French. To join the IBS go to the society website www.brechtsociety.org and fill out the membership form. Membership fees range from \$20 (Students, Retirees) to \$50 for Sustaining Members. For more information please contact the Secretary/Treasurer, Paula Hanssen at hanssen@webster.edu.

For more information on the International Brecht Society, including membership, conferences, contacts visit our website:
<http://wiu.edu/users/brecht10>

Editorial Policy: CIBS welcomes all material which deals with Brecht and the Brechtian: performance reviews (theater / film / video game) of Brecht plays or with an identifiable Brechtian element (e.g. an author or a work that influenced Brecht; contemporary work or artists that were inspired by Brecht; a work or artist that can be explored through a Brechtian paradigm) articles, conference reports, interviews, dialogic essays, aphoristic revues, letters, notes, detritus.

CIBS seeks the dynamic, the flexible, and the contemporary. Hence, submitted material should not exceed 3,000 words (roughly 12 pages, double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font). Performance Reviews should be approximately 750 words, unless the review is covering a performance festival, or is comparing multiple productions. Images and illustrations (along with copyrights and captions), enclosed as part of the submitted material, are encouraged. Please conform to MLA Style Standards.

Submission: All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor. Electronic submissions are preferred and should be sent as a Microsoft Word Attachment to the following email address: nroessle@temple.edu, or to the regular mailing address listed on the back cover.

A variety of viewpoints are expressed in CIBS, which do not necessarily represent the editors' viewpoints or the viewpoints of the organization.

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COVER STORY

NORMAN ROESSLER	3
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FORUM

PAULA HANSSEN, SECRETARY / TREASURER'S REPORT 2009-2010	6
MARC SILBERMAN, BRECHT AT MLA 2009	7
13 TH IBS SYMPOSIUM IN HAWAII: BRECHT IN/AND ASIA	
MARKUS WESSENDORF, PROGRAM	10
GUDRUN TABBERT-JONES, REPORT	14
BRECHTIAN NEWS, 2009-2010	16
CIBS ARCHIV	21

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS I

A.Q. TORBY, WAITING FOR GODOT (PHILADELPHIA)	22
RALF REMSHARDT, THEATERTREFFEN 2010 (BERLIN)	26
VERA STEGMANN, THE HILO MASSACRE (HAWAII)	35
A.Q. TORBY, JOHN WATERS AND ROLE MODELS (PHILADELPHIA)	38
CHRISTIAN GEDSCHILD, DER ZERBROCHENE KRUG (2X) (BERLIN)	40
A.Q. TORBY, LOVE JERRY (PHILADELPHIA)	42
NORMAN ROESSLER, MARAT / SADE (PHILADELPHIA)	45
PIROOZ AGHSSA, GATZ (NEW YORK)	48

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS II

JOSÉ ENRIQUE MACIÁN,	
HERR PUNTILA & SEIN KNECHT MATTI (BERLIN)	52
NORMAN ROESSLER, BRECHT ON BRECHT (NEW YORK)	
& GOOD PUPPET OF SZECHWAN (PHILADELPHIA)	55
ANDREW PERIALE, GALILEO (CONNECTICUT)	57
JOSÉ ENRIQUE MACIÁN,	
DIE HEILIGE JOHANNA DER SCHLACHTHÖFE (BERLIN)	60
JOSÉ ENRIQUE MACIÁN,	
DER KAUKASISCHE KREIDEKREIS (BERLIN)	63
GUDRUN TABBERT-JONES,	
THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE (SAN FRANCISCO)	66
R.G. DAVIS, THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE (SAN FRANCISCO)	68
KRISTOPHER IMBRIGOTTA,	
ARCHER & MORLEY CABARET (HAWAII)	73
STEPHEN BROCKMANN, THE JUDITH OF SHIMODA (HAWAII)	76
KEVIN S. AMIDON, THE THREEPENNY OPERA (HAWAII)	82
LEANNE TRAPEDO SIMS, THE THREEPENNY OPERA (HAWAII)	86
NORMAN ROESSLER,	
THE THREEPENNY OPERA (PHILADELPHIA & ST. LOUIS)	89
CHRISTIAN GEDSCHILD,	
DIE DREIGROSCHENOPFER (PHILADELPHIA & BERLIN)	98

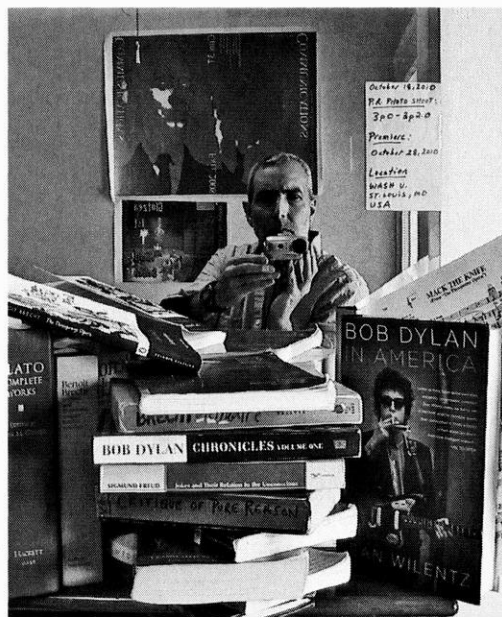
ARTURO UI CASEBOOK (REP/PTTP: DELAWARE)

NORMAN ROESSLER,	
ARTURO UI: AMERICAN DREAM / UNMASTERABLE PAST?	103
HEINZ-UWE HAUS, INTERVIEW	105

LINDA HENDERSON,	
BESIDE THE POINT: MUSICAL ILLUSTRATION IN ARTURO UI	113
CHARLES HELMETAG, PERFORMANCE REVIEW	118
NORMAN ROESSLER, PERFORMANCE REVIEW	120
PETER ZAZZALI, INTERVIEW WITH CARINE MONTBERTRAND	122
CAROLINE WEIST, PERFORMANCE REVIEW	127
BRIDGET SWANSON, PERFORMANCE REVIEW	129
AMY TANGUAY, PERFORMANCE REVIEW	130
ANDREA BARRIER, INTERVIEW	131
KATYA QUINN-JUDGE, ARTURO UI AND THE	
THEATRICALITY OF FASCISM: THE EVIL OF BANALITY	134
SARA KARPINSKI, ENVISIONING HITLER: AMERICA'S HISTORICAL	
IMAGINATION OF ADOLF HITLER AND NAZI POWER	139
JOSÉ ENRIQUE MACIAN, REFLECTIONS ON HEINER MÜLLER'S	
DER AUFHALTSAME AUFSTIEG DES ARTURO UI	
AT THE BERLINER ENSEMBLE	145
ARTURO UI IN THE CIBS ARCHIVE	150
DIALOGUE	
MARTIN MAZORRA, THE POPULAR AMERICAN FLIGHTLESS SHITBIRD	151
PHILIP GLAHN, ABER WIDERSTAND LEISTEN: ON THE	
POSSIBILITIES OF RESISTANCE IN THE VISUAL ARTS	152
MARGARET SETJE EILERS (WOMEN IN THEATER SERIES)	
INTERVIEW WITH SOFIA SIDIPOULO	166
MARNA KING, MARNA KING THEATRE COLLECTION	
AT DIE AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE / ARCHIV DARSTELLEND KUNST	170
R.G. DAVIS, FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO MIME TROUPE TO	
EPIC WEST AND ECOLOGICAL AESTHETICS	177
VERSUCHE	
STEVE GILES, HEARING BERTOLT BRECHT	184
ILSE SCHREIBER NOLL, ON BRECHT EXHIBIT AT THE BRECHT FORUM	187
PHILIP GLAHN, MEDIUM RESISTANCE -	
REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCIES IN PRINT AND CRAFT	189
JONATHAN PAPPAS, WAITING FOR THE SIGN:	
ARE COMICS "ART" YET?	193
SARA JOFFRÉ (& HUGH BULLEY), MADRE CORAJE EN LIMA, PERÚ	201
JULIA MORIARITY,	
AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN PLAYWRIGHT'S USE OF MOTHER COURAGE:	
NTOZAKE SHANGE, LYNNE NOTTAGE, SUZAN-LORI PARKS	203
SABINE BERENDSE, NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION:	
HANNS EISLER IN CONVERSATION WITH HANS BUNGE (EXCERPT)	207
GERD KOCH, BRECHT: AUF IN DIE FREMDE;	
ODER AUCH: BRECHT AUF IN DIE FREMDE	209
HEINZ-UWE HAUS, FERNROTTUNG AKTENKUNDIG	
ODER SCHLAFES MORDER SCHWARZE SONNE	213

Erste Lektion: Bittgänge: Diese Lektion wendet sich direkt an das Gefühl des Lesers. Es empfiehlt sich, nicht zuviel davon auf einmal zu lesen. Auch sollten nur ganz gesunde Leute von dieser für die Gefühle bestimmten Lektion Gebrauch machen.

CIBS 39 has proven to be a difficult birth, confirmed by the fact that it is appearing several weeks later than usual. Contemporary political events cannot be held responsible, although as always they should be acknowledged to provide a historical reference. Some headlines: Overthrow of Government in Tunisia; Secession in the Sudan; One-Year Anniversary of Haitian Earthquake; Record Floods in Australia; Shooting of American Congresswoman in Tucson, Arizona; The Continuing Great Recession; The Continuing Decline of the Humanities / Liberal Arts / Geisteswissenschaften at the University.



NORMAN ROESSLER

Now or can a dearth of material be used as a reason: coming in at 217 pages this is perhaps the most expansive CIBS ever constructed. Indeed, It is because of the incredible amount and quality of material and the concomitant task of doing justice to individual articles as well as integrating them into a whole that CIBS arrives in January rather than December. CIBS 39 is something akin to the Creature in Frankenstein (only Hollywood Nazis use the word, "Monster") or The Rolling Stones' *Exile on Main Street*, or Brecht's Schriften: a wonderful, syncretic mashup that alternately fails and succeeds with each turning of the page. Yes, I know not an exactly humble statement to place CIBS with such divine company, but I speak as editor in support of the various authorial voices that populate this volume. This is some really good shit in here.

Let us examine this CIBS 39 Creature in greater detail.

The backbone of CIBS over the last five years has been performance reviews, interviews and essayistic experiments (Versuche), and CIBS 39 contains a number of great examples from these various genres. Ralf Remshardt's review essay of the 2010 Berliner Theatertreffen covers six of the productions, providing detailed depictions and considerations for each production; and at the same time, invites the reader to reflect on the state of theater at the dawn of the second decade of the 21st century. José Macián effectively covers the major Brecht productions in Berlin over the 2009-2010 year and supplies the CIBS reader with rigorous critical interventions into *Puntilla*, *Arturo Ui*, *Heilige Johanna*, and *Kreidekreis*; with the *Heilige Johanna* review standing out as perhaps the best and most concise review of

the Brechtian theater enterprise ever written. Playwright, poet, puppeteer and polyglot from New Hampshire, Andrew Periale's review of *Galileo*, with a great image of the carnival scene from the production, inspired us to consider a gatefold pullout but financial constraints compelled us to resort to the poor man's centerfold. Christian Ged-schold supplies two comparative reviews based on productions of *Der zerbrochene Krug* and *The Threepenny Opera*, ask us to see theater as a neverending dialectic.

As for interviews, Peggy Setje-Eilers returns with her continuing series of "Woman in Theater" and an interview with Sofia Sidiripoulo at the Berliner Ensemble - providing a slice of the theatrical life rarely seen or discussed. Peter Zazzali, who has written numerous articles over the years, was able to interview his old friend and colleague, Carine Montbertand, for the *Arturo Ui* Casebook. The Versuche section contains selections from new as well as veteran CIBS writers. Julia Moriarity invites us to explore the *Mother Courage* genealogy in the work of contemporary African-American playwrights - Ntozake Shange, Lynn Nottage, and Suzan-Lori Parks. Jonathan Pappas finally takes CIBS into the world of comics and graphic novels with a rumination on comics as works of art.

The 13th IBS Symposium in Hawaii, masterfully organized and conducted by our colleague Markus Wessendorf shows up in a variety of ways throughout this volume. The full program, which is fascinating as a document in itself (Ding an sich), is re-printed and re-presented in full and accompanied by reports and photos from Gudrun-Tabbert Jones and Vera Stegmann. Beyond the academic presentations, the symposium was notable for a number of excellent theatrical productions which were captured in performance reviews by Stephen Brockmann (on the world premiere of the English-adaptation of *The Judith of Shimoda*), Kevin Amidon and Leanne Trape-do Sims (*The Threepenny Opera* at the Fort Shafter U.S. Army Base), Vera Stegmann (*The Hilo Massacre*), and Kristopher Imbrigotta (Robyn Archer and Michael Morley's German Cabaret Concert).

This material alone would likely have been enough, but what sets this volume apart from previous ones is the inclusion of three major thematic sections: *Medium Resistance*, the *Arturo Ui* Casebook, and *The Threepenny Opera. Medium Resistance - Revolutionary Tendencies in Print and Craft* was a graphic art exhibit presented in Spring 2010 in Philadelphia and co-curated by Philip Glahn. Included in this volume are an extensive interview with Philip Glahn, his own programmatic statement on the exhibit, and several photos from the exhibit with Carl Pope's poster art, *The Bad Air of Smelled Roses* serving as leitmotif throughout. What is so intriguing about graphic art is how it performs words and texts with a populist yet artisan attitude and corresponds with Brecht's philosophy on the *Literasierung des Theaters*. Theaters would do well to study the graphic art scene for a little bit of help with their scenic designs that increasingly seem to be pale imitations of television and film. *The Medium Resistance* material ties back to the Istanbul Triennial, that was unfortunately only lightly documented in CIBS 38, and also ties together with a several other articles on Brecht and the Visual Arts including, Steve Giles, "Hearing Brecht"; Ilse Schreiber Noll, "On Brecht" Exhibit at the Brecht Forum in NYC; and, Jonathan Pappas, "Waiting for the Sign: Are Comics 'Art' Yet?"

The *Arturo Ui* Casebook is the third installment of this genre following *Mother Courage* (2006) and *Galileo* (2007). As with the *Galileo* Casebook, Director Heinz-Uwe Haus's production at the University of Delaware with the REP/PTTP ensemble served as the foundation for the project. As always, Uwe was exceedingly generous with his time and access to the production. A real Casebook would document the entire rehearsal and production process from beginning to end, which is something that Uwe is very open to, but the material presented here does outline the main issues surrounding the contemporary and historical aspects of an *Ui* production. We were able to get several performance reviews of the production on different dates, thus providing

multiple perspectives. Notable is the work of Eric Jarosinski's German Drama class at the University of Pennsylvania (Amy Tanguay, Caroline Weist, and Bridget Swanson) and two Temple University students (Sara Karpinski and Katya Quinn-Judge).

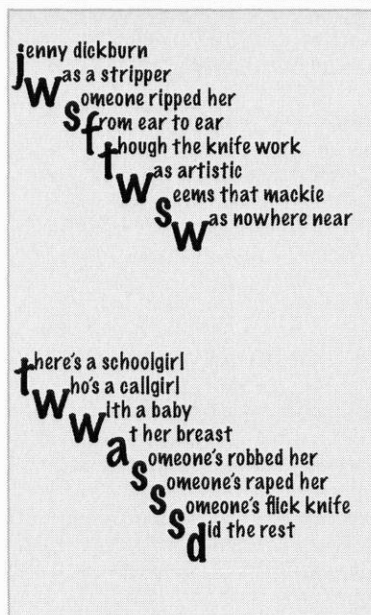
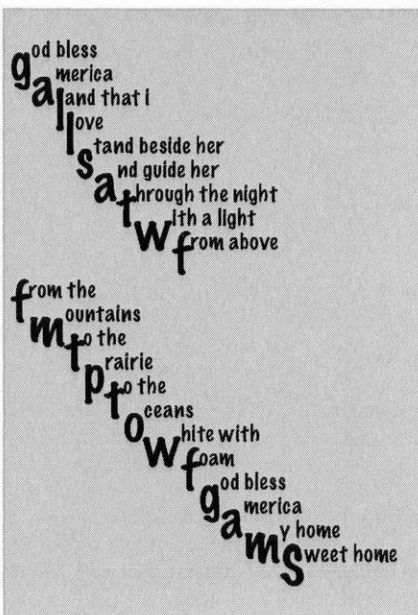
The Threepenny Opera material is the stealth content of this volume, which flies under the radar, aggressively intervenes, and then disappears leaving the reader wondering what happened, yet asking for more. *The Threepenny Opera* is actually the Casebook that we want to do for CIBS 40, but the material was so insistent that it compelled us to include some of it in this volume. Four productions are reviewed – Philadelphia, Hawaii, Berlin, and St. Louis – but much of the *Threepenny* material lies encoded throughout the volume in the form of graphic design, citation, and footnote – and much of this material is inspired by my experience at the Washington University production in late October (Ok, maybe a little influence as well from BB's *Hauspostille*, John Cage, Antony Tatlow, and Roland Barthes). In preparation for my visit, I had the opportunity to delve into the *Threepenny* musical universe and ended up with an imaginary meeting of the minds. "When Bob Dylan Met Bertolt Brecht at the 3p0" as well as a literal meeting of the minds with IBS colleague Peter Ferran. When I arrived in St. Louis, the production, directed by Jeffery Matthews and designed by Sean Savoie, proved to be the best *Threepenny* I have ever seen, the hospitality offered throughout my visit was remarkable, and the intellectual inspiration proved invaluable. Sadly, little of this shows up in this volume, a victim of too much good material coming too late.

As I leave you now reader / writer / scriptor, I recommend the following dialectic soundtrack to accompany your reading pleasure of this, the CIBS 39, Creature:

THE 3P 2.0 APP

ADD WATER; MAKES ITS OWN SAUCE!

- 1) SING "GOD BLESS AMERICA" TO THE TUNE OF "MAC THE KNIFE." ALIENATE FURTHER WITH RHYMELESS RHYME, BAD NASAL VOICE, OUT-OF-TUNE GUITAR, AND GESTICAL ORGAN IN YOUR HEAD; OR,
- 2) DO THE REVERSE, SING THE LYRICS OF "MAC THE KNIFE" TO THE TUNE OF "GOD BLESS AMERICA."



PAULA HANSSEN

Memberships are coming in slowly and we expect to maintain last year's numbers with ongoing renewals. The following report indicates, as last year, that we have covered our expenses for 2010 as well as the expenses for the 13th IBS Symposium in Hawaii 2010, especially with help from two grants and the matching grants from the University of Hawaii.

Due to the rising costs of printing and shipping, and the fees we pay to maintain a Euro account, we decided to raise our membership fees:

Student, Low Income, Emeritus Faculty \$30 / 30 €
 Regular Member (full-time employed) \$40 / 40 €
 Sustaining Member, Institutional Member \$50 / 50 €
 Lifetime member (retirees only) \$200 / 200 €

Summary of expenses (USD)

IBS web domain name (3 years): 30.00
 BY 34 (2009): 4,043.00
 Shipping: 1,285.50
 CIBS 38 (2009) + shipping: 3,488.81.00
 IBS Symposium: (matched by U Hawaii): 12,000.00

Total expenses: 20,847.31

Summary of IBS Assets (USD)

Yearbook royalties, back orders, memberships: 2009 - 2011: 13,421.00
 Grant from Sidney Stern Memorial Trust (for BY 36, 2011): 2,500.00
 Grant from DAAD: 5,000.00
 Euro checking (8028 €): 11,035.00

Assets After Expenses Paid: 31,956.89

Money Market savings: 11,000.00

Projected Expenses, 2010-2011:

CIBS 39 (2010) (+shipping): 3400.00
 BY 35 (2010): 5300.00
 BY Shipping: 1300.00

Total Projected Expenses, 2010-11: 11,000.00

All former and current members will received an email reminder about dues for 2010. We are working on a list of members for all members this year, and we will be changing databases this year; please be patient when the changes are being made.

Discussion at Business meeting of IBS in Honolulu at Symposium: It was agreed that our constitution will need some revision. For example: 1) the reduction of editions of the CIBS to one per year; and 2) new rates for subscribers. Raising our rates to \$45 fully employed / \$30 for students and emeritus will help fill the gap.

Please ask your library to carry the *Brecht Yearbook*.

Synopsis of IBS Membership

Year	Individual	Institutional	Total
2000	107	89	196
2001	100	83	183
2002	97	90	187
2003	133	84	217
2004	98	88	186
2005	90	79	169
2006	109	75	184
2007	53	72	170
2008	76	84	160
2009	84	86	170
2010	30	90	120 (175 projected)

The IBS sponsored two panels and a business meeting at the conference of the Modern Language Association in Philadelphia. Over 20 people attended the first panel and over 15 the second panel. Following the first panel, 11 people gathered for the IBS business meeting and dinner at Penang Restaurant in nearby Chinatown. Marc Silberman presided at the business meeting, where the main agenda item was to plan the next MLA sessions under the new regulations for Allied Organizations (such as the IBS). The consensus was to plan a "guaranteed" panel on "Brecht in Exile" (a roundtable to focus on Brecht and his wide circle German / Austrian exiles in the USA) and to seek a partner for a cooperative session on "Brecht, Marxism, and Ethics II" (building on the success of the 2009 panel, which received a large number of abstracts). Silberman also reported briefly on the following: IBS elections, conducted online in December 2009, the planned Brecht-Tage 2010 at the Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus, plans for the IBS's 13th Symposium in Hawaii (May 19-23, 2010), and IBS finances. Also in attendance were Friedemann Weidauer, who presented the newest volume of the Brecht Yearbook (34/2009), fresh off the press, as well as Norm Roessler, who distributed copies of the new *CIBS* (38/2009). Next year's MLA conference will take place in Los Angeles, 6-9 January 2011.

MLA Conference
December 2009

MARC SILBERMAN

SESSION 36. BRECHT, MARXISM, AND ETHICS

SUNDAY, 27 DECEMBER 2009, 5:15–6:30 P.M.

MODERATOR: MARC SILBERMAN

THE DRAMATURGY OF DEBT – AND ITS RELIEFS

DANIEL CUONZ, UNIVERSITY OF ZÜRICH / YALE UNIVERSITY

One of the most important intersections of ethics and the critique of capitalism is the relationship between financial and moral indebtedness. Significantly enough, the German term "Schuld" means both guilt and debt and designates all kinds of concepts of deficit and obligation. Walter Benjamin famously referred to the "demonic ambiguity" of the concept of "Schuld" and claimed it to be the very principle of capitalism. Brecht has put this issue on stage in different versions – at its most salient in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Modal verbs of obligation, admission and ability (müssen,

dürfen, können) echo through the whole play, but the structures of values that they seem to refer to are always already defined in terms of prices. The indebtedness of all human relations in capitalist societies seems to be absolute and hopeless. At first sight, thus, it appears as a contradiction that Brecht's dramaturgical theory and many of his later plays explicitly *obligate* the spectator to take a critical point of view towards these relations of *obligation* – for example in the famous ending of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*: “Verehrtes Publikum, los, such dir selbst den Schluß! Es muß ein guter da sein, muß, muß, muß!” Where, in contrast, the criticism of the capitalistic debt-economy is acted out to its very last consequences – as it is the case in *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* – the claim for solutions makes evidently little sense. The relief from the logic of obligation and indebtedness, the possibility of a debt- and guilt-free future, can be neither theoretically mediated nor ideologically decreed – but it can be made experiential, as a creditworthy encounter with the epic theatre.

ALL TOGETHER NOW: “WE ALL LIVE BY THE V-EFFECT, THE V-EFFECT, THE V-EFFECT”: BRECHTIAN ELEMENTS IN EAST AND WEST GERMAN MUSICALS OF THE 1960S.

SUNKA SIMON, SWARTHMORE COLLEGE

For the Hollywood musical, Richard Dyer has shown that while “musicals, like myth, attempt to resolve [socioeconomic] contradictions. Since the contradictions are real, they do not always succeed.” (Dyer, “Entertainment and Utopia,” 1977). For the Brechtian context, the musical genre transports better than any other genre from stage to screen. It is the form that can self-reflexively represent its medium's historical turning points, such as the shift from cinema's silent to sound era captured by Stanley Donnen's 1952 *Singin' in the Rain*, while entertaining the masses in a historically specific way. This specificity, as escapist or utopian as it seems at the outset, stems from learning “what emotion is embodied” in order to know how (not) to respond to it (Dyer 1977). In the way it codes emotional responses, the musical genre has always held a significant relationship to the specific political and socioeconomic context of its production and reception. The paper reads Brecht's theories of performance, acting, realism, and political theater with Dyer's theory of “entertainment and utopia” in the musical genre. It investigates the failure of embodiment in two musical films from the late 1960s: the DEFA production *Heisser Sommer* (Joachim Hasler, 1968) and the West German *Hurra, die Schule brennt* (Werner Jacobs, 1969). Both film stories center on the young generation coming of age in the late 1960s at the beginning of the student, peace, and women's movements. The paper argues that irreducible socio-political and generic tensions lead the audio-visual texts to perform a Brechtian ethics of epic commentary rather than affective embodiment.

IRONY, BELIEF, AND ESTRANGEMENT. ETHICS AND OTHER SELVES IN BRECHT'S *DER GUTE MENSCH VON SEZUAN*

MARTON MARKO, UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

A central device in Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* is the duplicate staging of the protagonist / prostitute Shen Te and her invented counter figure, the enterprising businessman cousin Shui Ta. The binary modeling of gender identity created through the coupling of the performed figures directs attention, on the one hand, to specificities of male- and female-coded dimensions of the capitalist power structure within the depicted social milieu. The audience clearly witnesses Shen Te's capacity to subvert given conventions associated with gender and power through her assumption of male identity. At the same time, those conventions and codes are also arguably seen as reified by Shen Te's staging of her male cousin figure. Viewing *Der gute Mensch* through the lens of three late-20th century interpreters of Marx, Julia Kristeva, Judith Butler, and Paul Ricoeur, we can re-visit Brecht's dialectic of self and society in *Der gute Mensch*

through the play's examination of gender construction as a challenge to naturalized identity. This focus on social formation of identity and projection of the self, which I link each to Ricoeur's notion of agency in the construction of otherness, Kristeva's meditation on the role of each irony and belief in locating "the stranger within," as well as Butler's discussion of parody and politics, serves as the grounding for an investigation of gender and identity politics at work in *Der gute Mensch* that both reflects and re-evaluates Marxist ethical dimensions in the piece.

SESSION 683: POSTCOMMUNIST BRECHT

WEDNESDAY, 30 DECEMBER 2009, 12:00-1:15 PM

MODERATOR: VERA STEGMANN

"DIE WAHRHEIT IST KONKRET" OR "VERDUNKELUNG DER TATBESTÄNDE"? BRECHT AND IMAGES OF WAR IN CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

KRISTOPHER IMBRIGOTTA, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

The rapid developments which characterize today's twenty-four hour media culture have created a runaway monster. With this onset and proliferation of mass media, war in particular has become—and will continue to be—very photogenic. As image-consumers, we want to see it; as image-producers, these same media outlets are pleased to provide "image events" on demand. But, can we rely on what we see? What is missing from that message? Strictly speaking, Marxist thinkers and critics have been skeptical of images in their ability to faithfully convey the realities of class, power, and truth; to a certain extent, Bertolt Brecht was no different. However, such a blanket statement does not fully capture the often tenuous working relationship that Brecht and photography share. From this many questions arise: Does photography uncover truth or cover up societal relations? How does Brecht employ photographs to expose contradictions? Can we continue to read contemporary images of war as Brecht sought to read/use them more than 50 years ago in his works? This paper briefly outlines first how Brecht appropriated press photographs and poetic commentary to help us rethink our approach to history, war, and visual representation, and second demonstrates through examples of recent war photographs his continued critical relevance to our current relationship with and assessment of the causes and effects of global conflict.

DOES BRECHT REALLY COMBINE EAST AND WEST?

SHAOJING WU, NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

The two most common comments on Brecht and his plays are: 1) he has the magic talents to combine the impossible elements of west and east in his plays, or, he was greatly influenced by Chinese culture and dramas; 2) and he is often considered as a Marxist playwright or dramatist. Since many scholars think there is a close relationship between Chinese culture and Marxism, I will comment on the relationship between the essence of Chinese culture and the gist of Marxism. Based on this discussion, I will analyze the above-mentioned two perspectives on Brecht and his plays. Living in a globalized context, I intend to bring out some implications and insights on how to understand influences of worldly influential figures like Brecht and how to understand the East and West.

BRECHT AFTER THE GREAT AWAKENING, 1980-2010; OR, GLOTZEN IST NICHT SEHEN

NORMAN ROESSLER, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

The title is a strategic maneuver, a Brechtian title proclaimed within academic theater but alienated from what happens onstage. What I am here to do is to suggest that "Post-communist Brecht" is not an ideational field, but rather a complex, a mosaic, of rhetori-

cal and analytic strategies that remind us of the counter-intuitive nature of human existence, which is a necessary, useful, and pleasurable engagement. One will surely note echoes of Jameson's *Brecht and Method* from 1997, in which he discusses "Brechtian Slyness" incorporated in the master's language, mode of thinking, and storytelling, in these opening comments. If they are more than echoes, than I am either following Brecht's own penchant for theft or I am restating the obvious to the choir, but as Tony Kushner remarks in his *Notes on Political Theater*, the choir *does* need preaching to. Although similar in tone, there is one crucial difference between Jameson's approach and my project here: I will make the case for "Postcommunist Brecht" as Procedural rather than Ideational by examining the infrastructure of the Brecht Industry itself. This includes 1) areas of ideational content; i.e. the problems, topics, debates that are performed in public forums such as academic journals and conferences such as the MLA; 2) useable Brecht materials upon which to base explorations of new ideational content; and 3) applications of both content and material in new spaces rather than the traditional university and regional theater.

13TH IBS SYMPOSIUM

BRECHT
IN / AND
ASIAHONOLULU,
HAWAII / USA

MAY 19-23, 2010

CONFERENCE BEGINS.
CW

WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2010: 1:00 - 5:30 arrival & registration (foyer/Kennedy Theatre); 3:30 - 5:30 IBS business meeting (QLC 412); 5:30 - 7:00 opening ceremony (mainstage/Kennedy Theatre): Opening Chant: Kumu Hula Snowbird Bento; Hula "Kaulilua": Kumu Hula Snowbird Bento & 'ōlapa; Welcome Remarks: Conference Organizer, Markus Wessendorf; Vice President of the IBS, Günther Heeg; President of the IBS, Hans-Thies Lehmann (video message); Interim Dean of Arts and Humanities, Thomas Bingham; Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Reed Dasenbrock; Tammy Haili'opua Baker from the Hawaiian-language theatre troupe Ka Hālau Hanakeaka;

Closing Hula "'Au'a 'Ia": Kumu Hula Snowbird Bento & 'ōlapa; 7:00 - 8:00 catered dinner (Paradise Palms Café); 8:00 (rueum): Ong Keng Sen (TheatreWorks, Singapore); Evening program: 9:30 theatre: The Red Ernst Lab Theatre); 9:30 theatre: Center).

keynote address 1 (Art Auditorium): "Brecht in Singapore"; Rockets: Mor Is Mor (Earle Borderline (Ong King Arts

Thursday, May 20, 2010
Colonial and Postimperial

103). Moderator: Friedemann (University of Connecticut, Storrs); man (University of Notre Brecht? - A Discussion of Complex Portrayal of the East as Seen in Man and The Mea-Taken"; Simran (University of to): "Brecht the Fall of Empire";

Marc Silberman (University of Wisconsin, Madison): "The Postcolonial Brecht?" **2) Brechtian Negotiations of East/West Traditions** (Webster Hall 112). Moderator: Guy Stern (Wayne State University, Detroit); Hilary Demske (Utah Valley University, Orem): "Music, Poetry, and the Nō Drama"; Martin Revermann (University of To-

(9:00-10:30): 1) Post-Brecht (Webster Hall

J. Weidauer (University of Dins-Dame): "Imperial Bertolt Brecht's Empire and Man Equals s u r e s K a r i r T o r o n a n d t h e



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ronto): "Brecht's Asia vs. Brecht's Greece"; Glenn Stanley (University of Connecticut, Storrs): "Brecht and the Classical Opera: Critical Fidelio Performances in Germany, 1968 to the Present"; **(11:00- 2:30): 1) Contemporary Political Theatre**

(Webster Hall 103). Moderator: Laura Lyons (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa); Pari-chat Jungwiwattanaporn (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa): "In Contestation over Hegemonic Narrative: Kamron's Brechtian Theatre and Beyond"; Peilin Liang (University of Texas, Austin): "Localizing Brecht—Performing Hakka Women and Pear-Growers on Taiwan's Fault Line"; Neelima Talwar (Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay): "The Brechtian Paradigm in Science-Drama"; **2) Adaptations and Translations of Brecht in Bangladesh and India** (Webster Hall 112); Moderator: Ricardo Trimillos (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa); Farzana Akhter (East West University, Dhaka): "Performing Brecht in Bangladesh: Making the Unfamiliar Familiar"; B. Venkat Mani (University of Wisconsin, Madison): "Translating Die Dreigroschenoper into Hindi: Preliminary Notes on Teen Kaudi ki Nautanki"; Manisha Patil (Institute of Science, Satara): "Postcolonial Adaptations, Translations and Other Offshoots of Brechtian Plays in Bombay Theatre"; **3) Brecht "Vermittlungen" in Asien** (Webster Hall 113); Moderator: Gerd Koch (Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, Berlin); Sabine Kebir (author, Berlin): "Helene Weigels Weg ins asiatische Theater"; Marianne Streisand (University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück): "'Sei stille, mein Herz, dieses Asien hat ein Loch, durch das man; hineinkriechen kann' (Uria in Brechts Mann ist Mann): Die Entdeckung der Massen in Brechts Mann ist Mann"; Yuan Tan (Huazhong University of Science and Technology): "Verehrung oder Maskierung? Neue Studien zu Brechts Sechs chinesischen Gedichten"; **(2:00-3:30): 1) Brecht and Traditional Indian Theatre** (Webster Hall 103); Moderator: B. Venkat Mani (University of Wisconsin, Madison); Boris Daussà-Pastor (The Graduate Center, City University of New York): "Estrangement in Kathakali"; Parameswaran S (University of Mysore): "The Concept of Alienation in the Context of Kutiyattam in Kerala" [since Parameswaran S cannot be present, another panellist will read his paper]; Devika Wasson (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa): "Proximity and Distance in Kutiyattam: The Social Implications of the Role of the Concept of Gestus"; **2) "Go-Betweens"** (Webster Hall 112); Moderator: Kevin S. Amidon (Ames); Sabine Husch (Berlin): "Intercultural Pina Bausch's Tanztheater"; (Lehigh University, of Fremde and Fremd-Writings"; **(4:00 - 5:30): 1) Fritz Bennewitz in Asia** (Webster Hall 103); Moderator: Florian Vaßen (University of Hanover); Rolf Rohmer (Fritz Bennewitz Archive, Leipzig): "A Brechtian Approach to Interculturalism - Fritz Bennewitz's Theatre



Work in Asia" [since Rolf Rohmer cannot be present, Alexander Stillmark will read his paper]; Joerg Esleben (University of Ottawa): "Asia in Brecht in Asia: Fritz Bennewitz's 1973 Production of the Caucasian Chalk Circle in Mumbai"; David G. John (University of Waterloo, Ontario): "Fritz Bennewitz's Caucasian Chalk Circle in the Philippines"; **2) "Asia" in Brecht** (Webster Hall 112); Moderator: Martina Kolb (Pennsylvania State University, University Park); Eberhard Fritz (Archive of the House of Wuerttemberg, Altshausen): "Grandma, Pietism and the Missionaries: Origins of Bertolt Brecht's Asia"; Ralf Räuer (Edith Cowan University, Perth): "Brecht's Baal and the Chinese God of Happiness"; **Evening Program:** 6:00 lecture-demonstration by Richard Schechner on his directorial work (Music Building, room 36); 8:00 concert: Robyn Archer & Michael Morley: German Cabaret Songs (Orvis Auditorium); 10:30 theatre: The Red Rockets: Mor Is Mor (Earle Ernst Lab Theatre).

Friday, May 21, 2010 (9:00-10:30): 1) Brecht and the Middle East (Webster Hall 103); Moderator: Manfred Henningsen (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa); Frank Episale (The Graduate Center, City University of New York): "Brecht (Not) in Asia: On the Mis-Application of Brechtian Ideas to Ta'ziyeh and other "Traditional" Theatres"; Markus Wessendorf (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa): "'Fear and Misery' Post-9/11: Mark Ravenhill's Shoot/Get Treasure/Repeat"; **2) Brecht und das japanische Gegenwartstheater** (Webster Hall 112);

Moderator: Günther Heeg (University of Leipzig); Michiko Tanigawa (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies): "Die Stellung des Black Tent Theaters (BTT) in der japanischen Brecht-Rezeption"; Eiichi Hirata (Keio University Tokyo): "Das andere Brecht-Theater in Japan"; Akira Ichikawa (Osaka University) und Joachim Lucchesi (Karlsruhe University): "Jan-Jan-Oper und Osaka-Rap: Brecht-Nachklänge im Theater Ishinha"; **(11:00-12:30): 1) Brecht and Asian Cinema** (Webster Hall 103); Moderator: Ming-Bao Yue (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa); Jeanne Bindernagel (University of Leipzig): "Cinematic Gestus and Gesture in Wong Kar-Wai's In the Mood for Love and 2046"; Laura Heins (University of Virginia, Charlottesville): "Brechtian Theory and Indian New Wave Cinema: the Dialectical Realisms of Ritwik Ghatak and Mrinal Sen"; Danielle Verena Kollig (University of Virginia, Charlottesville): "From Tokyo's Office Girl to Taipei's Punk Princess—Bertolt Brecht's Early Political Aesthetics and the Cinema of Yasujiro Ozu and Hou Hsiao-hsien"; **2) Asian Theatre and the Lehrstücke** (Webster Hall 112); Moderator: Kristopher Imbrigotta (University of Wisconsin, Madison); Andreas Aurin (University of New South Wales, Sydney): "Taoist Philosophy and The Horatians and the Curiations"; Finn Iunker (playwright, Oslo): "An Easy Kill in China: Occidentalist Perspectives on The Measures Taken"; **(2:00-3:30): 1) Sense and Sensibility: Brecht Meets Japanese Aesthetics** (Webster 103); Moderator: John Szostak (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa); Martina Kolb (Pennsylvania State University, University Park): "The Drama of Things: On Love and Character in Brecht and Pound"; Lúcia Nagib (University of Leeds): "The Realm of the Senses, shunga and the Eroticized Apparatus"; **2) Asian National Theatre Traditions Encounter Brecht** (Webster Hall 112); Moderator: James Brandon



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and Asian

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(University of Hawai'i at Mānoa); Michael Fernando (University of the Visual and Performing Arts, Colombo): "Brecht in Sri Lanka after 60 Years: His; Contributions to a New Aesthetic Approach in a South Asian Society under Postcolonial Conditions"; Frances Mammana (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa): "On Display: Brechtian Renderings of Ryukyuan Heterotopias in Jinruikan"; Alexander Stillmark (director, Berlin): "An Unrepeatable Model 1968-1985, or, Looking Back into Utopia: Integrating Brecht into Traditional Vietnamese Theatre"; **4:00-5:30 round-table (Art Auditorium): "Brecht in Honolulu"** (with directors and performers of the Brecht Theatre Festival: Harry Akina, Brett Harwood, Harry Wong III., Paul Mitri, Jenn Thomas, and Robyn Archer). Moderation: Lurana O'Malley. **Evening program:** 6:30 shuttle bus to The Threepenny Opera in front of Kennedy Theatre; 7:30 theatre: The Judith of Shimoda & The Mahagonny Songspiel (Kennedy Theatre); 7:30 theatre: The Threepenny Opera (Army Community Theatre, Fort Shafter); followed by Q&A with director Brett Harwood and his cast; 8:00 theatre: Borderline (Ong King Arts Center);

Saturday, May 22, 2010 (9:00-10:30): 1) Brecht's "Asian" Texts: Collaborators and Contemporaries (Webster Hall 103); Moderator: Stephen Brockmann (Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh); Dennis Carroll (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa): "Wuolijoki, Brecht, 'Well-Made' Dramaturgy, and The Judith of Shimoda"; Paula Hanssen (Webster University St. Louis): "Brecht in/and Asia: the Role of Collaborators in Texts from/set in Asia"; Weijia Li (Western Illinois University, Macomb): Strategy of Survival: Taoism in Brecht and Anna Seghers; **2) New Perspectives on The Good Person of Szechwan** (Webster Hall 112); Moderator: Helen Fehervary (Ohio State University, Columbus); Jan Creutzenberg (Free University Berlin): "The Good Person of Korea: Crosscultural Synergies and Challenges in Lee Jaram's Sacheon-ga"; Clayton Drinko (Tufts University, Medford/Somerville): "Water Over Stone Over Time: The Place for Realistic Acting Technique in Brecht's Marxist Revolution"; Zheng Jie (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore): "Brecht's Good Person of Szechwan: Undermining the East-West and Self-Other Dichotomy"; **(11:00-12:30):**

1) Brecht and Mao (Webster Hall 103); Moderator: Hui Jiang (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa); Joseph Dial (University of Washington, Seattle): "Brecht and Mao, 1935-37"; Anthony Squiers (Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo): "On Contradiction: a Philosophical Analysis of Mao Tse Tung's Influence on Bertolt Brecht"; Friedemann J. Weidauer (University of Connecticut, Storrs): "Brecht's (Brush with) Maoism";

2) Brecht's Asian Turn(s) and the Theory of Cultural Flexions (Webster Hall 112);

Moderator: Antony Tatlow (Trinity College, Dublin); Günther Heeg (University of Leipzig): "Of Brecht's Chinese Peripeties: The Practice of Transcultural Flexions"; Sophie Witt (University of Potsdam): "Between Appropriation and Expropriation: Reading Brecht with Artaud"; **3) Fremdheit und Verfremdung** (Webster Hall 113);

Moderator: Marianne Streisand (University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück); Gerhard Fischer (University of New South Wales, Sydney): "Verfremdung als philosophische und ästhetisch-didaktische Kategorie: Anmerkungen zu einem zentralen Werkbegriff Brechts"; Gerd Koch (Alice Salomon University of Applied Sciences, Berlin): "'Ortswechsel des Denkens' (François Jullien): Erkenntnis-pragmatische Überlegungen zu Bertolt Brecht"; Florian Vaßen (University of Hanover): "Fremdheit und Verfremdung bei Brecht";

2:00-3:15 Keynote Address 3 (Art Auditorium): Haiping Yan (Cornell University): "Sphere of Feelings: Theatricality in Chinese Aesthetics and Beyond"; 3:30 shuttle bus for downtown group excursion; 4:00 Historical and Cultural Walking Tour of Chinatown (Hawaii Heritage Center); 6:00 dinner at Little Village Noodle House; 8:00 theatre: The Hilo Massacre at Kumu Kahua Theatre; Alternative options: 7:30 theatre: The Judith of Shimoda & The Mahagonny Songspiel (Kennedy Theatre); 7:30 theatre: The Threepenny Opera (Army Community Theatre);

Sunday, May 23, 2010 (9:00-10:30): 1) Race, Class and Sexuality in Brecht's SPlays (Webster Hall 103); Moderator: Lurana O'Malley (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa); Kevin S. Amidon (Iowa State University, Ames): "Brecht's Operatic Anthro-

pology: Reflections on Race, Class, and Chinese Theatre"; Kathy Phillips (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa): "Bacchants, Homosexuals, and Asians in Brecht's In the Jungle of Cities"; Gudrun Tabbert-Jones (Santa Clara University): "The 'Lord of the South Sea' and his 'Maori Woman': The Function of the Tahiti Metaphor in Brecht's In the Jungle of Cities and Other Early Works"; **2) Contemporary Asian Playwrights and Directors Read Brecht** (Webster Hall 112); Moderator: Kirstin Pauka (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa); Ronald Gilliam (University of Hawai'i at Mānoa): "The I in YOU: Alienation in Gao Xingjian's Nocturnal Wanderer"; Susan Philip (University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur): "Brecht and Kee Thuan Chye in 1984, Here and Now"; Daniela Pillgrab (University of Vienna): "'The Text is Inside the Dance': Ong Keng Sen's Desire for a Connection of Epic Theatre and Peking Opera"; **3) Brecht and Contemporary Indian Theatre** (Webster Hall 113); Moderator: Manisha Patil (Institute of Science, Satara); Amal Allana (Theatre & Television Associates, New Delhi): "Brecht and India: Urban Encounters/Postcolonial Trajectories"; Nissar Allana (Theatre & Television Associates, New Delhi): "Brecht: Co-Author. Indian Modernism and Contemporary Theatre"; **1:00-12:15 Keynote Address 4** (Art Auditorium): Richard Schechner (New York University): "The Performance Group's Mother Courage in India"; 12:15 – 1:00 catered lunch (in front of the Art Auditorium); **1:00– 1:45 wrap-up presentation** (Art Auditorium): Antony Tatlow (Trinity College, Dublin): "Brecht and East Asia: A Conspectus" (Introduction: Helen Fehervary); **2:00 theatre: The Judith of Shimoda & The Mahagonny Songspiel (Kennedy Theatre)**; 8:00 meeting for drinks at RumFire at the Sheraton Waikiki (2255 Kalakaua Ave.); Alternative options: 8:00 theatre: Borderline (Ong King Arts Center).

Sunday May 23

CONFERENCE ENDS.

O MOON OF
HONOLULU:
BRECHT
IN / AND
ASIA

Vom 19. Bis 23. Mai fand an der University of Hawaii at Manoa das 13. Symposium der Internationalen Brecht Gesellschaft statt. Etwa 100 Wissenschaftler und Praktiker aus Nordamerika, Europa, Asien waren angereist, um Beiträge zu dem Thema "Brecht in/and Asien" vorzutragen. Entstanden war das Konzept für diese Konferenz im Jahr 2006, als sich Hans Thiess-Lehmann und Markus Wessendorf zusammensetzten und darüber berieten, wo man das nächste Symposium veranstalten solle. Auch über mögliche Themen tauschte man sich aus. Markus

Wessendorf, Associate Professor at the department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Hawaii schlug die eigene Universität als Tagungsort vor.

GUDRUN TABBERT-JONES

Auch das Thema der Konferenz "Brecht in/and Asia" passte zu dieser Umgebung, ist doch Hawaii der asiatischste aller amerikanischen Staaten. Im Einvernehmen mit IBS übernahm also Markus Wessendorf die Planung und Organisation des Symposiums wohl wissend, dass ihn dieses Unterfangen in den folgenden vier Jahren viel Mühe und Zeit kosten würde. Eine große Rolle spielte natürlich die Frage nach den zur Verfügung stehenden Mitteln, besonders im Hinblick auf geplante Abendveranstaltungen. Ursprünglich hatte Wessendorf mit der Idee gebälgt, zwei bedeutende Theatertruppen aus Fernost einzuladen, jedoch daraus wurde nichts, aus finanziellen Gründen! Also suchte er nach weniger kostspieligen Alternativen und beschränkte sich auf die vor Ort zur Verfügung stehenden Talente und Mittel. Was anfangs wie ein Kompromiss ausah, erwies sich dann als großer Erfolg.

Die Eröffnung fand am 19. Mai, im Kennedy Theatre der Universität statt. Markus Wessendorf und Thomas Bingham, Dean of Arts and Humanities begrüßten die Konferenzteilnehmer mit einer Ansprache. Anschließend sorgte die Tammy Haili'opua Baker

und Kumu Hula Snowbird Tanztruppe für Lokalkolorit. Den Einführungsvortrag am ersten Abend hielt der durch verschiedene Inszenierungen auch in Deutschland bekannt gewordene Regisseur Ong Keng Sen (Theatre Works, Singapore). Brechts habe nicht nur ihn sondern auch die Theaterarbeit politischer Gruppen in verschiedenen Ländern im asiatischen Raum geprägt: "Brecht's influence on me has been immense, beginning with the recognition of my own culture in his plays." Damit umriss er, worum es in den Vorträgen, die an den folgenden drei Tagen gehalten wurden, ging, den maßgeblichen Einfluss Brechts auf eine ganze Generation von Theaterpraktikern weltweit. Ein Blick auf die im Programmheft aufgeführten Titel mögen einen Eindruck davon geben, wie reichhaltig dieses Programm war. Trotz beigefügter Inhaltsangaben fiel die Entscheidung, in welche Sitzung man nun gehen sollte, schwer. Gut, dass die Sitzungssäle nahe beieinander lagen, so dass man möglichst unauffällig von einem zum anderen hinüberwechseln konnte. Sitzungen "geschwänzt", um doch noch ein bisschen die nähere Umgebung zu erkunden, haben wohl nur wenige. Zu verlockend war das, was da auf dem Programm stand.

Dem anspruchsvollen Tagesprogramm folgten abendliche Aufführungen verschiedener lokaler Bühnen. Aufgeführt wurden: *The Red Rockets: Mor is Mor* (Earle Ernst Lab Theatre), *Borderline* (Ong King Arts Center), *The Three Penny Opera* (Army Community Theatre) sowie "German Cabaret Songs," meisterhaft gesungen von Robyn Archer in Klavierbegleitung von



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Michael Morley. Das Glanzstück der Abendveranstaltungen war zweifelsohne *The Judith of Shimoda*, in Übersetzung von Markus Wessendorf und unter der Regie von Paul T. Mitri, aufgeführt am Kennedy Theatre der University Hawaii. Es handelte sich um die erste englischsprachige Aufführung eines nur bruchstückhaft vorliegenden Stückes, das erst vor einigen Jahren von Hans Peter Neureuter im Nachlass Hella Wouljokis entdeckt wurde. Man hatte bei dieser Erstaufführung bewusst darauf verzichtet, den Text, oder vielmehr die Texte zu kürzen, was insofern vertretbar war, als es sich bei dem Publikum ja um Fachleute handelte, denen man bislang unbekanntes Material in seiner Gesamtheit zugänglich machen wollte. Dem Stück vorangestellt war *The Little Mahagonny*. Es gastierten Künstler des Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio of the Hawaii Opera Theatre, musikalisch begleitet von Musikern der University of Hawaii in Manoa. Beide Aufführungen begeisterten das Publikum und ernteten großen Beifall. Um ehrlich zu sein, wir hatten nicht erwartet, an einer Universität Brecht so professionell aufgeführt zu sehen.

Am Sonntag, den 23. Mai, wurde der Erfolg der Konferenz, die so viele Brecht-fachleute aus allen Himmelsrichtungen zusammengebracht hatte, um die Erstaufführung der *Judith of Shimoda* feucht fröhlich gefeiert. Pläne für das nächste Symposium, das in nicht allzu ferner Zukunft auf einem anderen Erdteil stattfinden soll, werden bereits geschmiedet.

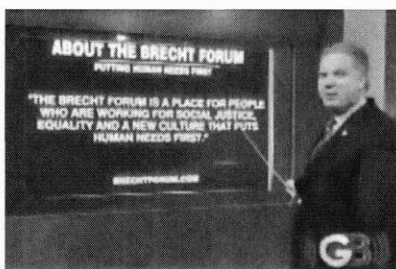
BRECHT IN THE NEWS 2010-2011

January 31, 2010: Galileo in Iran (From LA Times)

"Dariush Farhang, a longtime actor and director, said in an interview that he reinterpreted the play to draw "a contrast between logic and ignorance, modernity and ancientness" for the annual Fajr festival, a cultural event preceding the Feb. 11 anniversary of the Islamic Revolution. Despite an international and domestic boycott of the film portion of Fajr because of the post-election crisis, no one even considered letting the Galileo troupe's months-long rehearsals go to waste ... Farhang and co-writer Saeed Shahsavari insert references to Iranian history into the play, noting, for example, that Galileo was preceded not only by the 16th century Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus in arguing for a heliocentric universe, but also by the 11th century Persian astronomer Abu Rayhan Biruni. The writers added verses from the late Iranian dissident Ahmad Shamlu's poetry. When actor Amin Taroukh, who plays Galileo, referring to one of Shamlu's works, defiantly tells the pope, "this snow is not going to stop," he drew the raucous applause of the audience, who smirked, sighed or even wept at dialogues that were adapted to subtly refer to post-election events and arguments." The score included sorrowful church requiems and the winter portion of Vivaldi's "Four Seasons." Toward the end of the play, Andrea, Galileo's adopted child, declared, "We are a miserable nation because we have no heroes." Galileo answered, "We are a miserable nation because we need heroes." The audience roared with applause." Ramin Mostaghim, "Tehran Staging of Galileo Reflects a Nation's Struggle." (<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond>)

February 2010: CIBS Website (www.ecibs.org) Victim of Sneak Attack! Infamy! Nation Mourns! Electronic Viagra Virus Claims Global Leader on Alienation.

March 2, 2010: Glenn Beck vs. Brecht Forum (from www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSZM9PfEq_M)



April 2010

IBS announces new Website:
<http://wiu.edu/users/brecht10>

&

New Facebook site:
www.facebook.com/brechtsociety.

June 2010: 1956 Mother Courage Recordings

Recordings of San Francisco Actor's Workshop 1956 Production of Mother Courage, starring Beatrice Manley as Mother Courage, released. See: <http://beatricemanley.com>

July 15, 2010: Helene Weigel on NYC Stage (from nytheatre.com)

"I have inherited a rage which cannot be expressed or shared communally," Helene Weigel begins her last soliloquy. As the production draws to a close, I'm forced to agree. *The Last Dreams of Helene Weigel or How to Get Rid of Feminism Once and for All* is an exploratory opera that follows Helene Weigel, actress, wife, and "perfect woman," as she confronts various surreal, feminist dilemmas and has visions of her doppelganger, 12th century scholar, Heloise d' Argenteuil. Highly ambitious, the performance ultimately suffers from an over-saturation of under-explored concepts." Di Jayawickrema, "The Last Dreams of Helene Weigel or How to Get Rid of The Feminism Once and For All." (www.nytheatre.com).

August 5, 2010: Fatzer in Brazil (from nachtkritik.de)

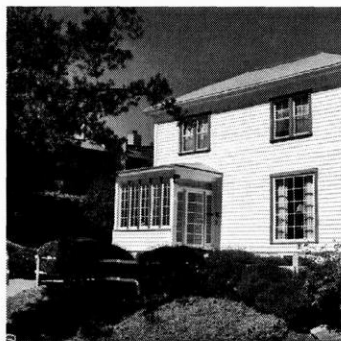
“Das ist ja immer noch ein Abenteuer für sich – wenn ein deutsches Theater-Ensemble, eines zumal aus der freien Szene, die neue, aktuelle Produktion weit weg von zu Hause zur Premiere bringt; und auch nicht etwa bei einem der bekannteren europäischen Festivals, sondern gleich in Brasilien. andcompany&Co, mit halbwegs festem Arbeitswohnsitz am Berliner Theater Hebbel am Ufer zu Hause, zeigt in Sao Paulo FatzerBraz, eine durch und durch brasilianisierte Fassung von Bertolt Brechts Bühnenfragment über den Untergang des Egoisten Johann Fatzer, entstanden zwischen 1926 und 1930. Gerade hatte sich ja ein internationaler Jugendworkshop in Mülheim als Teil des Programms der Kulturhauptstadt Ruhr 2010 mit dem Text beschäftigt; Anfang November kommt dann auch die brasilianisch-deutsche Fassung nach Mülheim, wo Brechts Stück spielt. In Brasilien ist Brechts Revolution vor allem bunt, und sie atmet Trash. Che Guevara und Ulrike Meinhof, Brasiliens historische Schlager-Muse Carmen Miranda, aber auch der Medien-Mogul Silvio Santos, eine Art Berlusconi à la Brasil heutzutage, tingeln und tändeln als Masken-Wesen durch den Eröffnungsreigen, und eine ulkige Version der legendären “Orfeu Negro”-Filmmusik von Luiz Bonfá dudelt dazu” Michael Laages, “Wer frisst wen?” (www.nachtkritik.de).

September 24, 2010: Brecht House for Sale! (from an email to the editor)

My walk to work often takes me by Brecht's residence in Santa Monica. Today I noticed a for sale sign in the front lawn. It has been on the market for two days. Please see the attached picture I took with my phone today. Although he lived in 4 different locations during his exile in this area, he stayed in this house longer than any other. If we follow the chronology, Galileo and the Chalk Circle were written here. The house is well cared for. The exterior seems to be unchanged and I suspect the interior is mostly preserved.

Here is Brecht's description from Aug 12 '42 lifted from the USC web site: “one of the oldest, is about 30 years old, california clapboard, whitewashed, with an upper floor with 4 bedrooms. i have a long workroom (almost 7 meters), which we immediately whitewashed and equipped with 4 tables. there are old trees in the garden (a pepper-tree and a fig-tree). rent is \$60 per month, \$12.50 more than in 25th street.”

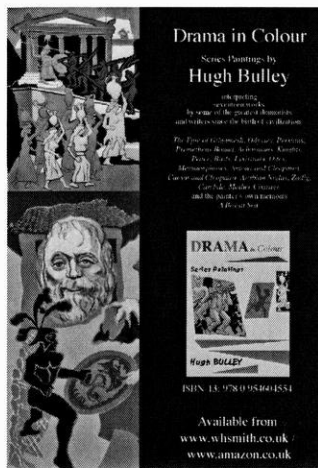
What concerns me is that the lot is fairly large for this very desirable neighborhood and suitable for condominiums or development. I did alert the local historical society of the significance of this house a few years back, but they were too short staffed to follow up with the city. My duties at work keep me too occupied to dedicate any amount of time to this. Here is a link for the sale: www.redfin.com/CA/Santa-Monica/1063-26th-St-90403/home/6762805. Would you or any member know someone at a local university who may examine the issue? Anyone else I can contact? Please let me know what you think?



October 21, 2010: Brechtian Tales from Hollywood (from LA Times)

“Bertolt Brecht, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, and their expatriate literary cohorts may have chalked up a hit or two in Europe, but did they have what it takes to make it in Tinseltown? The story of how talented writers fleeing Hitler's Third Reich were scooped up by movie studios and put to work grinding out hack screenplays supplies rich ironies, absurdist comedy and poignant drama in the Odyssey Theatre revival of Christopher Hampton's *Tales From Hollywood*. In an L.A. homecoming of sorts (the play was originally commissioned by Center Theatre Group in 1982), Michael

Peretzian's fine staging illuminates the signature erudition and eloquence with which Hampton weaves historical threads into a compelling story. Here, he employs as narrator a fictionalized incarnation of Hungarian playwright-novelist Ödön von Horváth (Gregory Gifford Giles), whose prescient insights into culture and the rise of fascism would have made him a perfect commentator on the plight of artists-in-exile in Hollywood (the real Horváth was killed in a freak accident in 1938 and never made it to America, but Giles' nuanced performance invests his theatrical afterlife with humor and intelligence)" Philip Brandes, Theater Review: *Tales From Hollywood at the Odyssey Theatre*. *LA Times*. (<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster>).



November 1, 2010: Hugh Bulley's Mother Courage Drawings.

November 9, 2010: Brecht, Dylan, and the Bitter Mirror (from PRI, The World)

"On November 9, 2010, Motéma Music reissued Bettina Jonic's long out-of-print, groundbreaking 1975 album, *The Bitter Mirror*, in CD and digital formats, which features 22 Songs by Bertolt Brecht and Bob Dylan. Playlist: The Black-Hats Fight Song, Train-A-Travelin', Death of Emmett Till, The Jew's Whore Marie Saunders, It's Alright Ma (I'm Only Bleeding), Masters of War, Songs of a German Mother, John Brown, Cannon Song, Hollywood, North Country Blues, Song of the Invigorating Effect of Money, Song of the Inadequacy of Man's Higher Nature, Mandelay, Nana's Lied, Like a Rolling Stone, Pirate Jenny, God in Mahagonny, I'd Sure Hate to be You on the Dreadful Day, Blowin' in the Wind, Perhaps Song, As You Make Your Bed You

Must Lie There.

Bettina Jonic has had a long career as a multi-talented singer, performer and director. She's worked in classical music, opera and the theater. One of her best-known works was an album she released in 1975, *The Bitter Mirror: Songs by Bob Dylan and Bertolt Brecht*. The album juxtaposes two sets of protest songs written for two very different audiences. Bertolt Brecht was a poet and lyricist in Nazi-era Germany. Dylan, of course, was writing his music in America during the Vietnam War."

November 11, 2010: Real Cause of Brecht's Demise Revealed (from press release, Mike Adelman, Media Relations, Faculty of Humanities, University of Manchester (www.manchester.ac.uk))

"Professor Stephen Parker, from The University of Manchester, has now proved that the iconic German poet, playwright and theatre director suffered as a child in the early 1900s from undiagnosed rheumatic fever, then a poorly understood condition. Brecht was simply labeled a nervous child with an enlarged heart, but his condition caused a lifetime of suffering and eventual death. When Professor Parker, who is writing a book on the life of the German, spotted an obscure note about Brecht's childhood diagnosis of an enlarged heart buried in the vast 30-volume edition of Brecht's writing, he set to work in the archives. His findings, pieced together from archival documents – including a 1951 x-ray report as well as published sources – open up a wholly new way of looking at Brecht's life and work, not least his cultivation of a macho image as a serial womanizer who in photographs famously pitted himself against boxers. The research, funded by the Leverhulme Trust, finds that rheumatic fever attacked the boy's heart and his motorneural system, triggering chronic heart failure and Sydenham's chorea, manifest in erratic movements of the limbs and a facial grimace"

December 1, 2010: Bertolt-Brecht-Preis geht an Albert Ostermaier (from the Augsburg Allgemeine)

“Die Stadt Augsburg ehrt Albert Ostermaier mit dem Bertolt-Brecht-Preis. Der Dramatiker und Lyriker wird die mit 15.000 Euro dotierte Auszeichnung am 10. Februar im Rathaus entgegennehmen. Der 1967 geborene Ostermaier ist durch zahlreiche Gedichte und Theaterstücke bekannt geworden. In den Jahren 2006 bis 2008 leitete der Münchner das Augsburger Brecht-Festival “abc.” In seiner literarischen Arbeit bezieht er sich auf die gesellschaftskritischen Dichter im weißblauen Land, etwa Feuchtwanger und Brecht, Fassbinder und Achternbusch. Vor allem Bertolt Brecht fühlt er sich nahe. Der Bertolt-Brecht-Preis wird seit 1995 alle drei Jahre zu Ehren des in Augsburg geborenen Dichters Bertolt Brecht verliehen. Geehrt werden Literaten, die sich durch kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Gegenwart auszeichnen.”

Hanns Eisler in Conversations with Hans Bunge (Ask me more about Brecht)

In 1954, while working as one of Brecht's Assistants at the Berliner Ensemble, Hans Bunge started his recording work. It is because of these recordings, that we have today this incredible first-hand source of the way Brecht worked. Besides recording rehearsals, Bunge also interviewed many of Brecht's friends and colleagues and asked them about their experiences of working with Brecht, the nature of their collaboration, and their thoughts about the Brechtian theatre. Among those he interviewed was Hanns Eisler, one of Brecht's professional collaborators and closest friends.

The conversations took place over a period of four years, from 1958 until Eisler's death in September 1962. In 1964 the opportunity arose to publish two conversations in a special edition, dedicated to Eisler, of the East-German literary journal *Sinn und Form*. The plan was to publish at least some of Eisler's stimulating thoughts and ideas so that they could be used for scholarly and artistic study.

Consequences arose from this publication. The music department of Radio GDR was interested in the material and, between autumn 1965 and spring 1967, broadcast in 20 instalments nearly all of the conversations Bunge conducted with Eisler. The extracts of the conversations were arranged by topic rather than in the chronological order. The publishing house Rogner & Bernhard in Munich published the transcript of the broadcast series in 1970 as a book with the title *Hanns Eisler Gespräche mit Hans Bunge. Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht* (Hanns Eisler conversations with Hans Bunge. Ask me more about Brecht). When the book was finally made available through an East-German publisher, by the Deutscher Verlag für Musik in 1975, the conversations were published for the first time complete and in their chronological order. In 1982 another West-German edition, which was based on the East-German edition, was published by the Luchterhand Verlag.

These conversations with Eisler are referred to again and again by their audience as unmissable, because they are enormously interesting in that they provide fascinating first-hand accounts both of Eisler's and Brecht's period of exile in the US, Eisler's condemnation of stupidity in music and because they give an idea of the quality of artistic, political and intellectual life in the German Democratic Republic of the 1950s. What started out as conversations about Brecht (the title is after all, 'Ask me more about Brecht'!) gradually developed into more wide-ranging intellectual conversations, and the topics they discuss embrace much more than Eisler's relationship with Brecht's dramatic works and evolved into a historical-artistic account of Eisler's own work and personality. Reading these conversations is a magnificent way of, as Prof David Blake (Eisler's only British Meisterschüler) called it once, 'getting to know Eisler's intelligence, his cultural breadth and his sparkling wit and vivacity'.

I was very much surprised to find out that the conversations, although part of the German edition of Eisler's Complete Works, have never been fully translated into English. And then it dawned on me. This is something I could do for my father and for me: to make his book available for an English speaking audience.

Together with Paul Clements, I set out to undertake this demanding (intellectually as well as emotionally) but deeply rewarding work. To adventure into one's own and then into another language is a profoundly creative task and there is much to learn as we go along. Probably the hardest challenge for a translator of recorded conversations (and Bunge too makes a similar point in his foreword to the printed edition) is what the reader, in contrast to the listener, unfortunately, misses out on, 'the experience of Eisler's captivating intensity of his way of speaking, the humour which originates from intonation, and the atmosphere in which the conversations took place.' We have, as yet, to confirm a publisher and any suggestions or recommendations would be very much appreciated by us.

Sabine Berendse

N.B. At the moment we are also preparing a programme of dramatic reconstructions of extracts from the conversations together with recorded words and music from Eisler himself. This will be performed at the International Feuchtwanger Society Conference from 14-16 September 2011 in Los Angeles. If you would like to invite us to present our programme while we are in the United States please contact us: sabine_berendse@hotmail.com

February 1, 2011: WWW.ECIBS.ORG - BACK ONLINE and BAPPER THAN EVER!

February & Beyond: 2011

Brecht-Festival Augsburg, Februar 3-13, 2011 "Brecht und die Musik" is the title of the ten-day festival in Augsburg, with guest artists Ute Lemper, Maria Farantouri, and Dominique Horwitz, productions of Mann ist Mann and Mahagonny, as well as an international conference sponsored by the Uni Augsburg under the title "Verfremdungen." Information: www.brechtfestival.de

The annual Brecht-Tage at the "Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus" will take place from Feb. 8-11, 2011. The topic is: "Gewalt und Gerechtigkeit: Brecht, Seghers, Kane, Larsson," and the events are being organized by Sonja Hilzinger. Participants include, among others, Florian Vassen, Martin Rector, Ursula Elsner, Bernhard Spies, Nils Tabert, Stefan Schnabel, Guenther Heeg, Frauke Meyer-Gosau, and Jochen Vogt.

The 2012 MLA conference is scheduled for Jan. 5-8 in Seattle, WA. Under the new MLA guidelines, the IBS may sponsor one guaranteed session and up to two special sessions (chosen competitively), one of which MUST be a collaborative session with another MLA division or allied organization. At the upcoming MLA in Los Angeles (Jan. 6-9, 2011), for example, the IBS is collaborating with the 20th Century German Division on one session (Epic and Ethics in the Brechtian Mode) and running its own roundtable session (Brecht in Exile). We are now soliciting suggestions for sessions, forums, or roundtables at the 2012 Seattle conference. If you would like to organize one, please contact me with your title and a few sentences to describe the proposed event. At the IBS business meeting on Jan. 8, 2011, 8:45 pm (301B, LA Convention Center), we will be deciding on the 2012 plans. We are already exploring with Patrizia McBride (Cornell U), chair of the 20th Century German Division for 2012, the possibility of a collaborative session around the topic of "Brecht's Adaptations as Reading Strategy" (reading will be the general topic of the Division in 2012). Session organizers are responsible for writing up the Call for Papers, distributing the call as widely as possible, and vetting the submissions by about March 20, 2011. Contact: Marc Silberman.

Report

"THE MOTHER" IN MADISON, WISCONSIN

by David R. Bathrick

Does Bertolt Brecht belong exclusively to the pallid paladins of American academe? Can Brecht's theater - in particular his agitational plays - be of significance as a part of an emerging struggle within the United States against American Imperialism?

These and similar questions lay at the conceptual base of an extremely lively and successful production of The Mother put on last May in Madison, Wisconsin. Directed by Denny Stevens of the San Francisco Mime Troupe and played by local amateur actors, the play pushed out from the University both spiritually and physically, with agit-prop performances on Madison's East and South sides.

Stevens chose to preface the play with the Mime Troupe's now famous "Carrot speech" based on Scene 3 of Turandot, in which a Ph.D. orals candidate is rewarded for her insights concerning BB:

"So in conclusion, let us seek in Brecht the artist, the man of the theater, the humanist; and take with a grain of salt the philosopher, the politician, the revolutionary. In this way we will provide our audiences with an enjoyable evening in the theater and food for thought, if they wish to think. And with a skillfully placed nude sequence, we may even provide ourselves with a modest fortune."

Even without a nude sequence the play was held over an extra two weeks due to its popularity, and would have probably played longer were it not for the end of the semester.

(Ed. note: Experiments as interesting as this one are probably being done quite often, but they are seldom heard of outside their immediate area. Won't you report such events to Communications so that we all can share in such experiences?)

OTHER BRECHT PLAYS IN PRODUCTION

David Bathrick is presently working on a production of Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis with the same group.

Andrzej Wirth is preparing a production of The Measures Taken at Lehman College, CUNY, New York City, for the spring term, 1973.

John Bettenbender, Chairman of the Drama Department of Rutgers University-Douglas College, New Brunswick, New Jersey, has scheduled a production of The Commune, also for the spring term, 1973.

WAITING FOR GODOT. SAMUEL BECKETT.
 DIRECTION: BRENNA GEFFERS. DESIGN: MATT SHARP, DAN SOULE, BRIAN STRACHARN, MEL LEEDS. LATVIAN SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA.
 PHILADELPHIA / USA. MARCH 12–28. REVIEWED: MARCH 13, 2010

Reading Note: The reader may want to include the following images whilst reading the review: George C. Scott in the film *Hardcore* watching his daughter in a porno film, screaming “Turn it Off! Turn it Off!” while Bert Lahr dressed as the Cowardly Lion, voicing the cartoon character Snagglepuss saying “Heavens to Mergatroyd” as he plays Estragon.

Yea, I know. It seems a bit implausible, if not downright pathologic / apocalyptic / absurd to suggest that *Waiting for Godot* produced by (inhale and speak double time): EgoPo Theater, directed by Brenna Geffers, featuring the acting talents of Ross Beschler, Charles DelMarcelle, Julian Cloud, Douge Greene, Robert DaPonte and the production team of Eric Snell, Matt Sharp, Brian Strachan, Dan Soule, Josh Wallace, and Melanie Leeds running at the Latvian Society (7th & Spring Garden) from March 12-28 in Philadelphia / USA (exhale and pause)

... could actually save one’s life. But, it could happen.

Yet, you, the PoMo Reader / Spectator respond: Isn’t *Godot* the original “sin” of the modern world - a play devoid of purpose, design, meaning, narrative, redemption, *telos*, God - at least according to the conservative mind? Or, isn’t *Godot* the original “crime” of the modern world - a play devoid of purpose, design, meaning, narrative, redemption,

telos, God – according to the liberal mind (which accepts the premise but is too embarrassed to admit it).

But the hell with both minds: sometimes the greatest sin, the greatest crime is the greatest comfort in this wonderful condition known as the human. As Bertolt Brecht reminds in his musings on the crime novel (*Über die Popularität des Kriminalromans*, published in 1940, BFA 22.1) there is a fundamental cognitive-emotive pleasure we take in both the construction of the sin/crime by the perpetrator (or his/her avatar – the theater company) and the unraveling (not solving) of the crime by the detective (or his/her avatar – the audience).

A.Q. Torby
 EgoPo was able to guide me to this quintessentially human dimension of cognitive-emotive pleasure (erstwhile known as intellectual masturbation?) with a noble assist from the Latvian Society (and its bar with a variety of Baltic beers and its bartender with his terrifying existential knowledge of Marcel Marceau films).

As we all know (we all do know, right?), *Waiting for Godot* is a play about nothing. The skill in producing as well as watching the play is to make something out of this nothing. Of course, this is not really true. The play is not devoid of all that is teleological: there are bits and strands of stories, structures, and meanings floating in the play. But they have no origins, they have no futures, and barely smack of any mystery or suspense. Beckett’s genius was to cut out this universe from the teleological template and then succeed in making the various detritus stand up for a two-hour production. But to succeed in making it work, making it bearable, requires a kind of desperate juggling

act of the human condition and its communicative elements. Needless to say it is a juggling act for everyone involved: spectator, actor, director.

So, the stakes are always high with a *Godot* production, but in post-9/11 America they seem even more so. In the culture of fear that animates our quotidian existence we seem to reach for any grand narrative that will help anesthetize the pain

premiere in Coconut Grove, Florida with Bert Lahr [Cowardly Lion from *The Wizard of Oz*] as Estragon), 1975 (Beckett directs play himself for first time in Berlin) as well as two 2009 revivals (on Broadway with Nathan Lane -Estragon, Bill Irwin -Vladimir, John Glover -Lucky, John Goodman -Pozzo) and in London (with Ian McKellen and Patrick Stewart) (*exhale*).

Throw in all those
fractured



©Josh Wallace

narrative
/ amnesia films

and hence numb us to the power of *Godot*. At the same time, we engage in various social media exercises, which are so decontextualized and minimalistic that they uncannily mimic the dialogue found in the play, consequently robbing the play of its shock-and-awe-power.

And let us not forget that *Godot* is now nearly 60-years old: (*inhale and speak double time*) Written in 1948/49, premiered in Paris in 1953, with notable productions in 1953 (guerilla version in a Wuppertal Prison in Germany), 1955 (English language premiere in London), 1956 (American

out there and one can see how *Godot* has infiltrated the cultural DNA of Western Culture.

Seen through these contexts how does one even get *Godot* off the ground in 2010? There is something at stake, but EgoPo, which has devoted its whole season to Beckett, proved courageous, skillful, and humorous in its delivery of the production. What was so entertaining about the production was how it hit the ground running the minute the curtain went up. Any show, and especially *Godot*, often has a fitful start before it finds its groove: if the opening of any play,

in general, is a train wreck waiting to happen, then *Godot*, in particular, is an earthquake waiting to happen. The audience collectively holds its breath in the first few minutes of *Godot* waiting to see what “comfort level” it will find with the despair and theatricality.

The signature 2x4-over-the-head-scene at the beginning of *Godot* is when simultaneously Vladimir peers into his hat and Estragon into his boot as the refrain “Nothing to be done” is uttered. Usually, you have two responses: “Fuck! I didn’t see that coming and now I have to put up with two more hours of the play making me feel despair;” or, “Fuck! I did see that coming and now I have to put up with two more hours of the play pointing out my despair.” No, Ross Beschler (Vladimir) and Robert DaPonte (Estragon) pulled off this first episode with a great degree of theatrical and linguistic precision. One felt the burden of despair, yet at the same time it was neither held for too long nor too short a period of time. The vocal timing between the two actors was responsible for much of this effect. Drawing upon the vaudeville and clown aesthetic (visually the two actors channeled Laurel & Hardy and Chaplin) the repartee between the two actors was sharp as a steak knife, yet cut the audience like a dull butter knife (*note the zesty theater critic prose*).

One realized during the production that doing Beckett well is doing Beckett straight. There is no need to oversignify theatrically: play the technical side with speed, skill, and empathy (yes, I said it - empathy – Beckett and Brecht scholars be damned!) and allow the wonderfully terrible content to work itself through the cracks.

Beschler and DaPonte supported

their vocal technique with an excellent command of physical theater. Again, this is an achievement not to be overlooked in American performance culture, a culture which produces Film / TV actors capable of 15-second scenes waiting for the *deus ex machina* of Redemption / Happy Ending but not actors who can simply stand on the stage and wait, let alone move upon a bare stage and animate the space. Director Geffers and her production team dared the actors to fail: providing nothing but the Beckett Stage to work with – a tree, rock, and shades of black and white. Like the vocal interaction, the physical orchestration between the two actors demonstrated excellent timing and a nice balance between heavy content and light technique.

However, the physicality of the show attained its highest arc with the arrival of Pozzo and Lucky played by Charles DelMarcelle and Doug Greene respectively. It was a sign of Geffers command of the material that she cast these two actors for these roles – their respective acting strengths were exactly what were needed in the desperate juggling that is *Godot*: for when the small, minimal stage became filled with four bodies, the physical theater had to notch up a level. DelMarcelle and Greene, costumed by Brian Stracharn, exuded a great physicality and range of movement, in the process making the middle passage of the play exciting in an existential way. The hat-passing scene between Pozzo, Estragon, and Vladimir is always a treat and Greene’s rendering of Lucky’s monologue was a wonderful exercise in Dylan-like rapping (without the nasality) but still somehow leaving



the audience wondering, "How does it feel?"

And after Lucky and Pozzo leave, right when you think the desperate juggling must crash before intermission or closing curtain, Geffers delivers another delicious surprise – Julian Cloud as the Boy (Giving yet another nod to the North Philadelphia home team, Temple University: Geffers, and Beschler, M.F.A. Josh Wallace B.A. and Cloud is currently an undergraduate). Cloud is somewhere between ethereal and creepy, undercutting vocally and physically the established dynamic of the other actors, but at the same time not undermining it completely.

There is a tense seamlessness (can one avoid these oxymoronic renderings within endless parenthetical reference?) to the production, a sense of command and skill, which never overtly manifests itself and is hard to locate in any one aspect of the production. I couldn't quite put my finger on it until I had the chance to talk with the director and the rest of the ensemble after the show downstairs at the Latvian Bar. (Actually, to be honest I think *Godot* World continued after the show down in the bar. I was drinking a Zelta beer, talking to the bartender about a weird Marcel Marceau film, *Shanks*,

from the 1970s, while a Lazlo-like figure sitting next to me kept on talking about some Abbruzzese restaurant in South Philly called Le Virtù. Now this is what theater is supposed to be like!) It turns out Geffers spent last season doing

German Expressionist Theater and *Woyzeck*, has an interest in doing expressionist O'Neill (*Great God Brown*) and a secret desire to do a season of Brecht with *Baal* as

the signature production. Does there need to be anything more said?: Making your theatrical bones this way is a darn good preparation for *Godot*. Geffers is good: her dramatic knowledge matched only by her theatrical skill. She, and her EgoPo partners, are just might be what is needed to defibrillate this current phase of Philadelphia Theater.

Alas, the evening had to come to an end as all theatrical productions do. Transitory – even the ones that save us. A temporary salvage job, but helpful nonetheless. Is there hope in despair? Yes, because one has to do it: one has to act. And the critic has to write, has to review the production. And the greatest tribute I can give to EgoPo's production of *Waiting for Godot* is that it empowered me to write this review instead of the usual 500-word cookie-cutter of backhanded compliments that one usually gets. Now, I don't know if EgoPo will feel the same way about the review as I do (What is blurbable, sellable about this review? Does such a review help EgoPo's P.R. department to sell more tickets, to get more Barrymore nominations?) So, in case the bottom line has been lost in my logorrhea: EgoPo's production of *Waiting for Godot* is one of the most pleasurable-distressing, satisfying productions of the 2009-2010 Philadelphia Theater season. If you don't see it, I tremble at the thought of your mental and emotional health for the rest of the year.



©Josh Wallace

THEATERTREFFEN. BERLIN / GERMANY. MAY 7-24, 2010

Homo homini lupus

RALF REMSHARDT

The poster for this year's *Theatertreffen*, the annual showcase of ten selected German-language productions, shows a mysterious creature, a man with a wolf's head, teeth bared

threateningly. Perhaps meant to signal the theatre's undiminished ferocity, the lupine face symbolized as much the rougher truth of art's vulnerability in the teeth of an unrelenting recession: as the festival got under

way, Greece and other EU countries were engaged in desperate efforts to turn the deficit wolf from the door, and it became apparent that the world economy was not nearly out of the woods. The utopian vistas of a joint Franco-German *Kulturnation* with theatre as its salutary centerpiece proposed by France's former minister of culture Jack Lang (who opened the festival with an address *auf deutsch*) seemed comically improbable.

On the other hand, theatre still matters to the crowds in Berlin, and a lupine rapacity also obtained in the discourse about the art, which now no longer needed the surrogacy of the press to proliferate. Where everyone has a strong (and strongly worded) opinion, the multiple outlets of internet fora (see *Nachtkritik.de*) and blow-by-blow blogging foster a culture of contrarian snarkiness and second-guessing, especially about the jury's selections and motivations, which amounted to a parallel performance. One evening, I sat next to a

man who was literally twisting in his seat from the imposition of the performance while muttering imprecations under his breath. A theatre that can cause so much pain must still be reasonably vibrant. Six reviews follow.

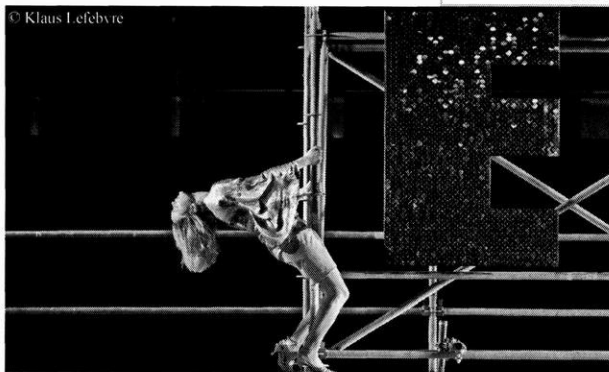
KASIMIR UND KAROLINE. ÖDÖN VON HORVÁTH.
DIRECTION: JOHAN SIMONS, PAUL KOEK.
PRODUCTION: SCHAUSPIELHAUS KÖLN WITH
NT GENT/DE VEENFABRIEK. VENUE: HAUS DER
BERLINER FESTSPIELE. MAY 8, 2010

When at the end of Johan Simons' uneven production of Horváth's *Volksstück* Erna (Lina Beckmann), the hapless and put-upon girlfriend of small-time crook and bruiser Merkl Franz, sings her brittle-voiced ditty about the evanescent springtime of life, it is a heartrending moment, true but also false, and too little too late. One wants very much to believe that her final liaison with the moping, existentially damaged Kasimir is more than a Pyrrhic victory, while knowing full well that for Horváth's people, at least these eternal bottom-dwellers, any happiness usually proves brief and illusory. But the production by Schauspielhaus Köln gives insufficient clarity whether it wants us to read Erna's moment as pathos or bathos; it casts about for much of its duration in search of the elusive "synthesis of earnestness and irony" the author demands.

Kasimir und Karoline is an elliptical tale of the grasping aspirations and inevitable disillusionment of late Weimar Germany's bewildered underclass, distilled into a scenic montage against the lurid background of the Oktoberfest. Amidst the din of carnival rides and freak shows, the title



© Klaus Lefebvre



mismatch is deliberate: Simons lets these characters try out attitudes (which are often platitudes) without ever being able to own them. Thus Karoline's dream of attaining "higher social status" - she allows herself to be courted by the diffident Schürzinger,

characters try to recover their fracturing relationship. Kasimir, fired from his job as chauffeur, believes Karoline can't love him sans employment - a clearly self-fulfilling prophecy as she succumbs to the lure of higher-status suitors while he slips into a dejected funk. The trauma and violence that inescapably ensues is morbidly predictable. Horváth slyly clothes his characters' unsettled sense of social belonging in a faux-naturalistic dialogue full of half self-revealing, half self-deluding sententiousness. They not only have to speak louder than the music of the fair, but they are always trying to out-shout their inner voice, the vociferous ruminations of their false consciousness.

The production plays the piece not as Depression nostalgia but as vaguely (though unspecifically) contemporary. "ENJOY" is the ironic exhortation emblazoned in 12-foot high reflecting letters on scenic designer Bert Neumann's set, its raw scaffolding suggesting the desultory obverse of the German *Spassgesellschaft*, where dreams come to suffer just a little longer before they die. The (offstage) beer hall music is replaced by a fright-wig wearing combo that periodically breaks into pop or disco tunes. If Karoline (Angelika Richter) is a little too old to be the gawky post-adolescent pulling at her panties and beatifically licking ice cream, the

but quickly moves on to his boss, the unscrupulous capitalist Rauch - finally turns into the sour observation that "people are nothing but wild animals." And so Kasimir, played as an oversensitive and moody slob by Markus John, vainly tries a mock suicide with the sleeve of his suit jacket.

But even though it dutifully underlines the echoes of the present crisis (the references to financial shenanigans, the babble of self-improvement) that connect these precarious figures to the contemporary German *Prekariat*, the production gives Horváth a mere (though unsentimental) nod of recognition rather than a rigorous or even radical reworking and so fails to find a firm rationale.

LIFE AND TIMES - EPISODE I. NATURE THEATER OF OKLAHOMA. CONCEPT AND DIRECTION: KRISTIN WORRALL, KELLY COPPER, PAVOL LISKA. PRODUCTION: BURGTHEATER WIEN. VENUE: SOPHIENSALE BERLIN. MAY 9, 2010

Primly chubby woman, her dress and demeanor reminiscent of a girl scout leader, ambles awkwardly onto the empty stage and, prompted by lively music, begins to sing: "Um...So...Shall I start? Okay. Um..." Soon, accompanied by the sort of graceless calisthenics usually seen in North Korean stadia (or truly provincial cheerleading squads), and joined

by two other equally grey-clad comrades, she begins tunelessly to unfold the mundane details of the average childhood of one Kristin Worrall, as told, sometimes haltingly, sometimes hauntingly, by herself.

Anyone who has stood trapped in line behind someone pouring out their life story on a cell phone recognizes the ubiquity of the confessional mode. Tweets are now the first draft of biography, and we have entered the age of oversharing, the apotheosis of the quotidian. The logic of cultural recirculation dictates that, sooner or later, such a text should become the basis of a performance. What is surprising is that it is possible to transform the stream-of-consciousness text of a series of late-night phone

calls into the *libretto* for a work of operatic proportions. But that feat of transmutation is exactly what the Nature Theater of Oklahoma and its inventive directors, Kelly Copper and Pavol Liska, have accomplished, and very entertainingly, in *Life and Times*. Based in New York (though moonlighting in Vienna), Nature Theatre has made a program of mashing up high- and lowbrow and teasing out the performativity of the everyday.

Over the course of more than three hours, the often manic action never ceases. Unspooling the commonplace (yet often oddly touching) details of Worrall's Rhode Island childhood, the three American woman are joined (and on occasion spelled) by three Burgtheater actors, creating a subtex-

tural culture clash of transcontinental ironies, as if Cabaret Voltaire had booked a guest slot on Saturday Night Live. The music never flags; it goes from *recitativo* to doo-wop, it bops and beats, becomes bluesy, classical, parodic. For all of its winking flippancy, the piece is rigorously *durchkomponiert* by composer/musician Robert M. Johanson, riding changes in mood and theme, respecting every empty discourse marker (*um, uh, like*) as if it were sacred text, often to hilarious effect. But while the score is

fixed, the action is ad hoc. Nature Theater likes to keep the actors on their guard (and the audience engaged) by choosing movement sequences seemingly at random; thus the off-kilter child's-eye



view of the world is reflected in an off-balance performance in which the discomfiture is sometimes real.

Life and Times can seem like it lasts a lifetime, although the narrative barely takes us to the protagonist's sixth birthday. But where the text might strain patience, the delivery is so energetically goofy, so sophisticatedly awkward that this bio-musical becomes a toe-tapping, playful think-piece about the disjunctions between selfhood and memory, text and context, individual utterance and collective performance, colloquial content and mock-epic form. This is theatre for the Facebook generation, and it's a marvel the jury saw fit to include it.

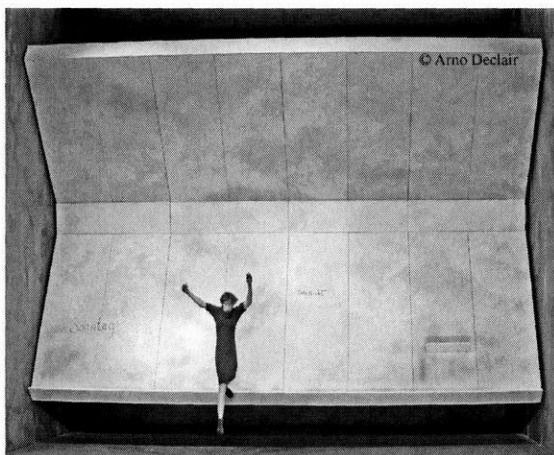
DIEBE. DEA LOHER, DIRECTION: ANDREAS KRIEGBURG. PRODUCTION: DEUTSCHES THEATER BERLIN. MAY 10, 2010.

The characters that inhabit Dea Loher's plays are often mere facsimiles of actual people; they are the most extreme form of our private neuroses, of our delusions, of our marital crises, of our social phobias. In *Diebe*, Loher, who has established herself as a sharp-eared chronicler of German miseries, takes a laundry list of the discontents of contemporary life, subjects them to a vigorous remix, and pours them out over a menagerie of multigenerational, multiply linked and coupled characters. As in some Schnitzlerian *ronde* or Strindbergian dance of death, fragile figures jostle up against each other's business and blunder into each other's secrets. Almost everyone in *Diebe*, as one character explains, is like a thief in their own life, moving warily, as if they had no right to be there. Feeding on wan hopes -- a promotion, maybe next year; a visit from the grown children; a baby to be born; a parent or lost spouse to be found -- the dreams deferred nourish the coming of catastrophe.

There are warning signs: Linda has seen a wolf; the prim Schmidts think there's a wild animal in their yard. Things fall apart: Finn, an insurance executive paralyzed by agoraphobia, begins to eat his money and commits suicide. Monika's marriage falters spectacularly and she ends up with a bullet in her head. Gabi offhandedly tells the police that her fiancé habitually tries to strangle her. These are fractured lives that can't be put together again because they were never whole to begin with. Nor does Lo-

her force a thematic cohesion that she refuses to believe in; theatre, to her is not in the business of explaining anything, but merely finding a more or less groping representation of our systemic ills. Several characters, though unrelated, are named Tomason, and a „Tomason,“ as Loher helpfully explains, is a philosophical concept for something that once had a purpose but has since lost it.

These might be grim proceedings if they weren't also very funny. Andreas Kriegenburg's inspired production at the Deutsches Theater (the only entry this year that originated in Berlin) may stretch to four hours, but it wrests both naked farce and absurdist chuckles from the 37 lean scenes of Loher's text, and rescues it from the peril of existential earnestness. An old lady (Heidrun Perdelwitz) goes to the police to report her husband missing and it emerges, by and by, that he left 43 years ago, though she maintains her steely assurance that he just stepped out. The Schmidt couple (Katrin Klein and Bernd Moss), all structured coiffe and sweater vest and sectional sofa, seem a caricature of bourgeois



probité and suppressed desires until they unleash their homicidal energies to *Dancing Cheek to Cheek*. Human unhappiness, as Beckett has observed, is the funniest thing of all, and Kriegenburg and his excellent cast find the mordant comedy in people who refuse to face up to the calamities in their lives.

A carpenter by training, Kriegenburg is a theatrical constructivist at heart who can rarely pass up an opportunity to make his stage a machine for acting (his 2004 *Nibelungen* in Munich featured a spectacularly cantilevered, moveable stage). In this instance, the stage is like an enormous white paddle-wheel hinged in the wings, allowing the upstage wall to rotate away and the ceiling to take its place as scenes change, ad infinitum. Not only is this structure, and the noiseless precision with which it is deployed, a technological wonder (and a considerable achievement for the actors who have to perform on dizzying precipices), it also is a highly efficient scenic correlative to the play's unstable and interlinked world where the floor of one is the ceiling of another and the wheel of fate (or human failing) keeps everything unbalanced: *fortuna rota volvitur*.

KLEINER MANN - WAS NUN?. HANS FALLADA (ADAPTED BY LUK PERCEVAL). DIRECTION: LUK PERCEVAL. PRODUCTION: KAMMERSPIELE MÜNCHEN. VENUE: HAUS DER BERLINER FESTSPIELE. MAY 11, 2010

This Munich Kammerspiele adaptation of Hans Fallada's social novel of 1932 under Luk Perceval's direction doesn't need to work very hard to assert its relevance. Wisely, Perceval reins in the temptation to make a *Regietheater*-style meal of the production and goes for truthfulness and transparency instead, even though long-time theatregoers are surely aware of Peter Zadek's

famed and boisterously cabaretic 1973 Bochum version. Fallada tells the story of the accountant Johannes Pinneberg and his wife Emma (nicknamed Lämmchen), whose shaky newlywed life takes several turns for the worse when he loses his job and they are forced to move in with his mother, an erratic harpy of fading charms and shady character who runs a private bordello in Berlin and has no use for her annoyingly respectable son. The mother's pimp finds Pinneberg a job in a department store, but he is dismissed when sales quotas are ratcheted up, and tumbles into a spiral of despair, finally chased from the street like a dog by the cops, only to find his last refuge in Lämmchen's loving arms: "Wir sind doch beisammen."

These words, soothingly delivered by Annette Paulmann with the child-like emotional certitude of her character, are finally so moving, that the surprisingly moist-eyed audience (a rarity in the worldly German theatre) seems to want to reassure Pinneberg that all will be alright (although history has taught them otherwise). As the baby-faced, lanky Pinneberg Paul Herwig is marvelous in showing the coiled-up spring of his initial

optimism winding down to twitchy inner tension, and finally, to utter depletion. In the final scene, defeated, he stands like a

furtive wounded animal, baffled as to what befell him. (Herwig's performance earned him the festival's acting award, conferred by Bruno Ganz.) Paulmann's maternal Lämmchen stands her ground as Pinneberg comes undone, but no amount of marital solidarity, or indeed of love, can shield these two quintessential naïfs from the sea of troubles unleashed by a world that is at best indifferent, at



worst implacably (and from their perspective, inexplicably) hostile to their little happiness.

In a different age, the director would have felt practically honor-bound to suffuse the marginally sentimental story with didactic politics, to rip the guts of these characters' humanity out and stuff them with the straw of dramaturgical annotation. But the German theatre is increasingly steering clear of the heavy hand. Even the video track that delivers the historical backdrop is unobtrusive and functional -- using footage from Walther Ruttmann's *Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Grosstadt* of 1927. The text effectively retains Fallada's tonal blend of colloquialism and satirical wit, with the characters often weaving the novel's third-person style seamlessly into direct speech. The scenic centerpiece on the otherwise empty and cavernous stage is a large orchestrion that like an atavistic jukebox bursts suddenly into eerily mechanical action, occasionally blaring the pie-eyed songs of the era which the actors sing with desperate conviction: "Einmal schafft's jeder/nur auf dich kommt's an..." The supporting cast consists of first-rate veteran actors who populate the story by slipping easily (and often uproariously) into the multitude of minor characters - outstanding among them Gundi Ellert as the comically self-absorbed mother Pinneberg. In

one of the brilliantly theatrical turns that mark the production's telling vignettes, the futility of Pinneberg's self-abasement while trying to sell a suit to a pompous thespian is underlined as he manically drapes empty

ty hangers on the customer who becomes a kind of surrealist mobile of rejection. Perceval and his cast more than do justice to this unjustly neglected novel -- they rediscover it in a theatrical idiom, and in the process reinvigorate the storytelling prowess of the German stage.

DIE STUNDE, DA WIR NICHTS VONEINANDER WUSSTEN. PETER HANDKE. ADAPTATION AND DIRECTION: VIKTOR BODÓ. PRODUCTION: SCHAUSPIELHAUS GRAZ. VENUE: HAUS DER BERLINER FESTSPIELE. MAY 13, 2010

You can take your eyes off the stage in the Schauspielhaus Graz production of Peter Handke's *Die Stunde...*, but if you do, you're apt to miss something whimsical or wonderful or simply weird. A hit-and-run motorcycle accident occurs (several times over); an opera diva in an outrageous rococo costume belts an aria; a woman in an office is inundated by a blizzard of papers and files; shady deals are made in a cafe; a jittery tourist gets tangled in his map; a utility man causes a power outage (several times over). And suddenly, we find ourselves at a night club (all dance!), or a tennis match (love all!), or in the midst of a mild earthquake (all fall down!). While there are stories being told (of a doctor who comes too late to see her dying mother, a man found



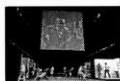
in flagranti with a lover), they are simply narrative scraps within an accelerating maelstrom of pure theatricality.

For an uninterrupted hour and a half, the stage runs riot, turning into a wordless *Our Town* on speed, pulsing with urgent urban life, traversing locations both ordinary (cafe, hospital, elevator) and strange (a museum with an animate suit of armor, an underground duct with an enormous fan), and displaying actions and interactions that are at once puzzling, moving, violent, and surreal, before the circling, prying eyes of live TV cameras. Just like reality, in other words. Or rather in no words, since this is a sometimes deliriously manic, sometimes elegantly poetic, always engrossing pantomime set to jazzy, jaunty music

The young Hungarian director

Viktor Bodó, who has achieved minor cult status in Austria with imaginative productions of Kafka's *Das Schloss* and *Alice*, after Lewis Carroll, works a theatre miracle with this very loose adaptation of the 1992 scenario, exchanging Handke's episte-

mological skepticism ("ich möchte lieber ahnen statt wissen") for a slapstick parable of multi-perspectivity and uncertainty physics, with flying, falling, and flailing bodies. Bodó and his exceedingly kinetic actors (half of whom are members of the director's own group, Szputnyik Shipping Company) convert Handke's rather genteel descriptive drama of random and not-so-random encounters in a city square into a kind of madcap meditation on the way



postmodernity slices and dices our perceptions of the real. While it may have serious questions on its mind -- Blumenberg and Benjamin are quoted, perhaps dutifully, in the program booklet -- the production's DNA is sheer Keaton, Tati, and Terry Gilliam. Rapidly shifting vignettes take place in claustrophobic sets built into containers and wheeled center stage at will, the cramped habitats of our secular transactions, as if echoing the *mansiones* of the medieval theatre. But this is a passion play without teleology -- stuck, rather, in eternal recurrence. What is more, the action on stage is refracted, analyzed, magnified, redoubled by a camera team who move, like bunraku puppeteers visibly-invisibly, with a roving electronic eye. Some of these witty interpolations, stacking images within images, and playing with the very anatomy of surveillance, are beyond my powers to describe; suffice it to say that the production derives much of its energy and sheer fun from the constantly alternating dialectic between our macroscopic stage-level view of things and the revelations (and occasional concealments) inherent to the projected image. There are worlds within worlds, Bodó likes to remind us, and you can't trust anything you see. The audience, following this virtuosic display of image-making and -unmaking with rapt attention, was delighted.

RIESENBUTZBACH. EINE DAUERKOLONIE. CONCEPTION AND DIRECTION: CHRISTOPH MARTHALER, ANNA VIEBROCK. PRODUCTION: WIENER FESTWOCHEEN 2009. VENUE: HANGAR 5, TEMPELHOF AIRPORT. MAY 16, 2010

Hangar 5 at the now defunct Tempelhof airport is a beautifully fraught location, redolent with history and futility, and the perfect place for Christoph Marthaler and

Anna Viebrock to situate *Riesenbutzbach*. Viebrock's stage, as much installation as set, is the star here -- a vast interior/exterior that acts like an ultra-specific spatial rebus reminiscent of the kind of 1970s utilitarianism that was the face of the old *Bundesrepublik*. Above it, the cryptic inscription: "Institut für Gärungsgerwerke."

What Marthaler has colonized in this „perpetual colony“ is an allegory of the present moment -- the *Dauer* is at best ironic, resigned both to stasis and impermanence -- in an oxymoronic imaginary location that suggests a giant nowhere, an *u-topos*. In this ambitious and multi-layered work, devised for the Wiener Festwochen, the tragi-comic hero is time itself; the current, shattered, uncertain time of economic misery and retrenchment, of course, but also the brief and bitter nature of transitory being. The texts, selected by dramaturg Stefanie Carp, invoke *Zeitenwende* and cite Seneca's meditations on the brevity of life, and the abundant and soul-stirringly deployed music (a Marthaler trademark) carries a similar sense, whether it's the hauntingly sung "Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis" from Mahler's 8th symphony or the Bee Gees' „Stayin' Alive,“ which the cast belts late in the evening with defiant abandon.

But if stayin' alive has become harder, it's also become funnier. Marthaler is a grand orchestrator of small absurdities, and the disconnected and disaffected characters in this panorama

of social anomie appear like escapees of some Buñuel farce, who are always covering their low-level hysteria with forced jocularity and earnestly trying to pursue their social rituals in spite of mounting evidence that things are

seriously awry. There may be no plot as such, and the relationships are nebulous, but we know these people with their outmoded wardrobe and their hangdog expressions well, except that they have a habit, when not frozen in some anxious paralysis, of lapsing into linguistic oddities and physical eccentricities. There's the bony bank cashier (Bernhard Landau) who dispenses bromides but may launch into a recitation of Kant's categorical imperative when provoked. There's the mother (Sylvia Fenz) who claims she just doesn't

understand her son (Marc Bodnar) -- because he's a Frenchman. („Bonjour, maman," he retorts.) Or the executive type on his cell phone (Ueli Jäggi), who worries

aloud to his interlocutor if he may have been a little bit wrong to kill his entire family. There are arresting images -- of a man high up on a balcony drilling into an electrical box and thrusting wires down in a crescendoing tangle; of another man sitting on a garage taking apart a computer. There is, again and again, the sublime music of Monteverdi, Bach, Schubert: sung, played, distorted, like the nagging echo of some great, now inaccessible cultural past.

By the time it all culminates in an awkward amateur fashion show done with mock solemnity, there has been a little too much of everything -- the arch jokes, the songs, the tirades, the catatonic flopping about on the set. Marthaler does his best to give a theatrical face and voice to current

discontents, but the sheer magnitude of the global crisis finally escapes him. Or perhaps its measure is taken by this quietly apprehensive line uttered by one character: „Wir leben im Zentrum. Uns wird man nicht fallen lassen." But the center, Marthaler shows, cannot hold.

The jury's selection this year acknowledged the troubled times. Remarkable was the absence of any *Klassiker*; there was no repose in the distant past. This was a festival of faltering economies, of the battered lives

wreaked by turbo-capitalism. The fallout of the global financial crisis and the concomitant vague psycho-socio-sexual discontents of a West-



ern (petit-) bourgeoisie teetering on the edge of decline or threatened by political irrelevance was tangible like a sour undercurrent everywhere. Unlike in previous years, the festival seemed reticent to deliver political analysis or an overt ideological stance; with the exception of a production I missed, Elfriede Jelinek's militant (and apparently interminable) *Die Kontrakte des Kaufmanns: Eine Wirtschaftskomödie*, an exhausted perplexity stood in for manifest positions. Grim(m) tales were the norm, and to judge from this year's productions, it's still very much the hour of the wolf.

THE HILO MASSACRE. TREMAYNE TAMAYOSE. DIRECTION: HARRY WONG III & DENNY HIRONAGA. KUMU KAHUYA THEATRE. HONOLULU, HAWAII / USA. MAY 20 - JUNE 20, 2010. REVIEWED: MAY 22, 2010

As part of the Brecht theatre festival that accompanied the 13th IBS Symposium, Vera Stegmann Kumu Kahua Theatre presented Tremaine Tamayose's teleplay *The Hilo Massacre*, which was staged as a theatrical performance here for the first time.

The Hawaiian language words *kumu kahua* translate into English as "original stage" or "original foundation." Accordingly, Kumu Kahua Theatre is a community theatre located in downtown Honolulu that tries to nurture an authentic theatre of Hawaii. The theatre's motto is "Plays about Life in Hawaii. Plays by Hawaii's playwrights. Plays for Hawaii's people." *Kumu*, as locals refer to the theatre, was founded in 1971 by Dennis Carroll, Professor of Theatre at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa. In 1982, the theatre was granted not-for-profit status, and in 1994, the Hawaii State Legislature awarded it its current 100-seat playhouse at 46 Merchant Street in Honolulu. After many years of Dennis Carroll's directorship, Kumu Kahua's current artistic director is Harry Wong III. Together with Denny Hironaga, Harry Wong III also directed *The Hilo Massacre*.

The play deals with an actual historical event that goes back to early labor history and union formation in Hawaii. As part of the New Deal,

Congress passed the Wagner Act in 1935, legalizing workers' rights to join and be represented by labor unions. Starting in the

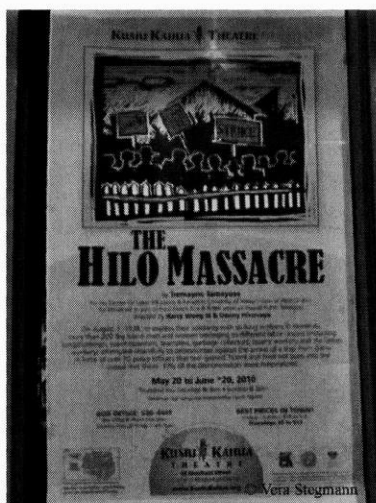
1920s, Hawaii was controlled by five large companies, the "Big Five": Alexander & Baldwin, C. Brewer, Castle & Cooke, American Factors, and Theo. Davies.

Harry Kamoku (1905–1957), a longshoreman from Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii, is considered by many as the father of the modern labor movement in Hawaii. On November

22, 1935 Kamoku and about 30 longshoremen of every ethnicity formed the Hilo Longshoremen's Association. They tried to acquire recognition from the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which was initially denied, because the AFL didn't believe all members in Hawaii were Americans. Hawaii's worker's association

was multi-ethnic, and Hawaii was not to become a state until 1959. But a recognition letter arrived eventually, and Kamoku's community became chapter Local 1-36 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU).

In 1938 workers in Honolulu began a strike against the Inter-Island Steam Navigation Co., demanding equal wages with workers on the West Coast of the United States and closed shop or union shop. Members of different unions in Hilo staged an altruistic and sympathetic protest in



solidarity with their fellow workers in Honolulu. These strikes culminated on August 1, 1938, when 200 workers in Hilo gathered to protest the arrival of the steamship *SS Waialeale*. They were peaceful and did not resort to any violence; their only transgression consisted in unlawful assembly and crossing a line set up by the police.

The "Hilo Massacre" – or "Hawaii's Bloody Monday" – occurred that day, on August 1, 1938, when over 70 police officers attempted to disband 200 unarmed protesters in Hilo, injuring 50 of the demonstrators. Officers threw about a dozen tear gas grenades and shot at the crowd. At least 16 rounds of ammunition were fired, and about 50 people were shot, although nobody died.

In October 1938, Kai Uratani, the first injured protester who was stabbed with a bayonet, filed a lawsuit against the officers responsible for the shooting. He lost and even had to pay for the officers' legal defense costs.

How does a play about this series of historical events relate to Bertolt Brecht? Brecht was never in Hawaii, nor did he write about the islands. But the topic of social justice and organized labor is certainly Brechtian, and so is the presentation of the play. The stage is located in the middle of the theatre, with the audience seated to the left and the right. In the front and back of the stage two podiums are set for forces of power, usually the company Brewer & Co. and its counterpart in Waialeale, Honolulu, facing and occasionally talking to each other. The actors/workers are below in the center, as in a sports stadium or a boxing ring. As members of the audience enter the theatre, they need to walk through the stage and pass by actors who are laboring, setting up the stage, lifting and moving heavy blocks. During this time before the

formal beginning, Tyler Tanabe in the role of narrator introduces the theatre *Kumu*, its history and importance in the community, and he explains the current economic situation of theatrical arts in Hawaii: "Our funding has been cut in half..."

Tyler Tanabe stands out as a talented and versatile actor, already by playing seven different characters. Other actors perform one or at most two roles in the play. Tanabe is the continuous narrator, introducing all the scenes, including his own varying roles: in Scene 2, he introduces himself as the dead longshoreman with the words: "I play a character who dies"; in Scene 7, he plays the worker Shige who is caught as a traitor and humiliated by his coworkers; he summarizes Scene 9 with the words "I play a Tear Gas Warren," referring to the stabbings and shootings by a particularly brutal policeman; and he precedes Scene 11 with the statement: "I play a sadistic foreman." As narrator, Tanabe always holds and occasionally reads from a slim red book, which contains not Tremayose's teleplay, but William Puette's *The Hilo Massacre*, a carefully researched documentary text on which the teleplay is based.

This interplay between a drama and a scientific study contributes to a questioning, critical attitude, to a theatre for a scientific age that Brecht would have enjoyed. Director Harry Wong III does not appear to trust traditional historical dramas. He states in the program notes that so much of history is often being "sacrificed for the sake of presenting an entertaining and economical drama." As a result, this play is based on two works, the teleplay by the playwright, comedian, actor, and producer Tremaine Tamayose; as well as the scientific study by William Puette, supported by University of Hawaii's Center of Labor Education

and Research, where Puette taught labor studies. This deliberate use of different sources gives the audience a more complete picture and invites the viewer to reflect on the events.

The play's structure is loose and open: it is divided in scenes, not acts, and each scene is numbered and announced by the narrator. On a few occasions the narrator points out discrepancies between different versions or views of events. Scene 11, for example, shows a conversation between Harry Kamoku and his employer in which the two come to a "gentleman's agreement – an agreement between equals," only to break the illusion in the end with the narrator's sentence: "This scene never happened!" Or in Scene 13, Tanabe as narrator describes the original script that focuses on the brutality of the policeman Charlie Warren. He then initiates the viewer into the writing process, stating: "We cut this scene, because we didn't want one single policeman to be a scapegoat for the entire police force." By this process, we see or imagine the scene and then witness it taken away from us, and we can decide which version offers a closer reflection of reality. Finally, the order of the scenes is presented as interchangeable. The play closes with a scene that, as we learn, is located in the middle of the original play. A worker, who has to care for his sick wife, receives money from the newly created union. By placing this scene at the end, the performance seems to suggest a happy closure. Yet, since the audience knows that this scene was originally in the middle and that the Hilo Massacre produced many injuries and no immediate gains for workers (although it probably contributed to the lasting establishment of unions in Hawaii), we are once again asked to question the happiness

of this ending.

The performance occasionally suggests contemporary implications, e.g. by viewing actors as workers, albeit in a light-hearted and humorous way. The narrator announces the intermission with the words: "Due to our collective bargaining agreement, it is time for us to take a break. Intermission, everybody!" The play integrates workers' and children's songs in a Brechtian way. We hear the Internationale and later a song with the refrain: "The more we get together, the better we'll be." It is an adaptation of a children's song in which the original line ends, "the happier we'll be" ('happier' was replaced by 'better'), and the melody stems from the 17th century Viennese folk song "Oh du lieber Augustin", created during the time of the bubonic plague. Toward the end, the play closes with "Hail, hail, the gang's all here." With lyrics by Theodora Morse and a melody by Arthur Sullivan, this song was originally composed for the musical *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Hawaii's multi-ethnic history is well-known; no one single ethnicity dominates the islands. In the 1930s, however, the Hawaiian labor force was divided into racial blocks, and big corporations could take advantage of this by keeping wages low. It was therefore essential for Harry Kamoku, a Chinese-Hawaiian longshoreman, to create a union across racial lines. We see Kamoku, beautifully and convincingly played by Ryan Sutherland, organizing Native Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese and Filipino workers, to create a union that "must be colorblind." "White skin, brown skin, yellow skin: we all have red blood flowing in our veins," is a frequent refrain in the play.

Gender also plays a role. In a conversation with Harry Kamoku, a Fili-

pino worker asks whether a Hawaiian woman would favor a unionized Filipino man over a non-unionized Hawaiian in marriage. The answer remains open. We see interactions between genders at local folk festivals, we hear conversations among women, e.g. about a new sandwich called "hamburger" which caused the husband of one woman no longer to eat her stew, as new technology has replaced traditional home cooking. We witness the cautious romance of Harry Kamoku, the great union organizer, who fails at traditional dancing steps and waits ten years before he finally marries the Chinese woman he loves. Women participated in the strike as laundry union workers or part of the women's auxiliary, the Hilo Longshoremen's Auxiliary. Besides the men, women and children also received injuries in the Hilo Massacre.

The narrator invites the audience to consider whether the term "massacre" applies to this event or whether "riot" might be more adequate, since nobody died, despite the excessive use of police violence. Tanabe offers two dictionary definitions for massacre: "indiscriminate, merciless killing of human beings" and "overwhelming defeat." The decision is left to the audience, but the play seems to suggest that "massacre" does describe the series of events on August 1, 1938.

Kumu's production of *The Hilo Massacre* presents a fascinating play on this tragic and important event in Hawaii's labor history in an engaging and informative style that incorporates many epic innovations by the dramatist Bertolt Brecht.

ROLE MODELS: A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN WATERS. FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA / USA. REVIEWED: JUNE 1, 2010

John Waters spoke to a full house at the Free Library of Philadelphia promoting his latest book *Role Models*. Waters, a.k.a The Pope of Trash, is a filmmaker who first made a name in the 1970s with a string of infamous films including *Multiple Maniacs*, *Pink Flamingos*, and *Female Trouble*. Starting in the late 1980s, he became a bit more mainstream with films such as *Hairspray*, *Cry Baby*, and *Serial Mom* and the last decade has seen him become something of a brand. *Hairspray* was first turned into a musical on Broadway, which was subsequently rendered as a film in 2007 with John Travolta playing the role of Edna originally created by Divine on film and Harvey Fierstein onstage. Waters has not made his own film since 2004 and so has spent more time at his second job as a writer and conversationalist par excellence. *Role Models* is a continuation of his earlier books *Shock Value* (1981) and *Crackpot* (2003), which finds the author reminiscing about his life in Baltimore, his early infamous films, and his continuing obsessions with the transgressive, the filthy, and bad taste.

If you have never heard of Waters, or if you know him and detest him, you will nevertheless be impressed with his ability to hold a conversation. He is an interesting storyteller with a stunning ability for the brilliant, and of course, transgressive quip. He can be hilarious to listen to. The Free Library event was, however, "Waters lite," I would have to say. Of course, he was promoting his book in a public forum, but a bit of the edge was missing.

Thankfully, instead of lecturing (which he had done at Bryn Mawr College earlier in the year) he was interviewed onstage by Gary M. Kramer, author of a book on Queer Cinema and a contributing writer for various national newspapers. The interview format brings out the best in Waters, especially if the interview becomes an actual dialogue. Kramer, however, proved less adept as an onstage interviewer as he is a journalistic interviewer. An earlier interview published in the *Philadelphia Gay News*, conducted in Waters' native Baltimore, was a witty and insightful read. The Free Library Interview, in contrast, was a bit too obsequious and nostalgic, perhaps sentimental. But I do not hang sole blame on Kramer. Except for the drunken university students seated behind me, the standing-room-only audience projected a similar, if not even stronger, fawning and uncritical attitude. And, in the end, Waters' title *Role Models* does beg for a certain type of conservative hero worship.

So, *Pink Flamingos* it was not at Free Library and I realized that I would have to read the actual book in order to see what Waters could deliver in the year 2010. Waters, if nothing else, is an efficient promoter of his material, and did render a synopsis of his recently published book. Hence, we learned of his hero worship of 1950s-era music icons Johnny Mathis and Little Richards and his eventual landing of interviews with both. He discovers that Johnny Mathis is a

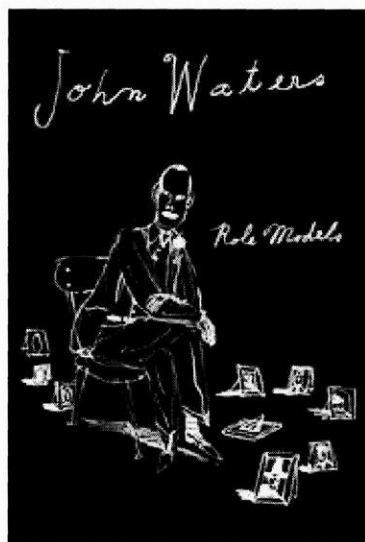
Republican; nevertheless, it is Little Richard's paranoia and misunderstanding of his own image, which seems to bother Waters the most.

The most interesting moment for me came when Waters discussed his chapter "Bookworm," in which he detailed his love of reading and the immense library in his Baltimore home. Having just seen professor and philosopher Martha Nussbaum

the week before at a Free Library event attempting to make a case for the humanities (*Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*), I felt that Waters made a much better case for why we should read literature, or even read at all. Reading is transgression, it is confrontational, it is an art form in itself; and combine it with difficult, banned,

or perverse books and you get something close to Waters' supreme existential moment.

Afterwards I decided to conduct the transgressive reception that was missing at the lecture and went to the bookstore to peruse Waters' book. That's right. I didn't buy it. I sat down on the floor with it as if it was a dirty magazine and took notes on it. Because that's the other thing that Waters makes clear: it is not how you do it (reading), what you do it with (books), but also where you do it (bookstores and libraries) that is also part of the titillating transgression. Waters deserves a place next to Orton



and Borges for his ability to make bookstores and libraries into cool places. Turning immediately to the "Bookworm" chapter I was struck by the restatement of what I had just heard at the lecture:

You should never just read for 'enjoyment.' Read to make yourself smarter! Less judgmental. More apt to understand your friends' insane behavior, or better yet, your own. Pick 'hard books.' Ones you have to concentrate on while reading. And for God's sake, don't let me ever hear you say, 'I can't read fiction. I only have time for the truth.' Fiction is the truth, fool! (164).

As you can probably gather from this quote, Waters does not write much differently as he converses, and hence after a while the writing does become a bit too comfortable and standard at times. Yet, Waters does deliver a real gem with the chapter "Outsider Porn." In it he details his interest in and interviews with Bobby Garcia, who became famous for filming Marines engaging in acts of fellatio, and David Hurler, who photographed criminals and psychopaths in homoerotic poses. Even Philadelphia's own Uncle Ed Savitz gets a mention in this chapter. The chapter is maybe the closest we get to the experience of a John Waters' movie: it is a journalistic documentary of outsiders, deviants, who at the same time are broken mirrors of Waters himself, endlessly and intriguingly reflecting his inner, wonderful, trashy self.

DER ZERBROCHNE KRUG. HEINRICH VON KLEIST. MAXIM GORKI THEATER (REGIE: JAN BOSSE; BÜHNE: STÉPHANE LAIMÉ; KOSTUME: KATHRIN PLATH; DRAMATURGIE GABRIELLA BUSSACKER) BERLIN. 10 JUNI 2010

&

CHRISTIAN GEDSCHOLD

DER ZERBROCHNE KRUG. HEINRICH VON KLEIST. BERLINER ENSEMBLE (REGIE: PETER STEIN; BÜHNE: FERDINAND WÖGERBAUER; KOSTÜME: ANNA MARIA HEINREICH; MUSIK: ARTURO ANNECCHINO; DRAMATURGIE: ANIKA BÁRDOS, VIKTORIA GÖKE). BERLIN. 10 JUNI 2010

DER ZWEIKAMPF (GORKI VS. BRECHT) –
UND KLEIST GEWINNT

Zwei vollkommen unterschiedliche Aufführungen und damit auch Auffassungen desselben Schauspiels sind zurzeit in Berlin zu sehen – ein Anlass für einen Vergleich.

Im BE läuft seit knapp zwei Jahren die Inszenierung Peter Steins, in der Hauptrolle mit Klaus Maria Brandauer besetzt, einem Großschauspieler, wenn nicht vielleicht sogar dem letzten Star des deutschsprachigen Theaters und es ist in der Tat, als wolle man im Hause Peymann noch ein (letztes) Mal den Geist des alten Theaters beschwören. Brandauer lässt nichts aus: Er utriert, grimassiert, brambasiert und schmiert bisweilen, ist dabei jedoch immer von einem Format, dass man ihm alle Übertreibungen verzeiht. Er ist einer der letzten Bühnenhelden, an denen das Fernsehen vorbeigesehen hat und die sich nicht für das schnelle Geld verraten haben. Auch das übrige Ensemble, allen voran Tina Engel als Marthe Rull, spielt gut aufgelegt mit und zeigt, wozu Theater in der Lage ist: Die anspruchsvolle Vorlage eines der wichtigsten deutschen Klassiker ohne Mätzchen so zum Klingen zu brin-

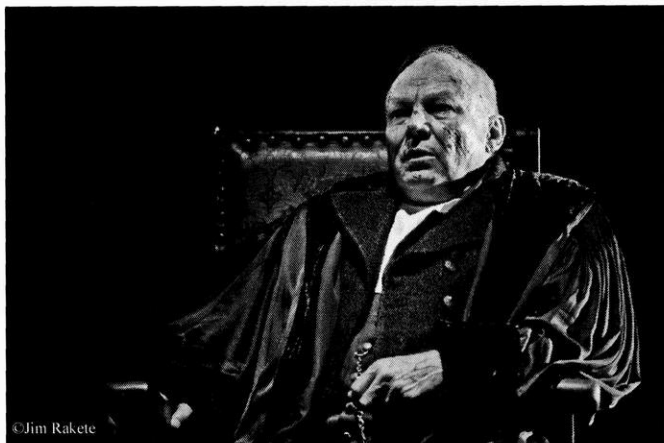
gen, dass der Zuschauer den Geist des Stücks selbständig entdecken und in seine jeweils eigene Historizität übersetzen kann.

Das Verständnis und die Werkreue sind der Regie Peter Steins zu verdanken, der sich vor fast 30 Jahren aus dem Betrieb verabschiedet hat und seitdem gewissermaßen vom Spielfeldrand aus durch abseitige Großprojekte und Gesamtinszenierungen (*Die Wallenstein-Trilogie*, *Faust I und II*) seiner Haltung gegenüber dem Instant-Theater und verkrampten Aktualisierungen klassischer Werke Ausdruck verleiht. Die Inszenierung kann schon nicht mehr nur werktreu, sondern muss traditionalistisch genannt werden. Von den lebendigen Hühnern, die zu Beginn von der Bühne gefangen werden, über die Kostüme, das Bühnenbild und die Musik bis hin zum selten gespielten Schluss des Lustspiels, das von Goethe verfasst und zur Bedingung der öffentlichen Uraufführung im Jahr 1808 gemacht wurde.

Im Maxim Gorki Theater, keine 300 Meter entfernt, hat Jan Bosse dasselbe Stück ganz anders inszeniert: Das Ambiente ist modernistisch, die Kostüme sind aus unserer Zeit und die Szene verlässt bisweilen die Bühne, um in den Zuschauersaal und ins Foyer zu wechseln. Jede Figur, jeder Konflikt ist so angelegt, dass der Zuschauer sich im Hier und Jetzt weiß. Frau Marthe ist eine Boutiquenbesitzerin, das Töchterchen Eve ein Girlie

und dem Rupprecht hängt die Hose in den Kniekehlen, ist also, der Mode unserer Zeit entsprechend, „baggy.“ Die Hälfte des Textes wird über Verstärkeranlagen gesprochen und so bleibt das unverstärkt Gesprochene leider nur schwer verständlich. Die ermüdende Darstellung des Schadens am Krug demonstriert Marthe mittels eines Overheadprojektors, und so weiter. Dass der Abend dennoch gelingt, liegt zum einen an der Intelligenz des Regisseurs.

Die Übersetzungen in unsere Zeit



sind gleichzeitig genau getroffen und in sich gebrochen, sodass der Zuschauer jederzeit den ironischen Abstand zwischen dem Original und dem Zitat erkennen kann. Nichts ist platt modernisiert, keine Figur kommt eindeutig aktualistisch daher, es ist alles am Rand der Satire. Zum anderen ist es Edgar Selge als Dorfrichter, der die Aufführung trägt. Selge ist einer der ganz wenigen Schauspieler, die auch nach Jahrzehnten regelmäßiger TV-Arbeit das Bühnenhandwerk nicht verkommen lassen und das liegt an seinem ganz eigenen, fast schwebenden Stil. Er ist das gedachte Gegenteil von Brandauer: Wo dieser die Bühne wie einen Acker pflügt, ist

jener ein Bonsai-Gärtner, der mit der Nagelschere an die ganz kleinen Triebe geht und sich kaum traut, sie zu berühren. Selge stellt den Text ebenso wie Brandauer aus, im Gegensatz zu jenem scheint er jeoch ständig von sich selbst berührt zu sein. Seine eigenen Sätze erstaunen, ja bisweilen erschrecken sie ihn.

Beide Interpretationen erlangen Gültigkeit, beide Aufführungen sind glaubhaft und gäbe es einen Wettbewerb, könnte der Kritiker ihn nicht entscheiden. Stein und Brandauer gehen aufs Ganze, sie nehmen ihren Kleist beim Wort und scheren sich nicht darum, dass die Konventionen des modernen Theaterbetriebs ihre Kunst ins Museum gestellt haben. Ihre Genauigkeit und Kompromisslosigkeit verhilft dem Dichter zur Geltung. Der Kreis derjenigen, die sich auf Traditionelles einlassen wollen, schein jedoch immer kleiner zu werden. Bosse und Selge versuchen das Stück mit intelligenten Mitteln in unsere Zeit zu holen. Dass die Verhältnisse, um mit Brecht zu sprechen, sich aber in den vergangenen 200 Jahren geändert haben, lässt ihr Bemühen im Grunde scheitern und verstellt darüber hinaus weitgehend den Blick auf das Stück. Zwei großartigen Schauspielern bei ihrer Kunst zusehen zu können und über den Vergleich zweier Inszenierungen desselben Stücks in einer Stadt zu einer echten Kritik im Sinne eine Unterscheidung zu gelangen, und das ist das Fazit beider Aufführungen, kann man nur als Glück empfinden.

LOVE JERRY. AUTHOR: MEGAN GOGERTY.
DIRECTION: REBECCA WRIGHT. MUSICAL
DIRECTION: DANIEL PERELSTEIN. NICE
PEOPLE THEATRE. LATVIAN SOCIETY. JUNE
4-20, 2010. REVIEWED: JUNE 17, 2010

I originally passed on this production until I happened on Wendy Rosenfield's review in the Philadelphia Inquirer (June 7) and Jim Rutter's review online at The Broad Street Review and the blog wars that erupted from their articles (see excerpts at the end of this article). Fascinated with this "drama within the drama" and the cause célèbre it seemed to be creating I found myself at one of my favorite spaces in Philadelphia, The Latvian Society at 7th and Spring Garden, watching a play the way it should be watched – with the Latvian beer, Zelta, in my hands.

Written by Megan Gogerty and first produced in 2008 at the New York Musical Theatre Festival, Love Jerry was enjoying its Philadelphia premiere through the efforts of Nice People Theatre, the final show of the theater's fourth season. Gogerty's play tells the story of a young couple, Mike (Jered McLenigan) and Kate (Rachael Joffred) and their son (uncharacterized) who, due to economic hardship, have moved into the apartment of Mike's brother, Jerry (Scott Boulware). Jerry and Mike were sexually abused by their Uncle Karl as children, and both carry the burden of this troubled past, yet only Jerry has replicated the uncle's behavior as an adult. We see Jerry, characterized as a mild-mannered and intelligent person, struggle with his condition in a series of episodes with a therapist (Amanda Grove) and an unrepentant pedophile, who wears a red nose and is known as Clowny (David Blatt).

The stage, designed by Caitlin Lainoff, was deceptively simple: a

small raised platform with an openly framed house, intimating the small apartment. The open frame enabled transparency and voyeurism for both the actors and audience. Offstage actors could watch and listen through the frames as the other actors played a scene; and the audience could see the actors engaged in such actions as well as the three-piece band under the direction of Daniel Perelstein in the far right corner of the house. Two separate platforms, downstage right and left, completed the stage design.

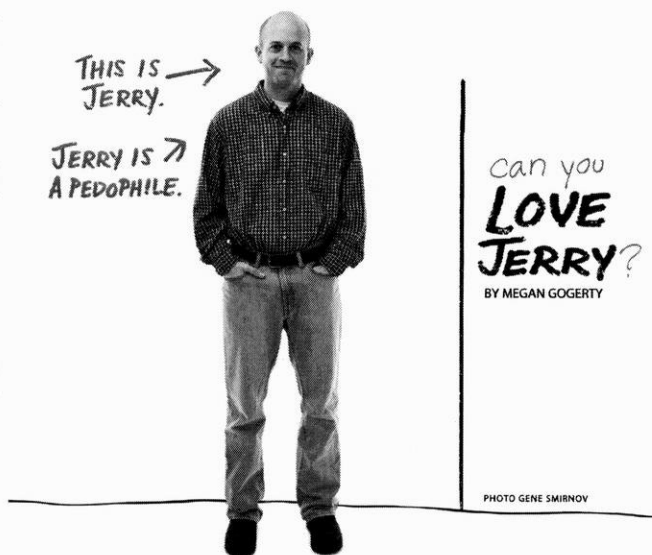
The minimalist stage design was an excellent theatrical strategy because it created flexible space for a playscript that courageously engaged a number of cultural issues, theater traditions, and narrative techniques. To be

honest, I was amazed that this production ever got off the ground considering all the weight it had to carry.

The American family is, of course, a well-worn tradition within American performance culture and Gogerty's playscript works firmly within the dramatic tradition of Ibsen, Chekov, Miller, and Williams by building the narrative through the medium of the family. American performance culture is so saturated with the family as the center of dramatic imagination that it is very hard to view yet another production which draws on the device as little more than banal. Indeed, I did find the characteriza-

tions and the dialogue, when isolated, as being extremely ordinary and even stereotypical.

Yet, the staging, which utilized flashbacks, flashforwards, musical monologues, counterpoint episodes, magical realism moments and a number of other stylized narrative devices, never allowed the characters or their dialogue to sink to the level of



the banal. It would be interesting to read the playscript to see if this effect is indeed so strategized, but I think both the playwright and the ensemble did a masterful job working with such well-trodden material. Except for the last scene, which brought something approaching reconciliation, the production did not dip into melodrama, although the temptations were always there.

Similarly, the negotiation of the American Musical tradition was handled with a lot of finesse. Perelstein's three-piece band, like the stage design, used simplicity and flexibility to negotiate the complicated and over-

crowded production. Multi-instrumentalists, they worked largely with piano, guitar, and bass. The sound was an acoustic pop sound, reminiscent of progressive rock operas from the early 1970s, like *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Perelstein would often start or break the song into three component parts, which was mirrored in both the vocals and the choreography.

Finally, the topic of pedophilia. Surprisingly, this topic has become almost as ubiquitous in the American imagination as family and the musical. Of course, recent headlines of Church scandals stand out, but network TV has been delivering a steady diet of pedophilia or sex-offense stories for years, with *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* only the most noteworthy of such shows. The difficulty in approaching this topic is to normalize it without resorting to sensationalization. Is it possible to present a pedophile outside of a creepy and sleazy atmosphere?

The acting was excellent in the midst of this complicated affair. The actors had an incredible amount of cues, which compelled them to move around the stage and change narrative and emotional focus. Yet, the actors were seamless in their delivery, and what's more, very confident and at ease.

In the end, I believe the production succeeded because it did what all successful dramatic productions seem to do: create space through triangulation. That is, never allow the stage space, the music, the acting to linger in any one area for too long; but rather, keep the *mise en scene* fluid by moving perspectives between three separate areas. The effect is to keep content and form interesting and not banal, complex yet not complicated.

But what of the politics of the production? Here we return to the second

drama around the production – the blog response to Rosenfield's review. Were Gogerty and *Nice People Theatre* acting "dangerously naïve" as Rosenfield herself said in one of her responses to the bloggers? Rosenfield makes an important point here; if you normalize something aberrant do you run the danger of relativizing it, which could mean some form of acceptance? Rosenfield cites other plays which handle the same material but create enough distance with the topic to render it as an intellectual problem.

Although they did not use the techniques of political theater – externalized, didactic – in many ways, the production delivered a pretty interesting political message. By delivering an unblinking presentation of pedophilia without sensationalization and using stereotypical forms of family and the musical, I believe the production drew attention to how normalizing family and the musical can be. You can get anyone to listen to your story if you sell family and the musical well enough.

It is here where we can locate Rosenfield's naivete. She projects it onto the production, but the fault lies more with her. She doesn't think that family and the musical should be used to present such issues, but above all, she can't believe that they can carry it off.

So, maybe this is the future of political theater. Take the traditional forms and play them straight with 21st century issues. On the other hand, there is a conservative politics at work. Political theater is about changing a changeable world. Usually this requires stepping outside of one's small picture and seeing the bigger picture; seeing not just the individual but the individual within society. Gogerty's play does get us to think about the is-

sue of pedophilia, and to think about it in a new way using traditional forms; yet, at the end, the audience does not feel empowered to change the world. Questions such as: Is pedophilia a historical phenomenon? Are there economic or social structures that lead to this experience?

We are left with a tragic sense, but a rather dulled tragic sense. Greek tragedy delivers the terrible double-bind but at the same time a cathartic release. Gogerty's play is more American tragedy – a sense of resignation, acceptance, reconciliation – but no sense of how to change things. We are left with therapy and maybe that's the best we can do.

WENDY ROSENFELD, *INQUIRER*,

JUNE 7, 2010:

The problem, as I see it, is Gogerty's efforts on Jerry's behalf, which occur at the expense of his victim. In a post-show talkback, Gogerty argued, "This isn't about [the child]." That perspective is her script's fatal flaw. Because this is indeed about the child. Pretending otherwise is more than irresponsible; it lets an autonomous human being become an abstraction, thus victimizing abused children even further. As a parent, it's darn near impossible to tolerate her premise. In presenting the piece, Nice People has wisely paired with the Child Abuse Prevention Effort, but ultimately Love Jerry does more harm than good.

JIM RUTTER, *BROAD STREET REVIEW*,

JUNE 7, 2010:

Whatever the solution, Gogerty willfully ignores the elephant in the room. There's plenty of room for sympathy for men like Jerry who've been demonized for behavior they can't control. The real question though, isn't whether or not we can "love Jerry"; it's how we can live with him. "A litmus test for society," Gogerty declares,

"is how well we're willing to support those we detest." She strikes me as a useful idiot in the cause of pedophilia normalization.

THE PERSECUTION AND ASSASSINATION OF JEAN PAUL MARAT AS PERFORMED BY THE INMATES OF THE ASYLUM OF CHARENTON UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE MARQUIS DE SADE. AUTHOR: PETER WEISS. ADAPTATION: GEOFFREY SKELTON. MUSIC: RICHARD PEASLEE? DIRECTION: BRENNA GEFFERS. EGOPO THEATER. THE SANCTUARY AT THE ROTUNDA. PHILADELPHIA FRINGE FESTIVAL. SEPTEMBER 3 – 18, 2010. REVIEWED: SEPTEMBER 4, 2010

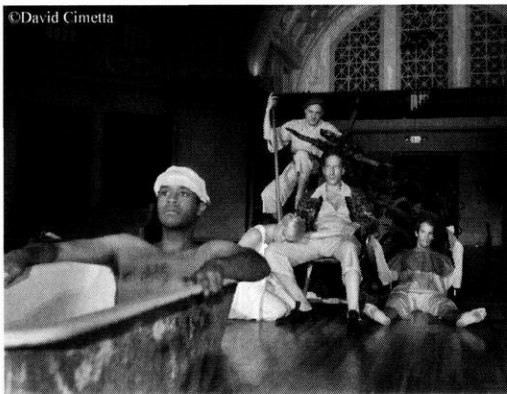
Combine Brenna Geffers direction, David Blatt's characterization as the Marquis de Sade, Anthony Hostetter's scenic design and crash land this cruel concoction in the Sanctuary space at the Rotunda Theater and one just might have

NORMAN ROESSLER

the most terribly satisfying theater pleasure of the year. Taking up where it left off with last season's Beckett Festival, EgoPo once again thumbs it nose at the conservative Philadelphia Theater Scene by inaugurating its Theater of Cruelty Festival with *Marat / Sade*.

Written by Peter Weiss in 1963 for the German Stage, *Marat / Sade* burst onto the international scene with a famous production by The Royal Shakespeare Company under the direction of Peter Brooks in 1964 followed by a cinematic adaptation in 1967. Set in a French sanatorium in 1808, it depicts inmates of the asylum performing a play, written by the Marquis de Sade, about the assassination of the radical leftist, Jean Paul Marat, some fifteen years before as the French Revolution begins to move into its Reign of Terror phase. So, it is

©David Cimetta



a play within a play, within a history, within a biography, within an insane asylum, within the Theater of Cruelty, etc.... Yea, it is a mindfuck theatrical-historical puzzle that makes one think through theatrical form as much as historical content. EgoPo should be arrested for violating the tender little minds that comprise the Philly Theater scene, but they will probably be punished with kindness and get a Barrymore Award.

Let's bump it up to an Obie Award for setting the production in the Sanctuary at the Rotunda, a truly uncanny place to experience a production. *Marat / Sade* is a heavy load for a theater ensemble to deliver as well as for the audience to receive. By placing it in the huge domed space of the Rotunda (60 ft x 60 ft x 60 ft or perhaps bigger) and then making this space even larger by moving all the church pews to the side to create one bare circular stage, it allows the crazy mosaic of the play to breathe, explode, and vomit into enough space to be engaged by the audience. Antonin Artaud, whose Theater of Cruelty manifesto (1938) is the inspiration for EgoPo's seasonal festival, would have appreciated the Sanctuary as well. Wanting to abolish the traditional stage so that space would speak again through scenic hieroglyphs

and the physical body of the performer, Artaud sought a ritualized space that would break down the walls of our repressed, atomized consciousness as well as the divisions between actor and spectator.

The thirteen-member EgoPo ensemble stepped into this vast and strange performance space and fleshed it out quite well. Largely operating in a semi-circle in front of the two rows of audience seating on the south side of the building, the actors threw their bodies around, screamed, yelled, convulsed; and then without missing a beat, straightened up to deliver crisp and constrained dialogue, song, or music. Comprising a mad, revolutionary choral group, four actors (Cindy Spitko, Griffin Stanton-Ameisen, Matthew Wright, and Josh Totoro) played instruments on stage – harpsichord, cello, mandolin, flute – and added vocal accompaniment. Considering the amount of physical and vocal acting required by this production, it was astonishing to see these players compose, literally and figuratively, after such strenuous undertakings. Matthew Wright, who played a toy harpsichord onstage, composed the music for the production, which had a very consonant, if not beautiful tone, yet operated against the mechanical, brutish lyrics.

Jered McLenigan, last seen in Nice Theater's production of *Love Jerry* at the Latvian Society, played the Herald, the stage manager of the production, and successfully negotiated the role between carnival barker and cabaret mc. Joe Canuso, artistic director of Theater Exile, lent a hand as Coulmier, the asylum director and symbol of the conservative reaction to the radical revolution. The Marquis de Sade was assayed by David Blatt, also last seen in *Love Jerry* as

Clowney, and presented the character with a noble and sadistic dignity. In contrast to the text and original production, Blatt's de Sade did not sit on the stage watching the production, but was located, at least at the beginning of the production, in the far balcony. Certainly, it was a great visual, and along with the National Assembly scene after the intermission a great framing of the Sanctuary space, yet it also highlighted the problem with using such an expansive space: a loss of the visual and aural edginess of the play.

At times the Sanctuary space literally swallowed dialogue rendering it unheard or dulled it to a point where lyrical, philosophical, and historical significance was easily overlooked. For example, the first dialogue between Marat and Sade, a masterpiece of radical and reactionary interpretations of political revolution, was delivered efficiently by both Blatt and Steve Wright (Marat), but it did not pop out of the background scene enough to really illuminate the power of the text. Likewise, the Cruel Aesthetic was, at times, overwhelmed by space and distance. The actors really do some outrageous things onstage. My personal favorite: following Cindy Spitko's Rossignol character as she calmly played cello, and then after a fit of hysteria, wandered aimlessly to the back of the stage space to masturbate on a church pew. Great stuff, I know, but in order to follow



the character I lost touch with the rest of the proceedings.

Perhaps all was by design; and perhaps such is the way to do such a difficult production. The same issues arose with the Classical Theater of Harlem's production a few years ago in New York City and are evident, as well, in the 1967 film. The latter utilized the cinematic techniques, e.g. quick

cuts and close ups, to negotiate group and individual scenes, but the effect was also a bit unsatisfying. The fault may well lie Weiss' text: despite its Theater of Cruelty intentions it is, at the same time, a very literary text, which demands attention to words

just as much as it demands attention to the body and space.

However, these are quibbles that should not obscure the fact that this production is a real achievement. Pure and simple: EgoPo's *Marat/Sade* is theater. In contrast to the usual tripe of the Philadelphia performance scene - a dreary menu of musicals, children's theater, naturalist drama, rock concerts, and sporting events that, aesthetically speaking, condemn one to a prison house of melodramatic fascism - EgoPo takes a chance, jumps into the abyss, and then tries to figure a way out. **OR, AS THE CHARACTER MARAT STATES:**

*Against
Nature's
silence
I
posit
action*

*In the
vast
indifference
I invent
a
meaning*

*I don't
watch
unmoved
I
intervene*

*And say
that
this
and this
are
wrong*

*And I
strive
to alter
and
improve
them*

*The
important
thing
Is to
pull
yourself up
by your
own hair*

*To turn
yourself
inside out
And then
see the
whole
world
with
fresh eyes*

GATZ. ADAPTATION: THE GREAT GATSBY / F. SCOTT FITZGERALD. DIRECTION: JOHN COLLINS. ENSEMBLE: ELEVATOR REPAIR SERVICE. THE PUBLIC THEATRE. NEW YORK / USA. SEPTEMBER 26 - NOVEMBER 28, 2010. REVIEWED: OCTOBER 31, 2010
PHOTOS: JOAN MARCUS

I have been complaining for years that the practice of theatre in America (especially commercial theatre)

PIROOZ AGHSSA

has become numbingly predictable. The entire process of theatre going

seems to have become routine. Even what we call "believable" in a play appears to be nothing more than a convention that only seems "believable" within a theatrical context. So,

it was within this negative state of ennui that I became aware of *Gatz*, an

adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's quintessential American novel, *The Great Gatsby*. How refreshing

it was to go to the theatre to witness something truly new and to have some of my old assumptions

challenged in the most persuasive way. It was as if familiar concepts had gained newfound meaning and significance. Even the word "adaptation" does not adequately describe

the scope of this courageous work by the Elevator Repair Service, one of the most innovative theatrical groups

working in New York City today.

What peaked my interest

as I was reading articles about this production prior to my seeing it, was

the fact that every word of the novel is read during

the course of the performance!

I am not joking! I was so intrigued by reading the various descriptions of *Gatz* that I booked a hasty trip to New York to see it at the Public Theatre. None of the articles that I

had read prior to seeing *Gatz* ever mentioned a Brechtian influence or connection,

but from the outset I could think of nothing else. Thankfully the Brechtian influence here did not seem to operate on merely an

academic level, the kind that tends to turn a performance into a painfully studied dramaturgical exercise instead of vital theatre. It

seemed to me that the familiar theories of Epic Theatre were used to create a theatrical experience that was, in the best sense, defamiliarized and

unusual.

The setting for *Gatz*, a cluttered contemporary-looking office, is as far from the world of *Gatsby* as one can

imagine. An office worker enters and attempts to start his computer unsuccessfully and in frustration

he looks through a rolodex and finds a used copy of *The Great Gatsby* and since

there is nothing else to do he begins to read the novel rather dispassionately. During

the first segment of the performance, which lasts about two hours, the audience is simply listening to this story

while various other office workers enter and exit and look at the narrator with curiosity or indifference. The

narrative aspect of this production, especially in this first portion of the evening, sets a relationship between

the stage and the audience that is reminiscent of Brecht.

We must listen for a long time and remain engaged. There

are no familiar dramatic/theatrical devices to ease the audience into this terrifying journey

of heightening one's sense of hearing for nearly two hours. What astonished me was how



keenly I became aware of the audience's sense of focus or unease in equal measure with my awareness of the performance that was taking place onstage. I also became aware of how frequently our contemporary theatre practices resist reliance on the act of listening. How many plays have you been to lately that asked

you to sit in the theatre and absorb words and sentences and the images that they evoke in your imagination without manufacturing those images visually onstage to let your imagination off the hook? I personally cannot think of very many.

The setting of the production and the world of the novel are at odds with each other visually and in other ways. The performance, therefore, constantly operates on multiple levels of reality. On a visual/emotional level there is the shabby looking office, which stands in opposition to the fictional world of *Gatsby*. On the level of performance strategy there is narration (which remains for the most part a non-dramatic reading, in other words, it does not determine for the viewer/listener just one single interpretation of the text) and there is action. These disparate elements sometimes

harmonize and sometimes collide, but they invariably illuminate the text and intensify our absorption of its many wonders. So, in addition to everything else that I have described, the first two hours of *Gatz* is also about the act of reading, that solitary and wonderful state that we enter when we submit ourselves to the unique world of a book. When

we read a novel do we experience

suggested images in a fragmentary

way or fully-formed? What do we edit out and what do we retain? Do we merely follow the story or are we at all guided by the miracle of the language itself? Are there any associations in our imagination between the characters of a novel and people that we know in our lives? What might cause those asso-

SO, IN ADDITION TO EVERYTHING ELSE THAT I HAVE DESCRIBED, THE FIRST TWO HOURS OF *GATZ* IS ALSO ABOUT THE ACT OF READING, THAT SOLITARY AND WONDERFUL STATE THAT WE ENTER WHEN WE SUBMIT OURSELVES TO THE UNIQUE WORLD OF A BOOK. WHEN WE READ A NOVEL DO WE EXPERIENCE SUGGESTED IMAGES IN A FRAGMENTARY WAY OR FULLY-FORMED? WHAT DO WE EDIT OUT AND WHAT DO WE RETAIN? DO WE MERELY FOLLOW THE STORY OR ARE WE AT ALL GUIDED BY THE MIRACLE OF THE LANGUAGE ITSELF?

ARE THERE ANY ASSOCIATIONS IN OUR IMAGINATION BETWEEN THE CHARACTERS OF A NOVEL AND PEOPLE THAT WE KNOW IN OUR LIVES? WHAT MIGHT CAUSE THOSE ASSOCIATIONS? WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE SOLITARY ACT OF READING COLLIDES WITH THE COLLECTIVE NATURE OF THEATRE-GOING? HOW DO THOSE OPPOSITE STATES INFORM ONE ANOTHER?

ciations? What happens when the solitary act of reading collides with the collective nature of theatre-going? How

do those opposite states inform one another? These are a few of the questions that arose in my mind as I was watching and listening.

After the first intermission the narrator began with chapter 4 of the novel. At this point in the performance, rather gradually, the various workers in the office have begun assuming the roles of the characters in the book. In a Brechtian way, many



of these actors were not cast according to type and therefore would never play their parts in a more "traditional" of "realistic" version of *Gatsby*. We live in an acting culture where the

read that part of the novel shortly prior to seeing this play. As words described the inner psychological states of Daisy and Gatsby in a torrential manner, the still image of the couple

sitting on the couch operates like a gesture, the essentialized visual statement of the text. As the narrator reads the book, all the actors begin to physicalize not just the action of the story but frequently a suggested meaning of the words.

Fitzgerald's description of Gatsby's anxiety prior to Daisy's arrival, and his subsequent psychological states after seeing her, is as follows:


After his embarrassment and his unreasoning joy he was consumed with wonder at her presence. He had been full of the idea for so long, dreamed it right through to the end, waited with his teeth set, so to speak, at an inconceivable pitch of intensity. Now in reaction, he was running down like an overwound clock.

The actor playing Gatsby performed a specific physical gesture that was not psychological in a "realistic" way, but it made the viewer aware of the description of "running down like an overwound clock." The physical gestures of the actors in this production invariably came first and then the audience heard the narration. So there seemed to be an intentional lapse between the gesture and the words, which allowed the audience to meld them together in a personal way. Frankly, I had never really become aware of the phrase "overwound clock"

In a Brechtian way, many of these actors were not cast according to type and therefore would never play their parts in a more "traditional" of "realistic" version of *Gatsby*. We live in an acting culture where the physical type and looks take precedence over almost anything else. Additionally, these actors play primarily office workers who are pretending to be the characters in the novel. This creates another element of distancing. On one level one might say that these are people from the narrator's real life that take over the characters in the novel in his imagination. On the other hand, the dichotomy between the actor and the characters make bold and assertive statements about the novel and the use of language that can only be achieved when opposites are placed alongside each other.

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until I saw the actor's body engaged due to the words. Surely, I knew what Fitzgerald could have meant but I never considered the physical power of those words. *Gatz* seems to make it a mission to arouse the audience's awareness of the words and the force that they can potentially carry. This is singular in a society that undervalues language.

Another aspect of this production that I found fascinating was my difficulty to readily label it as psychological realism, surrealism, non-realism, epic theatre, etc... I found *Gatz* to be a combination of all of the above and much more. This is truly a strong case of content dictating form. There seemed to be a graceful dissolution of various dramatic strategies, one after another, in order to communicate the text. It was also interesting to witness the simultaneous presence of narration and action and how one would negotiate with the other. For example, one of the rowdier parties in the novel was represented onstage as an office party. While the noise of the party (both au-

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FOCUS OR UNEASE IN
EQUAL MEASURE WITH
MY AWARENESS OF THE
PERFORMANCE THAT WAS
TAKING PLACE ONSTAGE.

I ALSO BECAME AWARE
OF HOW FREQUENTLY
OUR CONTEMPORARY
THEATRE PRACTICES
RESIST RELIANCE ON THE
ACT OF LISTENING. HOW
MANY PLAYS HAVE YOU
BEEN TO LATELY THAT
ASKED YOU TO SIT IN THE
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HOOK?

ral and visual) does not entirely drown out the volume of the narrator's voice, it requires the audience to listen with more intensity in order to hear the words. By that point in the performance we the viewers have learned the joy of words and sentence structures so much that we do not want to miss anything.

Even though the reading of the novel throughout the evening has been non-dramatic, there is no question that the narrator has gradually fallen in love with the book. His journey from a dispassionate reading at the start of the show to a deep commitment to the story and the characters is undeniable and palpable. Near the conclusion of the performance, the narrator closes the book, but continues to say the last twenty pages (or so) directly to the audience. In this gentle transition from reading a book to directly addressing the audience, we do not just see Nick Caraway's transformation due to the given circumstances of the story. We simultaneously see a man exalted and transported because he fell in love with F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.



HERR PUNTILA UND SEIN KNECHT MATTI. DIRECTION: MICHAEL THALHEIMER. DEUTSCHES THEATER BERLIN, GERMANY. BERLIN PREMIERE: 30 OCTOBER 2009. REVIEWED: 30 OCTOBER 2009

The performance begins in darkness. A symphonic poem, majestic music by Richard Strauss, sounds through the Deutsches Theater's gilded house. Dimly lit, a man stands onstage, erect and defiant, his head held high and his hands on his hips, before a towering, rotating wall of tarnished brass. The stillness and silence following this overture is broken by the sound of heavy breathing and vomiting in the shadows. Here, in the image of a militant sovereign, the audience first encounters Puntila, the Finnish landholder.

The opening scene for Bertolt Brecht's *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*, directed by Michael Thalheimer, sets the tone for the performance that follows. The prologue of Brecht's *Volksstück* has been removed. Just under two hours in length, many of Brecht's scenes have been cut and, with only nine characters, auxiliary figures have vanished. Thalheimer's work as a director is the reduction of a play to its concentrated essence. The unspoken subtexts are revealed in an attempt to move away from the social, and make the emotional, human reality of

the play relevant to a contemporary audience. Thalheimer reduces the text to onstage images that play against Henrik Ahr's imposing stage. Cut to the bone, only the essentials remain; and then sometimes the essentials are cut as well.

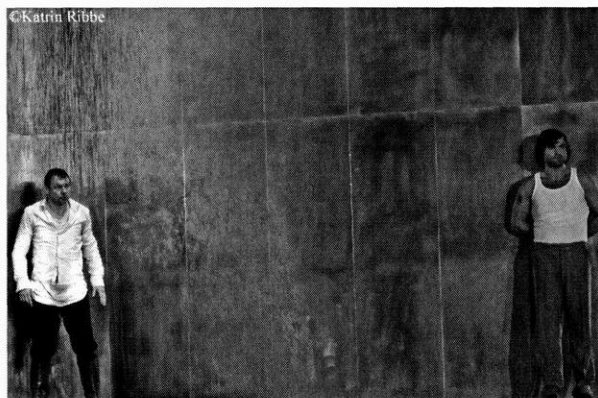
Spectators are forced to ask whether Brecht's text, written in 1940/41 while in exile in Finland, has been reduced to its essence or if they are seeing the "best of" Puntila and his man Matti. In abridging *Puntila*, Thalheimer has directed a series of vignettes oscillating between dramatic, comic, and grotesque.

The strength of this performance is by far its two principle actors. Norman Hacker performs as Puntila, Brecht's landowner who is a warm-hearted drunk but a selfish exploiter when sober. His performance of the violent and abrupt oscillations of this unsteady character is astounding to watch. From anger, to drunkenness, to deep depression, Hacker's Puntila is in a constant state of emotional change. Here, Puntila, who remarks at the beginning of the play, "*ich bin ein kranker Mann*," seems to suffer from the frantic ups-and-downs of a severe alcoholic. At

one moment he is weeping and at the next he is snapping his fingers for his daughter to bring him his coffee. When drunk, he either weeps or kisses his fellow performers; when sober, he falls into violent tantrums.

Both the antipode to Puntila's charac-

JOSE ENRIQUE MACIÁN



©Katrin Ribbe

ter and Hacker's performance is Andreas Döhler's portrayal of the sardonic chauffeur Matti. Döhler's performance is cold and matter-of-fact. Rarely does he display emotion. His responses are short and to the point, while Hacker's speech is rushed and nervous. Puntila gesticulates while Matti stands still. (In fact, Hacker is the only performer who is permitted to regularly walk and talk at the same time.) The simpleness of this Matti is in stark contrast to the drunkenness of this spastic Puntila. It is this contrast that makes the relationship between master and servant dynamic to watch.

Similarly, Döhler's performance as Matti is contrasted by the performance of Katrin Wichmann as Puntila's daughter Eva. She is the object of all the men around her, the young victim of her tyrant father and the stoic Matti, just as the young and talented Wichmann is the victim of Thalheimer's direction, making her into Puntila's argumentative, whining child. After she fails Matti's test of whether they could be happily married, Eva is sent away by Puntila, out of the performance; and the stage grows dark.

Brecht's play has been streamlined. Between some scenes, the V-shaped wall revolves and ominous music plays in a cinemagraphic, rather than "epic," use of stage technology to facilitate the movement of time between scenes. At other points, one scene flows into the next. When at one moment Eva is yelling at Matti, she is yelling at Puntila at the next. Puntila's proposal of marriage to three (in Brecht's text there are four) village women becomes a comic shtick as one woman is carried on after another, quickly addressed and groped, only to be sent off and replaced by the next woman. Or, the

awkward Attaché engaged to Eva (played by Ole Lagerpusch, whose physical virtuosity is always a pleasure) is confronted by a topless Eva and a nude Matti in the sauna. Or, after calling an end to his daughter's engagement, Puntila retreats to a corner where he is covered by a stream of red liquid (presumably wine, or perhaps Thalheimer's hallmark stage blood). These short vignettes, whether comic or cruel lead to a sleekness



of performance that invites the spectators into the play world rather than holding them at a critical distance.

Thalheimer's directing must be commemorated for its precision. Expressive poses, an economy of movement, and simple gestures replace psychological representation. In line with the Thalheimer style of performing, the actors come to the stage's lip and deliver their lines forward into the abyss of the audience, speaking above a simple, repeating, musical beat; or the actor's bodies face forward and only their heads turn to address one another. Yet, the finesse of Thalheimer's gestures by no means constitutes Brecht's social gesture. And when Puntila/Hacker breaks his cup and saucer against the wall or Eva/Wichmann is forced to gag on salted herring, one cannot help but think of the *Regietheater* of the 1990s and all of its excesses.

Thalheimer's *Puntila* production originally premiered in March 2007 at Hamburg's Thalia Theater. In 2009, Berlin's newly renovated Deutsches Theater came under the directorship of Ulrich Khuon, the Thalia Theater's former artistic director. Along with actors and directors transplanted from Hamburg to the German capital, Khuon has also brought several acclaimed productions including this *Puntila*,

overly sentimental end veers from Brecht who closes his text with Matti making the active decision to leave his master; and in doing so, Thalheimer shrouds the figure of Puntila in tragedy.

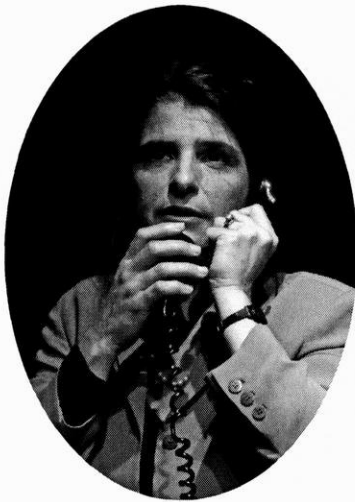
In staging Brecht's *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*, Thalheimer seems to have adopted his own understanding of Puntila's stance towards life: "lock, stock and barrel;



Thalheimer's second staging of a Brecht text. No stranger to Berlin's theater scene, Thalheimer became famous, and brought acclaim to the DT under its previous artistic director with his reductionist stagings of theatre classics: e.g. Lessing's *Emilia Galotti* (2001) and Goethe's *Faust* (2004). Unfortunately, Thalheimer's first production in the 2009/10 season is not a similar success.

The performance ends with Matti holding Puntila as they imagine climbing Mount Hatelma to gaze upon Puntila's forest: a final act of abandoning reality. As Matti states "*Das Herz geht mir auf*," Thalheimer has Puntila die. Matti closes his master's eyes, the music ends, he takes in the view, then leaves the stage. This

without regard; until the end." Yet, in his attempt to make the social into something emotionally relevant, Thalheimer's images collapse under Brecht's text. What remains? In an attempt to show the hidden, human reality in *Puntila*, two excellent actors remain surrounded by empty movements without a formal structure or social relevance.



BRECHT ON BRECHT. ADAPTATION AND TRANSLATION:
GEORGE TABORI. DIRECTION: JOHN STRASBERG. ACCIDENTAL
REPERTORY THEATER: JUDY KRAUSE, VIRGINIA ARMITAGE,
LOUIS VUOLO, AUDREY LAVINE, ROBERT ROWE, JERRY
MARSINI, ANNE PASQUALE. NY / USA. OCTOBER 29 -
NOVEMBER 21, 2009. REVIEWED: OCTOBER 31, 2009
PHOTOS: JIM BALDASSARE

write a
review
without
words

show, don't tell



to write is to record; to remember

the critic is a murderer



i plagiarize; therefore i am

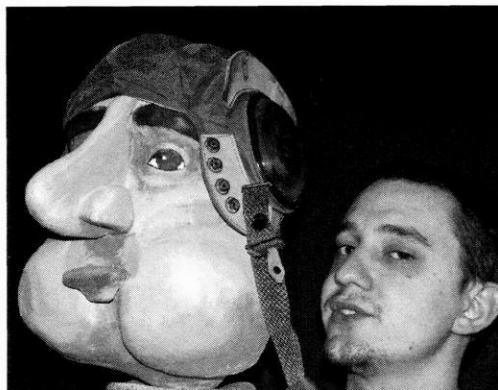
use the force, luke!

"ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS TRUST SHAKESPEARE"; "LASST EUCH NICHT VERFÜHREN!"

We know that in order to restore writing to its future, we must
reverse the myth: the birth of the reader must be required by
the death of the author." Barthes, *Death of the Author* (1968)

*Get Laid! Reject Vertical! Go Horizontal!
Read / Write Sideways!*

THE GOOD PUPPET OF SZECHWAN. ADAPTATION & DIRECTION: STAN HELEVA. B. SOMEDAY PRODUCTIONS. WALKING FISH THEATRE. NOVEMBER 4 - 22, 2010. FISHTOWN / PHILADELPHIA / USA. SALON REVIEWED: OCTOBER 10, 2010; PRODUCTION REVIEWED: NOVEMBER 4, 2010. PHOTOS: MICHELLE PAULS & STAN HELEVA



silence

thereby, literature (it would be better, from now on to say writing), by refusing to assign to the text (and to the world-as-text) a "secret," i.e., an ultimate meaning, liberates an activity we may call countertheological, properly revolutionary, for to refuse to halt meaning is finally to refuse god and his hypostases, reason, science, the law." Barthes, "Death of the Author," 1968



LIFE OF GALILEO. ADAPTATION: CHARLES LAUGHTON. DIRECTION: GARY M. ENGLISH. DESIGN TEAM: RACHEL LEVY, DAVID SMITH, MARTI SIMMONS, ED WEINGART, JOE THERRIEN, DASSIA POSNER. CONNECTICUT REPERTORY THEATRE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT'S HARRIET S. JORGENSEN THEATRE, DECEMBER 3-12, 2009, REVIEWED: DECEMBER 10, 2009.

I entered the Jorgensen Theater on the Storrs campus of the University of Connecticut, and was immediately struck by the bright, white disk upstage of the acting area. It's like a toothed wheel from some enormous clock, modern like one of Kandinsky's circles, fragmented like a bird's eye view of ground zero.

The company, Connecticut Repertory Theater (CRT), is a mix of professional, graduate and undergraduate actors, which presents its audiences with a challenge, namely, that an older actor will play the old Galileo, while other aged characters might be played

ANDREW PERIALE

by young actors "acting" old. This disconnect must simply be accepted as a convention, in the way that gravely ill patients in a teaching hospital must put their lives in the hands of interns and residents some of the time. Here, too, the mortality rate is quite low.

The CRT production is one of many *Galileo*'s mounted last year, thanks to the 400th year anniversary of Galileo's first

peek through a telescope, and the recognition of 2009 as the international year of astronomy. Several productions scheduled enrichment activities around their performances. CRT featured a panel discussion with Gary M. English (director), and faculty members Friedeman Weidauer (editor of *The Brecht Yearbook*) and Serena Parekh (assistant professor in Philosophy and affiliated with the Human Rights Institute at UConn). The discussion was well attended, and was moderated by CRT dramaturg Dassia Posner, who also assembled a useful collection of essays for the program. There was also a post-show discussion including professor of physics Ronald L. Mallett, author of *Time Traveler*.

Just as, in Galileo's universe, the earth and planets

all revolve around the sun, in Brecht's universe the pope and all the other characters revolve around Galileo. Dudley Knight did a stellar job with the text-heavy title role, though I thought he lacked some of Galileo's *joie de vivre*, as if the great man ate and drank only in order to pursue science and not for the pure sensual joy of it—he was, after all, Italian. ["I cherish the consolations of the flesh." scene viii]

Sure, Brecht puts his stamp on *Galileo* in the arguments that run for several pages (the virtuosic turns of which explain in part Laughton's compulsion not merely to *play* the role but to bend it to his will), but it seems to me that directors put their stamp on the piece in Scene 9, which arrives *deus ex machina* with all the mad joy of a bacchanal in Bedlam just in time to rescue audiences from the crushing weight of history. Director English's take on the scene did not disappoint, mixing low-tech Bread-and-Puppet-style parade figures with shadow projections and singing—a rollicking plebeian iconoclasm. It is the one moment in the play when we hear from "the people;" as imperfect as their understanding of Galileo's science may be, they fill the theatre with earthy, peasant energy.



©Gerry Goodstein

English drew a strong parallel between Galileo Galilei and J. Robert Oppenheimer, and used the 1947 Laughton collaboration, in which Galileo's pure-research-divorced-from-real-world-consequences stands in for the Manhattan Project and a grim nuclear future. Oppenheimer actually appears in this production as a sort of shadow. In a particularly moving moment just after Galileo's recantation, actors stood in tableaux before a high-tech projected cyber-collage of nuclear holocaust, napalm victims and a thousand other images too fleeting to be consciously assimilated. It was quite dazzling. (See this scene on YouTube under keywords: "Galileo" "CRT")

The other actors were all very good. I particularly enjoyed Bonnie Black as Mrs. Sarti, and Kurt Zischke as Barberini, who made that delicious transition from Cardinal and friend of Galileo, to Pope Urban VIII, in which he literally puts on the mantle of authority, and the understanding that he now represents something larger slowly unfolds.

Ryan Guess, a second year MFA actor, did a good job with the challenge of play-

ing the 10-year-old impish Andrea Sarti, as well as the 24-34-year-old protégé of Galileo and the 43-year-old embittered academic. Perhaps in an attempt to distinguish between the three incarnations of Andrea, Guess's emotional highpoint—the disappointment at Galileo's capitulation—was played with such unbounded emotion that he seemed literally to be foaming at the mouth. While Brecht was writing with exclamation points here, this would have been an excellent moment to have kept some of that emotion inside, as it left the reviewer feeling a (perhaps) unwarranted sympathy for Galileo.

The set (Rachel Levy), lighting (David O. Smith) and costumes (Marti Simmons) were all first-rate, and all supported English's enlightened direction of Brecht's extended argument.

For some reason, this production drove home the abject bleakness of the play's ending—Andrea sneaking off with the "Truth" hidden under

his coat. Future directors might consider closing with a reprise of Scene 9, or better yet a full cast musical number. It worked for Brecht in *Threepenny Opera* ("Verfolgt das Unrecht nicht zu sehr...") and, what with many of his theatrical "alienation" devices having lost their punch over the decades, I doubt he'd mind kicking up the ending a bit.

As a sort of postscript, I would encourage you to Google "Galileo Iran" for a Ramin Mostaghim review (for LA Times website) of Dariush Farhang's production of *Galileo* (Tehran, January - March 2010). His adaptation contrasted ignorance and enlightenment, modernity and ancientness. He referred not only to Galileo's predecessor Copernicus, but to 11th Century Persian astronomer Abu Rayhan Biruni. As well, the "writers added verses from the late Iranian dissident Ah-

mad Shamlu's poetry," none of which was lost on the Iranian audiences. ("When actor Amin Taroukh, who plays Galileo, referring to one of Shamlu's works, defiantly tells the pope, 'this snow is not going to stop,' he drew the raucous applause of the audience, who smirked, sighed or even wept...") This was just the sort of reworking of Galileo with which Brecht was engaged for many years, and a good illustration of why we must continue this work as Darkness assumes new guises.

PERFORMANCE II: BRECHT

DIE HEILIGE JOHANNA DER SCHLACHTHÖFE. DIRECTION: NICOLAS STEMANN. DEUTSCHES THEATER BERLIN, GERMANY. PREMIERE: 16 DECEMBER 2009. REVIEWED: 16 DECEMBER 2009

JOSÉ ENRIQUE MACIÁN

The multiple productions of Bertolt Brecht's *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* across Germany in the 2009/2010 theatre season reflect the current crisis in the global economy defined by the collapse and takeover of key financial firms, and the bailout of banks by national governments. Director Nicolas Stemann is amongst those who have attempted to investigate the current state of capitalism through the lens of this play written between 1929 and 1931. More than merely using Brecht to draw simple parallels between the Great Depression and the current financial crisis caused by predatory lending, Stemann has staged Brecht's text in Berlin's Deutsches Theater to demonstrate a mechanism of globalized economics structured around corporate raiders and hostile takeovers.

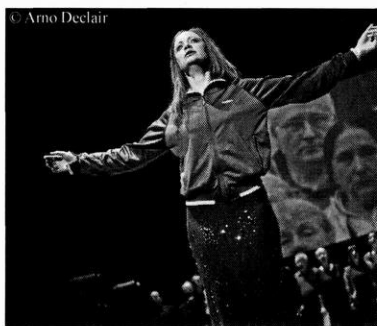
Stemann, who is best known for his dynamic productions of plays by Austrian Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek, is familiar with directing theatre critical of both society and history. His performances, heavily structured on the use of media, the deconstruction of text, and the decentralization of character, serve as a 21st-century continuation of the *Verfremdungseffekt* for a generation raised on cable television and the Internet. Here, not only does Stemann criticize the capitalist status quo, he also analyses the actual potential of Brechtian techniques to attain the distance needed to

promote a socially critical audience.

In the first fifteen minutes of this three-hour performance, it seems that every alienating technique of Brecht's epic theatre is used: many of these are already staples of Stemann's work. The audience is confronted by actors Andreas Döhler, Felix Goesser, Matthias Neukirch, and Katharina Marie Schubert standing before the stage's curtain. The three men are dressed in sequined tuxedos: a bit like Liberace. Schubert, as Johanna, dons a maroon sequined gown (with open back) suitable for a fundraising gala; her maroon Salvation Army jacket is worn on top. The actors read from the orange Suhrkamp edition of Brecht's text, clutched in their hands. Tongue-in-cheek, all the answers can be found in the

small paperback: a critical stance to Brecht as omniscient patriarch of socially relevant theatre.

They read stage directions aloud, stepping in and out of character. They address the audience directly. There is projected video and even a cardboard placard labeling Döhler as 70,000 workers. The actors fight over who can speak into the one onstage microphone. There is a continual flux between reading and acting, as well as between performing characters and reporting a story. Singular characters are fragmented. The three men argue over who will speak the text of the meat-packer king Pierpont Mauler: a debate that carries on throughout the performance. They speak as individuals and they speak as a chorus.



When the curtain opens, the stage is flooded with harsh (Brechtian) white light. A table with a cutout city is revealed to be the source of the “live”-projected videos showing cityscape and the striking masses. The Suhrkamp books are set aside but the characteristic matter-of-fact speaking, and the conflict between acting and demonstrating continues. In the scene where the broker Slift shows Johanna the baseness of the poor, Döhler demonstrates the roles of Slift, the foreman, and the young worker recounting the ill-fated Luckerniddle in the style of Brecht’s “Street Scene.” Yet the reporting is broken when Mrs. Luckerniddle enters, played by Margit Bendokat. With plastic bags from Lidl and Obi in hand, Bendokat is dressed in the jogging suit of the stereotypical *Hartz IV-Empfänger*: the German unemployed on social welfare. Later a chorus of some twenty singers enters; when at first the masses were only a paper cutout on a video; now they are present onstage in flesh. Throughout the performance, a band adds musical accents to the action onstage and provides accompaniment to the performers’ songs. In line with the “fund-raising gala” theme of the costumes, Dessau’s music has been replaced by a new composition by Thies Mynther: somewhere between easy listening and show tune.

The performance continues on a simple set: a hanging window and two doorframes, a table and some chairs before the projection screen, on the large, sparse stage. The men continue to switch their roles. A body count is projected: every three sec-

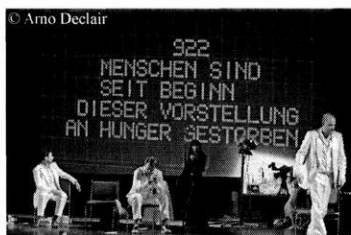
onds someone dies of hunger. The audience sits and counts the increasing number of the dead since the performance’s beginning. Regardless of whether this heavy-handed didacticism is sincere in its politics or if the performance is showing an inherent trend in Brecht to moralize, the helplessness in the provocative declaration “*gegen Krise kann keiner was*” is the central idea that the audience confronts.

Then, in the second half of the performance, beginning after Johanna is expelled from the Black Straw Hats, a strange shift occurs in the production: it becomes “dramatic” (as opposed to “epic”). Where the first half was a distanced representation of the private world of capitalist giants, the second half presents the personal in the large world of the masses. Before the all too familiar projection of rising and falling stocks, the dimensions of the stage seem to have increased. The DT’s

revolving stage turns, illuminated by cold blue theatrical light, revealing lounging capitalists (Goeser as Slift), Johanna rummaging through trash, Döhler as a reporter with camera crew, and eventually the striking workers with raised fists under a flurry of stage snow. By no means naturalistic, the acting does take on



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a degree of pathos in an attempt to show some kind of emotional authenticity between characters. Yet these private relationships between stage figures are unable to encompass the scope of Johanna's world. And when the market crashes leaving Mauler destitute, Neukirch (who spent the first act struggling to keep the role for himself) plays as the single Mauler to parallel the single Johanna.

It is during the private performances of Mauler and Johanna, that Margit Bendokat reveals her acting prowess. Despite the other actors performing with a critical distance towards the character and text, the simplicity and clarity of Brecht's social gest is absent. With an economy of gesture, and her cold, articulate vocal intonation (colored with her Berliner accent), Bendokat's speaking of Brecht's text is unmatched in its clarity. Her performance is moving not because it is emotional but because the text stands for itself. She takes over Schubert's declaration of Johanna's revolutionary dream. "*Mit kriegereischem Schritt*" in Bendokat's voice, she embodies the labor leaders and workers alike; a revolution organ, Bendokat leads the workers towards revolt.

After the troops open fire on the stockyard strikers, the production's style takes one final turn when a robotic voice announces a final letter from Mauler's Wall Street friend, descending from the flies as *deus ex machina*. Neukirch's Mauler, exalted through poverty and humility, rejects the letter, which Döhler eagerly takes: now he is Mauler. With the rejection of sentimentality, the white lights and the objective style of acting return; thus, Mauler's humanization, and final return to business, set the tone of the performance.

Johanna, deprived of her strength and a microphone, is drowned out in her attempts to denounce the class system as three Maulers accompany the chorus in song canonizing her. With a megaphone, Bendokat announces the disastrous news of unemployment, crashing currencies and banks: as relevant in Brecht's time as today. The projection of stocks is replaced by Margaret Thatcher's slogan "There is no alternative." Johanna leads the ensemble in a large musical number to the glories of capitalism. At the end, Bendokat and Schubert are alone onstage, the latter's glittering gown in contrast to the former's simplicity. Matter-of-factly, Bendokat states that "*Die Kommunisten haben recht behalten. Die Massen hätten nicht auseinanderlaufen dürfen.*" The sound of gunfire rings out and Bendokat falls. Johanna, naïve as always, turns shocked to the audience: "Oh!"

Despite the loud boos that filled the Deutsches Theater on the night of the premiere, Stemann's production of *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* was a success as a performance and in the dialectical sense that it raised important questions about the world today and about staging Brecht. Two decades after the fall of the Wall what is the "no alternative"? Capitalism or its downfall? In the boxing match between Stemann's "postdramatic" theatre and Brecht's drama, the voice of Bendokat resonates through the theatre: "The communists were right."



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DER KAUKASISCHE KREIDEKREIS. DIRECTION:
MANFRED KARGE. BERLINER ENSEMBLE,
GERMANY. PREMIERE: 23 APRIL 2010.
REVIEWED: 23 APRIL 2010

Manfred Karge's newest staging at the Berliner Ensemble is something of an oddity in Berlin's theatre landscape alongside productions of Brecht texts directed by Castorf, Steinhilber, Thalheimer, and, most recently, Friederike Heller. While these others have left their strong directorial fingerprints on Brecht in an attempt to deconstruct and destabilize his

JOSÉ ENRIQUE MACIÁN

Norbert Stöß appears onstage as the narrator, as ironic chorus of one, a "*Künstler aus der Hauptstadt*." In a pinstriped suit, Stöß narrates

Brecht's prologue set in the Soviet Union following the Second World

War, framing the rest of the play. As in telling a story, he describes the dispute and dialogue between two communes over farmland. This sets the rhythm for the rest of the production, where Stöß, sometimes in songs by Paul Dessau, sometimes reciting Brecht's irregular verse, interrupts

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written word, Karge places the focus of his *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* on the actors, the text, and Brecht's own style of theatre making.

This production is an experiment in staging Epic Theatre, as students could imagine it from a textbook. Karge stresses the parable quality of Brecht's play written between 1944 and 1945 while in American Exile. The performance begins when Nor-

bert Stöß appears onstage as the narrator, as ironic chorus of one, to describe the action, or to build temporal bridges between scenes. The rest of the ensemble follows the narrator's example performing in a "Brechtian" style of demonstration, in a continual flux between acting a character and reporting the story.

The fantastical, Orientalist *mis-en-*

scène of the performance is more abstract than the historically illustrative settings of other Brecht productions directed by Karge: e.g. *Schweyk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (2008) or *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (2009). The director himself designed the minimalist set that consists of black, slanting and peaked walls with glowing red borders, and a pointed archway in the center. This pseudo-expressionistic backdrop to the play's actions is a palace, the walls of a Georgian city, and the summits of far-off mountains. Jessica Karge's costume design however does the most to define the performance's setting in the far-off world and time of a parable. The servants and farmers seem to come from the Soviet Union of the 1930s, and the soldiers' uniforms are reminiscent of Stalin's Red Army. While the governing, noble characters are dressed in costumes that are part historical epic (think Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*), part contemporary Russian Mafia, and part Disney draws the Russian Royal Family.

With this use of alienation in performance and *mis-en-scène*, Manfred Karge directs a production that is close to the word of Brecht's text. And although some scenes have been cut to focus the action exclusively on Grusche and Azdak, reducing the performance to almost three hours in length, the most aggressive change to the written *Kreidekreis* is in its dramaturgical structure. In the text, the first four scenes are about the servant Grusche rescuing and raising the infant son of the assassinated governor; the fifth scene describes the rise of the common man turned corrupt, yet homespun, judge Azdak; and in the sixth scene, the two stories collide when Azdak, like Solomon, must decide who is the boy's mother – the woman who bore him or the woman

who raised him. Where Brecht divides the action of his play into two sections that temporally occur simultaneously, destabilizing the centrality of Grusche's character by switching perspectives during the story, Karge and his dramaturg have decided to intertwine the stories of Grusche and Azdak seamlessly creating a linear narrative and emphasizing the epic expanse of these two stories, making theatre for an audience familiar with the cuts and jumps of cinema.

Despite this changing of Brecht's dramaturgy it would be possible, because of the performance style, to imagine that Karge was attempting to restage Brecht using his *Modellbuch* on the same stage where Brecht himself directed the German-language premiere in 1954. Such respect and classicism seems strange for the director, who alongside Matthias Langhoff revolutionized East Berlin theatre in the 1970s with their stagings of texts by Heiner Müller. The paradox of the evening is that it seems to be a museum piece out of the dusty Ensemble's past and yet Karge has accomplished staging a production autonomous of Brecht's own model: Karge's *Kreidekreis* is more real than the original that it seems to represent.

The difference between the Brecht and Karge stagings is betrayed by the new performers and the lack of the social gest. In acting Brecht, the performers perform acting Brecht. Where the actors strive to maintain a presentational style of performance, they often fall into overt theatricality and caricature as if to say with a grin, "Yes, we are performing Brecht!" Rather than an objective reading of the text, the actors often resort to unwarranted pathos and even psychology. Karge's minimalist set is also not conducive to the socially clarifying gestures and *Arrangements* of

Brechtian performance that enables the social to be made visible. Only the governor's wife (Marina Senckel) and her entourage are able through tableaux and formalized gestures to condense their social class into simple, clear stage images.

Of the some two dozen actors, the performances of Dieter Montag and Anna Graenzer are particularly noteworthy. Montag, from an older generation of actors, masters his role as Azdak. His performance and speech is simple and to the point, underlined by dry, matter-of-fact humor. The talented Graenzer performs Grusche with an economy of gesture and clarity of speech. And although she sometimes

falls into the showy theatricality of her colleagues, the quality with which she speaks her text, and acts/

demonstrates her role, stepping in and out of her character to comment, sets her apart from other performers her age. Amongst the newest generation of actors performing Brecht, Graenzer is a thrill to watch onstage.

Forasout of place as this performance may appear aesthetically, Brecht's *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, with its clear-cut moral, seems just as anachronistic to produce. Yet a play containing the line, "*Wenn das Haus eines Großen zusammenbricht/ Werden viele Kleine erschlagen*," should be relevant for the current reality of financial crisis, of failing banks and economies. Karge changes

the performance's ending with Stöß's narrator warning those who do not make a garden of the land given to them. Because Karge staged a work of Epic Theatre, respectful of Brecht's 1950s aesthetic, the production's ending draws a reference to the socialism of Brecht's prologue: a failed hope for the future, which now lies in the past, but not so long ago as to constitute myth. Karge's *Kreidekreis* finds itself locked in its own circle, where the audience feels that it is watching a historical production when in reality it is watching a performance made for the 21st century. So when the moral is directed at the year 2010, it is understood as a tongue-in-cheek

critique of Real Existing Socialism. Rather than being political, the production becomes grotesque. This is an example of why, in



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order to remain social, Brecht cannot be (re)staged without adopting a critical stance towards his work and theatre. Brecht's theatre of alienation must be alienated.

PERFORMANCE II: BRECHT

THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE. ADAPTATION: DOMENIQUE LOZANO. DIRECTION & DESIGN: JOHN DOYLE. ORIGINAL MUSIC: NATHANIEL STOOKEY. AMERICAN CONSERVATORY THEATER, SAN FRANCISCO / USA. FEBRUARY 18 – MARCH 14, 2010. REVIEWED: MARCH 2, 2010

A “bracingly modern” *Caucasian Chalk Circle* was staged by the American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco, from February

GUDRUN TABBERT-JONES

18 to March 14. Director John Doyle used the crisp colloquial translation by Dominique Lozano and original music by Nathaniel Stookey for this production. Brecht’s story was set in a non-descript contemporary context. The prologue with its references to Communism was omitted. The stage - littered with trash behind a wire curtain, actors rummaging through the wreckage, salvaging bits and pieces, and carrying them off - recreated the aftermaths of a catastrophic event. Wailing sirens, lights crashing down from the ceiling brought acoustically and visually sceneries of warfare, earthquakes and other recent catastrophes to mind.

Likewise, the costumes, acting style and language – contemporary regional American vernacular, slang, swear words – were intended to make Brecht’s story accessible to ordinary Americans. Not everyone in the audience appreciated the crude language and vulgar terms used by the translator. Many of Brecht’s fine linguistic nuances and subtleties were lost in translation. For example, the governor’s foul-mouthed wife calls her servant a “cunt,” language

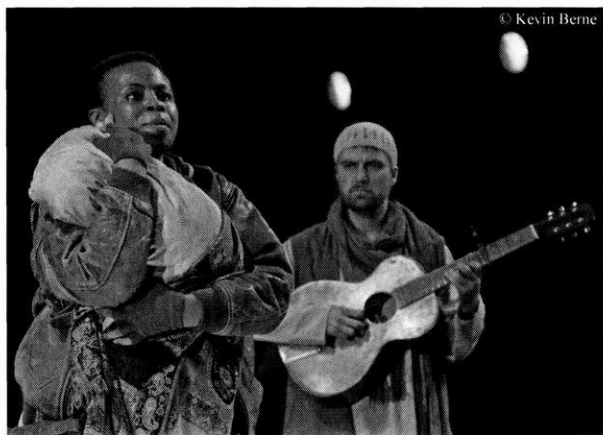
that puts her on a par with members of the underclass. Unfamiliar with the German text the audience attributed the

crude and vulgar language to Brecht.

The Brechtian concept of actors not identifying with a character but “presenting” a role was applied very successfully. Nine actors played multiple roles, which was one of the reasons the cast was not listed on the program. In the audience exchange session, we learned that, during rehearsals, the actors tried out different roles and sometimes redistributed them as they saw fit.

I have never seen a Brechtian play where the transition from one role to another was done so well. It was as if the actors were playing a game, tossing the roles to one another like a ball. The scene in which Grusche leaves the child on a farmer’s doorsteps was particularly delightful. The farmer’s wife, played by Gregory Wallace, a male actor, pretending to be a woman, imitated a high pitched female voice, whereas the farmer, played by René Augesen, an actress, responded in a deep male voice.

This was a marvelous application of



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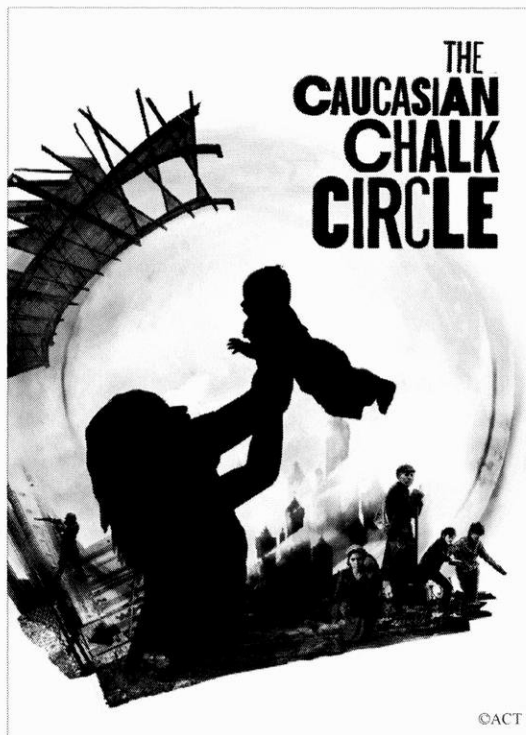
the Brechtian concept of actors “playing” characters, but not “impersonating” them. After the show, the actors also talked about improvising as part of their role assignment, a concept some of them found quite challenging and intimidating at first but ended up enjoying it like a game. Given that most of the actors played different roles, I would like to compliment them on their versatility and the ease with which they switched roles. Jack Willis stood out as Azdak, the corrupt

ing on whom he asked, the responses differed from production to production and could lengthen or shorten the play by as much five minutes.

Some critics argued that carrying on a dialogue and mingling with the audience “drained the play of its theatrical energy” and “obscured the narrative” (*New York Times*: March 2, 2010). Be that as it may, it certainly included audience as another character in the play.

What was also new was the music.

The “singer” (Mannoel Felciano) accompanying himself with a tired-looking guitar or a violin interrupted the action, narrating and annotating the story, alternating with a chorus made up by the cast, adding a touch of Greek tragedy. The “singing” was truly Brechtian. During the audience exchange session, the actors admitted how delighted they were to learn that they were not expected to sing like opera singers. In fact, they reported that they thoroughly enjoyed the four weeks rehearsal time, an experience they shared



/ incorruptible judge. While all of the actors had been instructed to include the audience as a character in the play and address them as such, Jack Willis, playing Azdak, went a step further. In each of the two performances I saw he asked a lady sitting in front row for her name, family status, and whether she wanted to get a divorce. Depend-

with those who had actually worked with Brecht half a century ago. Overall, the A.C.T. production of *Caucasian Chalk Circle* was well received. Viewers commented about the play’s validity in our current situation.

PERFORMANCE II: BRECHT

THE A.C.T
&
THE
CAUCASIAN
CHALK
CIRCLE

When I found out that the director of a current production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* had been the Tony Award-winning director of the Broadway musical *Sweeney Todd*, I wondered why no one I knew in the International Brecht Society hadn't advised directors that doing *Sweeney Todd* (a murder revenge musical) was a learning process for anyone tackling a gigantic play with enormous historical importance like *Chalk Circle* (derived from *Augsburg Chalk Circle*, *Chinese Chalk Circle* and Solomon's biblical choices)

I was invited by a friend to see the production because he was interested in discussing Brecht. I agreed to go if he bought the ticket, he did, and we climbed to the 2nd balcony breathing deeply to watch the thing in the Gallery at a 45-degree angle.

I thought the Gallery was where the performers but not in this location, I couldn't figure out why the director had sirens and noisy crashing sounds plus huge light flashes, along with drops flung in to interrupt the scene, until I realized these were scene changes. They were also gimmicks to keep the audience awake – but what were the sirens about?

Oh I forgot, the play "was about war." This is what the program stated. However, as I remembered the play (before rereading it again after the performance a night later) it was about property and motherliness. Who uses the property well, who should own it? (The last line of the play and the first discussion in the prologue between the two Kolkhozes).



I bet my friend that the prologue would never appear on an ACT stage. Why? It's a discussion between two communist Russian Kolkhozes, with people who defeated the Germans discussing the best use of the valley the mountains and the land; and whether or not to put up a dam and use the irrigation water for crops while also allowing the goats to roam the hillside to produce cheese. The Expert (agronomist) is asked to layout the plans for the two groups to discuss the choices perhaps satisfying old peasants and current needs. I think they agree to damage the land both ways (from an ecological view) but at least there is this discussion as to how to proceed to make the land useful and productive. Usefulness is a key idea in Brecht's play. The lead character in the

fable, parable, folktale turns out to be useful (a good mother) after many difficulties. In the prologue the discussants invite a storyteller to tell a long fable on the subject.

The Storyteller, a famous one in the Caucasus (the location of the play) enters with musicians and is asked by the Expert from Moscow how long the play will be? "Two hours," says the Storyteller. The expert says: "I have to be in Tiflis tonight, can you cut it short?" The Storyteller: "No."

No discussion on the use of the land for food production. This despite the fact that Michael Pollan's *bougie* books (*The Botany of Desire*, *Omnivore's Dilemma*, etc...) must have been in the hands of many. The ACT cut the prologue and located the play in no place, only onstage as if the actors had agreed to make a play, dressed not in Caucasian costumes but rather as soldiers in Afghan US desert duds in front of scribble scrabble drop cloths.

No need to interpret the fable, "I was not there." The play was distorted, so any meaning and philosophical insight was awkward and weird.

The direction was more like *Chorus Line* and much like *Urinetown* with a punch in the stomach and a bang on the head. A repeated image: forthright actors standing in line either on a fence or up against the footlights singing directly to the people. This must have been that dreaded Brechtian-esque trope, "alienation": flat-noted music with a hard text and thin lips. Characters (such as they were) all telling it like it is. The Like it is, is the Like it is. Get it!

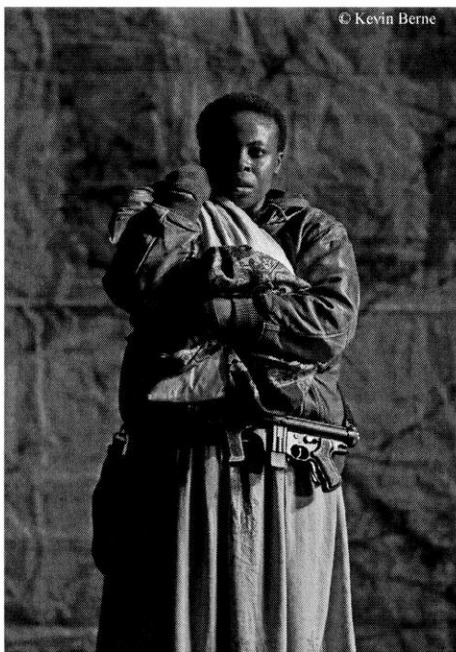
By writing different music, (not Paul Dessau) retranslating it (not Ralph Manheim) with enough "fucks" to make it current lest the language be too elevated and meaningful and thus to misinterpret the director Doyle, and his vague opposition to war.

All wars... any war... somewhere... "Whatever."

What the "fuck" is taking place? Where are we? What is this play about?

In print it is a good play and I remembered I had seen a fine production done by Carl Weber in 1963 with the SF Actors Workshop at Marines' Memorial Theatre. Weber had just come to the US and was hired by the AW (The Root Beer Organization) to direct *Chalk Circle*. And he did.

But he did what everyone is worried about: he produced the Berliner Ensemble model on the Actors Workshop stage. I thought it was a great gift and a wonder. I knew the Actors Workshop couldn't do such a production: they



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PERFORMANCE II: BRECHT

were neo-realistic, with little or no great directorial or performance style like the Guthrie in Minnesota. Rather, a fine selection of plays with mediocre reasonable productions with no stars, non-Equity, usually intelligent and competent.

But Weber's Berliner Ensemble remake was stunning. One memorable moment: Grusha picks up the Queen's child, who was left behind. After a lot of looking at the bundle and wondering if she should or shouldn't, we begin to understand that once she picks up the baby she is in trouble: both as a potential mother protecting it and endangering her own life. The Ironshirts were after the boy to kill it to stop that particular royal line (one group is overthrown yet later regains control while both destroy many peasants).

The fable is set in a distant place.

She picks up the bundle, is followed, hunted, and has to cross a rickety bridge over a gorge with the baby. The curtain opens and there is an 80 by 50 photograph of the Caucasian (Ural) mountains and a small bridge with a spot light on her. She sings. Stunning.

No director in the Actor's Workshop or scenic designer ever would have thought to do such a bold stroke. It also placed this little figure of human with a bundle in perspective. Obviously thought up elsewhere. Weber who worked at the Ensemble planted the production on top of the actors. Later I talked to him and said that the actors would eventually distort his direction. He agreed. And when I spoke to the actors they said: "That Teutonic director told them which hand to move..." They were not used to such stuff. Nevertheless, we saw a Berliner Ensemble remake and it was astounding.

Barbara Berg (a.k.a Barbara Brecht Schall), daughter of Helen Weigel and Bertolt Brecht used to prevent producers in Europe from ruining Brecht's plays. People thought she was annoying, too restrictive. If she only had control of productions in the USA. How we need such a protector. Stephan Brecht died recently in New York, so he was not around to prevent the bizarre event at ACT.

FOOTNOTING: OR, CITING OTHER VOICES ON THE A.C.T CHALK CIRCLE PRODUCTION

Mr. Doyle's impressive if problematic *Caucasian Chalk Circle* almost out-Brechts Brecht in its accentuation of the play as dramatic artifact, and the actor as a creative worker more than a representative of character. Just nine actors portray the dozens of roles in this play, which is performed in a crisp, colloquial new translation by Dominique Lozano, and features haunting original music by a local composer, Nathaniel Stookey. Here, too, the actors make the music, with the terrific Mannoel Felciano leading the charge as the Singer who narrates and annotates the story, often accompanying himself on a bruised-looking guitar, or plucking at the strings of a violin.

Charles Isherwood,

New York Times: March 2, 2010

The happiest surprise of British director John Doyle's dashing, apocalyptic staging of Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, which opened Wednesday at San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater, is the depth of feeling that courses through the production.

**Charles McNulty, *LA Times* Blog,
Culture Monster: March 2, 2010**

[*The Chalk Circle* is] structured in a series of almost vaudevillian episodes, little vignettes one after the other, and that asks the director to do a lot of work in terms of how all of the scenes and images have contrast and theatricality, and I'm drawn to that kind of material.

Director John Doyle:

Words on Plays: Insights into the Play, the Playwright, and the Production

Mr. Doyle's cast excels at underlining the mordant comic aspects of Brecht's play, creating sharp, detailed portraits that sometimes edge toward the cartoonish. But as the story grows more diffuse and complicated in the second act, Mr. Doyle's presentational approach - much of the dialogue is directed at the audience, often with the actors ranged across the front of the stage - begins to drain the play of theatrical energy and sometimes obscures the narrative too.

Charles Isherwood, *New York Times*: March 2,

There will be a way of beginning the story [in our production], but I don't want the audience to get bogged down in communism, Nazism, and therefore feel alienated (in a negative way, I mean) before the story begins. I want it to be a play for today."

Director John Doyle:

Words on Plays: Insights into the Play, the Playwright, and the Production

Just as he did in his Broadway productions of *Sweeney Todd* (seen at ACT as well as the Ahmanson) and *Company*, Doyle enlists the actors to play musical instruments. This practice seems more natural for Brecht than for Sondheim. To begin with, Brecht makes it difficult for performers to plant themselves in realistic soil, asking them to serve as both storytellers and characters in the story. But equally important, the composition by musical director Nathaniel Stookey is seamlessly integrated into the overall stage vision. Stookey's *Junkestra* clearly influenced the approach (buckets and pipes are used along with conventional instruments), yet the blend of sensibilities has a novel chemistry. I can't recall when I've found a music drama this eclectically satisfying.

**Charles McNulty, *LA Times Blog*,
Culture Monster: March 2, 2010**

Brecht's embrace of contradiction stemmed in part from his belief that, when it comes to texture in the theater, more is more. Although his productions were acclaimed for their simplicity, critics also noticed the beautiful costumes and the props that were basic but spoke of long, useful lives, every carefully chosen item in exactly the right place and used the right way. He never sought to take away texture, but always to add. So while the lyrics in his songs would express one emotion, the music would very often express the opposite, and thus provide a comment on them, deepening the texture. He never sought to banish emotion from the theater (which he knew was impossible), but rather to reduce it so as to add to it another human response: judgment.

**Michael Paller,
A.C.T Dramaturg:
Words on Plays:
Insights into
the Play, the
Playwright, and the
Production**

Referring to Parisian critics who saw Brecht's production of *Mother Courage*, Harold Clurman pointed out another enriching contradiction: abetted by his designers, beneath the seeming simplicity of Brecht's stage pictures was thick texture and complexity; Brecht's "visual austerity was so artful that [they,] when they saw his production, spoke of its several hundred shades of brown.

Michael Paller, A.C.T Dramaturg: Words on Plays: Insights into the Play, the Playwright, and the Production

PERFORMANCE II: BRECHT

In what strikes me as a crucial miscalculation, a pillow is used to symbolize the baby whose fate is at stake. Brecht espoused the use of well-worn, specific props — a knife is a knife, a table a table, a chair a chair. There is something arbitrary, lightweight and almost comic about employing a pillow to represent a child. In the climactic scene, in which the governor's wife and Grusha are told to each take one of the child's arms and yank him from the circle, they look a little ridiculous. We are not just kept at an appraising distance from this grippingly theatrical, powerfully emotional moment, but thrown outside of it entirely.

Charles Isherwood, *New York Times*: March 2, 2010

Another thing that has been liberating is that I can create many alternate versions, kind of like those kid's books where you choose your own adventure. There are multiple versions of each character, and John can pick and choose. It's fun for me to be working both really fast and in an environment of constant collaboration. Actors are coming and going [in and out of the music rehearsal studio], and in between I'm working on parts of the score that haven't been written yet.

Composer

Nathaniel Stookey,

Words on Plays:

Insights into the Play, the Playwright, and the Production

If I read that something is Brechtian, I think, "Oh I'm not going, it'll be dreary." There is a danger of thinking about Brecht. "Oh I don't get emotionally involved," and I don't think that's good theater. Brecht's theater is vital and alive. I see a danger in getting too much involved in it as a philosophy.

Director John Doyle:

Words on Plays: Insights into the Play, the Playwright, and the Production

He wanted people to discuss the issues in his plays, but real discussion is possible only when the playwright doesn't stack the deck in favor of one character and against another, and characters' words sometimes argue with their actions - in other words, when there's something to discuss.

Michael Paller, A.C.T

Dramaturg: Words on Plays: Insights into the Play, the Playwright, and the Production

My gut feeling is that John and I have a lot in common, and that comes from my experience of *Sweeney Todd*, which is the only piece of theater that I have ever seen more than once, or wanted to. There is a personal reason for that—my best friend, Manoel Felciano, was in it—but also a musician's reason, which is that what John did with the music in that play was make it a part of what is happening onstage. I'm not the only musician who was very excited by that production, because it allowed us to join the club. We were part of the action instead of being just the soundtrack. We were characters; the music became a character.

Composer

Nathaniel

Stookey,

Words on Plays:

Insights into the Play, the Playwright, and the Production

As Doyle's conception of *Chalk Circle* evolved, it began to revolve around a group of people making a play together in a ruined theater. Needless to say, we at A.C.T. feel an immediate and terrifying "sense memory" when the words "ruined theater" are uttered, since we lived with one for so many years after the Loma Prieta earthquake, when our precious playhouse was so badly damaged. Indeed, the photographs of postquake destruction in our theater were enormous triggers for Doyle's imagination, and the images you see in this production may be very resonant for you, if you remember the desperate condition of this building after that disaster.

**Carey Perloff, A.C.T Artistic Director,
Chalk Circle Program Notes**

One certainly does not need to be a music critic, historian or even a Brecht expert to appreciate an evening of Weimar-era entertainment. What's there not to like - catchy melodies? Thoughtful, humorous lyrics that lampoon conventional figures and events? Songs about heroic gangsters, crooked politicians, and the prostitutes that come between them?

The internationally acclaimed artistic duo of singer Robyn Archer and pianist Michael Morley took to the stage during the 13th IBS Symposium in Honolulu, Hawai'i to deliver a tour de force evening of "German Cabaret Songs." Their two-hour program, designed to complement the cultural events of the symposium, was free and open to the public and covered

ROBYN ARCHER & MICHAEL MORLEY. GERMAN CABARET SONGS AT THE IBS SYMPOSIUM. HONOLULU, HAWAII / USA. REVIEWED: MAY 20, 2010

I overheard audience members near me comment: "I wouldn't want to be up there in front of *this* crowd!" However, if Archer's and Morley's reputations did not proceed them for those few

KRISTOPHER IMBRIGOTTA

scattered throughout the seating area, then surely the skeptics were won over by the end of the evening. In fact, they never missed a beat.

Archer's successful career as a singer, writer, director, artistic director, and public arts advocate - not just in her native Australia, but also around the globe - is well documented by her numerous awards, speeches, and



several decades worth of material. To be up front, I give credit to Archer and Morley for their initiative, as the group watching them was no ordinary one. I would imagine that performing some of Brecht's most well-known songs in front of an auditorium of scholars, theater practitioners, and artists assembled in Brecht's name would be daunting to say the least.

public accolades. In 1974 she starred in a production of Brecht's *The Seven Deadly Sins*, and subsequently played other parts such as Jenny and Mrs. Peachum in the *Threepenny Opera* (which was also staged by a local troupe in Honolulu during the symposium). Her repertoire also includes, among others, the one-woman shows *Tonight Lola Blau*, and *A Star is Torn*,

as well as performances in *Brecht & Co.*, and the two-volume sets of music recordings *Robyn Archer Sings Brecht* and *Songs for Bad Times*. Accompanying her on stage was Michael Morley, whose résumé is equally impressive. Morley is professor of drama at Flinders University, Adelaide. He has published on Brecht's poetry and plays in collaboration with Kurt Weill and Hanns Eisler, and has also served as president of the International Brecht Society, which co-sponsored the symposium. As a musician and/or musical director, Morley has been involved in productions of Brecht/Hauptmann's *Happy End*, and Brecht's *The Mother*, *Threepenny Opera*, and *The Decision*. The Archer/Morley team has performed together since the 1970s throughout the world.

The evening's program was as diverse as the audience and added variety to the IBS Symposium, as it did not confine itself to the rubric of "Brecht in/and Asia." Archer and Morley's set consisted of songs, poetry, a myriad of anecdotes about Brecht's life, and short history lessons to provide context. The setting was simple and straightforward: Archer and Morley, she with her microphone and music stand, he with his piano; nothing more was required. The performance was divided into two parts: the first included Brecht's earliest work through the late twenties, the beginnings of the (previous) world financial crisis, and the rise of political extremism from both ends of the spectrum in the final gasps of the Weimar Republic. Examples from this first set include: "Benares Song" (*Mahagonny*); the cabaret-like "murder song" of "Jacob Apfelberg," which Archer linked to Brecht's "Moritat of Mackie Messer"; three numbers from *Threepenny Opera*: "Barbara Song," "Ballad of

Sexual Obsession," and one of the liveliest crowd pleasers of the evening, "Cannon Song." Brecht was not the only songwriter present - Archer/Morley selected collaborations from Tucholsky/Eisler, Ringelnatz/Grosz, Brecht/Hauptmann, and ended with Gasbarra/Weill's "Seashells from Margate" (mentioned below), another crowd pleaser.

After a short intermission where the audience stepped out under the stars - Moon over *Manoa!* - Archer and Morley then focused their artistic attention on the crisis years in Germany during the early 1930s, Brecht's exile (1933-1948) experiences, and finally back to Berlin and the newly founded GDR. A sampling from this set includes: two from Brecht's *Round Heads and Pointed Heads*, "Song of the Stimulating Impact of Cash," and "Song of the Young Whore Nana"; the "Ballad of Marie Sanders, the Jew's Whore" (*Svendborg Poems*); poems from the *Hollywood Elegies*; and two from the collection written in his home in Buckow near the end of his life. We also heard others like Friedrich Hollaender's popular favorite (sung in German by Archer in Dietrich-esque flair) "Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt."

The concert had its moments of acute political and social timeliness. As I mentioned above, Archer and Morley closed the first half of their line-up with the song "Seashells from Margate," a highly satirical ditty on the downsides of the world's ongoing petroleum fetish. Criticism of oil companies' track records on environmental and worker exploitation is nothing new. In 1928, the play *Öl-Konjunktur* (roughly: "The Oil Economy") by Lania and Gasbarra was staged in Berlin, which presented a Balkan state that the oil giant Shell and two other international oil com-

panies coveted for sole rights to its oil reserves. The production showcased music by Kurt Weill, with words by Gasbarra specifically attacking Shell. After verses about environmental pollution and exploitation of labor the song climaxes with the words:

... da fing das Öl zu brennen an, von
Aserbeidschan bis Tibet. Es stecke die
Welt in Brand. Petroleum heisst unser
Vaterland. Dafür zerlöchern wir uns
das Fell: Shell! Shell! Shell!

(... the oil began to burn from Azer-
baijan to Tibet. It set the world on fire.
The name of our Fatherland is Petro-
leum. And for the sake of it we'll drill
our own hides full of holes: Shell!
Shell! Shell!)

Archer's display of amusement in belting out the "Shell, Shell, Shell!" refrain was evident in her wide smile and her raised, clenched fist. Clearly the audience was meant to take something more than cabaret songs home with them. Brecht, as is often the case, also has a thing or two to say. I am not sure whether Brecht saw Gasbarra's play in Berlin. Nevertheless, he wrote a poem published in the same year, with unmistakably similar satirical overtones, about the cons of oil-based industrialization (he also poked fun at the artistic movement of New Objectivity, religion, and the Ford Motor Company).

I conclude with Brecht's poem, affectionately titled "700 Intellektuelle beten einen Öltank an":

Ohne Einladung
Sind wir gekommen
700 (und viele sind noch unterwegs)
Überall her, wo kein Wind mehr weht
Von den Mühlen, die langsam mahlen, und
Von den Öfen, hinter denen es heisst
Daß kein Hund mehr vorkommt.

Und haben dich gesehen

Plötzlich über Nacht
Öltank.

Gestern warst du noch nicht da
Aber heute
Bist nur du mehr.

Eilet herbei, alle!
Die ihr absägt den Ast, auf dem ihr sitzt
Werktätige!
Gott ist wiedergekommen
In Gestalt eines Öltanks.

Du Häßlicher!
Du bist der Schönste!
Tue uns Gewalt an
Du Sachlicher!
Lösche aus unser Ich!
Mache uns kollektiv!
Denn nicht, wie wir wollen:
Sondern, wie du willst.

Du bist nicht gemacht aus Elfenbein
Und Ebenholz, sondern aus
Eisen.
Herrlich! Herrlich! Herrlich!
Du Unscheinbarer!

Du bist kein Unsichtbarer
Nicht unendlich bist du!
Sondern sieben Meter hoch.
In dir ist kein Geheimnis
Sondern Öl.
Und du verführst mit uns
Nicht nach Gutdünken noch unerforschlich
Sondern nach Berechnung.

Was ist für dich ein Gras?
Du sitztest darauf.
Wo ehemals ein Gras war
Da sitztest jetzt du, Öltank!
Und vor dir ist ein Gefühl
Nichts.

Darum erhöhe uns
Und erlöse uns von dem Übel des Geistes.
Im Namen der Elektrifizierung
Des Fortschritts und der Statistik!

(see *Lesebuch für Städtebewohner*, 1928;
BFA 11: 174-176)

Lines from both pieces, penned before the economic collapse of the Great Depression, conjure up the

PERFORMANCE II: BRECHT

haunting images of the 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Needless to say: the lyrics carefully chosen by Archer and Morley did not fall on deaf ears in the auditorium that evening. The audience reaction was “encore, encore, encore!”

Archer and Morley’s German cabaret show underscored the depth of their own intimate knowledge of the period and the breadth of Brecht’s (and others’) contributions to musical theater, all of which blended nicely to create an evening of spectacular songs, witty commentary, and one of the true highlights of the entire IBS conference in Hawai’i.

fin worked on a German-language translation of Glenn Shaw’s English-language translation, and then Hella Wuolijoki and Brecht transformed the text into something more in line with Brecht’s ideas about epic theater.

In particular, Brecht and Wuolijoki embedded the play’s main action, the story of the self-sacrifice of the geisha Okichi for the sake of her city and nation (a sacrifice that recalls the sacrifice of Mother Courage’s mute daughter Katrin in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, written a year before *The Judith of Shimoda*) in a framing narrative in which Japanese actors perform the story of Okichi for western visitors at the behest of a wealthy

THE JUDITH OF SHIMODA. BERTOLT BRECHT AND HELLA WUOLIJOKI. ADAPTED FROM YAMAMOTO YŪZŌ’S *NYONINAISHI, TŌJIN OKICHI MONOGATARI*. TRANSLATION: THE SAD TALE OF A WOMAN, THE STORY OF CHINK OKICHI (GLENN SHAW). RECONSTRUCTION: HANS PETER NEUREUTER. TRANSLATION: MARKUS WESSENDORF. DIRECTION: PAUL T. MITRI. DESIGN: CHESLEY CANNON. KENNEDY THEATRE, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII’I-MĀNOA. HONOLULU, HAWAII / USA. REVIEWED: MAY 23, 2010

STEPHEN BROCKMANN

One of the great treats of the thirteenth symposium of the International Brecht Society, which was held at the University of Hawai’i-Mānoa from May 19-23, 2010, was the chance to see the first English-language production of Bertolt Brecht’s *The Judith of Shimoda* (*Die Judith von Shimoda*). This was a play that Brecht worked on at the end of 1940, during his stay at the playwright Hella Wuolijoki’s estate in Finland. It was based on Yamamoto Yūzō’s 1929 play *Nyoninaishi, Tōjin Okichi monogatari*, translated into English by Glenn Shaw as *The Sad Tale of a Woman, the Story of Chink Okichi*; this work appeared in *Three Plays* by Yamamoto Yūzō, published in 1935 by the Hokuseido Press in Tokyo, and it was in this version that Brecht found it in Finland in 1940. Brecht’s collaborator Margarete Stef-

Japanese newspaper baron and in the presence of the young Japanese playwright. The very framework of the play is thus an estrangement effect, rather as in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, written four years later, whose main action is also performed within a framing story.

The parts of *Die Judith von Shimoda* that were left in Brecht’s papers found their way into volume 10.2 of the Berlin and Frankfurt edition of Brecht’s Complete Works in 1997, but it was not until 2006, in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of Brecht’s death, that the Suhrkamp publishing company made available a separate edition of the play, based partly on a Finnish-language version found by Hans Peter Neureuter among Hella Wuolijoki’s papers two years earlier, in 2004. Neureuter’s edition used the German-language scenes found

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among Brecht's papers and included in the Berlin-Frankfurt edition but added scenes from Wuolijoki's Finnish version, which Neureuter translated into German. The result was a play that cohered dramatically. The premiere of Neureuter's version of *Die Judith von Shimoda* occurred on September 11, 2008 at Vienna's Theater in der Josefstadt to largely negative reviews, and nine days later, on September 20, 2008, Osnabrück's city theater staged the first performance in the Federal Republic of Germany - this time with decidedly more positive reviews.*

Markus Wessendorf, associate professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa and the primary host

of the thirteenth symposium of the IBS, translated Hans Peter Neureuter's German-language version of *Die Judith von Shimoda* into an English-language version for the English-language premiere of *The Judith of Shimoda*, which occurred on April 30, 2010. Participants in the thirteenth symposium of the IBS had the opportunity of seeing the play on May 21 or 22 at 7:30 PM or on May 23 at 2:00 PM. Because of various scheduling conflicts and the richness of the cultural offerings at the IBS symposium, I chose to go the May 23 matinee - the play's final performance - and my comments on the show are based on that performance.

I should start out by stating clearly and succinctly that Markus Wessendorf has done both the IBS specifically and Brecht aficionados in the English-speaking world more generally a huge service by creating this English-language translation. It is not every day that one gets to see a premiere of a "new" Brecht work, and for this reason alone the performance at the University of Hawai'i was exciting. We also owe a debt to the play's director, Paul T. Mitri, to the set designer Chesley Cannon, and to the entire cast and crew of the show. This play is of interest primarily for four reasons: as an instantiation of Brechtian ideas about theatrical estrangement, as a variation on the problem of heroism in Brecht's plays, as an intercultural experiment in literary and theatrical translation - from Japanese to German to Finnish and then back to German and on to English - and as an attempt to come to terms with the history of American imperialism in an Asian country.

This last aspect had particular resonance, at least for me, in the context of a premiere in Hawai'i, itself an island nation that fell victim to Ameri-

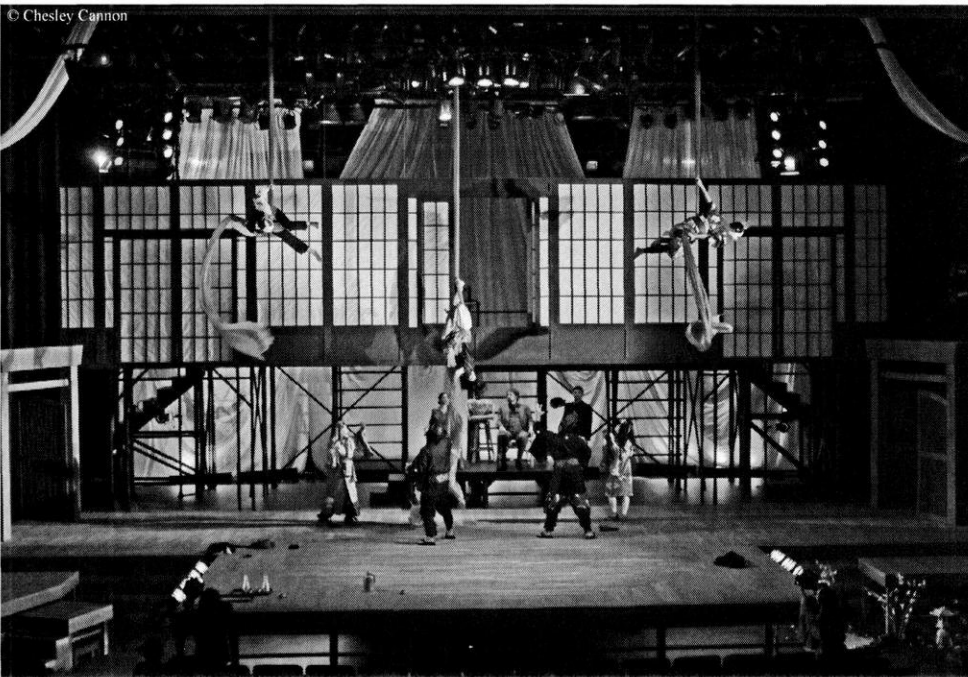
PERFORMANCE II: BRECHT

can imperialism in the second half of the nineteenth century. One wonders what Brecht would have done with the history of Hawaii itself, if, for instance, he had ever come across a copy of Liliuokalani's book *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen* (1898), which appeared five years after the coup that overthrew her and in the same year that the U.S. Congress annexed her nation. Brecht's play is based on the forced opening of Japa-

centuries, and so too does Brecht's play.

The title's reference to Judith might lead some viewers to expect that the heroine Okichi will ultimately get her revenge on the American consul Townsend Harris, just as the biblical Judith gets revenge on the Babylonian general Holofernes, but such is not the case. Okichi does manage, by means of sexual favors and the procurement of cow's milk for Harris

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nese markets to the western world in the 1850s, and hence it conjures up the theatrical world of Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (1904), Stephen Sondheim's *Pacific Overtures* (1976), David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* (1988), or Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil's *Miss Saigon* (1989). These works all deal with lopsided political, social, and sexual interactions between west and east in the nineteenth and twentieth

(something strictly forbidden by Japanese law and deeply disgusting to the Japanese people at that time) to keep Harris from ordering the bombardment of Shimoda, but Harris leaves Japan triumphantly, whereas Judith is ultimately destroyed by her own heroism. Her love affair with a young man named Tsurumatsu is ruined, as is her ability to continue working as a geisha - because other Japanese now find Okichi disgusting. Okichi

is someone who saves her people but who pays a very high price for it. In Brecht's world no good deed goes unpunished, and his play draws to its conclusion rather like *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* (1929-1930): while ordinary people sing her praises in a kitschy song, Okichi herself screams out in anger but is unable to make the singing stop.

The main Brechtian additions to Yamamoto Yūzō's play, however, come within the framing narrative, and these are particularly interesting because, in their staging of an audience for a play, they explicitly dramatize some of the principles of epic theater. Nowhere else in Brecht's dramaturgy does an audience become so active on the stage, and one suspects that one of Brecht's goals in reworking Yūzō's play was to show an active audience doing precisely what he hoped the audiences for his own - and other - plays would do: ask questions, stop the action, interfere, refuse to accept particular endings, etc... At no point in Mitri's staging of *The Judith of Shimoda* - with the significant exception of the intermission - does the on-stage audience disappear completely from the scene, and hence the play's real audience is always confronted with an on-stage surrogate suggesting various ways of reacting to a play that go far beyond the passivity that Brecht despised. Mitri ends the play by having the actress who plays Okichi, Dineka Patten, hand over the red streamer on which she had previously hanged herself by her feet (the real Okichi committed suicide by hanging herself), to Ms. Ray, an audience member played by Eleanor Svaton.

The implication is clear: the actress refuses to become a martyr like Okichi, and she walks off the stage leaving both her fictional audience, in the form of Ms. Ray, and her real audi-

ence, wondering what they would do in order to create a better ending for the play (perhaps a nod on the director's part to the ending of *The Good Person of Sezuwan*). The actors in the framed narrative are also always apparent as actors: at the end of each scene they fall out of their roles and become ordinary people again. During the intermission the on-stage audience and the real audience get to intermingle on the Upper Lanai balcony of the University of Hawaii's Kennedy Theatre, again reinforcing the connection between the two audiences.

The entire second half of the production is driven by its fictional audience's desire to know what really happened to the heroine Okichi. Whereas the wealthy newspaper baron Akimura - played by Tony Young - plans to cut off the play after Okichi's successful attempt to save her city, the fictional audience wants to know what happened afterward. Its curiosity ultimately allows the fictional playwright Kito - played by Futoshi Terashita - to show how heroism usually does not pay off for heroes, even if it does sometimes pay off for other people, like the newspaper baron Akimura.

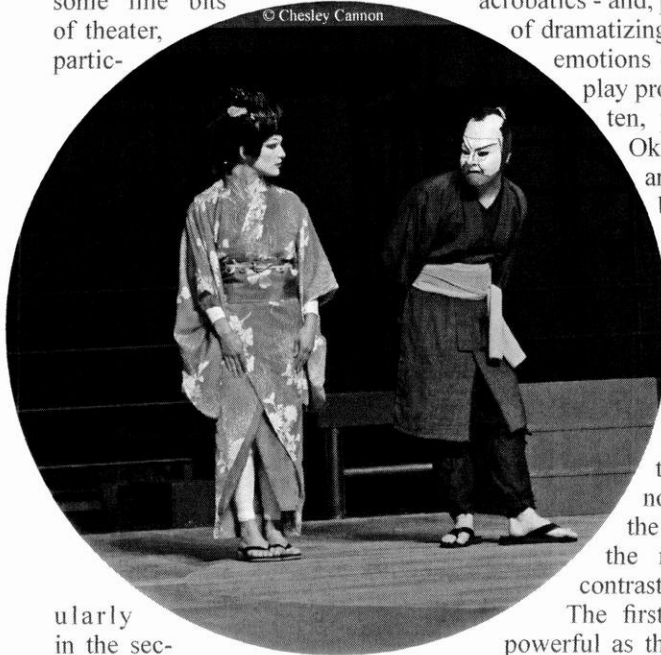
According to Markus Wessendorf, Brecht's heirs did not want to allow the play to be cut in performance - as almost any play by Brecht or any other dead author normally would be, and as Brecht himself undoubtedly would have done if he had ever gotten a chance to stage this play. This is unfortunate, because some of the play's epic moments - especially the initial discussions among the fictional audience - drag a bit. Wessendorf notes that about 5% to 8% of the text was nevertheless cut for the performance, and this is a good thing; probably a good deal more could have been cut

PERFORMANCE II: BRECHT

without doing severe damage to the play. A similar epic effect could have been achieved with shorter epic interludes. I found this to be a particular problem in the play's first half, before the audience begins objecting to the play.

Once the audience actively intervenes, however, and demands a continuation of the play, I began to find the relationship between the on-stage audience and the on-stage actors increasingly interesting. There are some fine bits of theater, partic-

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ularly in the second half. This half begins with one of Akimura's servants anxiously awaiting the arrival of the on- and off-stage audience, and it approaches its climax when the fictional playwright Kito searches for someone in the real audience to sing a song about Okichi's glory. The fact that the audience member who actually sings this song, Megan Mount, is actually a plant does not pose a problem; the epic surprise is successful.

The most important visual effect

in the second half of the play is verticality: Okichi begins to climb up various long pieces of red cloth that hang from the upper part of the theater. She uses these in various ways - sometimes to evade pursuers, sometimes as a chair on which to sit, and in the end as a way of hanging herself. This verticality is highly effective dramatically and visually; it is simultaneously yet another estrangement effect, a gesture toward Asian theatrical traditions - particularly Chinese acrobatics - and, paradoxically, a way of dramatizing various events and emotions even further. As the play progresses Dineka Patten, playing the role of Okichi, becomes more and more consumed by it - in a perhaps rather un-Brechtian but nevertheless highly effective way. Precisely because of the powerful dramatic effect of Okichi's end, however, Patten's final, relatively nonchalant exit from the stage, becomes all the more Brechtian in contrast.

The first act, while not as powerful as the second, nevertheless includes some moments of real dramatic power. James Schirmer delightfully overacts as the villain Townsend Harris - he becomes a caricature of an ugly American from Texas - and also as Prince Isa, a role in which the audience sees him only as a looming shadow (a wonderful piece of staging on the part of Mitri). Dan D. Randerson plays another evil American, the translator Heusken, quite effectively. One could call both Schirmer's and Randerson's work a

kind of *gestic* acting, and I suspect that Brecht would have approved. When Okichi opens up a cage to release a bird, the *bird* flies out over the heads of the real audience (on a string, of course), another wonderful bit of stage magic.

The Judith of Shimoda was preceded by the Hawaii Opera Theatre's performance of Brecht and Weill's *Mahagonny Songspiel*, directed by Henry Akina, with musical direction by Eric Schank, and conducted (on May 23) by Chan Tadahiro. This work, too, was nicely staged; I particularly enjoyed the slow entrance of the Mahagonny girls Jessie and Bessie, played and sung by Bambi Brock and Pauline Taumalolo, through the auditorium onto the stage, as well as the Mahagonny boy's killing of God, a clever on-stage fusion of Brecht with Nietzsche. The *Mahagonny Songspiel* was also a treat for the ears. Its ending, "Denn Mahagonny, das ist kein Ort. Denn Mahagonny ist nur ein erfundenes Wort" was an effective prelude to the explicit theatricality of *The Judith of Shimoda*, even though Shimoda, a real Japanese city, is far more than just "ein erfundenes Wort." As a member of the audience and a participant in the thirteenth IBS symposium, I am grateful to Henry Akina for his willingness to present the *Mahagonny Songspiel* in the context of the symposium. Taken altogether, the *Songspiel* and the premiere of a "new" play by Brecht were a great pleasure.

Of course one can argue about whether or not *The Judith of Shimoda* is really a Brecht play. Brecht himself only worked on it for a few months, and he never staged it or even got it ready for staging. He worked together with Margarete Steffin and Hella Wuolijoki, and parts of the new version had to be translated from Wuolijoki's Finnish. The play was based on an English-language translation of a Japanese original. Clearly, all the arguments that continue to rage about Brecht's adaptations and collaborations could be fought out in reference to *The Judith of Shimoda* as well.

Nevertheless, the play's strong connection to other Brecht works - especially *Saint Joan of the Stockyards* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* - as well as some of its language suggest that this is at least in part a genuine new work by Brecht. At any rate it sheds light on Brecht's relationship to Asia and his approach to the epic theater, among other things. And Paul T. Mitri has demonstrated that it is possible, in spite of the play's shortcomings and the sometimes unreasonable stipulations of the Brecht heirs, to stage a dramatically effective, gripping production. I hope that this was just the first of many other English-language productions.

* It should be noted that on December 20, 1997, in honor of the hundredth anniversary of Brecht's birth in 1898 the Berliner Ensemble staged a version of *Die Judith von Shimoda* based solely on the scenes left in Brecht's papers. For this reason the Berliner Ensemble, in the person of Claus Peymann, objected to the 2008 designation of the Viennese performance as a premiere. Neither of the parties to this debate, however, could argue against the designation of the performance at the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa as an English-language premiere.

THE THREEPENNY OPERA. ADAPTION: MARC BLITZSTEIN. DIRECTION & DESIGN: BRETT HARWOOD. MUSICAL DIRECTION: LINA DOO. ENSEMBLE: ARMY COMMUNITY THEATRE. RICHARDSON THEATER, FORT SHAFTER ARMY BASE, HONOLULU HAWAII / USA. MAY 21, 2010

KEVIN S. AMIDON

Early on the evening of Friday 21 May 2010, a large contingent of participants from the IBS *Brecht in/and Asia* conference embarked in taxi vans for a unique theatrical excursion. A short drive west on Honolulu's H1 freeway brought them to the gate of the U.S. Army's Fort Shafter, headquarters of the Army's Pacific Command and one of Hawaii's numerous active military installations. The serious but friendly military police guard at the gate granted access to the base upon display of a ticket to that evening's event: a performance by Fort Shafter's Army Community Theatre of the Brecht/Weill *Threepenny Opera* in Marc Blitzstein's English adaptation made in the early 1950s that played thousands of performances off-Broadway between 1955 and 1961.

The pleasure and ironic amusement expressed by many at the courteous treatment they received upon their first-ever entry into an active U.S. military installation was heightened upon seeing the wide expanse of manicured lawns and tidy, peach-colored buildings that surround the impressive structure that would house the

evening's event: Fort Shafter's Richardson Theater. The 808-seat house, built in 1948 to present both cinematic and live events, has provided the home of Army Community Theatre (ACT) since 1987. The theater welcomes its audiences with a whimsically impressive Art Deco colonnade, an architectural flourish under which the group chatted and mingled for some time, having arrived generously early. As the group entered the theater, its pleasure and amusement grew at the sight and sound of a pianist in the lobby performing arrangements of German cabaret songs of the 1920s, including some by Kurt Weill and Friedrich Hollaender that many in the group had heard just the previous evening in the exquisite conference-

affiliated performance by Robyn Archer and Michael Morley at the recital hall of the University of Hawaii - Manoa Music Department. Several members of the group sang along with the

piano arrangements through several numbers.

What followed inside the theater during the subsequent three hours deepened pleasure and amusement into serious interest and engaged enjoyment. ACT presented a *Threepenny Opera* that can stand with any this reviewer has seen for its combination of energy and finesse, creativity and care, strong performances of

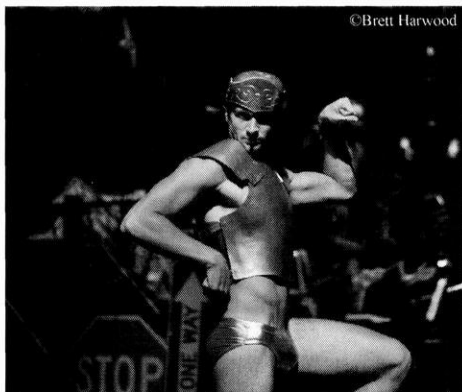


both dramatic and musical elements across the cast and orchestra, clarity, economy, and effectiveness of staging and technical execution despite expected minor glitches, and sensitive, thoughtful, but never fussy engagement with the Brechtian performance tradition. The performance successfully provided not only a fine and appropriately challenging evening of theater, but also an intellectual experience that contributed to the conference discourse.

ACT is to be roundly congratulated and thanked for this enriching experience. Several members of the cast and crew further contributed to the conference as participants, audience members, and organizational assistants. Terri Madden, who played a fine Mrs. Peachum, deserves particular mention, for she kept the conference participants superbly fed and caffeinated through organization and management of that most crucial element in conference conviviality: generously provisioned and regularly scheduled morning and afternoon coffee breaks. Further remarkable about the performance is that the cast, orchestra, and crew were made up entirely of volunteers. ACT, founded in 1942, is part of the Army's Hawaii network of recreational and leisure services organized under the office of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation. Its performers and subscribers range from community members with long theater experience to active-duty military personnel stationed at Fort Shafter and Hawaii's many other military installations.

One member of the crew holds a professional position as Artistic Director of ACT, Brett Harwood. The performance clearly bore the stamp of his creative and thoughtful engagement with the Brecht/Weill work, the character of Blitzstein's adaptation, and the many traditions and difficul-

ties presented by both. Harwood's efforts suffused the entire production, for he served as Director, Musical Staging Director, and Set Designer.



The integration of these efforts paid dividends from the first moment of the performance. Harwood also generously shared his own time and insights with the conference participants. He participated in a Friday afternoon roundtable with other directors and performers from other shows during the conference-affiliated Brecht Theatre Festival, and he and his entire cast took time to share their thoughts and reflections with the conference participants in an extensive discussion after the Friday evening performance.

The performance itself displayed the energetic commitment often invested by amateurs. At the same time, it showed a level of polish and – most importantly – narrative flow that even highly experienced professional actors often fail to achieve in Brecht. From the opening introduction, which featured accompaniment by Music Director and Conductor Lina Doo on accordion from the house, the performance made clear dramatic sense, carrying the narrative forward while successfully exploring both the dramatic and critical function of the

text, the songs, and the musical elements. Almo Paraso's performance of the "Ballad of Mack the Knife," which opened and closed the show, provided through both staging and gravelly-voiced but clear and unhis-trionic performance a kind of framing element that seems so often absent in performances of this work.

When the lights subsequently came up on the first scene, this framing



made welcome sense. The wide, shallow stage was set with a catwalk-like raised platform at the rear, with several ladders and stairs providing access from different directions. At stage right was another lower and wider platform. Above the upper platform hung a screen that enabled large projections to be made over the stage with an LCD projector. These projections concentrated attention on crucial dramatic elements, and never distracted from the action and dialogue, for they were drawn cleverly and appropriately from things like maps and scenes of cartoon violence. They therefore evoked the projections provided by Caspar Neher and other of Brecht's own collaborators, but did so in a way both creative and well integrated with other elements of the staging and performance.

The costumes provided perhaps the subtlest form of estrangement in the

production, for they included a wide range of historical references that required thoughtful attention without undue jarring contrast to other elements of the dramatic content. These ranged from Mr. Peachum's leisure suit to Macheath's early twentieth-century dandy to Tiger Brown's Victorian-era uniform to the mélange of nineteenth- and twentieth-century references in the accoutrements of both the prostitutes and Macheath's gang. Harwood and his team had given the cast wide leeway in choosing their own costume elements, and this freedom paid off dramatically.

The eight-person orchestra was distributed under the rear platform and atop the other, with Music Director Doo moving about the stage to direct various orchestral and vocal elements. Her leadership gave the music its appropriate vigor and presence, while supporting the singers sensitively. Her work, along with Harwood's kinetic but always clear and uncluttered staging also helped to achieve the clear narrative and dramatic distinction between dialogue and songs that Brecht calls for in his "Literarization of the Theater – Notes on *The Threepenny Opera*."

The principal singers used wireless microphones, which allowed a successful balance between vocal and orchestral elements in the long and deep space of the theater, but occasionally interrupted the sound with pops and crackles, and contrasted with the voices of a few unamplified ensemble members. For this reviewer, however, these minor technical issues (along with the failure of the stand holding up the orchestra's keyboard at the beginning of Act III) counterintuitively helped to emphasize the care with which the cast and crew had thought through the function of the musical numbers in the work, and how appropriately to demonstrate the necessary transitions – even breaks – between the dramatic

scenes and the songs. Brecht insists in his "Notes" that "the primacy of the theatrical apparatus is the primacy of the means of production," and these technical issues highlighted precisely how and why the performance was being in so many ways successfully executed technically and dramatically.

Throughout all three acts, the cast performed with consistent energy and poise. All major cast members delivered both their dialogue and their songs with a sensitive balance between the dynamics of the characters' relationships on the stage and the ways in which the songs in particular require the performers to direct their activity not toward one another but toward the audience.

At every stage the dramatic-narrative function and motivation of the songs remained clear and present, and the sensitive performances and direction allowed the complex relationships between the characters to speak for themselves without tending toward either of the modes that can so easily derail Brechtian performances: (pseudo-) sentimental mawkishness, or – even worse – a so aggressive approach to the presentation of both dialogue and songs that the characters become caricatures torn from the flow of the epic structure of the drama. This approach also brought out the elements in Blitzstein's adaptation that link the Brecht/Weill work with the practices of mid-twentieth century American musical theater, particularly through the combination of memorable melodic

elements in the song numbers with clear dramatic function of the songs. Furthermore, careful modulation by the performers between vocal beauty in the sung melodies and motives and textual clarity in the songs further strengthened the effect.

Particularly strong both dramatically and musically in Act I were Jody Bill's (Polly Peachum) performance of the "Pirate Jenny" song and Terri Madden's (Mrs. Peachum) performance of the "Ballad of Sexual Dependency." The "Army Song" ensemble number, with the key roles sung by Macheath (Laurence Paxton) and Tiger Brown (Kelly Pohl), capped a scene in which the subtlety of the dynamics of the two characters' longstanding relationship rooted in their violent military exploits in the colonies came vividly to life. In the wedding scene, Larry Cross's not-so-delicately flouncing and hot-pink-chasubled Reverend Kimball obliquely and cleverly brought attention to the homo-social erotics that seethe under the surface of numerous

relationships in the drama, particularly between Macheath and Tiger Brown. With this foil, Paxton and Pohl effectively captured the curious combination of boastfulness and insecurity in both characters, and Brown's eventual "betrayal" of Macheath thereby gained a clear and effective dramatic grounding. John Hunt's Mr. Peachum also gave

nuance to his role by playing with cool resignation rather than the silly



apoplexy that too many actors bring to this role, and thereby allowing the complexities in Polly's and Mrs. Peachum's characters their central significance as well.

In Act II, the "Jealousy Duet" between Polly and Lucy (Kristin Stone) also deserves praise, for it was staged most kinetically of all the songs with the characters in a boxing ring (held and manipulated by members of the ensemble) reminiscent of Act II of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*. The content of the song remained fully present as the ensemble changed the shape of the ring to focus the characters' attention on one another or on the audience. Shawna Gobble's performance as Jenny gave ironic life to a too-often cardboard character. The assignment of the "Barbara Song" to Lucy and its placement in Act II (rather than being performed by Polly in Act I as Brecht calls for) caused some consternation among audience members schooled in the structure of the Brecht/Weill versions of the work, but in doing so Harwood simply followed Blitzstein's version.

In Act III, the drive to the dramatic *deus ex machina* was taut and inexorable, and in the final scene Paxton approached Macheath's famous monologue – so often delivered with either nose-wrinkling pathos or as a monotone harangue – with a superb balance of desperate rhetorical energy and apt resignation. This dramatic balance made the arrival of the Messenger, played with appropriate ironic levity in gold posing trunks and body paint by Michael Duda, who also played an eager and excited Filch, into precisely the *denouement* that the play's material requires. And with a subsequent thirty minutes of thoughtful discussion between cast, crew, and conference audience, ACT's

Threepenny Opera became for this reviewer a fine addition to his short list of benchmark productions that reveal the living potential of Brecht's theatrical and theoretical legacy.

REVIEW: MAY 29, 2010

The Threepenny Opera makes it clear how intimately the counter-morality of the beggars and rogues is bound up with the official morality

~ Walter Benjamin

LEANNE TRAPEDO SIMS

The Army Community

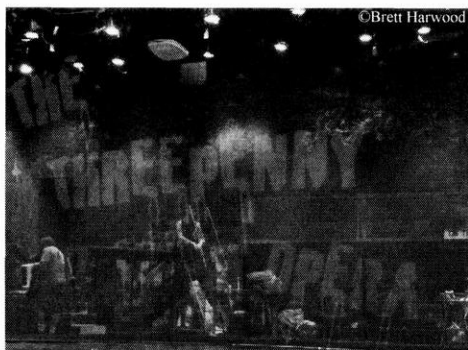
Theatre building hung, a flamingo façade, against an enchanting Honolulu sky. An uncannily apt canvas for the staging of Bertolt Brecht's and Kurt Weill's 1928 *The Threepenny Opera*. As part of the week-long International Brecht 13th Symposium, housed at the University of Hawaii-Manoa and spearheaded by Professor Markus Wessendorf, *The Threepenny Opera* was one of the innovative live experiences sandwiched between the academic panels by international luminaries, such as Richard Schechner and Ong Keng Sen. The pilgrimage to Aiea's Army Community Theatre was perhaps the pinnacle of anomaly, befitting a Brechtian alienation *mise-en-scène*. Passing the young army clad guard, one is inescapably aware of traversing onto military soil.

Director Brett Harwood casts an avant-garde eye to his sensorium-esque scenography, which echoes Brecht's original idea of the mosaic - the libretto as montage. The stage, an avalanche of spiritual slogans, piled up against each other - a junkyard canvas with scripted diatribes, *human pity is my business* or the Orwellian *Beggar's Big Brother*, torched in a fluorescent cerulean, evoke the labyrinth and work well with the dystopic

world of Macheath. These architectural visual mounds are ghostly reminders that someone is *indeed* watching. Reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*, the storyteller/street singer (Almo Paraso) ascends scepter-like and incantates a dissonant *Ballad of Mack the Knife*. Harwood erases the traditional pit, and exiles his musicians to the jowls of his industrial structure at the back of the mainstage. Eliminating the 20-foot orchestra pit was a practical vehicle for Harwood to abbreviate the space between audience and actors. "This provided many musical challenges," quips the sinewy musical director, conductor and accordionist who opens the play, Lina Doo. Doo's slight form appears from the back of the audience, her muscular arms opening and closing like tense wings around a haunting accordion. Heads turn and beginnings collide with ends. In the relocation, the compact musical ensemble of eight become witnesses, which is echoed in the minimal use of lighting throughout - the billowy shadows that haunt the walls. Harwood employs aural, visual, metaphorical and literal multi-levels, which is one of the play's musicalities.

"I wanted to tip my hat off to Brecht but still approach the material with my individual interpretation."

Harwood choreographs the *Jealousy Duet* as a somatic stand-off between Mackie's two rival "wives" - Polly (Jody Bill), an enigmatic soprano and Lucy (Kristin Stone) set in a boxing ring. The play calls for the lowering of three golden lights, a farcical commentary on the conventions of romance and theatre. Although edgy, I would have liked to see a more radical re-envisioning - along the lines of naked mud-wrestling. In a conversation with Harwood, the di-



rector confessed that mud wrestling was on the agenda but the cumbersome logistics, such as a water-pool, the mud and costuming, forced him to abandon the idea. Utterly indebted to process-driven theatre, a successful improvisational alteration he implemented was in the complex gallow dénouement. Initially, Harwood projected images of Enron across the stage to reference the banking catastrophe, but as rehearsals unfolded, he saw the power in the raw singular moment and replaced the overtly politicized Enron images with a hyperbolic projected close-up of Mackie's contorted face: "It was so much fun working with projected images..." Brecht is so powerful for all of his contemporary reverberations on politics, economics and race and to augment that "with the technology we have today" was an impulsive playground for Harwood.

Lighting aficionado, Daniel Sakimura, concocts lighting as character - a witness to the Babel that unfolds. The dim lighting may be irritating to some. Heads craned to get a better view of the shapes on stage; but had the audience succumbed to the poetics, the shadows quivered like associative meanderings - a seductive dream-scape. The Richardson Theatre was not even half-full on the Saturday night I attended, which attests to the dearth in serious theatre lovers in Ho-

nolulu. "I took a lot of risks—people either loved it or hated it. But that is the barometer of theatre that transforms." The cerebral Brechtian script that did not depart from the Blitzstein adaptation, coupled with Harwood's experimental approach was challenging for the theatrically conservative Hawaii audience.

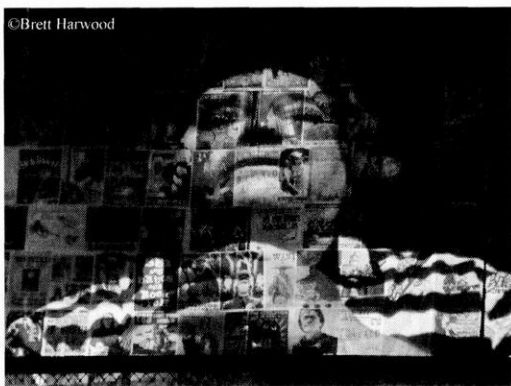
One of the many arresting visual moments was when clothes descended like an apparition from the heavens and the spectacular wall tapestry, where Charles Manson is neighbor to Mahatma Ghandi. The wall was constructed by the entire cast—a testament to community theatre that Harwood comes from. Prior to his position as Artistic Director of the Army Community Theatre, Harwood was Artistic Director of a 250-seat theatre in Germany: "The Germans know how to have humor about Brecht. Here, in America we approach Brecht like the holy grail." Brecht's text is certainly contradictory at its core - the simultaneous celebration and defilement of the artist; the juxtaposition of good and evil, ala Hannah Arendt. And in Harwood's re-envisioning the wall is backdrop to "heroes," such as

and stylish suit is a visual reminder of Jackie Onassis and the homage to *Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend* a salute to Marilyn Monroe (not to mention the constructed Madonna).

Mackie (Laurence Paxton) is physically suited to his role as the quintessential anti-hero with his swaggering robust corpulence but his female counterparts, Jenny Diver (Shawna Gobble), Mrs. Peachum (Terry Madden), Lucy Brown (Kristin Stone) and Polly Peachum (Jody Bill) are vocally luminous. "I never thought of the play as a female play but we were so lucky with the vocal excellence of our female singers," comments Harwood. One of the most popular characters was the Herculean golden bikini-clad messenger who delivers Mackie's absolution from the mouth of Queen Victoria. If that attests to a Hawaiian penchant for bodily aesthetics, it also speaks to the fact that this young actor is a returning Iraqi soldier - a narrative that is endemic to the region.

The Threepenny Opera is without doubt one of the most visually provocative theatre pieces I have seen in Hawaii. Resplendent with legible signage such as *We're here we're queer get used to it*, and the display of a psychic abyss in its revolutionary heroes and villains, Harwood excavates Brecht and infuses the play with a contemporary timelessness. "You can never really tell what time period we are in. Take the brothel - we have a Victorian clad whore next to a leather-clad one. I did not want to recreate a museum piece - the fact that this almost 100 year-old play still offends people - is beautiful," laughs Harwood. "The brilliance of *The Threepenny Opera* is its display of a wicked commentary that is absolutely relevant to today's politics."

©Brett Harwood



Bobbie Kennedy, who possesses the swagger and sensuality of a Mackie. Polly Peachum with her coiffed hair

THE THREEPENNY OPERA. ADAPTED FROM JOHN GAY'S THE BEGGAR'S OPERA BY BERTOLT BRECHT (ADAPTATION AND LYRICS), KURT WEILL (MUSIC), ELISABETH HAUPTMANN (TRANSLATION). ENGLISH ADAPTATION: ROBERT MACDONALD (DIALOGUE), JEREMY SAMS (LYRICS). THEATER: ARDEN THEATRE CO. DIRECTION: TERRENCE J. NOLEN. MUSICAL DIRECTION: ERIC EBBENGA. PHILADELPHIA, PA / USA. SEPTEMBER 30 – NOVEMBER 7, 2010. REVIEWED: SEPTEMBER 30, 2010.

You really want stand up and applaud in the first fifteen minutes

NORMAN ROESSLER

of the
Arden
Theatre's
produc-

tion of *The Threepenny Opera* ... but you don't. You want to cheer when Anthony Lawton (Tiger Brown) opens the show by serenading the audience with the charismatic killings, rapes, kidnappings, throat slashings of Macheath (a.k.a Mac the Knife not The Joker). You desperately want to hoot and holler as Scott Greer and Mary Martello (respectively, Mr. & Mrs. Peachum) mock Christianity, compassion, morality, marriage... but you don't.

The skill is there: beautifully-dissonant music, savage lyrics, flawless vocals, dead-on acting chops. You say to yourself: I know these characters, these storylines and they should work; so, why don't they?" But then comes Victoria Frings (Polly Peachum) singing "Pirate Jenny" followed by Terence Archie (Macheath) and Anthony Lawton singing "The Cannon Song" with its refrain:

*The British Army
Will make salami
From Basra to Goose Green
We'll help the foreigner
To meet the coroner
Brown or black or calky
A darky's still a darky
You'll notice from the bodies*

© Mark Garvin



Where the squaddies have been

And you finally get it. You don't know if you should laugh, cry, panic and possibly slit the person's neck sitting next to you, but you won't leave your seat. The 1928 Berlin premiere had a similar effect on the audience. Uncanny? Serendipity? Whatever it may be, the Arden's *Threepenny Opera* hits just the right note of cabaret decadence.

The production jumps off the stage immediately: visually and musically. A half-curtained stage leaves the actors on the wings exposed as they wait for the production to start. They are warming up, picking their nose, staring into space, and adjusting their fishnet stockings and leather thongs. The curtain goes up and a metal scaffolding with stairs and ramps frames a small movable stage in front of a large brick wall, which doubles as a projection screen. Everything is raw, exposed, unfinished and waiting for the actors and the audience to construct the literary and

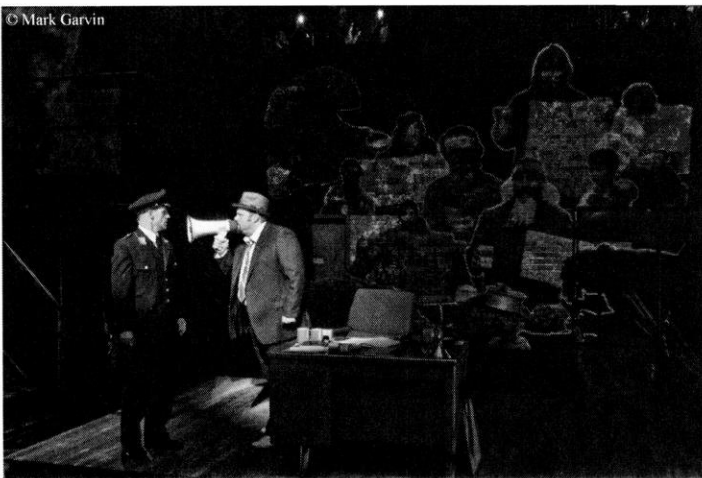
musical narratives we all know so well. It's Brechtian Epic Theater in a nutshell and Scenic Designer Tom Gleeson has nailed it. Sound/Video Designer Jorge Cousineau extends this visual palette with projections of titles littered throughout the production on the main brick screen as well as two smaller ones. The projected texts compel us to stay awake and remind us that it is our responsibility as human beings to actually pay attention and read the texts (written, cultural, political) that are set before us and not fall asleep or pretend we have read them (The German people didn't read the Hitler text and look what happened there). Of course, this scenic and visual design all smack of empathy and didactic political art, which Americans can't stand. So, thankfully Scott Greer (Peachum) empowers the audience, and by extension all Americans, by standing on the center platform and pissing on this degenerate art and restoring our faith and honor.

The mosaic stage design is further extended by the musical direction of Eric Ebbenga and his eight-piece orchestra. Seated behind and above the main stage, the orchestra is only partially visible to the audience and actors, but visible enough to thwart any attempts to fall into a *Forrest Gump* soundtrack mode. Kurt Weill's music is delivered crisply with finesse, and moves between, against, and through

Brecht's lyrics and the actors' vocals. It is a testament to the musicianship that one can actually hear every instrument step out from the orchestra and re-arrange the song in a wonderfully anarchic yet organized way.

Alas, perhaps the music is too good, which is always the problem with *The Threepenny Opera*. At times during the production the music and accompanying vocals overwhelm the lyric and you find yourself smitten or intoxicated with a tune in which the lyric is describing human misery, butchery, or inhumanity in general. Fortunately, Director Nolen and Dramaturg Sarah Ollove made a wise choice with the Sams / MacDonald adaptation that first premiered in London in 1994. Sams takes a fair amount of liberty with the lyrics: hyperbolic, perhaps gratuitous, word choice, re-organization of sections, and wholesale reconstruction ("Solomon Song"). Yet, these adaptations seem correct evolutionary adaptations. In terms of performance, the language is theatrical – it moves much better onstage than the 1976 Manheim/Willet translation – and creates more of that jingle jangle visual effect, which Dylan admired so much in the song-

© Mark Garvin



writing of Brecht. In terms of culture, the language is savage and gratuitous but more suited to 2010 Philadelphia than the Marc Blitzstein adaptation from 1954. Sams uses a lower-class English or Scottish tonality that corresponds well to the linguistic universe of Philadelphia. On the one hand, it takes the German language and its orientation on beginning “Sh” sounds, as in “*Scheisse*,” and moves it to English and its orientation on beginning “Eff” sounds, as in “*Fuck*.” On the other hand, it drops endings the “ee” (e.g. army / salami) and “er” (foreigner / corner), which fit well with the Philadelphia dialect and its pronunciations of words like “*Olney*” and “*water*.”

The toxic concoction of music and lyric come together in fabulously choreographed subtexts of cabaret movements and gestures running throughout the production: Microphones are mounted on stands or given to performers by stagehands and a piano is rolled out for a few songs.

In terms of the acting, Terence Archie and Scott Greer as the principal roles, should be commended for playing brilliantly within the limitations of their respective characters. *The Threepenny Opera* (and Brecht in general) is desperately in need of deconstruction, but until the copyrights run out in 2026 we are condemned to live with 1928 museum pieces. The problem is that Macheath and Peachum were such brilliant distillations and conceptions that they pretty much set the template for similar characters over the last 80 years. Macheath has evolved into Michael Corleone, Tony Soprano, Don Draper, The Joker, while Peachum has evolved into Mr. Potter, Gordon

Gekko, and Mark Zuckerberg. Evolution is great but the earlier form never looks as good or seems to have as much freedom of variation, and for the actor it is a bit like playing a stereotype. Despite this burden, both actors gave powerful performances: Archie displayed a remarkably restrained charisma, not often found in Macheath characterizations; Greer, in contrast, kept smashing away at the character until he achieved some excellent moments in Act III. Perhaps,

© Mark Garvin



however, these rather tame male characters (moving toward extinction?) are not a bad thing: the female characters – Victoria Frings (Polly), Rachel Wallace (Jenny) and Liz Filios (Lucy) come across as vibrant, modern, with perhaps a touch of post-feminist “girl power.”

The Arden’s production of *The Threepenny Opera* is a solid show, which may well keep humankind alive through all the torture, silence, and oppression of our daily existence. It is something akin to a political-artistic steroid that hopefully will scandalize the milquetoast Philadelphia Theater scene out of its Matrix-like existence.

THE THREEPENNY OPERA. BRECHT, WEILL, HAUPTMANN, GAY. ADAPTATION: MICHAEL FEINGOLD. DIRECTION: JEFFERY MATTHEWS. SET / LIGHTING / PROJECTION DESIGN: SEAN SAVOIE. MUSICAL DIRECTION: HENRY PALKES. CHOREOGRAPHY: CHRISTINE KNOBLAUCH-O'NEAL. ENSEMBLE: WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY PERFORMING ARTS DEPARTMENT. EDISON THEATRE, WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, ST. LOUIS, MO / USA. OCTOBER 22-24; 29-31. REVIEWED: OCTOBER 29, 2010.

After numerous viewings, readings, and meditations on *The Threepenny Opera*, I have come to the conclusion that it is one tough architectonic and historical sonofabitch. To do *The*

Threepenny Opera is to

NORMAN ROESSLER

do Epic Theater, which means the sustaining of architectonic tension throughout the production. *The Threepenny Opera* is a series of contradictions that are played "both... and" and not "either...or." The list of tensions seems endless: one must have an epic stage yet play upon this stage with cabaret intimacy; one must have operatic musical codes that are played in populist, jazz figures; one needs professional acting artisans who can play like amateurs; one needs social relevance, yet aesthetic pleasure and nonchalance. And, even if one is able to sustain such architectonic tensions, one is confronted with the historical issue: much of the revolutionary aesthetic of *The Threepenny Opera*, has now become part of the apparatus of contemporary performance culture. Not in terms of acting Gestus, of course (American performance culture is still safely within the teleological embrace of Ar-

FROM THE CRITIC'S POCKET
NOTEBOOK (A.K.A.):

THE CRITICAL UNCONSCIOUS

DIRECTIONS FOR USE:

1) THESE WORDS ARE NOT TO BE DOUBTED;

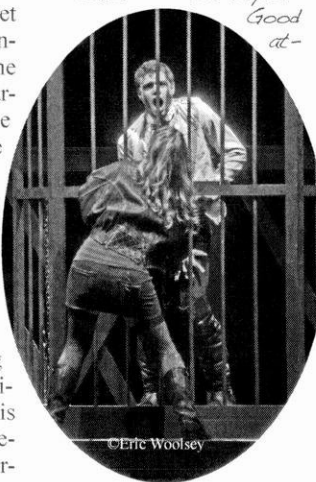
2) READ SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH, AGAINST, AND THRU THE REVIEW;

3) ADD WATER; MAKES ITS OWN SAUCE.

**First Thought: Capacious stage, but cavernous auditorium. How are they going to fill this space, without losing audios and visuals, yet also keep the proceedings small?*

**Ansager opens show with solo "Moritat" that proceeds to add other voices and various choral elements. Similar to the Arden production, although less cabaret style.*

Good at-



©Eric Woolsey

istotle and Stanislavsky) but in terms of performance technology (the showing of the showing). One only needs to watch the Jon Stewart Show, Fox News, and a local beauty pageant to see that Brechtian Epic Theater tricks have been successfully absorbed by liberal, conservative, and traditional-fundamentalist constituencies. The technology of Epic Theater is ultimately politically neutral (or it can become neutralized), and hence one has to manipulate the performance technology of *The Threepenny Opera* in a judicious way in order to make it work.

Thankfully, the answer to this critical logorrhea is to actually see a production that successfully negotiates the 3p0 minefield. The Washington University *Threepenny Opera* production under the direction of Jeffery Matthews proved to be just the tonic needed for the troubled Brechtian visiting the American Stage. Matthews and Designer Sean Savoie constructed a giant scrim across the entire stage, both vertically and horizontally, at the Edison Theatre, which proved to be the answer to all the architectonic issues listed above. The scrim created a spatial organization as follows: a) behind the scrim, a stage design

tempt. It gets the job done. After all, how do you open with an over-used, canonical number without killing the show?

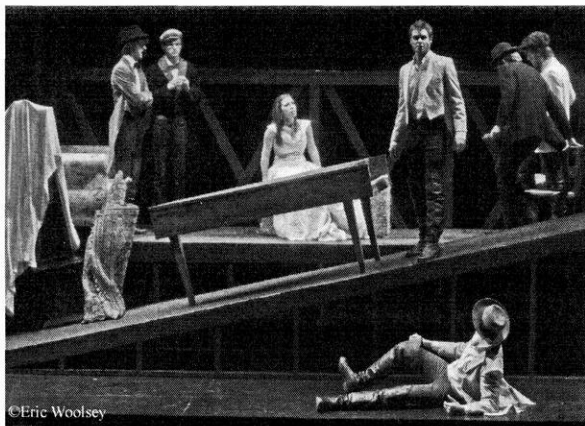
*First Peachum scene.

Orientation is stage right. Multiple Screen Projections of Biblical Sayings. Some projections frame the Peachums, while others pull our gaze away. Nice visual tension.

*Dialectics 101: Stage, Scrim, Projections = tripartite, depth, alienation, dissonance, syncretism, tension, suspense, mystery—that-can-solved. Change the world, because you know we can, and it needs it.

*First impressions: Stage and Projections are great; produce cinematic carnivalesque effects. Like Dylan's "Desolation Row."

*Mac's costume: white tux, high boots. Cavalier, a bit vampy but not Johnny-Depp Pirate bullshit. Good taste but bad taste. It is what a terrorist-killer-vampire-pirate-capitalist



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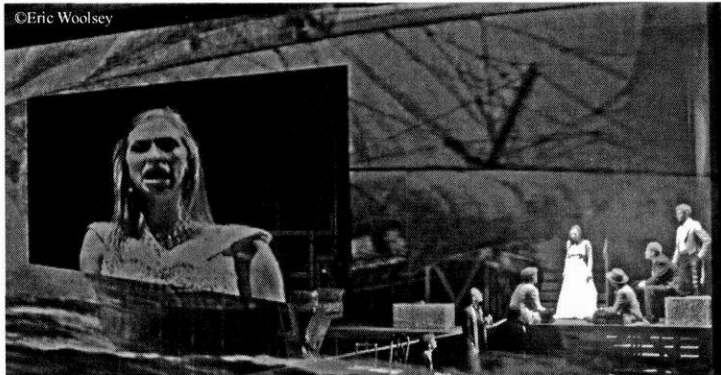
based on three platform areas – right, left, back; b) in front of the scrim, the orchestra in the pit and the spectators in the audience; c) on the scrim, text, image, video, and color projections. The scrim is a great alienation effect. It is a veil, a screen that one can see through yet is not absolutely transparent (opaque); something that masks, manipulates, and distorts what lies behind it, and upon which different images can be projected. In short, a technological palimpsest, which allows us to see and actively participate in the construction of narrative and meaning.

The stage design allowed

action to be both localized and highlighted on one area of the stage; yet at the same time, did not negate or subsume the non-functioning stage. Hence, gaining epic intimacy without *restlose Verwandlung*. Also, the tripartite stage design allowed for quick scenic movements, triangulation, and of course, wonderful dialectic tension. A case in point, was the stable scene, always the gold standard for any *Threepenny* production because of its architectonic and narrative complexity. Taking place downstage left, the actors moved on four different vertical landings created by various

platforms and steps. The multiple levels allowed for physical concentration of the actors without density and also provided interesting tableaux. But in the initial moment of the scene the stage

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PERFORMANCE II: BRECHT

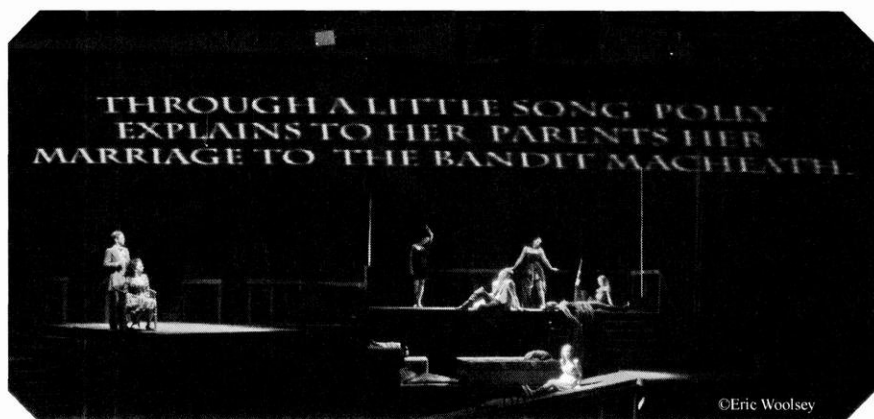
design helped to concentrate our attention and remind us that we were watching Mac the Knife and not just Macheath. Mac (Dan Davis) shoved one of his gang members off the ramp and then jumped down to threaten more assault, exhibiting both the romantic scalliwag as well as the brutal criminal. These small scenes were continued with Polly's lead up to "Pirate Jenny" and the gang's

thinks a romantic hero / villain should look like. That's why it works. Plus the actor wears it well - not a professional.

**Mac: "Art isn't nice" - then phrase projected on screen. Nice Use. Postmodern Irony. Quick, Useful.*

**Cannon Song: Projections of armies marching. Wow History Channel Documentary-like.*

to a song they knew all too well. "The Barbara Song" was perhaps an even better number. Polly sat on a lower platform stage right while the two other stages were highlighted - the Peachums stage right, Mac and the whores, upstage. Projected on the scrim was not an image but the scenic title. Of course, scenic projections are nothing new for Brecht and fairly ubiquitous in all performative media; so, why did



renditions of the "Wedding Song" and then resolved with the "Cannon Song."

"Pirate Jenny" and "The Barbara Song" illuminated the stage design and the use of projections on the scrim. In the first song, Polly (Marissa Barnathan) sings downstage left, while on the scrim two projections are placed: one a background shot of a ship at sea, and another a cutout on the background shot of a close up of Polly. The effect was dialectical layers of images, both technological and organic, pushing the spectator to pay attention

But the whole cast is doing Ziegfeld Folly kicks. Well, OK!

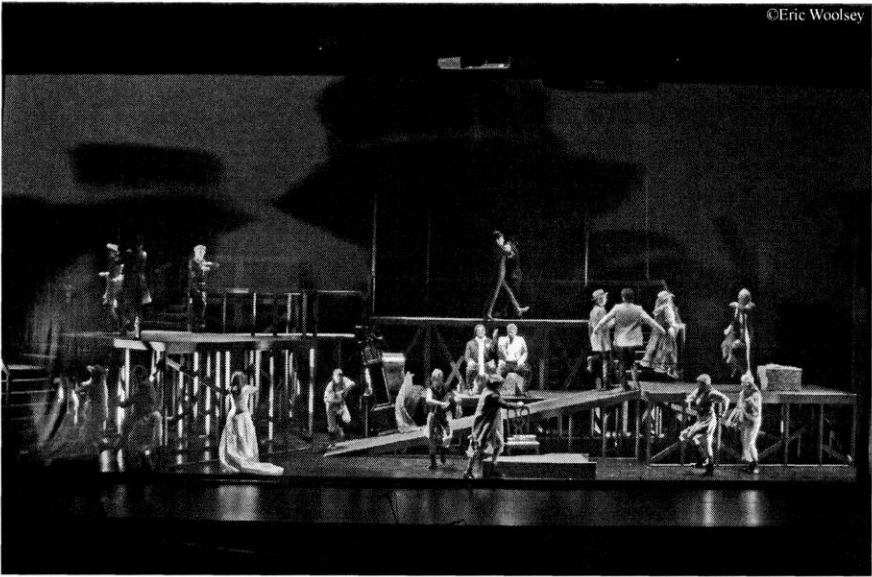
**Barbara Song: Actually, better than "Pirate Jenny." Great screen projections, use of stage, stage design, movement, singing. All works. The skill with the technology is amazing. Epic Theater, but Brechtian not Fascist. Like if Steven Spielberg used his powers for good, not Hollywood imperialism.*

**The music: it is there, but it is not there. Musicians not onstage. Musicianship is all solid. It sounds good.*

this effect work so well for the Wash U. production? Probably, because it framed multiple visual perspectives, yet did not overwhelm one with too many perspectives. One was not allowed to settle for the entertainment of one perspective nor of white noise (too many perspectives) but rather was invited to see the competing narratives and characters in a familiar storyline, i.e. an invitation to the pleasure of thinking.

The Second Act, especially the "Pimp's Ballad," really showed off the acting chops of the ensemble,

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and made a case (along with the Fort Schafter Army Base Hawaii production; see previous reviews by Amidon and Sims) that *The Threepenny Opera* should only ever be acted by university actors or amateur troupes. As Brecht reminds us in the stage directions, it is not so much a play about beggars, but a play put on by beggars for beggars. This goes back to John Gay's original *Beggar's Opera* – the idea that what we are watching is what beggars think opera is, how it should be performed, and how it will be received by the aristocratic or bourgeois audience. The beggars always know they are performing and are caught between not knowing what they are doing and not caring whether it works or not. In modern theater, it is a sensibility best captured by Peter Weiss' *Marat / Sade* – the prisoners in an

insane asylum are putting on a historical play for a middle class audience that pities them.

And this sensibility or gestus is what is exuded, either consciously or unconsciously by the ensemble. As Mac and Jenny (Sally Wippman) sing the "Pimp's Ballad," they dance a tango with the whores on a raised platform behind them doing striptease figures on stripper poles. The performances are great – the singing is topnotch, the dancing expert, and the costumes gorgeous. But there are gaps, misses, and dissonances. The songs are world-weary, old, wise, cynical and the university actors attempt to perform them, but they are always a bit unsure, or maybe it is just the audience who will not believe that they fully understand what they are saying. But the point is, they are acting it not because

The epic alienation, etc... seems to be missing, but at the same time, it is not a Hollywood / Wagnerian soundtrack.

It is more like the steady rhythm, the bottom, that is carried here. Drums and bass. But maybe this is what works in the 21st century with the 3p0 – at least if the stage work is doing its job.

**First Finale: Pile of Steaming Shit (cartoon-like) projected onscreen.*

**Intermission: Overheard: Random Critique of Feingold Translation in relation to Blitzstein version. What's the basis for such a critique? Tip: on Brecht / Dylan – read Patti Smith's new memoir, *Just Kids*. Thought: which version of 3p0 to use? The 1928 original or the 1930's rewrite by Brecht? The latter reflects the Brechtian*

©Eric Woolsey



they know it, or have lived it (hint: think identification, mimesis, Aristotelian, Method), but acting it according to what they think are the common codes for acting such material. At times, they do quite an excellent job, but even when they nail a song perfectly, it still seems freaky and alienating – exactly because they can do it.

Heretofore, I have paid little attention to Brecht and Weill and their avatars – Michael Feingold (adaptor) and Henry Palkes (musical director). This was my first time seeing a production with the Michael Feingold adaptation, which was originally commissioned for the 1989 New York production starring the rock musician, Sting. Reading it beforehand, I thought the adaptation brought a certain novelistic insight to the text,

version, which is seen by many as the Marxist rewrite. That's why the original, Weill-influenced version, is safer for America ("God Bless America"). But no, ("This Land is Your Land"), the re-writing of the 3p0 is the 3p0: dialectic, anti-teleological. Think Dylan – he never plays a song the same way. In fact, he destroys his own songs every concert. Now, That's Art! To write BB through BD is to escape totalization. It creates space to allow Brecht to breathe again.

**After "Pimp's Ballad," Mac tries to escape police. He looks around and then jumps into the audience and sits down acting nonchalant. Nice ironic citation of breaking the fourth wall. Again – nice, quick, effective. Matthews gets the pacing right.*

i.e. it made me think about characters, storylines, and songs that I had long ago stopped thinking about due to multiple reading and seeing, which made me engage the text a bit more than usual; at the same time, certain lexical and syntactical choices left me scratching my head and wondering how they would work musically and rhythmically onstage.

Feingold's adaptation proved eminently useful and seemed to both carry the story and draw enough dissonant notes that one pricked one's ears in attention every now and then.

The orchestra was located in the pit in front of the stage and hence ran the danger of being criticized for being Wagnerian; yet, it is not so much where the music is located as how the music functions in space, which determines whether it is Wagnerian or Brechtian. In this regard, the music tended toward the Brechtian: it was useful in that it carried the story yet did not overwhelm one like a fascist Hollywood soundtrack. The scrim and the stage design did most of the heavy lifting for the alienation effects, and for once, the 3p0 music had the pleasure of serving as a rhythm section to the technological improvisation of scrim and stage. So, the music was, like the adaptation, useful in a Brechtian

way.

All in all, a great show, which worked, where many productions have failed before, because the director Jeffery Matthew and set designer Sean Savoie constructed a *mise en scene* which mediated the epic-theatrical puzzle that the *Threepenny Opera* is, and which allowed organized space for both the actors and the audience to stretch their aesthetic imaginations.

**The Kids Are Alright (High School Musical) has a Glee, High School Musical feel to it. Maybe universities are the only places where 300 should be done.*

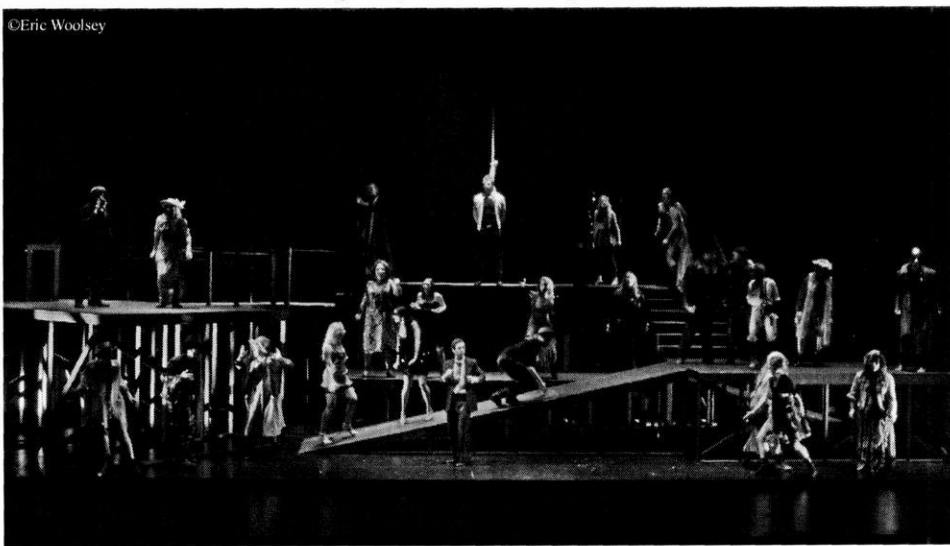
**Tiger Brown (stage left) sings a few bars of regret - nice solo shot and great projections of prison bars. Classic 1930s Hollywood film shot - The Big House. Projection is an exposure and runs diagonally back from stage*

one of mine!

**Third Act: Mrs. Peachum sings a snatch of the Sexual Imperative Song (stage left) and we see Mac and Suky (stage back-right) in embrace. Great tableau, great cinematic effect. Matthews knows.*

**Mac on Death Row. Time is projected on screen - digital time. Effective. Useful. Good choice. Plays with the suspense that we all*

©Eric Woolsey



This fucker is starting to look brilliant.

**Mac goes to jail. Cell is lowered from above, just as Mac hits his spot. Again, craft, skill, techne.*

**When Mac escapes jail, he look for a way out, rattles the cage, and then realizes it is just a stage prop and steps around it. Again, quick, agile, nimble.*

left. Nice angles that produce some interesting perspectival watching. Sehen nicht glotzen.

**Second Finale: "What Keeps Mankind Alive?" - Usually gets my interest, but didn't notice it this time. But don't feel like I missed anything - all the other scenes worked.*

Second Intermission: No thoughts. Went to take a piss. Don't take

are programmed with by Hollywood.

**Hanging Scene - feels like a Hollywood Western, but fake. That's the point. Useful again. *Messenger Scene - we hear the hoofbeats and the whole cast mimics riding on a horse. Touché. One final touch from the artists bag of tricks but with Brechtian flair.*

DIE DREIGROSCHENOPER. ARDEN
THEATRE, PHILADELPHIA, PA / USA.
REZENSIERT: 15 OKTOBER 2010

&

*Zwischen Glotzen und dem richtigen
„Sehen“: Brecht in Philadelphia
und am Schiffbauerdamm*

DIE DREIGROSCHENOPER.
BERLINER ENSEMBLE.
INSZENIERUNG, BÜHNE UND
LICHT: ROBERT WILSON,
MUSIKALISCHE LEITUNG:
HANS-JÖRN BRANDENBURG
UND STEFAN RAGER,
KOSTÜME: JACQUES
REYNAUD. BERLIN / BRD.
PREMIERE: 27 SEPTEMBER
2007. REZENSIERT:
10 NOVEMBER 2010

Glotzt doch nicht so romantisch! Ein Transparent mit dieser Aufschrift ließ Brecht in den 1920er-Jahren im Theater aufhängen und für den Vergleich der Aufführungen

gen
sei- **CHRISTIAN GEDSCHILD**

ner „Dreigroschenoper“ im Arden Theater von Philadelphia/Pennsylvania und am Berliner Ensemble soll diese Aufforderung den Maßstab bilden. Ich glotzte also auf die Szenen, die US-amerikanische Theaterleute dem bedeutendsten aber, wie man neuerdings sagt: wenig anschlussfähigen, deutschen Dramatiker des 20. Jahrhunderts bereiten haben und bin gespannt, welche epische Sehweise eingenommen wird. Vor allem aber interessiert, was sich aus der jeweiligen Sichtweise ergibt, ob und wie das Stück funktioniert.

Die Frage ist in Philadelphia schnell beantwortet: Man lässt romantisch glotzen oder unternimmt zumindest den Versuch hierzu. Mit den bewährten Mitteln des Broadway beziehungsweise des Off-Broadway wird dem alten Stück das letzte Bischen Aktualität und Schärfe genom-

men und es kommt ein lauer, etwas zu lang geratener Abend mit Musik, vulgo: ein Musical, dabei heraus. Mr. Greer als Peachum bedient die gekonnt gesetzte Pointe, Ms. Frings als Töchterchen Polly ist gar zu blond (nicht nur äußerlich), als dass man ihr die Verruchtheit abnehme und die Gangster- und Bettlerbande ist gar zu harmlos. Unfreiwillig komisch wird die Aufführung im fünften Bild, dem Hurenhaus von Turnbridge, wenn ein Ensemble wohlzogener Schauspielerinnen und Schauspieler versucht, die jeweils eigenen Vorstellungen einer Lasterhöhle möglichst jugendfrei darzustellen, das hat den Hauch einer Faschingsfeier unter Pfadfindern.

Ein kurzer Moment der Spannung entsteht durch die Besetzung des MacHeath mit einem dunkelhäutigen Menschen: Ist die Hautfarbe des Mr. Archie als Programm zu verstehen? Gefehlt! Es ist ein versierter und charmanter Musical-Darsteller aus der zweiten Reihe, wobei allerdings nicht verschwiegen werden darf, dass man in den deutschen Musical-Theatern schon über Vertreter der dritten

Garde froh wäre. MacHeath flirtet mit dem Publikum und vermeidet vor allem eins: Ein gefährlicher Verbrecher zu sein. Die Kostüme sind ebenso brav und konventionell, die Dekoration funktional

und ökonomisch, es wird auf verschiedenen Ebenen gespielt und die Regie von Tom Gleeson ist vor allem bemüht, das Publikum irritations- und gedankenfrei durch den Abend zu geleiten, so dass man keine Schwierigkeiten hat, dem Plot zu folgen.

Gefährlich sind die Gestalten, die Robert Wilson und sein Kostümbild-



ner Jaques Reynaud auf die Bühne des BE stellen. Das ist eine andere Liga als in Philadelphia und es ist schon ein wenig unfair, die beiden Aufführungen angesichts der deutlichen (Preis-) Klassenunterschiede in die Nähe eines Vergleichs zu bringen, aber hier soll es ja um unterschiedliche amerikanische Sichtweisen auf den deutschen Klassiker gehen, also auch Sichtweisen, die durch die verschiedenen ökonomischen Bedingungen geprägt sind.

Gefährlich ist allen voran der umwerfend unnahbare Stefan Kurth als MacHeath als eine Kreuzung aus Steve Buscemi, Hans Albers und dem fliegenden Robert aus Heinrich Hoffmanns Struwwelpeter. Er steht im Zentrum dieser Ballade, die, wohl ganz im Sinne Brechts, nichts als die menschliche Verkommenheit und die ihr zugrunde liegenden Verhältnisse zum Thema hat. Allein Kurt zuzusehen, lohnt den Abend, aber auch Jürgen Holz, Traute Höss, Angela Winkler, um nur einige zu nennen, füllen die exzentrische Form Wilsons Figurentheaters und bringen das alte Stück zu einer künstlichen aber dennoch hochaktuellen Schärfe. Das gelingt ohne Anbiederung, ohne Anspielungen auf die Tagespolitik, denn Zynismus als ästhetisches Destillat wirkt auch ohne Verweis auf Kon-

krete. Kostüme, Farben, das Licht und vor allem die brillant von Hans-Jörn Brandenburg orchestrierte Musik überhöhen und Sezieren das Stück bis zu einer schmerzhaften Kenntlichkeit.

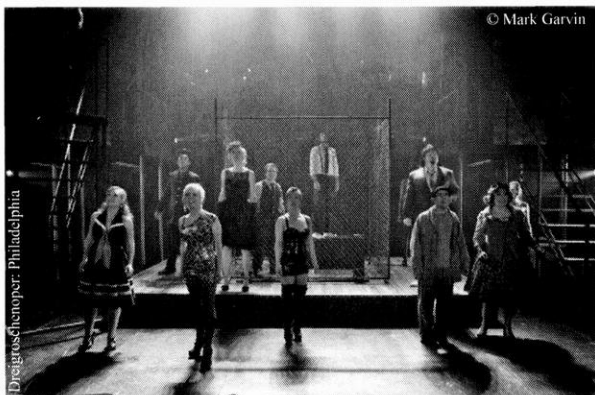
Im Gegensatz zu einigen Inszenierungen Wilsons in

Dreigroschenoper, Berlin



© Lesley Leslie-Spinks

den letzten Jahren, die immer einen Hang ins Boutiquenhafte, Geschmäcklerische haben, erlaubt die Berliner Dreigroschenoper keine Flucht ins Design. Die Aufführung nervt, nicht zuletzt durch das penetrante Gegenlicht, den überhöhten Gestus und die grellen Töne, aber sie geht im wirksam auf die Nerven. Hier ist kein Platz für romantisches Glotzen, auch der „Mond über Soho“ verkommt nicht zur Schnulze. In den besten Momenten wirkt der Abend wie eine Übersetzung der Formsprache Brechts in den ästhetischen Jargon unserer Zeit, so als hätte es die Perversion des Ideals einer klassenlosen Gesellschaft in Deutschland zwischen der Uraufführung 1928 und heute nicht gegeben oder Brecht zumindest die Gelegenheit gehabt, nach



© Mark Garvin

Dreigroschenoper, Philadelphia

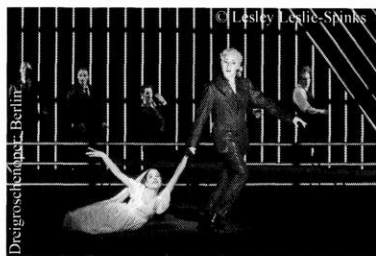
dem Untergang des real existierenden Sozialismus einen abgeklärten Blick auf die *conditio humana* zu werfen. Das Ganze ist präzise und aus einem Guss und auch drei Jahre nach der Premiere handwerklich gekonnt. Zwischenzeitlich fragte sich der Rezensent, warum dem Publikum diese Fähigkeiten und Begabungen in den anderen Aufführungen des BE mit fast schon quälender Regelmäßigkeit vorenthalten wird.

Beide Aufführungen verzichten dankenswerterweise auf krampfhaft aktualisierungen und daher muss der Frage nachgegangen werden, ob und wie die beiden Aufführungen



der Dreigroschenoper über das Vergnügen an guter Unterhaltung hinaus wirken, ob sie eine eingangs angeführte *Funktion*

bedienen. Diese Frage ist insbesondere von Belang, da zwar das amerikanische Theater der „entertainment industry“ zugerechnet wird, die deutschen Theater jedoch nicht nur zu Zeiten Brechts in der DDR, sondern auch im heutigen Deutschland einen als didaktisch zu verstehenden kulturellen Auftrag haben, durch dessen Erfüllung sie die Zuwendungen rechtfertigen, die sie am Leben halten. Auf die besprochene Aufführung am BE angewandt, könnte sich hier ein Widerspruch zwischen dem am großzügigsten subventionierten Theater Berlins und der Herkunft des



Regisseurs auftun, im Fall des Arden Theaters ist die Sache jedoch klar: Hier muss dem Zuschauer der Grund zum Kauf der Eintrittskarte gegeben werden, ihm muss sich der Mehrwert, der sich durch den Theaterbesuch ergeben kann, erschließen.

Dies vor Augen haltend ist man dennoch verblüfft, dass in Philadelphia noch nicht einmal ein Hauch von Kritik wenigstens als ein folkloristisches Zitat dargeboten wird. Die Szene verweist ausdrücklich nicht auf das, was doch gerade in den USA dieser Tage so aktuell wie selten zuvor ist, im Gegenteil: Existenzbedrohende Armut und wirkliche Not gibt es nur im Märchen und auch dort nur mit gutem Ausgang. Mit einiger

Ironie könnte man sagen, dass mittels der gewollten Harmlosigkeit und Humorigkeit und dem Fehlen jedes Bezugs zur gesellschaftlichen Wirklichkeit eine Verfremdung in vollendeter Form zustande kommt, ein V-Effekt, den Brecht jedoch nicht gewollt und bestimmt nicht gebilligt hätte.

In Berlin fehlt der erhobene Zeigefinger und umso erstaunlicher ist es, dass die Kritik des Stückes noch nach 82 Jahren wirkt, auch wenn dies nur indirekt und offenbar nicht für jeden Zuschauer gleichermaßen erkennbar geschieht. Auch hier wird sich des Mittels der Verfremdung bedient – diesmal ganz ernst und ohne Ironie zu verstehen – in diesem Fall jedoch erfolgreich. Das Ensemble wirkt bei aller Künstlichkeit und, wie ein Krit-

ker in der *FAZ* schrieb, „Wackelköpfigkeit“, nie selbstverliebt oder satt. Jede Geste wird bis an den Rand des Erträglichen mit ernsthafter Bösartigkeit ausgespielt, sodass die Strophe vom Fressen, das der Moral vorangeht, „funktioniert“. Die überzogene Künstlichkeit vermittelt deshalb den Eindruck großer Wahrhaftigkeit, weil sie jederzeit den Anlass und die Notwendigkeit des Spielens erkennen lässt. Hier kreist nichts um sich

Hause gehen zu dürfen. Es fühlte sich an, wie nach einem Sonntagsgottesdienst in der Gemeinde: Man kennt einander, weiß vorher, was der Pfarrer sagen wird und erlebt nichts Beunruhigendes, nichts, was in die Welt hinaus weist. Aber es ist wichtig und richtig, dabei gewesen zu sein.

Die Berliner *Dreigroschenoper* ist nicht voraussetzungslos und so werden nur, diejenigen etwas mit nach Hause genommen haben, was über



selbst, es findet kein „l’art pour l’art“ um seiner selbst willen statt.

Die Frage nach einer „Funktionalität“ von Theater lässt sich zusammenfassend nur im Hinblick auf die Rezeptionsfähigkeit seines Publikums stellen und vermutlich nur unzureichend beantworten, da es „das“ Publikum nicht mehr gibt oder vielleicht in einer anzunehmenden Homogenität auch nie gab und so bleibt dieses Ende spekulativ.

In Philadelphia schien man nur mäßig interessiert oder gar erregt zu sein. Dem Abend mangelte es an Sensation und er war nicht besorgniserregend, auch die Reaktion des Publikums war lau und die Leute schienen froh gewesen zu sein, endlich nach

das Amusement hinausreicht, die eh schon einen Sinn für gesellschaftliche Realitäten und eine höchst artifizielle künstlerische Zeichensprache haben. Die Mehrzahl der Zuschauer, unter denen dank des erfolgreichen Marketings des BE sehr viele Touristen aber auch sehr viele Schülerinnen und Schüler waren, hatten zum romantischen Glotzen allenfalls den Anlass, endlich einmal wieder eine großartige Aufführung im Berliner Ensemble gesehen zu haben.

Fünfte Lektion: Die kleinen Tagzeiten der Abgestorbenen. Diese Lektion ist zu singen unter Anschlag harter Mißlaute auf einem Saiteninstrument. Es hat als Motto: Zum Dank dafür, daß die Sonne sie bescheint, werfen die Dinge Schatten.

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI: A GANGSTER
SPECTACLE. ADAPTATION: GEORGE TABORI. MUSIC
COMPOSITION: HANS-DIETER HOSALLA. DIRECTION:
HEINZ-UWE HAUS. MUSICAL DIRECTION: LINDA
HENDERSON. SCENIC & LIGHTING DESIGN: WILLIAM
BROWNING. REP / PTP ENSEMBLE. THOMPSON
THEATRE, UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE. NEWARK, DE /
USA. APRIL 29 - MAY 16, 2010



Nadine Horvath

*Why, who's so gross
That cannot see this
palpable device?*

Yet who's so bold but says he sees it not?

Bad is the world, and all will come to naught,

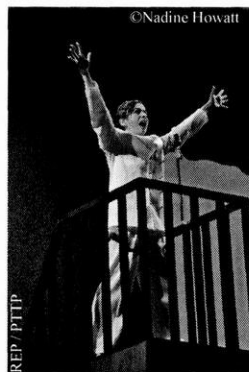
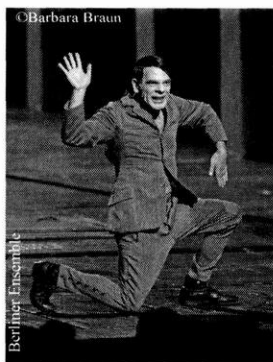
When such bad dealing must be seen in thought.

Richard III, 3.6.10-15

Performing Hitler as a parable play / gangster spectacle in America 2010 is a dangerous enterprise.

It doesn't take much for someone in America to shout the name "Hitler!" in a crowd: both the left and the right of the political spectrum, directly or indirectly, incessantly reference the Great Whitewasher. Whether it is George W. Bush and the crisis of 9/11 resolving into the Patriot Act, or Barack Obama and the Great Recession resolving into Health Care Reform, Americans are quick to play the Hitler Card as condemnation and warning no matter what the facts may be. The Austrian tramp is the significant Other in the American cultural imagination: an endlessly plastic rhetorical device that has been divorced from its historical context, which serves, in a strange, negative fashion, to con-

firm the exceptionalism of our American Dream. Yet this ghost comes at a price: it displaces and disguises the real problems that trouble our soul and need attention. Hitler as Chicken Soup for the American Soul? And Heinz-Uwe Haus and the REP/PTTP want to negotiate this price with Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*? Gentle Spectator,



the stakes are indeed high!

Brecht's *Arturo Ui* is at best, a genial, fragmentary puzzle; at worst, a toxic, unstable minefield. Completed within a few short weeks in early 1941 (several months after The Three Stooges' *You Nazy Spy* and Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*) it is a compilation of problematic layers: the rise of Hitler the Dictator, ca. 1935 (but not yet the Hitler of the Holocaust, ca. 1945); a gangster spectacle drawn from Brecht's lifelong fascination with America and the gangster film genre; a gangster drama in classical verse with canonical references ranging from Shakespeare's *Richard III* to Goethe's *Faust*.

Productions over the last fifty years have only confirmed the problematic nature of the play. The world premiere in Stuttgart in 1958 was met with a tepid reaction; a reaction which would be countered by the international success of the Berlin Ensemble's 1959 production starring Ekkehard Schall. 1963 saw the American premiere on Broadway with Christopher Plummer in the lead role last a total of five days; yet the play's fortunes would be revived by Leonard Rossiter assaying *Ui* on the English Stage with a successful run of produc-

tions in the late 1960s. The play's stock would remain static until the 1990s where successful revivals emerged throughout the decade: John Turturro in New York and Antony Sher in London would both mount significant productions in 1991; in 1995 the Berliner Ensemble brought forth Heiner Müller's adaptation starring Martin Wuttke (which is still in repertoire) and Heinz-Uwe Haus' first production of the play at the University of Delaware in 1997. The post-9/11 era has witnessed at least two significant productions – the 2002 New York production directed by Simon McBurney and starring Al Pacino and the Washington, D.C. blackbox production by Catalyst Theater in 2006. These last two productions probably serve as the best framework for the current REP/PTTP production: post 9/11 fears, gangster / mafia references from American Culture (Michael Corleone, Scarface, Tony Soprano) and use of cinematic effects from the early decades of the century (silent film, Charlie Chaplin, gangster films, Leni Riefenstahl).

Thus in the realm of history, culture, and theater, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* is a terrifically dangerous play that significantly raises the stakes for both the theater ensemble and the audience. During the performance, will you gently laugh and dismiss the proceedings as “just entertainment” that “could never happen here”? Will you unconsciously find yourself swept up by the irresistible rise of Arturo Ui, the self-made man from Brooklyn who sucked “pimento with his mother's milk”, as the invisible hand of the free, democratic market propels him through the business / political world to become Cauliflower King? Will you be both fascinated yet appalled at this Tony Soprano-figure as he milks and mocks the American Dream in order to establish a New World Order of truth, injustice, and vegetables? Or, will you rush the stage, intervene in the action, and show (not tell) the actors how a scene could be played, how the world could be changed? How Ui, Hitler, Richard III could have been stopped?

**If we could learn to look instead of gawking,
We'd see the horror in the heart of farce,
If only we could act instead of talking,
We wouldn't always end up on our arse.**

Was war Ihr erstes Erlebnis mit Arturo Ui? Als Text oder als Inszenierung?

INTERVIEW MIT DEM REGISSEUR:

HEINZ-UWE HAUS

27 APRIL 2010

Zuerst sah ich die Aufführung mit Ekkehard Schall im Berliner Ensemble, danach habe ich den Text gelesen. Schalls Spielweise hatte mich tief berührt, weil sie von listiger Dialektik schien. Indem sie Brechts Auffassung, den „Verüber großer politischer Verbrechen“ dem Gelächter preiszugeben, mit Bravour durchsetzte, kollidierten die ästhetischen Lösungen weitergehend vor allem auch mit der Verlogenheit des sogenannten Antifaschismus.

Brechts verfremdende Zugangsweise zum Thema, sein Griff in die soziale Maschinerie von Politik und Kriminalität im sich entwickelnden Gangstermilieu der Vereinigten Staaten während der Dreißiger, überzeugte mich, daß seine Theatralik die Überlebenskünste gegen jegliches Unrechtsregime stärkt. Schalls Wille zur Form schien es gelungen, die Interpretation politisch unanfechtbar zu machen. Nach diesem Ui war der sozialistische Realismus endgültig adabsurdum geführt. Ich begriff durch Schalls Interpretation, warum Brecht auf den Zusammenhang von kritischer und genießender Haltung pocht. Er schien zugleich die Rückversicherung des mündigen Zuschauers, selbst wenn diesem das Wasser bis zum Halse steht.

Daß ich die Aufführung so „befreiend“ wahrnahm, lag wohl auch daran, daß mir im gleichen Jahr eine Matinee mit Texten von Brecht, die ich einstudiert hatte, verboten wurde, weil sie „nihilistische Texte“, u.a. aus „Baal“, enthielt und „in der Herangehensweise formalistische Tendenzen aufweist, die nicht dem sozialistischen Realismus entsprechen“, wie es abstrafend hieß. Das passierte nur etwa 80 km vom Schiffbauerdamm entfernt in der Erweiterten Oberschule, die in der DDR-Provinz die Nachfolge des traditionellen Joachimthalschen Gymnasiums angetreten hatte!

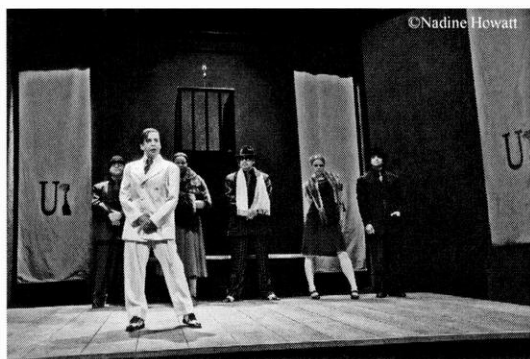
Ausser der 1959 BE Inszenierung gibt es andere bemerkenswerte Aufführungen, die Sie gesehen haben? Zum Beispiel haben Sie die 1995 Heiner Müller Inszenierung geschaut? Oder die 2002 NYC Inszenierung mit Regie Simon McBurney und Al Pacino?

Außer Heiner Müllers Inszenierung 1995 kenne ich keine weitere. Sie ist ebenfalls vor allem durch den Darsteller des Ui, Martin Wuttke, ein Erlebnis, wie unerschöpflich die Theatermittel sind, wenn undurchschaute „Gesetze“ sinnfällig zu machen sind. Wuttke hat mit seiner rigorosen Rollengestaltung ein provozierend zeitgenössisches „Modell des Zusammenlebens der Menschen“ entworfen. Ein Beispiel übrigens, wie Schauspielkunst und Brechtverständnis eine wundersame Liaison eingehen und behaupten können, wenn der Rest der Inszenierung eher statisch darum drapiert ist.

Was halten Sie von Taboris Übersetzung? Ziemlich frei, nicht wahr? Vielleicht zu frei? Er verwendet eine Menge von umgangssprachlichen Ausdrücken mit einem Gestus (!!) des jüdischen Galgenhumors; aber Fontane zu zitieren, vielleicht „ein zu weites Feld?“

An Taboris Sprache gefällt mir, daß sie „amerikanisiert“, sich als Kunst-

sprache vermittelt, die ihren sozialen Gestus nur zitiert. Er erinnert mehr an Johnny Cash denn an Godfather. Da das „Gangsterspektakel“ kein Drehbuch weder für Alfred Hitchcock noch für Woody Allen ist, sondern ins Kabarett oder auf die Opernbühne gehört, wo es über die Zeitbedingtheiten hinweg sperrig bleibt, weil die Triebkräfte von Geschichtsprozessen sich permanent



verhüllen, erweist sich Taboris *chuzpe* im Umgang mit dem Text überzeugend publikumsnah. Sie ist wie ein vielgenutztes Requisit, dem man nicht glauben will, dass es nicht noch älter als von 1966 ist! Seine Stärke ist, daß es zum Inventar der Jahrmarkts-historie gehört.

Die ölig-beflissene Konversation der Gemüsehändler aus Chicago und Cicero zum Beispiel hat Tabori, meines Er-

achtens, kongenial erfaßt. Er kannte seine Pappenheimer noch von daheim. Er wußte, daß die Schleichwege der Anpassung so bequem waren, dass es kaum einen gab (es sei denn er war mosaischen Glaubens oder hatte sich politisch zu sehr exponiert), der nicht dem „Anschluß“ zujubelte. Ich bin überzeugt, daß mit Taboris Fassung Piscators Aussichten 1941, einen Broadway-Produzenten zu gewinnen, weitaus größer gewesen wären als mit der Übersetzung, die er hatte anfertigen lassen. Tabori hatte eine blutige *Dreigroschenoper* im Kopf und weniger die Zuordnung der Vorgänge zu den geschichtlichen Ereignissen.

Zum zweitenmal inszenieren Sie Ui auf die Delaware Universität Bühne. Beim Rückblick auf die 1998 Inszenierung, welche stichwortartige Erinnerungen haben Sie?

Das bekanntlich eher homöopathische Politikbewußtsein in den Vereinigten Staaten, das besonders bei der Deutung des Aufstiegs des deutschen Nationalsozialismus „eingreifendem Denken“ entgegenwirkt, verlor durch die Besetzung des Arturo Ui mit einer Frau seine Klischees und Ruhekissen. Nazi-Ramsch und Freud-Verschnitt bleiben außen vor und konnten nicht länger den Verstand verdünnen.

Ich erinnere mich nur bruchstückhaft an die vorherige Inszenierung mit dem PTPP. Natürlich ist mir der andersartige Raum gegenwärtig. Das Hartshorn Theater ist eine Mischung aus Halle und Blackbox. Publikum und Darsteller sind nah beieinander, in engstem Kontakt, so daß es sich leicht miteinander ungehen läßt. Wir hatten eine schräge Plattform auf Rollen, die vielfältigste Anordnungen im Handumdrehn ermöglichte. Ui war ein unerbittlicher DJ im Gestus einer Hilde Benjamin oder Elena Ceaucescu. Das Vorbild aus Braunau verbarb sich gewissermaßen hinter seinen Zöglingen.

Die Gang in Militärmänteln erinnerte an Freikorps und Rausschmeißer zugleich. Die Mischung aus Hell's Angels und Söldnern tobte sich wie in einer

„Nahkampfdiele“ aus. Die populäre Musik, von den Darstellern zur Verwendung vorgeschlagen, war eine Collage aus Nashville and Barber shop: so bekannt und beliebt, daß sie wie ein Hohn auf die Vorgänge klang.

Peep show und Cirque de'Soleil waren in unseren Köpfen. Tatsächlich schien die Aufführung dann auch davon ihren Biß gehabt zu haben. Jedenfalls ist so die Erinnerung mancher Zuschauer, die wir befragt haben.

Was ist neu bei dieser Inszenierung 2010? Meinen Sie, dass die Ereignisse des letzten Jahrhunderts (vor allem, die WTC Angriffe 2001 und anschließend die Krieg gegen Terrorismus / Foltergeschichten, usw... sowie die jüngste finanzielle Krise) haben die Aufnahme des Arturo Ui durch die amerikanische Öffentlichkeit geändert?

Wie gesagt, ich vergesse meine Inszenierungen schnell. Keineswegs versuche ich mich bei einer Inszenierung eines Stückes, das ich schon mal einstudiert habe, an neue Lösungen zu denken. Der Grundgeist ist das anders, in einer Kontinuität mit meiner Auf-Theaterspiel geprägt hat, wie und Schauspielerei.

Ich muss im Spielensemble muss ich das Faden-Text her- Alle Mittel sind

recht, wenn sie von den Schauspielern her entwickelt werden. Gruppenszenen arbeite ich in der Regel bevor ich zu den Vorgängen zwischen den Protagonisten komme.

Was nicht zu sehen ist, gehört nicht auf die Bühne. Punkt. Wenn es um politische Haltungen geht, ermutige ich zuerst, das infrage zu stellen, was dem Darsteller als Staatsbürger wert und teuer ist. Political correctness gehört zum Verhaltenskodex im Alltag, im Probenprozess hat sie nichts zu suchen.

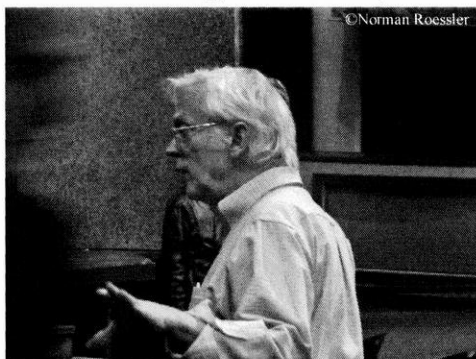
Extreme Widersprüche hart nebeneinander zu behaupten, ist das Ziel bei der Abbildung von Vorgängen. Nur wenn man in den Montagen des Verhalten über die Stränge schlägt, tut sich Brecht auf.

Unbequeme Widersprüche gehören auf die Spielwiese des Denkens eines Schauspielers. Wer spielt, der sucht nicht nur gezielt. Unerwartetes und Überraschungen mobilisieren „wie man sieht, statt stiert“.

Daß der deutsche Gruß einst der amerikanische war und erst spät vom Weißen Haus gegen die Hand aufs Herz vertauscht wurde, lädt auch zum Nachdenken ein.

Daß Kennedy und Reagan besser als Rhetoriker abschneiden als Obama mit seinen glänzend formulierten Reden, läßt fragen, warum wohl?

Was Chamberlain an Hitler hatte ist so unfäßlich wie Roosevelts Erschaffung des „Uncle Joe.“



©Norman Roessler

einst gefundenerinnern. Was stus angeht, da agiere ich nuität. Die hat fassung von zu tun, die ich auf Texter lergehe. mer zuerst ein schaffen. Also bulieren mit ausfordern. mir dazu

Und daß damals in den vorbildlichen Demokratien die Menschenrechte meist nur in Nebensätzen vorkamen, ist bestürzend aktuell für den politisch interessierten Schauspieler.

Gibt es bestimmte Brechtsche Einflüsse auf Ihre jetzige Inszenierung? Zum Beispiel, "Theatralik des Faschismus" aus dem *Messingkauf*? Oder vielleicht von den anderen Hitlerstücken – *Die Rundköpfe, Furcht und Elend*, oder vielleicht irgendeine Inspirationen aus den Gedichten?

Gangsters, Guns and Cauliflower.

All you need for a little change of regime.



The Resistible Rise of ARTURO UI

BY BERTOLT BRECHT

APRIL 29 - MAY 16

www.rep.udel.edu

(302) 831-2204

Presented by the REP Thompson Theatre Center for the Arts, Newark

Die „Theatralik des Faschismus“ aus dem *Messingkauf*, die ich ins Probenmaterial 1998 aufgenommen hatte, ist zweifelsohne immer noch anregend, schon des historischen Zusammenhangs wegen. Diesmal haben wir viele originale Filmdokumente betrachtet, nicht nur um inspiriert zu werden, sondern auch um die Erbärmlichkeit der zeitgenössischen Kopisten, die von nicht minderer Gefahr aber unauffälliger sind, zu studieren.

Wenn Brecht eines lehrt, dann ist es, daß sich Macht selten mittels direkter Repression oder unmittelbarem Zwang durchsetzt. Die verdeckteren Techniken sind es, die dem Publikum vertraut sind. Auf diese rich-

teten wir unsere Aufmerksamkeit. Die Aufführung versucht, die vertrauten Prozesse totalitärer Einbindung und Gesinnung in eine unerwartet modelhafte Form zu bringen, die die Zuschauer nicht kalt läßt.

Ich muss zugeben, dass bei den Proben als Carine Montbertand die Rolle Ui spielte, dachte ich an anderen Frauenfiguren des Brechtschen Theaters, z.B. Widow Begbick, Mutter Courage, Shen Te. Wieder einmal "ein zu weites Feld" oder gibt es etwas zu dieser Ahnung?

Brechts Figuren faszinieren, weil sie nie einheitliche Subjekte sind. Sie sind diskontinuierlich, gespalten, kurz: widersprüchlich. Sie sind trotz des Primats der Fabel nie dessen Vollzugsorgane.

Damit widersetzen sie sich auch dem (in den Staaten scheinbar unausrottbar) Klischee vom Stil des „epischen Theater“, in dem der Darsteller dem Publikum irgendwelche Fiktionen vorführt, die einer „Verfremdung“ dienen

soll, der man angeblich am erfolgreichsten als Eingeweihter begegnet. Was da zumeist herauskommt, hat mit Brecht und Theaterspiel wenig gemeinsam. Das Ärgerliche ist, daß damit die dumpfe, nicht-dialektische Idee vom Individuum, das abgebildet gehöre, immer wieder Aufwind bekommt. Da vergessen dann auch oft die Schauspieler ihr Talent und ihren Kopf und sielen sich im „Ich,“ das sich den Charakter aus dem Stück einverleiben will. Der Aufbau der Figuren in *Arturo Ui* steht dem bekanntlich entgegen. Die Proben hatten damit auch einen ästhetischen Erkenntnisnutzen für das Ensemble.

Novalis prägte den Begriff „Dividuum,“ um gegen die herkömmliche Vorstellung vom Individuum als einer festen, in sich geschlossenen Größe anzugehen. Novalis nannte es das „zerstückelte, unvollständige Ich.“ Die Spannung zwischen dem Ganzen und dem Einzelnen, auch das Bild der aus der Geschichte bekannten „Kraftnatur“ (Hitler – Stalin – Mao – Pol Pot, um nur einige wenige „besondere Menschen“ zu nennen, die das Unmenschentum im 20. Jahrhundert verbreiteten), führt zum „Herzstück der theatralischen Veranstaltung,“ der Fabel. Im *Kleinen Organon* heißt es: „Auch wenn der besondere Mensch, den der Schauspieler vorführt, schließlich zu mehr passen muß als nur zu dem, was geschieht, so doch hauptsächlich deswegen, weil das Geschehnis um so auffälliger sein wird, wenn es sich an einem besonderen Menschen vollzieht.“

Carine Montbertrand sammelt mit der Lust des Alltagsethnologen Gesten, Andeutungen, Auffälligkeiten an der Grenze zwischen Sprache und Unausgesprochenem. Ihr Körper exhibitioniert gestisches Verhalten aus der Politik, der Wirtschaft, der kriminellen und Unterhaltungsbranche, das fernsehbekannt ist und natürlich auch in den Staaten von Männern dominiert wird. Verkleidungen selbst des teuflischsten Zwergs hinter dem eine Frau steckt wecken Verlangen. Ein Zuschauer machte kein Hehl aus seiner Beobachtung: „Eine Domina als Einpeitscher!“ Wir hatten das nie im Sinn, aber es traf zu im letzten Bild, das der Massenhysterie auf einer *convention hall* nachempfunden ist, als Carine/Ui ihre/seine Huldigung entgegennimmt.

Insofern ergibt sich aus der Frage, warum Brechts Helden alle weiblich waren, auch die Behauptung, daß die Besetzung einer Figur wie Arturo Ui mit einer Frau von Brecht selber sein könnte. So wie die großen Frauenfiguren eine überragende Bedeutung für seine Dramaturgie der Verfremdung erlangen, weil durch sie die Fülle komplexer gesellschaftlicher Erscheinungsformen geordnet, in Modelle umgeformt und durchschaubar gemacht wird, ist die wirkungsvolle „Hosenrolle“ von gleichem aufklärerischem Kalkül.

Das Motto unserer Arbeit war dementsprechend gestisch: „Nichts existiert a priori und erfahrungsunabhängig.“

Der Gangster und die Gangster Spektakel haben über das letzte Jahrhundert eine intensive Faszination auf die amerikanische Öffentlichkeit geübt. Es gibt eine Reihe der Mackie Messer in der amerikanischen Vorstellungskraft (*Scarface*, *The Godfather*, *The Sopranos*, usw...) Gibt es immer noch die Möglichkeit für Verfremdung in diesem Bereich? Kann Ui/Hitler immer noch diese Gangsterphantasie durchbrechen?

Die Hauptverfremdung unseres Ui ist, daß eine Frau Züge all der erwähnten und anderer Gangster, erschaffener wie wirklicher, in eine Figur montiert.

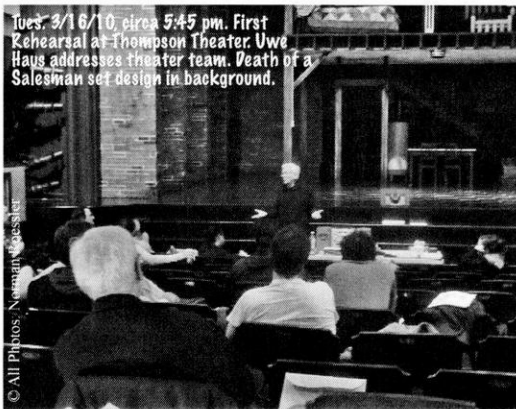
Ich weiß nicht, ob es eine spezifische amerikanische Gangsterphantasie gibt. Wenn es sie gibt, wird sie dadurch sicher irritiert oder durchbrochen, denn im Unterbewußten wird der Zuschauer sich ihm vertraute, manchmal nahe politische oder andere öffentliche Personen wiederfinden und sich wundern über die Austauschbarkeit von Haltungen und Ansprüchen. Es werden gesellschaftliche und wirtschaftliche Interessen hinterfragt, die weit über das oeuvre der Mackie Messer geht. Das Kopieren öffentlichen Verhaltens, der Widerspruch zwischen Text und Bild, dem Zuschauer aus den Gesprächsrunden von CNN oder Fox nur allzuvertraut, ist eine wesentliche Voraussetzung schauspielerischen Fabulierens.

Neu ist die REP / PTP Struktur. Was halten Sie von diesem neuen Modell?

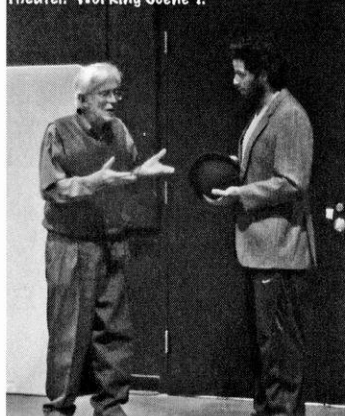
Daß es Sanford Robbins gelungen ist, auf dem Campus ein professionelles Schauspielensemble zu etablieren, das sowohl dem Trainingsprogram in gemeinsamen Aufführungen zu Gute kommt, als auch für Delaware ein tatsächliches Repertoire-Theater schafft, ist ein Glücksfall, der alle Möglichkeiten eröffnet, über die Region hinauszuwirken. Angesichts der wirtschaftlichen Krise, in der der Bund, der Staat und die Universität sich befinden, grenzt das fast an ein Mirakel. Doch das ist Amerika, voller oft auch positiver Überraschungen.

REHEARSAL DOCUMENTS

Tues. 3/16/10, circa 5:45 pm. First Rehearsal at Thompson Theater. Uwe Haus addresses theater team. Death of a Salesman set design in background.



Sat. 4/10/10, circa 12:30 pm. CFA Studio Theater. Working Scene 1.

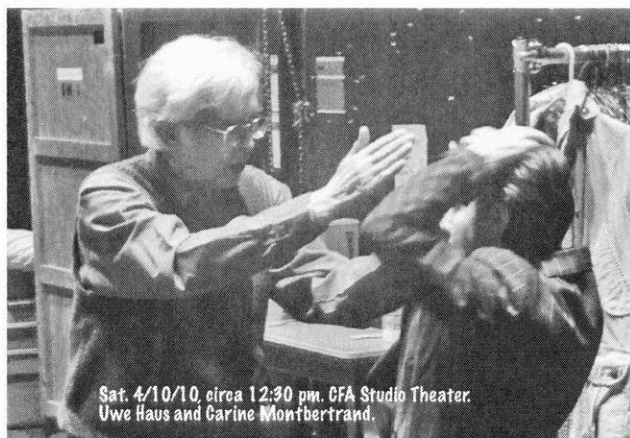


Sat. 4/10/10, circa 12:30 pm. CFA Studio Theater. Musical Director Linda Henderson. The Piano.



Sat. 4/10/10, circa 12:30 pm. CFA Studio Theater. Costume Designer Andrea Barrier. Coats.





Sat. 4/10/10, circa 12:30 pm. CFA Studio Theater.
Uwe Haus and Carine Montbertrand.

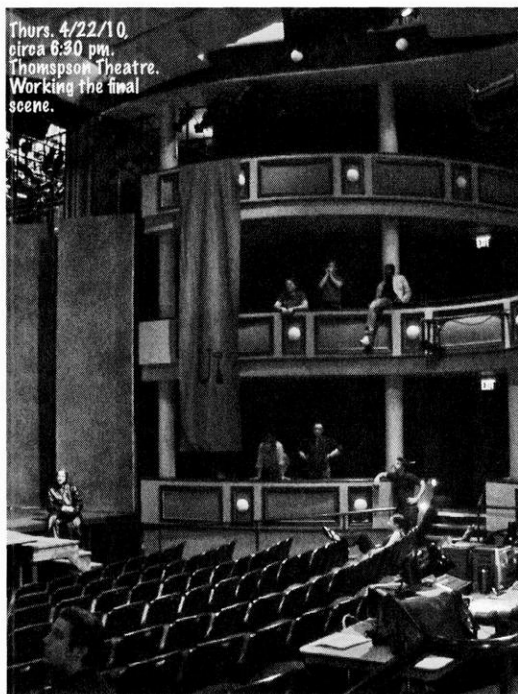
DAILY CALL
Arturo Ui
Saturday, April 10th, 2010

Rehearsal Breakdown: CFA Studio Theatre	NAME	1 st call	2 nd Call
12:00 – 12:30 Work Scene	BRACEY Jasmine	2:30pm	7:30pm
12:30 – 1:00 Work Scene 2 (without U)	CHARLES Ben	1:00pm	6:30pm
1:00 – 1:45 Work Scene 3	CROCKER Caroline	No Call	No Call
1:45 – 2:30 Work Scene 5	FITZGERALD Dante	12:30pm	6:30pm
2:30 – 3:15 Work Scene 6	COLDWASSER Andrew	12:00pm	6:30pm
3:15 – 4:00 Work Scene 7	GRIFFIN Sara	No Call	No Call
4:00 – 5:00 Work Scene 9	KNIGHT Cameron	1:45pm	6:30pm
5:00 – 6:30 Dinner Break	MATARRESE Mic	12:00pm	6:30pm
6:30 – 7:30 Work Scene 10	MATHEW Erik	12:00pm	6:30pm
7:30 – 7:45 Work Scene 11	MILLER Doug	1:45pm	6:30pm
7:45 – 8:30 Work Scene 12	MONTBERTRAND Carine	12:00pm	6:30pm
8:30 – 9:30 Work Scene 8 – Urinary	NAGRAJ Anand	1:00pm	6:30pm
	PELINSKI Stephen	12:00pm	6:30pm
	SIMPSON Matthew	No Call	No Call
	SULLIVAN Meaghan	No Call	No Call
	VALENTINE Sara	2:30pm	No Call
	HEMPHILL Nicole	No Call	No Call

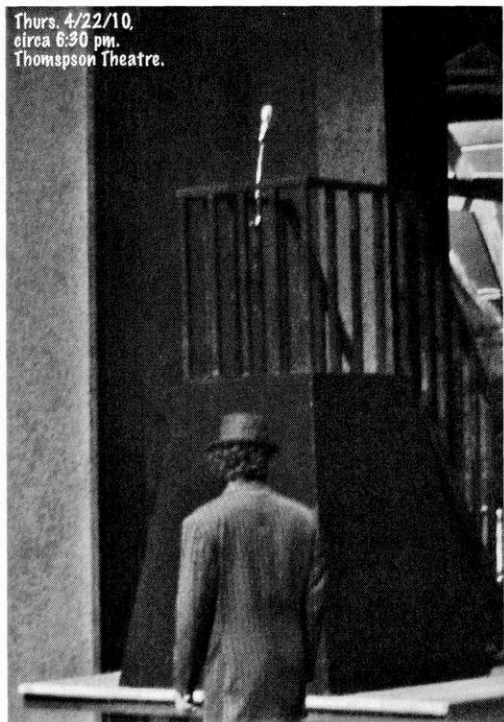
Thurs. 4/22/10,
circa 6:30 pm.
Thompson Theatre.
The iconic Hitler
podium being
wheeled out.

Notes: Norman Roessler will be present to video parts of the 12:00 – 5:00 rehearsal for the Brecht
workshop.

Montbertrand, Carine	Costume Calls	
	Gloss Hair Salon	12:00 – 1:00
	Dinner Calls	
Montbertrand, Carine	CFA greenroom – interview with H. Roessler	1:30 – 1:45



Thurs. 4/22/10,
circa 6:30 pm.
Thompson Theatre.



In addition to the three songs written by Hans-Dieter Hosalla, the following music is used for *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*:

Overture:

- "Milenberg Jags": Rappalo/
Mares/Morton, 1925
- "Dead Man Blues": Ferdinand
(Jelly Roll) Morton, 1926*
- "Chicago"; Fred Fisher, 1922*
- "St. Louis Blues"; W.C. Handy,
1914
- "Chicago Breakdown": Morton,
1925*
- "Rialto Ripples": George
Gershwin, 1917
- "Jelly Roll Blues": Morton, 1915
- "Darktown Strutters Ball":
Shelton Brooks, 1917
- "Ain't Misbehavin'": Thomas
(Fats) Waller, 1929
- "Manhattan": Rodgers and Hart,
1925
- "Madonna Mia": traditional
Italian folk song, transcribed by
Al Capone*

* - also used in the play

The play:

- "Elite Syncopation": Scott
Joplin, 1902
- "Powerhouse": Raymond Scott,
1937
- "Triangle": sung by Patsy Cline
- "Oh my Lord": traditional gospel
- "Make New Friends"
- "La Cumparsita": Gerardo
Matos Rodriguez, 1917
- "Habenera": Bizet, from *Carmen*,
1845
- "Bye Bye Blackbird": Ray
Henderson, 1926
- "Agnus Dei": traditional
Gregorian chant
- "Heal the World": Michael
Jackson, 2008

- Linda Henderson

The music in our production had three functions: the songs by Hans-Dieter Hosalla, interludes between scenes, and sound effects.

BESIDE THE POINT: MUSICAL ILLUSTRATIONS IN ARTURO UI

LINDA HENDERSON

Hans-Dieter Hosalla wrote three songs for *Arturo Ui*: "Spielhalle," ("There was a Little Man") sung by the newspaper reporter, Ragg; "Das Lied von der Tünche" ("The Song of the Whitewash"), sung by Givola; and, "Heimatschnulze" ("Our Home"), sung by Jimmy Greenwool. Director Uwe Haus and I used these three songs as a base to create forty musical illustrations during the play. We also used American popular music of the early part of the 20th century, some contemporary pop music, traditional American folk music, a country song, and Gregorian chant.

The interludes were a collaborative effort between the REP / PTTP students, Dr. Haus, and myself. Performances began in April of 2010, but the creation of the interludes began three months earlier. Dr. Haus split the nine students into groups of three or four, and gave them an assignment: re-title the scenes of the play based on the essence of what was to come, but in a contemporary style. In addition, they had to incorporate a group rhythm, harmonize a melody, each one must have a sung solo, and they had to improvise over a text. After much exploration, we refined the pieces, adding percussion or piano accompaniment and choreographed movement.

These interludes functioned the way the banners, headlines, or placards in many Brecht productions function, but without relating directly to the play. For example, Scene Eight was preceded by an interlude the students entitled: "Smoke of the Fires, Screech of the Tires." The interlude was in three parts, yellow, orange, and red alerts, with five actors relaying contemporary news items in a whisper-down-the-lane style. Each time information was passed, it became more distorted, drawing a parallel between the way people react to news in today's society and the way the grocers were swayed by Ui's speech in Scene Eight.

Our first musical comment occurred twenty minutes before the start of each performance. As is often the case at the Professional Theater Training Program, some of the actors are multi-talented. Our Dogsborough (Anand Nagraj) has a lovely baritone voice and is also an accomplished clarinetist, and our Mrs. Dullfeet (Jasmine Bracey) plays the trumpet and tap-dances. Before each show, the three of us lured the audience into the theater with music by Jelly Roll Morton, W.C. Handy, and Fred Fisher, such tunes as "Dead Man Blues," "Chicago Breakdown," and "St. Louis Blues." I also played solo piano pieces like Gershwin's "Rialto Ripples," Fats Waller's "Ain't Misbehavin'," and "Darktown Strutter's Ball" by Shelton Brooks.

People listening would frequently applaud, until they saw the scowls on the faces of the musicians. The actors were dressed as gangsters with ugly make-up, gray foundation with mottled complexions and dark circles around the eyes. Applause became feebler as people were put off by the contrast of those scowls against the lively sound of the music. I also presented the "love theme" of our production, "Madonna Mia." Al Capone, when he was imprisoned at Alcatraz, transcribed an old Italian song with romantic lyrics, and we used variations of the song many times throughout the play. Its first function, however, was to keep the voices of the actors warmed up. They spent those twenty

minutes onstage in stillness, silhouettes against the back wall, and when I played “Madonna Mia,” they hummed along to keep their voices ready. The effect in the house was eerie, since they didn’t move, and one couldn’t be sure where the humming was coming from.

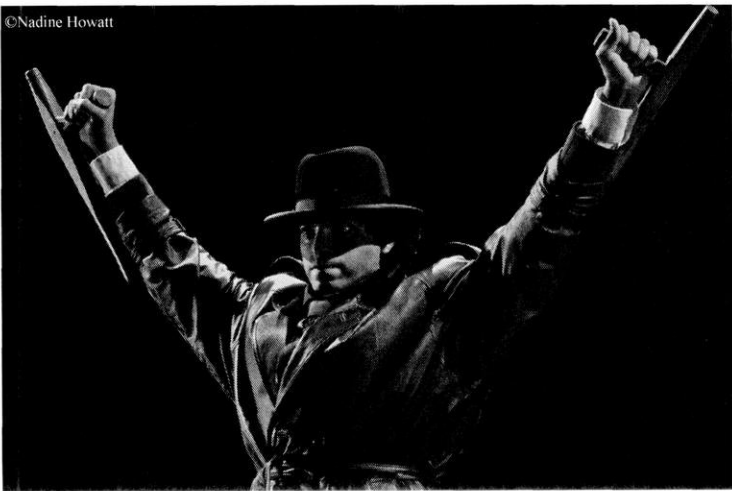
An important musical aspect to our production was rhythm, in repetitive gestures and synchronized movement. The play opened with the introduction of a rhythmic ostinato (a constantly recurring melodic fragment) to accompany the prologue. The cast members each had two wooden tonfas, Japanese weapons which we used as rhythm sticks. The actors started striking in a random pattern, gradually increasing the tempo and volume. The cacophony grew to a frenzy, which suddenly cut off as the cast faced front and slowly stood up. They then began a synchronized march, accompanied by the tonfas and a bass line on piano taken from the “Whitewash Song.”

The ensemble was interrupted by the Barker, our Arturo Ui (Carine Montbertrand), before she donned her Ui costume. At this point she was dressed as a Catholic schoolgirl, and gave some blasts on a slide whistle to announce herself. I began “Elite Syncopations,” a 1902 composition by Scott Joplin, to accompany her opening monologue, and then segued into “Chicago Break-down” at the introduction of the major players. For the introduction of Ui, I chose “Powerhouse,” a recognizable piece to most audience members as the theme of gangster movies and TV shows. The prologue concluded with a burst of machine gun fire, a series of nine rim shots on a snare drum. I sat at the piano at the side of the stage, visible to the audience, not hiding the fact that all gunshot sounds came from me. Immediately following the machine gun shots, Ui gestured to me to begin the music for the opening banner, “Chicago.” Her line was, “Downtown Chicago: the office of the Cauliflower Trust,” and she sang along with the Chicago tune.

Scene Two, where Flake (Erik Matthew) intimidates Sheet (Donte Fitzgerald) into selling his business, was preceded by the first of the interludes, titled “Change You.” It involved two men who accost a third character, inviting her to change everything about herself. The skit concluded with her voice appearing

to come from one of the first actors, a Three Stooges kind of dissonant triad built by each of the three singing, “Change you.” During scene two, Ui and Roma accost Flake, and Roma (Cameron Knight) sang the first

©Nadine Howatt



phrase of "Madonna Mia," but with no lyrics. After their exit, however, Flake lunged after them, as if to call them back, by singing a longer phrase of the song, this time in Italian and with an elaborate piano accompaniment. We quoted the song a final time in this scene when Sheet is threatened by Flake, who screamed a short section of the phrase, again in Italian. "Madonna Mia" signified Ui's relationship to his men, especially Roma, and a hearkening back to his early life in Brooklyn.

The lead-in to Scene Three, the back room of Dogsborough's saloon, is an example of a musical idea illustrating a parallel situation, beside the point. Dogsborough is about to deviate from his straight and narrow path of sixty years, and we made the point by means of the Patsy Cline song, "Triangle" (1963). The song describes the singer's dilemma of having two lovers, always a sticky situation, and one that requires deceit. It foretells Dogsborough's sticky situation to come: "Well, I got myself in such a mess and I don't know what to do." We set this number with the whole cast, including a boxing tap-dancer, a guitar and triangle player, and a double chorus to join the soloist in the "tra-la-la" sections.

Scene Four introduces the audience to Ui and his gang, and Roma's encouragement of the vegetable protection racket. We set the scene with Hosalla's song, "There was a Little Man." The actor playing Ragg (Andrew Goldwasser) sang to the ensemble, and our clarinetist and a flute-playing actress joined me to accompany. Since the interludes also functioned as scene changes, we extended this one with a drum rhythms played by two actors onstage, expanding on the rhythm Hosalla wrote for the song. "Madonna Mia" is quoted by Roma as he cajoles Ui, and by the whole gang as they exit. The next interlude began immediately as gang members emerged from under the stage with their pairs of tonfas. I set the rhythm with brushes on the snare drum in the same pattern that the ensemble marched to earlier. The actor who played Flake/Givolola (Erik Matthew) began his transformation to gangster by performing a display of twirling his tonfas as the ensemble watched. They hit their sticks together in a three-phrase version of the "Whitewash Song" as they asked the audience, "Is there something foul and oozing from the plaster?" Ui's reign is beginning.

The interlude into Scene Five, Dogsborough's country house, concluded with a piano version of Hosalla's "Our Home." Even without the lyrics, the song is sentimental and nostalgic, a contrast with what is about to happen between Ui and Dogsborough. The church bells in this scene were played on a chime note, announcing 4:00 as the time of Ui's Sunday social call.

Scene Six is the City Hall investigating committee, introduced by another beside-the-point illustration. Six actors marched onstage to the beat of my left hand bass and right hand snare drum. They began a background noise of morning commuters, imitating car horns and traffic sounds, as they individually looked up from their open newspapers and read current bad news. I added a melodic motif from the "Whitewash Song," which accelerated into the headline of "City Hall Investigating Committee." The character of O'Casey (Jasmine Bracey) sings "Silent Sheet, Unholy Sheet" to the melody of "Silent Night" during this scene, and percussion was used to add to the cacophony when O'Casey is asked for proof of Dogsborough's guilt. The drum was played again when Bowl is shot by machine gun as an offstage siren blared.

The most beautiful variation of "Madonna Mia" introduced Scene Seven, when Ui is coached by the Actor Maloney. Four actors entered, the first using a Tommy gun as an oar. They glided across the stage as if on a gondola, singing the song in three-part harmony consisting of the melody, a tenor descant line, and whole notes completing the harmony with the lyric "U-i." An actor announces "Ui's Suite at the Mammoth Hotel," and the audience is lured into a scene that feels funny. By the end of the scene, though, Ui's transformation is complete, and the beauty of the lead-in and humor of the scene give way to the realization that Ui's rise is becoming less resistible with every passing scene.

At the conclusion of Scene Seven, which Ui ends with the Marc Antony speech, I brought back the gangster music of "Powerhouse" as actors ran into place for "Smoke of the Fires, Screech of the Tires." We added some background noise to the scene, my fingers tapping on the drum, noodling at the high end of the piano, an actor idly brushing on a big oil drum, and sounds made by feet and hands. The noises stopped and turned to audible heavy breathing when Ui started to display his newly acquired style of walking and speaking.

Finally, we used Hosalla's song, "Our Home," as written, accompanied by piano. Our Greenwood (Donte Fitzgerald) invited the grocers to join him in the chorus, which we sang in harmony.

Act Two opened with Ui doing a jazzy dance as we played "Chicago" on piano, clarinet, snare drum, and tambourine to introduce our Scene Nine (Scene Thirteen in the script). We had three of the gang in a grouping near Ui, besides Roma, Giri, and Givola, and these three became Ui's born-again congregation during his "faith" speech. They moved in step together, quietly singing "Oh my Lord, Lord, Lord" in the style of a gospel choir. Extra jazz riffs were provided by a female singer seated near me at the piano, and Giri and Givola got into the spirit with rhythmic clapping.

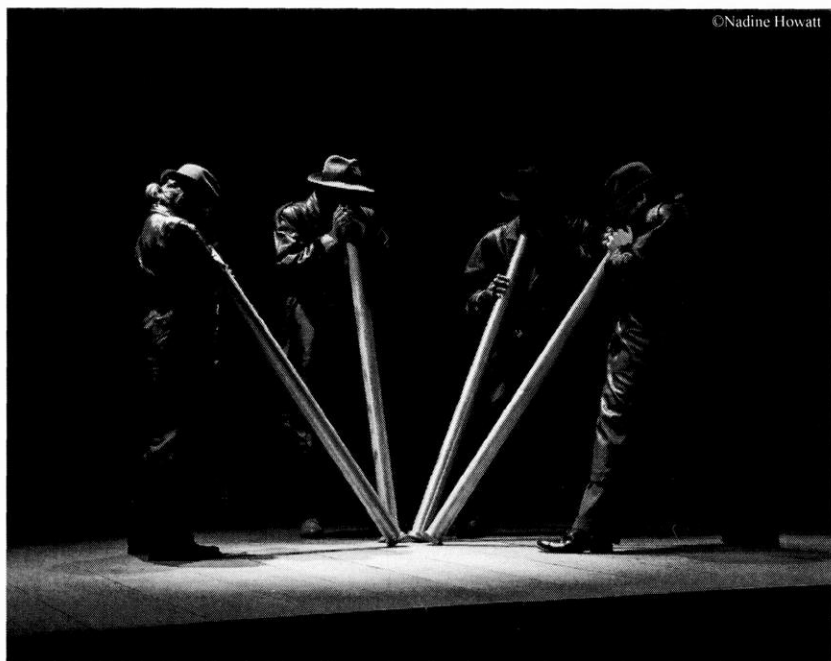
Our Scene Ten was the garage scene, when Roma is murdered. The preceding interlude, therefore, was a diabolical version of "Make New Friends," a favorite of Girl Scouts, called "Make New Friends, but Kill the Old." Four gangsters ran, giggling, to center stage, carrying long metal tubes. They started singing into the tubes as though they were playing Alphorns, and then started the song, accompanied by pounding of the tubes on the floor. The song ended with the crash of the tubes to the floor and a display of the brass knuckles the gangsters were wearing.

The sound of a rainstick and a single chime note (1:00 a.m.) opened Scene Ten. Other sound effects needed for the scene included a metal spoon scraping the oil barrel for the sound of the garage door going down and up, two single gunshots, a machine gun fire.

Scene Eleven was preceded by our biggest production number, the entire "Song of the Whitewash." Two women gangsters asked the questions, "Is there something foul and oozing from the plaster? Does the dry rot drizzle through the wood? Will the sewers spring a new disaster?" Four men answered that "All we need is whitewash" as they marched and did choreography reminiscent of snakes and "Heil" salutes. An actor announced the next scene, Givola's flower shop, as I played a romantic, jazz-chord-infused variation of "Chicago," setting the scene for Ui's seduction of Mrs. Dullfeet. This is the scene where Ui and Mrs. Dullfeet alternate their dialogue with Givola and Mr. Dullfeet. I chose three famous tango melodies to accompany the scene: "La Cumpar-

sita" by Gerardo Matos Rodriguez, "St. Louis Blues" by W.C. Handy, and The "Habanera" from *Carmen* by Georges Bizet. Gangsters, frozen in place, held bunches of flowers and occasionally interjected phrases like "I love you," "Get out now," or "Chicago," sung to the tune of "Chicago." The piece was accompanied by piano, cabasa, and drum. We cut abruptly as the spell was broken on stage by Mr. Dullfeet's line, "Betty, let's go."

I felt the tango scene required some punctuation, so the two percussionists and I added one final line of "La Cumparsita" to finish the scene. Immediately I launched into "Bye Bye Blackbird," written in 1926 by Ray Hender-



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son and, incidently, adopted by Goebbels as the musical theme of his propaganda campaign. It served as a musical nod to the demise of Mr. Dullfeet, as well as setting up the next interlude, "Top Dog, Underdog." The whole cast marched in rhythm, accompanied by the bass line of "Whitewash," until one actor grabbed the hat of our shortest actor. A game of keep-away ensued, but the short actor grew (on someone else's shoulders) to become the tallest. The group chants, "Top dog, underdog, who comes out on top?"

"The Cemetery of Cicero" was our Scene Twelve, introduced by three chime notes and the cast singing the Agnus Dei from the Latin mass. "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us" the gangsters and Ui sing as they lay Dullfeet to rest. I echoed the melody in perfect fifths to call Gregorian chant to mind as the scene began.

The final scene was "Convention Hall, Chicago," preceded by an interlude, three women as cheerleaders. They used every aspect of Uwe Haus' instruction, a rhythmic ostinato, which I started on the snare drum, then solo cheers developed from their improvised text, and a dissonant chord built on the word

"Unanimous."

Mrs. Dullfeet (Jasmine Bracey) used her trumpet playing skill in this scene, when she was the one to play the fanfare introducing Ui. We used the beginning of Hosalla's song from earlier in the play, "There was a Little Man," which has the fanfare in its introduction. As Ui spoke about his rise to power, the cast hummed the melody of Michael Jackson's "Heal the World" as an underscore.

As she advised the grocers to place their confidence in Ui, as she herself has done, Mrs. Dullfeet, lost control as she sang her next lines to the tune of "Cabaret:" "I've had the chance to get to know him well in these our dire days." Mrs. Dullfeet brought out the trumpet again for a reprise of "Dead Man Blues" as the grocers of Cicero and Chicago give thanks for Ui's protection.

The play ends with Ui proclaiming, "New York today! The world tomorrow!" The cast was surrounding the audience by this time, and as we all began to sing the Michael Jackson song, the cast ordered the audience to sing along. But the words were wrong – instead of "Heal the world," the cast was singing "Ui's world." Balloons drifted down onto the audience as cast members handed out small flags with Ui's emblem on them. The barker returned, the Ui style of speaking gone, and the whole ensemble participated in the barker's final monologue. Our Ui actress got the last line, though. "Although the world stood up and stopped the bastard, the bitch that bore him is in heat again."

REVIEW: APRIL 29, 2010

In 1998, Heinz-Uwe Haus directed an energetic production of Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* at the University of Delaware with graduate theatre student Carine Montbertrand in the title role. In

CHARLES H. HELMETAG

May 2010 he directed the same play on the University of Delaware campus again with Carine Montbertrand in the title role. The play was written in 1941 to warn American audiences – against a backdrop they would be familiar with: Chicago in the era of Al Capone – about the dangers of fascism. With a play that was topical seventy years ago produced now in 2010 with the same director and leading performer who collaborated some twelve years ago, one might well ask, "So what? What had changed?"

Well, everything had changed. Germany had changed, America had changed, the world had changed. The venue for the production had changed

from the stark black box of Hartshorne Theatre with its metal stadium seating to the ornate, state-of-the-art Thompson Theatre in the Roselle Center for the Performing Arts. The performers were no longer graduate students in the University's Professional Theatre Training Program but members of a professional repertory theatre troupe, the Resident Ensemble Players. Like the best theatre professionals, Haus and Montbertrand had come up with a new bag of tricks. In other words, everything had changed – except the kind of demagoguery that inspired Brecht in 1941.

Twelve years later, I still have vivid memories of certain scenes in Haus's 1998 production: the opening scene; the scene at Dogsborough's country house; the scene with the Shakespearean actor in Ui's hotel room; the scene at Givola's flower shop; and the finale. William Browning's set design was simple but highly effective. An

extremely functional raked platform measuring approximately 8 ft. x 22 ft. served as a stage for the barker in the prologue, Ui's room at the Hotel, Givola's flower shop and a cemetery plot. It separated into two parts to form Dogsborough's bar.

Haus invested the play with a breathless physicality; the actors used every inch of the playing area and much of the audience space from the moment the entire troupe entered through the audience and rushed on stage like a mob or a pack of jackals. The scene in which old Dogsborough vowed to resist Ui "as long as I breathe" while Ui snaked his legs up Dogsborough's body and wrapped his feet around his neck was another example of such physicality. At Givola's florist shop several of the crooks formed part of the scenery: reclining on the floor with bouquets in their mouths, they became flower baskets.

Brecht conceived the play in the style of epic theatre as a series of loosely connected scenes, which he separated by titles. In 1998, Haus replaced the visual titles with songs developed by the actors during rehearsals through improvisation: gospel singers performed "Ce-me-te-ry at Cicero" to the tune of "Amen"; a hard rock group sang and played "A garage at night"; "Dogsborough's country house" was presented as a square dance.

With few exceptions the actors and actresses were dressed in drab topcoats and fedoras, the typical gangster uniform, and wore whiteface with their cheekbones highlighted in black, serving as Brechtian "masks." The episodic structure, the titles, the music and the masks were alienation devices designed to discourage audience identification with the characters and stimulate critical reflection about the relevance of the events portrayed

to the audience's own reality.

The most striking alienation device in the production, however, was Haus's selection of a young woman to play the role of Arturo Ui. Carine Montbertrand appeared in the prologue as the barker - dressed in a black skirt, white blouse and black tie resembling a parochial school uniform, summarized highlights from the impending play and introduced the principal characters. Finally, the actress put on a topcoat and fedora like the other actors and "became" Arturo Ui. The casting of a woman in the role of Ui reminded the audience that, despite the parallels in the plot to 1920s Chicago and 1930s Germany, Brecht was not portraying either Al Capone or Adolf Hitler but the essence of a fascist leader.

For the 2010 production William Browning designed a simple, functional set with variously shaped gray panels behind and at the sides of a raked proscenium stage. When the audience took their seats, the oddly made up actors dressed in leather coats and fedoras were already squatting motionless in a sort of trench center stage. Precisely at 7:30 p.m. they began to hum Raymond Scott's "Powerhouse." Then they all stood up, stomped their feet, clapped wooden sticks together in martial rhythms, stared at the audience and screamed "Ui!" Throughout the play the ensemble appeared in various configurations to form crowd scenes, parades, funerals, massacres and conventions. Cast members even formed a pyramid on stage, as cheerleaders do, with Ui on top.

Haus wanted to warn his audience about all demagogues, whether they lived in the twentieth or the twenty-first century. (In his earlier productions of "Arturo Ui" in other parts of the United States he had made allusions to David Duke and Richard

Nixon.) As in 1998 Brecht's scene titles were replaced by songs. This time the music was taken from Hans Dieter Hosalla, the former music director of the Berliner Ensemble, and from American popular songs as well as from music composed specifically for this production. Kudos to music director Linda Henderson!

The discussion in act II about what should be done with Giri was presented as a revival meeting. In the scene in the garage the Backstabbers singing group sang their new single "Make New Friends and Kill the Old." The widow of one of Ui's rivals danced a tap dance as she resisted Ui and sang "Never!" but in the end succumbed and danced a tango with him as a sign of his conquest of her.

Haus used allusions to the new realities of 2010. The actors voiced slogans such as "Ui rides again!" and "Error is human but so is terror." In front of the city hall in Chicago they demonstrated against global warming as well as against Obama's health care plan and repeated the phrase "We're all gonna die!" Then Arturo Ui entered as their would-be savior, making use of all the fascist gestures he had recently learned from his Shakespearean acting coach. The scene with the acting coach, incidentally, provoked thunderous applause from the opening night audience.

In the final scene of the play, Haus took full advantage of the new theatre for the staging of a political rally. Actors occupied the box seats and actresses in the role of cheerleaders shouted "Ui!" while he entered from the rear of the auditorium, shaking hands with members of the audience as he approached the stage. The mob boss Ui sought to legitimize his takeover of the city of Cicero just as the Nazis carried out a plebiscite in 1938 to justify the an-

nexation of Austria. Following his speech to the crowd, the cast sang Michael Jackson's "Heal the World" as red balloons with the black letters "Ui!" fell from the ceiling onto the members of the audience, some of whom could not resist joining into Haus's spectacle by playing with the balloons.

The fact that the role of Arturo Ui was played by a woman was a constant reminder that - despite the historical parallels - Brecht wanted Ui to represent any demagogue who comes to power by promising the people "protection" in bad times. In the 2010 production Ui himself spoke the words of the epilogue: "though the world has stood up and stopped the bastard, the bitch that bore him is in heat again." Haus's spectacular production showed that *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* is still relevant in a world in which tyrants rule and too many politicians think only about the next election and not about the welfare of the electorate.

REVIEW: APRIL 29, 2010

The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, Bertolt Brecht's 1941 parable on the rise of Adolf Hitler set within a fictionalized Chicago underworld playing at the University of Dela-

NORMAN ROESSLER ware's REP/PTTP Theater until May 16, is easily resistible.

I mean, resistible in that you-see-it-coming- a-mile-away-resistible; that is, until the first chords of Raymond Scott's "Powerhouse" tickle the keyboard, and then you realize how truly compromised you actually are.

Sure, you are momentarily seduced by the gangsters dressed to the nines in their three-piece suites and fedoras, which call out to your inner Mack the Knife, Michael Corleone, Scarface,

Hannibal Lecter, Tony Soprano. Yes, as an American you secretly admire these Self Made Men, but you can distinguish your fictionalized love for the real thing, if you ever met it. And yes, it is uncanny how those long black leather coats, which are so stylish - especially when framed in colors of red and black, can appear so sexy on both gangsters and Nazis. But you know the difference and you resist. But when that "Powerhouse" song starts to emanate from music director Linda Henderson's piano, you know you are doomed. The gangster story and Hitler fable that you thought you knew and could control are unleashed by the soundtrack that we all know. "Powerhouse" is the "assembly line" musical sample used in many of the classic Looney Tunes cartoon shorts from the 1940s. It's as American as apple pie and once it is injected into the performance we all return to those halcyon days of childhood, except this time we have to watch as Adolf Hitler and Tony Soprano are constructed before our willing eyes. Man, this is one creepy cabaret show. Doo Doo Doooo, Doo Do Do Do Do...

Creepiest of all is Carine Montbertrand in the title role of Arturo Ui, the poor son of Brooklyn who climbs his way up the Chicago power structure to become Cauliflower King. Reprising her role from Director Heinz-Uwe Haus' original adaptation in 1998 (also at the University of Delaware), Montbertrand is a walking cartoon, a sadistic killer clown who respectively lurches and slithers across the other characters, the stage, and the audience. She easily competes with the other great Uis of recent vintage (Anthony Sher, London, 1991; John Turturro, New York, 1991; Martin Wuttke, Berlin, 1995; Al Pacino, New York, 2002; Scot McKenzie, Washington, D.C., 2006). We first meet this "ani-

mated piece of sewage" (a line I stole from Ben Brantley, I think) literally coming from beneath the stage and then we watch as she coils her snake-like body around the dying old political leader, Dogsborough. Later, when Ui needs to improve his diction and gait, we see him receive lessons from an old actor who shows him how to act and talk like a great actor / dictator channeling Shakespeare and Stanislavski into proto-goosesteps and a raised-arm "Heil!" In any *Ui* production this is always the show stopper and the REP/PTTP production sets it up and pulls it off beautifully. By the end of the production, Montbertrand has transformed Ui into a passable, charismatic, political character, dressed sharply in a three-piece white suit, addressing the audience as if it were a political convention. As the balloons rain down on us and the characters are in the auditorium commanding us to sing along with Michael Jackson's "Heal the World," we glance at the transfigured Arturo Ui, as if he were the MVP of the Super Bowl, and we feel a distant feeling of nausea. When are we supposed to be seduced and when are we supposed to resist? Did we miss it? Is it too late?

Fortunately, the seduction / resistance opposition is negotiated expertly by the ensemble, bearing the mark of Director Uwe Haus who has been one of the great practitioners of Brechtian Theater over the last thirty years. The actors move seamlessly from the stage to the auditorium to the orchestra, where they all, at different times play instruments in accompaniment with the piano (shades of the Patti Lupone-Sweeney Todd production a few years back). Also, the actors negotiate a series of interludes interspersed throughout the play, which serve as transitions between scenes and replace the inter-

titles and film clips from traditional productions of *Ui*. These interludes were developed in rehearsal by the actors themselves – exercises in understanding what Brecht would call the layers of *gestus*, or big ideas that animate the play – and run the gamut from overt contemporary political connection to creative cabaret maneuvers. With all the running around that the actors do, one comes to appreciate the functional minimalism of both the stage design (William Browning) and costume design (Andrea Barrier): both illuminate without getting in the way.

Americans have a tough time with parables. They like the entertainment value but they do not like the didactic tone that comes with it. We do not like finger pointers, especially if they are eggheads who smell of some type of communitarian spirit. Yet, we are also a people that constantly play the “Hitler Card” in our public discourse. Liberal or conservative, it does not seem to matter: Barack Obama and health care reform seems to be treated to the same Hitler branding that George W. Bush was with his War on Terror. So, maybe it is necessary to check in with our parables and the thought experiments they contain every now and then.

INTERVIEW WITH CARINE MONTBERTRAND

I had the good fortune of being a member of the University of Delaware’s IMFA acting company in 1998 and vividly remember Carine Montbertrand’s Arturo Ui as a well-crafted performance by a student whose promise for a stage career was unmistakable. More than a decade later, Montbertrand has clearly fulfilled my prediction as she is now a seasoned professional who has worked extensively throughout the U.S. regional theatre circuit. This past May I returned to my alma mater to share in Montbertrand’s reprisal of Ui in Heinz Uwe Haus’s stellar production for the University of Delaware’s REP / PTTP ensemble. Recently I interviewed Montbertrand at her apartment on New York’s Lower East Side. The following are excerpts of our conversation.

PETER ZAZZALI

When did you first learn that you would be playing the title role of Arturo Ui and how did you feel about undertaking this enterprise?

I learned I would be playing the role during the summer of 2009 when our REP season was announced. It seemed an enormous undertaking and challenge – and I was thrilled to get another, now professional, crack at it. I had previously performed the role as a student and knew I could bring a lot more to the process at this point in my career.

How did your reprisal of *Ui* differ from the first time you created the role in 1998?

I think it was a lot more detailed, more mature. I did a lot of research the first time around, but this time I had access to the Internet, which made research a lot easier and more systematic. I remember it being physically and vocally challenging the first time, but this time, being older, I had to really work on building the stamina I needed to play the role the way I envisioned it.

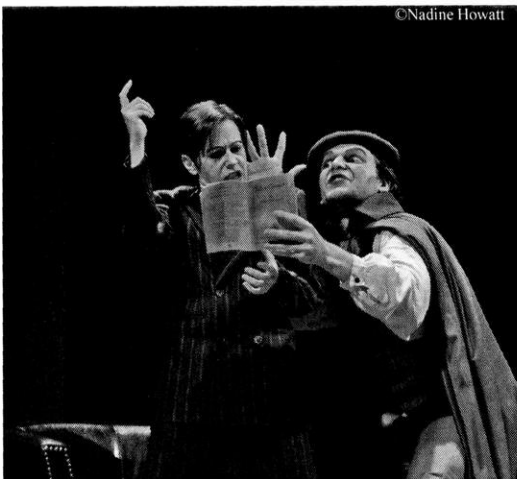
While I didn’t want to do an exact imitation of Hitler, I think I was a lot more precise in the transformation in the more recent interpretation. Also, I could build on things I had discovered the first time. When I did it in 1998 I had no idea what I was going to do when we started rehearsals,

but this time I had a lot of strong ideas to try off the bat.

How do you think the two productions differed?

We were not at all interested in remounting the previous production and, in fact, Uwe and I didn't remember it in any reliable detail. We did not have a video from 1998, which in my mind was a good thing. We wanted it to be fresh and current, and though there were a few things we remembered and kept, but for the most part it was all new.

The actors in the first production were all students, whereas in our new production we had professional actors. With the exception of myself all the actors were new to the play, so the interpretations were necessarily different and unique. The interludes in both productions addressed contemporary issues and drew on contemporary culture - first in 1998 and then in 2010. The productions took place in two very different venues, the first was a large black-box theatre, the second a proscenium theatre with a balcony. In the black-box there was a set comprised of several platforms on wheels which we moved around and placed in different configurations, in the proscenium theatre we also had some moveable set pieces but they weren't as extreme. The costumes were also newly interpreted as well as the make-up.



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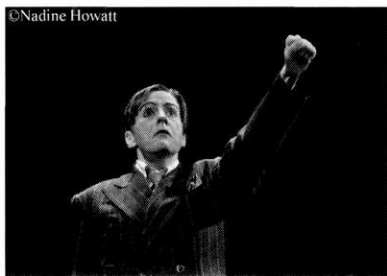
What was it like to work with the internationally recognized Brechtian director Heinz Uwe Haus?

Working with Uwe is a uniquely inspiring experience. He is incredibly creative and intelligent. I am a bit in awe of him! Uwe both trusts and appreciates actors in a way that brings out their best work. He has an infectious enthusiasm which permeates the entire cast. I feel extremely connected to him when we work together. We spent many hours both in and out of rehearsals passionately discussing the production and in particular, the storytelling aspect of the play as well as Ui's dramatic function, and how we thought the story and personality should and could affect the audience. Sometimes we didn't agree or surprised each other with ideas. With Uwe it's all an exploration. He can be very exacting and at the same time leaves a ton of room for discovery and surprise. He doesn't simply tell the actors what to do, he wants to create together. In this way it is extremely satisfying for all involved. I can't speak highly enough of working with him...

Having seen this extraordinary production, I was struck by Haus's choice to cast a woman in the part of Ui. It seems to me that he made this choice, in part, to exploit Ui's contradictory nature, insofar as he has an unassuming charm despite being a murderous thug. What was it like being an actress asked to play a male mobster? What were some of the most outstanding challenges for you?

The main challenge was to find the right balance - I wasn't trying to fool anyone that I was a man, but wanted to create an extreme "gestus" of a man. The audience would be aware that there was a woman within a complete form of a man, if that makes sense. I used my lower vocal register to suggest a man, but didn't go so low that it would either damage my voice or call attention to itself as being obviously false. I found a male physicality for myself. I used the tools of costume, hair, and make-up. It was important that those tools did everything to create the male character and weren't feminine in any way. As a female Ui, I was a sort of natural alienation effect. Again,

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Brecht wants to give you the opportunity to step back and think.

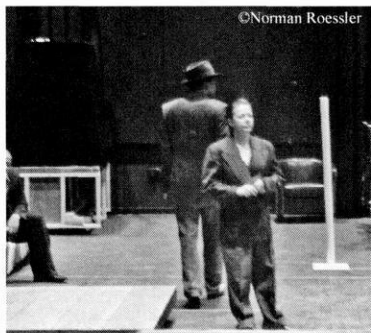
Of course you were not only reprising a role under the same director, but you were doing so at the very site of the original production: the University of Delaware. What was it like to return to your alma mater as a professional and work with conservatory students who were undergoing the same training you

did twelve years ago?

It was great. The students have a youthful enthusiasm, openness, and creativity that's very inspiring. It's wonderful to be around that kind of energy. My job at the REP includes a mentorship function for the MFA students, so I needed to set a good example for them. I worked with them in Uwe's class before we started rehearsals so that their transition to working with professionals would be smoother – this was their first play with the REP – and also so I could get a head start on my own work in the play and on my relationship with them. Because they had been studying with Uwe before we started rehearsals, they were extremely prepared and had an understanding of how to approach the work from the beginning. This set the tone for our rehearsal period – instead of grappling with Brecht's style and Uwe's vision, we could jump right in.

Brecht of course was a political playwright whose work invited the audience's critical analysis of a drama's sociopolitical themes. Moreover, he stressed the importance of actors having a clear and invested understanding of these ideas while working on their roles. How much did you and the cast consider the play's sociopolitical meaning? How were these concepts explored through the rehearsal process?

I'll answer this question with an example. In the scene where the gangsters are all threatened and turning against each other, Ui is fed up with the factions and brings the gangsters together with a speech demanding their complete faith and trust in him alone no matter what. When I read it before we started rehearsals, it reminded me of a speech a modern evangelist would make in a church. I thought a completely Brechtian approach would be to deliver this speech as an evangelist. A friend who grew up going to a Pentecostal church recommended I watch LEAP OF FAITH in which Steve Martin wonderfully portrays a traveling evangelist/charlatan. I took the idea to Uwe, who had something culturally contemporary American add a clarifying dimension. This gangster/fascist 1930s uses tools we have in our contemporary once an alienation effect and think, and at the a connection of what's



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What was the audience's general response to the production? Did they pick up on the play's function as a didactic parable? If so, how did they, and if not, why do you think they didn't?

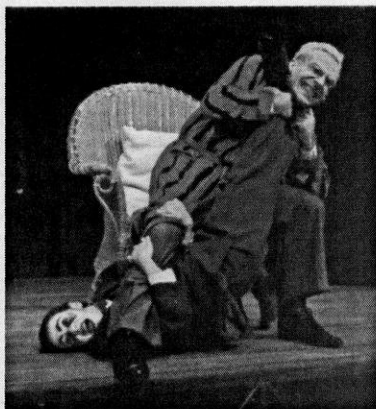
My impression was that the play had the effect we wanted on the audience for the most part. That effect was to have the audience think about what they were experiencing and to assess one's own behavior. The idea was not to give an interpretation where the audience could judge the character of Ui as a symbol of Hitler, and therefore make a self-righteous decision about the character prematurely, but rather to sweep the audience into a situation where they would have to examine their own responses to the character and situation.

Ui, in my interpretation, does not become an imitation of Hitler after he has learned gestures and good speaking from the Actor, but slowly takes on the characteristics of a fascist dictator over the subsequent scenes and learns how to appeal to the masses gradually. It is only in the final scene that he is the full-fledged dictator/politician/tyrant, and at this point in the play the lights come up, Ui enters the theatre from the back of the audience, and he shakes hands with and salutes people in the audience. He ascends the stage and makes speeches using direct eye contact with the audience. His henchmen go into the audience and hand out "Ui" flags and order the people to sing and salute him. At this point the audience is put in the strange and terrible position of having to examine their own behavior. Do they salute, shake his hand, and therefore encourage this character who clearly represents a fascist dictator, despite the fact that he has charmed them for the last two hours, or do they reject him?

Most audience members shook hands with Ui, cried out his name, saluted, waved the flags, sang, or simply remained silent. Some told me that they didn't know why they honored him knowing it was wrong. A few did refuse to shake my hand, and one person popped all the balloons around him and gave me the finger from the front row with both hands. In our theatre the actors form a receiving line in the lobby after the show to thank the audience for coming. I therefore had the opportunity to hear what some thought of the play. I had the impression that we'd achieved our goal of having them think! But I have to say that I have to ask myself the same questions!

COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society



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What other productions of Brecht have you done and how do they compare to your experience(s) working on Ui?

The only other Brecht production I've been in was *The Threepenny Opera*, which was directed by Uwe when I was a student at the University of Delaware. I played Jenny Diver and had to sing. The role was challenging, but since it was so much smaller it didn't require me to carry the show. Being a lead in a play comes with a lot of responsibilities. With Ui, I needed to carry the show and also be a good leader for the group.

One of the outstanding features of your performance was your use of repeated gestures (one might identify them as Gestus) that functioned as a leitmotiv of sorts in creating your Ui. I'm specifically thinking of your slithering walk and the repeated way you would abruptly fold your arms. How did you arrive at these stylized suggestions of character and how does this way of working differ from the way you approach other plays?

The idea is that Ui starts as a wannabe gutter-dog of sorts. A real lowlife who gradually transforms himself into an all powerful dictator with complete control over and appeal to the masses. The goal was to transform into a Hitler-like character using Hitler's posture and many of his habitual gestures. Knowing how his physicality needed to finish informed how it should start

CASEBOOK: ARTURO UI

- so essentially, I could work backwards from what I knew of Hitler from my research. To create how Ui transforms physically, I watched hours of footage of both Hitler and Al Capone, as well as evangelists, politicians, dictators, and gangsters. Uwe and I shaped the transformation together.

I wanted the transformation to be extreme and theatrical because I think the play calls for it, and because that appeals to me artistically. My interpretation of how the character moves at the beginning is a product of my imagination and Uwe's. We used images from the play like "snake" "dog" "gutter" and Richard III to inspire the initial movement choices. Also, I just let my body move the way I felt when I played him and thought about what was important to him. He is initially unconcerned with how his physicality affects the way he sways and later in the play it becomes very important to him. Also, because the "Actor" in Scene 7 teaches Ui how to move, I was also compelled to let this character inform some of the physical choices I made.

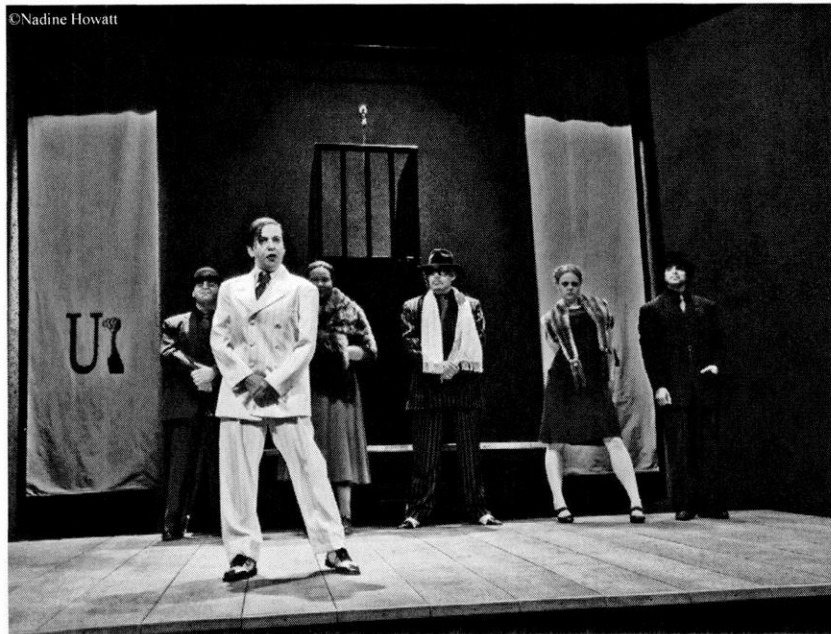
As someone who has been actively working in the U.S. theatre for nearly twenty years, why do you think Brecht's plays are not produced more often here?

I imagine that the main reason they're not produced more often is money. They have big casts and are therefore expensive. Also, Brecht's plays are complex and challenging. Some theatres may want to stick to an easier sell. However, there are productions of Brecht's plays around the country every year. So perhaps it's not as infrequent as we may think. Ui has been produced in New York quite a few times. And only a few years ago, The Public did *Mother Courage and Threepenny Opera* was at the Roundabout.

Would you be interested in working on Brechtian drama in the future, and if so, what role(s) would you most like to do?

Sure, especially if I could work with Uwe again. I'd love to take a crack at *Mother Courage* eventually. But I would be interested in working on any of his plays.

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Perhaps the trickiest part of staging Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, a task undertaken this spring by the University of Delaware, is negotiating its inevitable aging. Appearing in its earliest form in 1941, when Hitler was still in power, the play uses the gangster-filled plot to satirize the dictator's initial rise. Given the immediate relevance of the play at the time of its composition, Brecht's message likely entailed not primarily a warning about the present's potential to produce a future dictator (as in his epilogue), but a lesson about the threat posed by a very specific dictator in the present.

Where, then, does that leave today's productions, staged in a world where that particular threat has long passed? Although the elegance of Brecht's satire has remained intact, the pertinence of that targeted lesson decreased markedly with Hitler's defeat, requiring any current production that wants to engage in relevant social commentary (it is hard to imagine choosing a Brecht piece without that desire) to shift the piece's focus. Today's stagings, rather than communicating primarily the time-sensitive, specific commentary on Hitler, must concentrate on the less-defined warning about the potential for a similar dictator. Shifting the focus while doing justice to Brecht's skillful original satire is no easy task, and Delaware's *Ui*, directed by Heinz-Uwe Haus, managed to succeed, with only a few false steps.

In its most basic form, the effectiveness of Brecht's epic theater depends on his ability to remove a familiar situation from the spectator by means of an unfamiliar one, and then to provide enough recognizable parallels for the audience to collapse the distance be-

tween the two and leave the theater with a new awareness of their ability to change the once-accepted familiar situation. Generating that sense of action in the spectator requires walking a fine line between creating parallels that are decipherable and parallels that are obvious - too clear, and the audience does not have to engage actively with the piece; too difficult, and the audience will not see the opportunity to engage. Brecht completes this task masterfully in his satire of Hitler by targeting points relatively well-known to dissidents, like the dictator's origins, his documented study of public speaking, and his political tactics. The University of Delaware's production staged the satire of Hitler masterfully, perhaps in part because Brecht's text already contained the balance necessary to engage the audience. Where the production alternately struggled and excelled was in creating conditions that would lead the audience to make the additional jump required by the passing of time: not only from *Ui* to Hitler but from Hitler to the present.

The spottiest success rate belonged to the transitions that served to connect the scenes from Tabori's translation and often to cloak the smooth transformations of William Browning's versatile set. These sequences included an impressive variety of percussive, melodic, and spoken elements generated by the cast, which spoke to the depth of the ensemble; however, the freedom from the text also led to attempts to make the production "current," which were not always effective. Of the many transitions that occurred, the two that felt dissonant were those that did not ask the audience members to draw out the connections to the present situ-

ation, but tried to take that step for them, specifically the newspaper-headline and the whisper-down-the-lane sequences. In the former, actors shouted some highly current, yet remarkably off-topic, headlines like "Flyers force game seven!"; and, in the latter, statements on issues like health care and global warming were distorted to humorous effect. In the context of a play that the program explicitly states "takes place during the early 30's in and around Chicago" - a period made instantly recognizable by Andrea Barrier's swarm of intimidating, tailored suits - the insertions ripped from current headlines not only seemed jarringly out of place, but also stifled the impulse to engage that had been so carefully crafted by the rest of the text. While the need to make the show relevant was well-intentioned, a little research into newspaper headlines from the 30's could certainly have yielded topics that were similar to current headlines - politics and sports are no recent developments. By using those parallels, the show could have asked the audience to find the familiar in the unfamiliar, rather than hitting them over the head with yesterday's newspaper.

Fortunately for the production as a whole, those few overeager moments and some pacing issues were eclipsed by the strength of its final scene. Fronted by a cheerleading sequence that brought to mind Brecht's "theater as sport," the transition into the convention hall included aligning the flats into what resembled walls and raising the house lights to a level that made the audience visible. These elements, plus Ui's (Carine Montbertrand) entrance from the back of the house and the presence of other actors in the seating area, combined to shift the focus suddenly to the audience's

immediate vicinity. This transfer was not, however, the jolting, obvious change of the newspaper headlines, but rather a well-executed, almost sly implication of the audience in the events of the play on several levels. In the most overt sense, the ensemble handed out Ui flags and commanded the audience to sing along with "Ui's World," which was set to the tune of "Heal the World," and almost impossible not to hum along with, at least mentally.

In a less obvious, more unsettling way, Montbertrand brought together all of the halting, stylized gestures that she had been expertly building throughout the play into a disturbingly familiar political figure. The character that had been a citational, often humorous mixture of De Niro, Lugosi's Dracula, declamatory Shakespearean actor, evangelist preacher, and a host of other ingredients unexpectedly transformed into a charismatic, skilled public speaker, flanked by the red banners of his party. During Ui's final speech, Montbertrand drew applause not only from the actors, but from the spectators, who seemed to respond almost automatically to being surrounded by clapping. Seeing spectators realize that they were caught in the action of applauding on cue, even when those cues were given by a figure sporting the unmistakable side-part, spoke volumes for what the production had achieved. By exploiting the ingrained applause reaction, Delaware's production successfully completed its compelling effort to bring together the theatrical present of the play and the immediate present of the spectators in a way that, although it may not have roused them to immediate political action, should at least make them think twice before clapping.

When Brecht penned *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* in 1941, his play served as part of a larger program to reform the German stage. Above all, he sought to confront and deconstruct his viewers'

REVIEW: MAY 13, 2010

BRIDGET SWANSON

common – and passive – associations by dislocating events from their specific historical contexts. Ideally, this disjunction between place and incident was meant to distance viewers from the events on stage, with easy recognition replaced by a mode of critically engaged, and often unsettling, discovery and analysis. In *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* this strategy is used to great effect, with Brecht dislodging Hitler from a specific German context and cartoonishly transposing the story of the rise of National Socialism into the world of Al Capone's Chicago slums. Undeniably Hitler-like in form and appearance, the main villain Ui's rapid ascent comes via the rather prosaic means of the local cauliflower trade: cornering the market leads to control over the Chicago mob and presumably the city itself.

Although displacing the fascist leader is a darkly farcical move common for Brecht, it also serves to problematize the concepts of identity and the possibility of identification in a modern, globalized world. Would one, the viewer is left asking, have been able to identify Ui as a rising fascist if he had not been the mirror image of Hitler himself? Do we rely too much on now familiar visual and audible signs in order to make this recognition? And, perhaps most crucially, to what extent are we even capable of discerning, let alone resisting, the workings of similar evils in unexpected and unfamiliar places?

Precisely these questions are at the heart of the refreshingly updated

staging of the play by the University of Delaware's Resident Ensemble Players and directed by Heinz-Uwe

Haus. Although otherwise true to the plot and time period of the original, the cast seizes the

opportunity to extend Brecht's warning for constant vigilance from the time period of the play's setting to the current day by repeatedly spoofing contemporary American culture. This shift takes place most clearly, and quite fittingly, during the play's many scene changes, during which the audience is presented with a myriad of parodies pointing to the persistent power of the mass media and contemporary political spectacle to rally otherwise unfathomable popular support. At times, these skits involve peppy cheerleaders, dancing and chanting to fire up Ui's fans as though politics were but a type of sporting event; at others, balloons donning Ui's logo drop marvelously from the ceiling, calling to mind the seductive images of spontaneous (yet carefully choreographed) mass enthusiasm familiar in contemporary political conventions. In each transitional skit, the updated message rings resoundingly clear: in today's ever-savvy, global, and "linked in" world, one must constantly question not only the specific images and information one receives, but also the larger nexus of interests that has shaped their manufacture and aided their mobilization. In other words, several decades after Hitler, one must still remain on high alert, perhaps now more than ever.

As Brecht well knew, to be vigilant means to be prepared for the unexpected. And indeed, this is precisely the challenge posed by Haus's staging of the play. Taking the concept of alienation to a new frontier, he casts the remarkably energetic, yet

quite petite Carine Montbertrand as the all-powerful Ui. This results in a Hitler-like figure not only dislocated in terms of geography and time period, but now gender as well. In a country and decade that have begun to see more and more women rising to leadership positions, this cross-gendered casting is unquestionably one more aspect of the play's post-modernization, and the fact that it works so well is truly a tribute to the superb abilities of Montbertrand, who simply overwhelms the audience and company alike, as Ui well should. Yet, at the same time, it is precisely this casting move that also elicits a new discomfort, unparalleled by more traditional stagings of Brecht's play. The eerie and unforgettable realization that the all-powerful Ui is played by a woman serves as a jarring reminder that tyrants can come not only in all shapes and sizes, but also all genders. By driving the audience to this fresh analysis, Haus proves that where many struggle to follow in Brecht's footsteps, he has quite simply surpassed them.

REVIEW: MAY 13, 2010

AMY TANGUAY

The Resistible Rise of Arturo

Ui has long proved itself to be as difficult for directors to stage as for audiences to receive. The fact that the play is more challenging than some of Brecht's more popular works, such as *The Threepenny Opera* or *Mother Courage and her Children*, is likely an effect of the uncomfortable subject matter: the rise of Hitler as represented by the rise of Arturo Ui, initially a two-bit thug in Chicago whose criminal syndicate eventually engulfs Chicago in the course of the play and has set its sights on the country as a whole. To be sure, even

today this tale of Ui's "resistible," yet unresisted rise can be as discomfiting as Brecht had intended.

The Resident Ensemble Players, under the direction of Heinz-Uwe Haus, make no attempt to lessen the unease of the attentive audience member. Instead, they have added an extra historical layer to Brecht's cautionary tale: that of present-day America. In the moments between scenes when other productions might have an actor cross the stage carrying a placard announcing the next scene, a group of actors clad in trench coats and fedoras takes the stage to perform a short skit, unique to this production, each of which ends with the actors barking out the setting of the next scene. The skits vary wildly in form, ranging from song and dance to cheerleading and martial arts. A particularly memorable transition consists of a quartet acting out a demented game of telephone that begins with one actor worrying about global warming and ends with another hysterically yelling that Al Gore is leading an advancing army of marauding polar bears.

This commentary on the play's theme of manipulating fear and disseminating skewed information is underscored by the set changes in which the workings of the theater are highlighted rather than hidden as actors push platforms into place and move chairs. This laying bare of events unfolding on the stage, both in terms of the play's plot and of stagecraft, is a perfect compliment to Brecht's script, as it lays bare the mechanics of propaganda and political control.

At the center of all this is, of course, the titular mob boss, Ui. All jerky movement, penetrating glare, and screeching voice, Carine Montbertrand's Ui lends a simultaneously

comical and unsettling presence to the stage. Though Mic Matarrese deserves particular commendation for his hilarious turn as a washed-up actor brought in to instruct Ui in the finer points of public speaking, the rest of the ensemble cannot compete with Montbertrand's manic energy. This is not necessarily to their discredit; much like Hitler, Ui simply overpowers all who are in his orbit.

Nowhere is this clearer than at the conclusion of the play, when Ui's closing speech is punctuated with a fall of balloons bearing his sigil (his last name, with a raised and closed fist forming the I). At this moment, the actors distribute flags, also marked with Ui's logo, to the audience members, at which point a decision must be made: lose oneself in this doubled spectacle of theatre and cheerfully wave a little flag – or abstain and signal resistance to the shrieking voice promising protection from all of the other frightening specters that it conjures?

This ingenious bit of staging, like the entire production, challenges the audience not only to critically (and personally) engage with the political allegory of the play, but to recognize – and resist – the fear-mongering and grandstanding of contemporary American politics. Surely, Brecht himself would have had it no other way.

INTERVIEW WITH ANDREA BARRIER, COSTUME DESIGNER

You first met Uwe in the early 1980s at University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee through a production of Brecht's *Good Person of Sezuan*, right? Do you remember your first impressions of working with Uwe Haus, Brecht, *Good Person*?

I first met Dr. Haus when he came to direct *Good Person Of Sezuan* in Milwaukee in the early 1980's. I was taken with the way he envisioned the production, taking it out of the original setting and moving it to a modern urban environment. I was also immediately engaged in the project with the way he included the designers to help shape the direction the play was to go. He was very focused and as an artist himself has a strong visual idea of what he wants and is usually able to communicate it clearly. At the same time he allows the designers a lot of freedom to create the actual design. He really pushes you to think outside the box and not do the expected.

In our conversations, you have spoken a lot about how you develop ideas out of art history, and we will talk about this topic specifically in relation to the most recent Arturo Ui production, but is the medium, discipline, language of art history also something that Uwe relates to?

Much of costuming relies on research of what is historical as well as what has been done before for a production. I find that being American does give me a different frame of reference than if I were Eastern European. Uwe will frequently reference a garment or household item which is common to him which simply does not exist in the United States. It is usually so common that it seems incomprehensible that I do not know what he is referring to or that I cannot run to the corner store and pick one up. Over the years we have developed a process, which often starts with paintings or photos from a

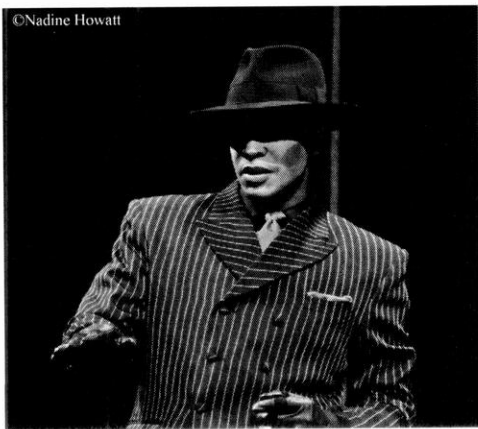
certain era so we can reference common images to use as a starting point. For example, in our recent production of *Arturo Ui*, the makeup design was taken from German Expressionist paintings.

Before you met Uwe you had not worked very much with Brecht, is that correct? What was new about working with Brecht in terms of Costume Design?

I approach all plays through the questions: What do the actors need? What does the director envision? What does the play call for? Brecht plays are no different. Before doing *Good Person of Sezuam* I had read Brecht and seen it performed but had never designed a production. After researching what was traditionally done when Brecht was still alive to influence his productions I started to understand some of the background, which has steered the design of many of his plays. As a mask maker, I love that aspect of Brecht, but in that first production we did not use masks but instead exaggerated makeup. When we did another production of *Sezuam* some years later we decided to use masks of soft sculpture that were caricature-ish.

You have worked on about 10-12 Brecht productions with Uwe including most of the mature Brecht plays – Good Person, Chalk Circle, Threepenny, Galileo, Ui. However, the Mother Courage production you did with Uwe stands out. Could you take us through this production?

In the 1990's we did a production of *Mother Courage*. Uwe was invited to bring the production to Germany to commemorate 50 years of peace since WWII. The production was to be performed on an abandoned missile base about an hour from Frankfurt am Main. When we arrived I was immediately taken by the implications of the missile silos juxtaposed with wildflowers, which had begun to take over the surrounding land, which once had held military equipment. It seemed somehow fitting.



There were many challenges which came along with designing a show which would perform indoors and then later tour to Germany. One of the things people do not think about is shipping, getting things through customs and paying duty. Beyond this was ease of cleaning, durability when performing in an outdoor environment, which we did not control, and comfort for the actors. We solved the first issues by having each actor carry their costume in their suitcase. Bulkier

coats we boxed and checked as luggage. We knew we would be performing outside in June. Evenings could be very chilly by the time the play ended so the costumes were designed in layers, adding coats and hats as they traveled. They also added a layer of protection if it rained. There was a lot of action, sitting on the ground, fighting etc... so we knew the costumes would get dirty

in an outdoor setting. This was not like an outdoor theatre where you can sweep the stage. The play was staged so that each scene was in a different location or bunker and the audience followed the actors in their travels from place to place. Costumes needed to be designed with bold color and large silhouette to compete with the environment and not get lost.

One of the challenges was laundry. Equity, the actors union, requires that certain pieces of the actors costume are laundered daily. We found that there was no running water at the abandoned base and therefore no washing machine. We were based in a small town with no laundramat. The closest laundry was over an hour away and there was no certainty that there would be available machines to do nine loads of laundry. A deal was struck with the local road maintenance crew to use their washer and dryer that turned out to be apartment-sized units. I had no car and so was dropped off in the morning to do the laundry. At 4 PM the crews left and no one had showed to pick me up. There were no phones at the base so it was nearly half hour before anyone noticed I had not come back. They did send someone but it was close and some of the laundry went on damp. After that I took a minimal amount home with me at night and washed it in the bathtub.

The May 2010 production of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* was your second time doing it with Uwe, the first time being in 1998, I believe. However, the 2010 production was not a revival but a new production. So, what was different this time around from the point of view of costume design?

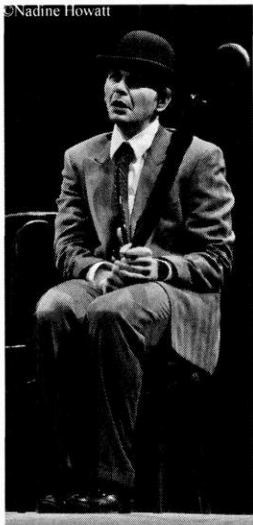
Our recent production of *Arturo Ui* was the second time I had designed that show for Uwe. I was not happy looking at photos of the first production so was looking for a fresh approach. The play itself dictates a lot the design. You basically need to put bankers in grey suits and gangsters need to look like gangsters. Then you need to find a way to integrate the interludes. We chose to not use masks and instead did stylized makeup. I started the design with strong bits of color in each scene to counter the dark men's suits such as red neckties in the interludes, a yellow tie against a black shirt for Giri, bright dresses on the ladies etc... some of this got discarded to keep Ui the center of focus in his scenes but much of it was retained. I was also trying to caricature the gangsters as a bit foolish and to play up the stereotype.

I chose to use black leather trench coats for the interludes as they had a timeless quality and would cover the actors other costumes. They were worn by German officers in WWII, as well as by street thugs in more recent times. Pictures of 1930s gangsters depict them in trench coats, although not in leather, but I thought the black leather had a certain toughness to it. Uwe had asked for long black leather coats in previous productions we had done together so was open to their use in Ui. They also neutralize the actors so we do not focus on male/female in the interludes. I was fortunate to find most of them at local thrift stores or online at the end of the season at greatly reduced prices. Finding 15 of anything that match is a challenge and it was important that they be long enough to disguise the actor's main costume. They were purposely oversized so they would be easy to get on and off. The quick changes were still a challenge and we were fortunate to have a great wardrobe crew.

Carine Montbertrand has to transform three times: from Announcer to Ui the thug to Ui the celebrity dictator. What were the considerations for her costume design?

It was important to Uwe that the barker be totally different from Ui and so he and Carine came up with the idea of the Barker being a school girl. It was important when designing this costume to not imply something with the costume which was not intended and for it to come off instantly to transform to Ui. Since Ui was played by a woman, it was also important to design a costume which made the audience forget any gender issues. We wanted the suit to be well tailored and yet fit like a man's suit, not a woman's suit so it needed to be built for her. We were lucky to find a boys suit which could be altered for the white suit at the end when Ui addresses the convention.

Nadine Howatt



As a costume designer you work with material but also color. How important is it for you to create a type of road map in color of the production, which helps to direct the audience in a certain direction?

I find that color can be very useful to steer the audience and to define or set off certain scenes. In this production the interludes had everyone in Black leather trench coats, grey fedoras, white shirts and red neckties. The bankers are all in various shades of grey with navy ties and the grocers are all in warm colors. The different suit styles, body shapes, textures and patterns in the fabrics and color variations are what set the characters apart. Each scene has a very tight color palette that holds it together and helps set the change of location to the audience.

DIALECTICAL INTERVENTION #1:

ARTURO UI AND THE THEATRICALITY OF FASCISM: THE EVIL OF BANALITY

The University of Delaware's 2010 production of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* took place within a political environment of considerably greater fear than their last staging of the play in 1998. While I was not present for that production, I cannot imagine that Brecht's take on the Hitler phenomenon felt as immediate then as it does today. Ben Brantley reviewed the Broadway production of *Arturo Ui* for the New York Times: "At a moment when the name of Hitler is being evoked for politicians of all stripes, any fresh insights on the man and his frightening seductiveness are welcome. Unfortunately, Arturo Ui doesn't provide them; it never has." I would disagree. Brecht's characterization of Hitler provides a crucial and timely insight: perhaps we are not going to have any fresh insights if we focus on Hitler the individual; but rather, when we examine Hitler in search of the intrinsic qualities of a monster, we waste precious time.

Arturo Ui succeeds because Brecht, at his alienating best, strips Hitler of the aura of ingenious pathology that so often surrounds him. Ui is a schlub, played here with seedy schlubbishness - and mind-blowing stamina - by Carine Montbertrand. An additional layer of alienation is provided by director

Heinz-Uwe Haus' decision to cast a woman as Ui. Rather than suggesting that Hitler's depravity consisted of some incomplete manhood, his casting choice allows us to see as flexible an attribute of Hitler's that we take for granted. But the crowning glory of Brecht's Hitler is his sparkling oratorical ineptitude. This is displayed famously in the Actor Scene, in which Ui visits a washed-up Shakespearean actor for advice in public speaking. Together, the two develop a repertoire of heroic gestures that would drive Stanislavsky to self-immolate. At a time when skillful oratory has acquired a sinister air, we are reminded that there is no mistaking a Martin Luther King Jr., whose vocal cadences are informed by the images and principles he seeks to convey, with a speaker whose style is informed merely by the goal of self-inflation; for whom content seems an afterthought to gesture and emoting.

Brecht's Hitler gets what he wants because he does not underestimate the public's desire to be manipulated. He calculates, correctly, that people are so desperate to feel connected to a larger cause that they may not question what it is they are connecting to. Rather than embodying some enigmatic power, the character of Ui reminds us that it is not Hitler the man that needs examining. Instead, Ui shows us, we need to look at the social conditions that enabled his rise, and crucially, the techniques he and his party employed within those conditions.

The production's least stimulating moments happened in its book-end interludes, which should, in theory, be one of the chief means by which a Brecht production spurs the viewer to an analysis of real-world conditions. Actors held up newspaper clippings from articles sensationalizing the dangers or selling points of healthcare reform, and shouted out mashed up versions of Obama's campaign slogans. Instead of feeling alienating to the viewer, these interludes were almost soothing. Media coverage of politics is so fragmented and unintelligible that the mishmashes felt like business as usual. Ironically, this had perhaps the intended effect. That a common alienation device can fail to alienate the audience is in itself alienating, at least retrospectively. Was this the point?

Regardless, these devices may contribute to the chief success of Haus' production - the reminder that most dangers comes not from the unknown, but from the familiar; from the contentless discourse that we consume and create daily. Our tendency to examine our leaders obsessively for signs of derangement, depravity, or evil genius syndrome, represents our capitulation to these dangers. We derive a perverse pleasure looking out for the mysterious forces we believe (or hope) are coming to destroy us. Meanwhile, we're being consumed by the real conspiratorial tools of mindlessness and mediocrity.

If Brecht refuses to offer insight into the more sensational aspects of Hitler's evil - his intrinsic character and aura, he has plenty to say about the more banal contributors to his success: namely, his tactics of social, and, by extension, societal, manipulation. If we turn to Brecht's *On the Theatricality of Fascism*, we find a useful study of one of the trendier issues of our time - the role of empathy in politics. This brief but rich text is written in the form of a discussion between two fictional characters: "Thomas" and "Karl" are two sides of Brecht that pivot off of each other's thoughts and weave a portrait of





"how the oppressors of our times make theatre." The interlocutors clarify the concept of "making theater" thus: "that [politicians]...act consciously in the eyes of the world, and try to impose their immediate tasks and purposes on a public, as if they were reasonable and exemplary." They state that in order for theater to achieve its goal - that of obtaining "the key by which to master the problems of social existence," we must also examine what destructive tools theater provides- "how fascism makes theater 'on the streets,'" how it "lend[s] a theatrical expression to otherwise unremarkable circumstances."

Karl and Thomas touch briefly on the fact that Hitler took lessons in 19th century-style acting, as depicted in the Actor Scene in Arturo Ui. But the conversation quickly changes direction. Its purpose, we are told, is to "investigate the representative nature of [Hitler's] behavior," in other words, the form of his appearance: The tactic of Hitler's that most requires scrutiny is not his creation of a grandiose and hyperbolic persona for himself, but, "the manner in which he acts on the occasion of his great speeches in preparation, or justification, of his acts of butchery...where he's concerned to

induce a public to empathize with him and to say: yes, that's how we would have acted too. In short, *where he presents himself as an ordinary human being* [my emphasis] and seeks to convince the public that his actions are simply human, and to persuade them, quite naturally, to applaud him. That makes for very interesting theatre."

This "ordinary human being" persona tactic, in Thomas's words, "has much more to do with the theatre which we normally get to see on the stage" than any would-be leader's cultivation of a larger-than-life persona: "For there it is again, that empathy of the public for the protagonists that we tend to think of as the most essential product of art... that transformation of the spectators into a unified mass." At this point in the dialogue Thomas, Brecht's dominant alter-ego, is rebuked by the more pedestrian Karl, for conflating Hitler's use of empathy into a problem with empathy in general—indeed, for trying to bring empathy into disrepute by associating it with Hitler. It is striking that Brecht was aware of this tactic, which has come to be used so often that we now know it as "the Hitler fallacy." If Ben Brantley noticed frequent occurrences of this fallacy in 2002, he must now, as Charles Barkley would say, be rolling over in his grave. But what exactly are Brecht's issues with empathy?

Brecht sets up his anti-empathy argument by contrasting Hitler's public addresses with the typical political speech, whose material has been discussed in committee and revised at length. Hitler, he says, speaks "as a private individual to private individuals." Note the variety of meanings that can be attributed to "privacy." Brecht means, on the one hand, that Hitler takes the issues he is speaking of to be personal, in the sense of "now...it's personal." Yet on another

level there is also the sense that he is speaking as though they are in private, as though public standards of decorum did not apply. Finally, there is a sense that Hitler is telling his audience a secret, perhaps even a secret that they do not want you to know. This is of course a typical tactic to arouse feelings of victimization in a dominant class, or to attribute real and widespread problems to the presence of an “undesirable” group. When criticizing his views on empathy, scholars often give priority to Brecht’s apparent opposition to emotion. Yet it is not emotion itself that Brecht takes issue with, but its form of appearance: In the hands of the fascist, emotion is merely a conduit for the rhetoric of “us vs. them:” “He loses himself in furious tirades like some Homeric hero... implies that he can only barely stop himself leaping at his opponent’s throat.” As Thomas puts it, this is “a theatrical method, by which he can persuade his audience to follow him almost blindly. He induces everyone to abandon their own points of view...He...lets them ‘participate’ in his troubles and his triumphs, and dissuades them from any criticism.”

Poor Karl interprets this line of criticism as a statement of Hitler’s refusal to engage in argument, but he is quickly rebuffed. “That’s not what I mean,” Thomas says. “He uses time. His very words are of est: ‘He loves cause’ on the tence which is complete as it he’s just ut-an incontro-testable truth, and then to pause, and then produce reasons. It’s like he’s tossing a handful of ‘reasons Why’ in the wake of his assertions, reasons which he just happens to have to hand.”



prets this line of criticism as a statement of to engage in he is quickly not what I says. “He uses time. His very words are of est: “He loves cause’ on the tence which is complete as it he’s just ut-an incontro-testable truth,

and then to pause, and then produce reasons. It’s like he’s tossing a handful of ‘reasons Why’ in the wake of his assertions, reasons which he just happens to have to hand.” Here Thomas fleshes out our understanding of the notion that Hitler argues like a “private individual” – Hitler deliberately gives the impression of discovering his thoughts as he speaks, of following his natural thought process. “Some of what he tacks on after such a ‘because’ is not really a reason at all,” Thomas notes, “it’s just labeled a reason by the gestic emphasis it’s given.” It is the form of this appearance, this “gestic emphasis” that is operative in what Brecht calls empathy. What follows deserves to be quoted in full: “Sometimes he promises, to himself, as it were, in his excitement, three reasons why, or five, or six, evidently without having first worked out precisely how many he actually has. So he discovers the number he’s promised, or not, as the case may be, sometimes it’s one too few, or one too many. What matters to him is to induce in the empathizing public the attitude of ‘one who argues’, one who employs arguments, or more exactly, one who looks for arguments.”

I challenge the reader to refrain from laughing here. As *Arturo Ui* demonstrates, when seen from a critical distance, Hitler’s appearance, his manners,

and his methods of argumentation, are wonderfully silly. This is not a new realization; comedians have mocked Hitler at least since Chaplin. But the above description does more than caricature Hitler as an individual. Rather, Brecht captures the hilarious appearance of someone in a position of power who takes himself too seriously. In doing so, he does not suggest that others should not take such a person seriously - when in close proximity, one must take him deadly seriously. But distance - the critical distance produced by the V-effect - dissolves fear into mockery. Brecht encapsulates this phenomenon in his poem "O Germany, You Pale Blonde Creature": "O Germany, hearing the speeches which ring from your house, one laughs. But whoever sees you reaches for his knife."

No better current example of this phenomenon can be found than the "Hitler's Bunker" meme, which perhaps requires no introduction to the reader. This You Tube trend is a comedic response to what was, at the time of its release, a highly controversial film. (Its portrayal of Hitler was seen as potentially too sympathetic, as if such a thing were possible.) In separating it from its world-historical context, these clips show the "Hitler's Bunker speech" as the ravings of a lunatic, and are all quite delightful regardless of their sometimes substandard execution.

But back to empathy. What are the real dangers of the empathy Brecht sees Hitler employing? Is Hitler's use of empathy not, Karl asks, problematic only to the extent that the madman is leading them down a dangerous path? Again Karl has missed the point, for "the establishment of empathy makes it impossible for the person who falls under its spell to recognize whether the path is dangerous or not." But, says Karl, should the path be a good one, surely there can be no danger in empathy? Thomas responds: "The concept of the right path is less appropriate than the right way of walking. The most amazing capacity of mankind is criticism...Whoever empathizes with someone, and does so completely, relinquishes criticism both of the object of their empathy and of themselves...That is why the theatrical presentation offered by Fascism is not a good example of theatre, not if we expect of it representations which might give the spectators the key by which to master the problems of social existence."

Aside from clarifying misperceptions about Brecht's take on empathy, and providing valuable insight on the representative nature of Hitler's behavior, this brief dialogue has a lot to offer our understanding of the theatrical elements of politics today. Here it must be noted that the political theater of our time differs from that of Brecht's in a key way: Politicians are no longer the most crucial actors. There is a chorus, mediating between the gods and the audience, who attempt to work them into a frenzied state of agitation and mass hysteria—to empathize with them in order to see the images of their dreams. When we turn to this mediating class, we find the material most relevant to the topic at hand. Recall that when President Obama began his search for a Supreme Court nominee early last year, he cited empathy as a key quality for a judge. This led Glenn Beck - who appears to have studied extensively in the school of theater that Brecht derided - to make the Brechtian-esque assertion that this very quality had been central in Hitler's policies. The irony should be obvious to the reader who has appreciated Brecht's views on empathy. Beck denounces Obama, whom he views as too intellectual and professorial (de-

spite his not using a blackboard for his speeches) even as he employs all the tactics of the empathy-mongering speaker. And he commits the dreaded Hitler fallacy.

What separates Brecht from Glenn Beck should be obvious. Beck adopts the “language of criticism,” takes the pose of “one who argues,” and supports assertions with nothing more than gestic emphasis. Brecht’s professed preference for critical distance, on the other hand, is not simply a means to bolster his own propaganda. We see the depth of his critical spirit with *On the Theatricality of Fascism*, where he turns it on himself and points out the very fallacy others accuse him of committing. That Brecht had more of a critical eye than Beck really does not deserve to be argued. That Brecht’s ideas on empathy can help us make sense of the madness of our own time, likewise, need not be.

DIALECTICAL INTERVENTION #2:

ENVISIONING HITLER: AMERICA’S HISTORICAL IMAGINATION OF ADOLF HITLER AND NAZI POWER

Grappling with Germany’s traumatic 20th century is quite an undertaking, especially as a historian in America. America, as a general population, has a deep-seated, very specific knowledge of Germany: on the one hand, a knowledge based on the Self or Heritage (according to the 2000 US Census, 15.2% of Americans cited German ancestry, the largest ancestral group in America); on the other hand, a knowledge based on the Other or History – Hitler, Nazis, and Holocaust. Americans have internalized this “other” history to such a degree that an American studying Germany has a particular American imagination of German history: specifically, a very particular image of Hitler and Nazism.

SARA KARPINSKI

How have Americans become comfortable with Hitler as a historical figure? How has our historical image changed over the decades to make him an accessible figure? Despite there being many equally exciting (and currently relevant) periods of German history found under the guise of the modern classification, Americans focus almost unwaveringly on the twelve years known as the Third Reich and specifically its leader, Adolf Hitler. Shaped by political climate and popular culture, American historical understanding of Hitler and of the Nazi seizure of power has shifted over the decades since World War II. Mass culture such as movies, popular and academic histories, television, political commentary and even YouTube create a collective American imagination of Hitler and his rise to power.

As Michael Butter argues in his text, *The Epitome of Evil: Hitler in American Fiction, 1939-2002*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009, popular culture (particular fiction writers) shape American historical understanding of Hitler. According to Butter, Hitler, his regime, and his motivations have become a manipulable trope for understanding American political and social experiences. Butter argues that the Hitler of America’s imagination is that of pure evil, an image found throughout American popular and political cultures during the 20th century. Both cultural modes use Hitler and Nazism as comparative points for whatever political and social scenario America found itself in: “Hitler and the Nazis have become a means for American culture to understand, comment on, evaluate, destruct, deny, affirm, revise or criticize its own history” (3); and further: “Hitler is not so much a historical persona as a free-floating signifier

ready to be filled with shifting meaning, depending on the exigencies of the historical moment" (5).

However, over the last decade America's historical imagination of Hitler has changed. Unlike Butter's thesis, I argue that recent popular culture's manipulation of the history of Hitler has led to a recasting of the dictator in America's historical imagination. He is no longer an inherently evil "other," alienated from the reader or viewer, but instead an approachable, manipulable mockery of a failed regime and intrinsically inept leader. Through popular history monographs, political talk shows, cable television, YouTube parodies of the movie *Downfall*, and even Lady Gaga, Hitler has become an approachable figure whose name and regime is referenced frequently and casually with little thought of the meaning and power behind such historical images. Rather than the image of previous decades - that of a mythical dictator or punished former leader used as a weighty historical warning - steady and continuous mentions by media and cultural outlets have shaped Hitler into desensitized comedic historical image, focusing on the faulted comedy of the man, instead of the evil which he perpetrated. This understanding of Hitler has created an image so pervasive, and seemingly so ripe for mockery, that shouting "Sieg Heil!" in America to another person is done in jest without thought of what it means, when such an act is grounds for arrest in Germany and Austria (*See: Online Strafgesetzbuch, Bundesministerium der Justiz Deutschlands Section 86a/b: *Use of Symbols of Unconstitutional Organizations*: "shall be punished with imprisonment for not more than three years or a fine." and "2) Symbols, within the meaning of subsection (1), shall be, in particular, flags, insignia, uniforms, slogans and forms of greeting. Symbols, which are so similar as to be mistaken for those named in sentence 1, shall be deemed to be equivalent thereto.")

Prior to the late 20th century American popular culture imagined Hitler as inherently evil, but yet strangely composed, forward-thinking and generally all-powerful. With the notable exception of Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940) American film and textual imagination of Hitler during most of the 20th century created a figure without humanity and thus without audience accessibility. Starting in the 1930s, much of America's understanding of Hitler came from visual representations in film, television and news broadcasts. Chaplin's film, one of few to satirize Hitler while he was still in power, functions as a source of comic relief during World War II, a damning of fascism, and a warning to the world and following generations. To both German and non-German speakers, it is obvious that Chaplin's Hitler figure, Adenoid Hynkle, simply spews gibberish to a willing and captive audience. He hangs from window treatments and dances with globes. Hynkle remains a powerful figure, for despite his bizarre actions, the crowds still quickly absorb and follow his seemingly mindless babbling. Despite the comedy of the "real" Hynkle speeches, when the barber takes on the role of "the great dictator," the film becomes a reprimand to Germany, Hitler and fascism. The new Hynkle warns viewers to resist greed and abundance and avoid becoming "victims of a system," finally noting that dictators die but liberty will never perish. This final note is a nod that fascism and Nazism can exist within all of humanity, not just specifically within Adolf Hitler.

Films portraying Hitler after the fall of Nazism take on a much more serious

tone than that of Chaplin's. Ennio de Conini's *Hitler: The Last Ten Days* (1973) details the final days of Hitler and Germany's involvement in World War II. Most of the action takes place in the so-called "Führerbunker." Alec Guinness plays Hitler, meaning the distinctly German dictator speaks the Queen's English. It is fairly common for actors to not take on the accent of the figure they portray; however, an English-accented Hitler alienates the character from its historical basis, as well as from the viewer's conception of the Hitler character. Furthermore, Guinness portrays Hitler as absolutely calm - a significant break from the Hitler shown in newsreels and Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, another source of America's understanding of Hitler during the 20th century. Hitler is seemingly unaffected by his position and unwaveringly stands by his calculated decisions: Guinness's self awareness and complete control define the Hitler figure. The viewer comes away with an image of a calm, unapproachable dictator who holds ultimate power. The audience relates the most to Hitler's aids who question the Führer's actions and beg for a more amicable solution.

The made for television film, *The Bunker* (1981), portrays Hitler in a similar way, and once again, portrayed by a British actor, Anthony Hopkins. Potentially due to the older styling of Hopkins, the unwavering power of Hitler seems more apparent in this film. He speaks less, but when he does, it is in a more paternalistic way, reassuring that his plans are indeed the best and only available. Much like *The Last Ten Days*, Hitler's confidants provide the historical moral pulse, functioning as warning to both Hitler and the audience that the plans moving forward are ill advised and maliciously driven. The viewer sees Hitler as evil, powerful and once again, generally very calm - a break from the understanding created from news reels and documentaries of the time.

In the three previously discussed films, America imagines Hitler as calm and all-powerful, yet distant from both his aids and the viewer. The Hitler figure is never the character the audience relates to, nor feels any empathy or sympathy toward. Each film also carries a historical warning of some sort, normally found within the actions of surrounding, less historically known characters. Other texts of the 20th century depict Hitler in a very different way but often to the same historically alienated results. Written fiction also influenced America's understanding of Hitler, particularly in the 1970s. Rather than calm and powerful, the other end of the spectrum is represented, depicting Hitler as defeated, punished, unrecognizable and barely human. Much of the "Hitler fiction," as Butter calls it, from this time period is considered alternate histories. Often verging on science fiction, it places Hitler in alternate realities and succeeds in casting Hitler as the "Other" - making him as inaccessible as possible to the reality of the reader. In these texts, America's image of Hitler shifts outside the realm of dictator and his character is exposed through cloned children with his DNA, an asylum patient with President's brain and Hitler's body, and even through fictional offspring. In each case, the reader comes away with some warning about Hitler and the actions of Nazism.

Ira Levin's novel *The Boys from Brazil* (1976) explores a world in which Josef Mengele, Hitler's infamous doctor, attempts to recreate Hitler through cloning and specific social environments. Levin warns the reader of the potential for future Hitlers as Mengele utilizes the existing environment and the role of nurture to shape a similarly minded human. David Lodge's *Swastika*

(1972) places Hitler as an old man in an insane asylum (who's brain has been switched with that of the President of the United States), unrecognizable to himself and only vaguely recognizable to other patients, an image which wavers from America's general ability to point out Hitler even if he is represented only by a side-swept hair cut and small mustache. Finally, in Gary Goss's novel *Hitler's Daughter* (1973), the warning for potential evil among in the human race is told through the story of Hitler's alleged daughter, Cynthia. Goss notes, "We are most of us Hitlers," stressing the potential for Hitler actions to present through anyone at any time (75).

Spanning several decades and genres, these films and novels demonstrate the various ways America created an image of Hitler throughout the 20th century. In many cases this image differed from the historical understanding of Hitler as dictator, as demonstrated by the disparity between the Hitler found in *Triumph of The Will* and that found in *The Last Ten Days* and *The Bunker*. The image of Hitler projected in these films is calm and unquestionably powerful, rather than dramatic and emotionally charged. The image found in the novels similarly differs from American historical understanding mainly due to the alternative realities created by the narratives. In all cases these fictional representations of Hitler alienate the reader or viewer from the historical figure, be it through British accents, implausible alternate histories or comic relief. In addition, all provide warnings to current and future generations of the dangers of Hitler and societies based on greed and abundance, ensuring the viewer's comprehension by embedding these warnings in accessible figures found throughout the narrative.

Hitler's prominence in American culture has not diminished over the years - if anything it may have increased. Take for instance the tendency for bookstores to highlight Hitler on their shelves. Of the forty-one titles on German history on the shelves of a Barnes & Noble store in southeastern Pennsylvania, twenty-nine focused on Hitler or the Third Reich. These texts ranged from five copies of *Mein Kampf* to discussion of IBM's role in Hitler's Reich. All, however, discussed Hitler in depth, either as biography or as integral to the argument. Hitler's prominence in America's historical interests is also exhibited in the programming of one of the nation's main sources of historical interpretation and knowledge: *The History Channel*. Of a six-week sampling of *The Military History Channel*, where most of their legitimate historical programming is now shown, 7% of programming from 9 AM to midnight is explicitly about Hitler. When World War II, consisting of over 7% programming is included, this number jumps to about 15%. Put in perspective, the next highest percentage of programming is 5% with programs on the Civil War.¹ Perhaps the History Channel deserves its nickname as "The Hitler Channel" but it does illuminate the continued fascination of Americans with Hitler, his psyche, actions and regime.

Since the 1990s Hitler has become an approachable figure in America's historical imagination. Rather than a calm figure alienated from history and from the audience, the Hitler character has taken on emotional and physical faults, which allow Americans to access the character and its history and manipulate the image in more significant ways. Bringing the Hitler image "back to earth," so to speak, leaves it open to humor and ease of reference. The incredible increase in the usage of the Hitler figure in popular culture is both an

influence on this shift and a symptom of it. Television, movies, politics and even YouTube feed into this changing image, creating new associations which link Hitler with humor, physical and mental ineptitudes, and seemingly every sentiment and action undertaken in the United States' ever-volatile political landscape.

Television became nearly impossible to watch while writing this over the last few months, for it seemed every series further informed the viewer's understanding of Hitler. Shows from *True Blood* and *Mad Men* to *Louie* and *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia* stressed the nation's casual familiarity with the Führer, furthering my understanding of how popular culture has made Hitler into an approachable historical image. In each case, the references are casual, often humorous, from Russell's (*True Blood*) reference to "Adolf," (which considering how few actually got to refer to Hitler in the "du" form, is shockingly informal) and Don Draper (*Mad Men*) asking in a thick German accent "Did you enjoy ze Führer's birthday?" ("ze Führer" being the owner of Lucky Strike, in this case). Television programming has been for many years a source of influence on and propagation of America's imaging of Hitler and Nazism. Much like the references in *True Blood* and *Mad Man*, those found in shows such as *Seinfeld* are also casual, and project Nazism and Hitler as a source of comedy rather than a source of warning. For example, Elaine's comments in the infamous "Soup Nazi" episode of *Seinfeld* attempts to order soup from the title Soup Nazi in a manner defiant to the rules of the establishment, only to be denied - an interesting yet unrealistic comparison to the fates of those who defied Nazism. In each case, the viewer creates an image of Hitler that is devoid of historical consequence and ripe for comedy. Considering the popularity of these series and the fame of the "Soup Nazi," television has become a standard vehicle for America's image of Hitler as a comedic character as well as a medium through which it is created.

Much like television, film has proven significant in shaping America's imagination of Hitler. Admittedly, the image in film has changed less than in other forms of popular culture. A notable exception to this is the German film *Downfall* (2004), which enjoyed significant success in the United States for a German film, grossing over five million dollars during its twelve-week run in New York (*See: David Bathrick "Whose Hi/story Is It? The US Reception of *Downfall*," *The New German Critique*, 102, (2007): 1-16). The film continues in the tradition of the Führerbunker films of the 1970s, but presents a very different understanding of Hitler. Rather than the calm, unwavering power as presented by Guinness and Hopkins, Bruno Ganz, plays Hitler as a troubled, near-broken leader with an underlying understanding of the failure of his regime and his work, presented as severe paranoia. Ganz styles the character much differently than the British actors - his hair is unkempt, clothes seemingly unchanged. He holds his body tightly and compactly, shoulders hunched forward as though unconsciously submitting to the situation, his body giving in prior to his mind. As exhibited by the financial success of the film, American filmgoers found this image of Hitler intriguing, if not popular. A fictional portrayal of Hitler for once fit into the historic image Americans held - specifically, the character spoke German: emotionally-driven and conflicted, expressing paranoia, panic, and extreme physical rage. While this image is off-putting to many, it is the image one calls to mind when thinking of Hitler

and which in *Downfall* was solidified into film.

Ganz's representation of Hitler has become a moderate sensation on Youtube almost entirely in the form of parodies based on the "bunker scene" in the film. A simple search on the site for "Downfall Parodies" yields over three thousand results. They all focus on a very angry Hitler, who yells dramatically at his subordinates for going against his orders and the goals of the regime. Since most Americans do not speak German, industrious internet users have re-subtitled the scene to make it seem as though Hitler is having a paranoid break down over everything from video games (e.g. Mario Kart) to real estate. These parodies are meant for general consumption and amusement. They have created a YouTube sub-culture of their own, where "Hitler Responds..." videos respond to each other, and got to the point that when copy right deemed they be removed from the site, viewers donned dark suits, tiny mustaches and side parts to create live-action parodies of the scenes, the subtitles ranting that YouTube removed the videos. The videos range in popularity from a few hundred views to over two million views. Due to the nature of YouTube, these parodies and particularly this image of Hitler, is heavily consumed and easily transmittable between friends and throughout the whole of the internet. It thus makes this image - that of a screaming, twitchy, soon-to-be defunct leader screaming about *vuvvezelas*, the one which Americans associate with history of Hitler and the Third Reich.

Twenty-four hour news programming, that of both the right and the left, further enhances the casual association Americans have with Hitler and Nazism: the most apparent example of this is Glenn Beck, the host of *The Glenn Beck Program* on FOX news. Beck is renowned for his casual use of both Hitler and Stalin as figures for comparison to America's current political environment. From watching to a number of episodes of Beck's difficult to follow political program, the general trend appears to be that democracies (not republics, which he claims for the United States) are equivalent to Nazi Germany and that Progressivism and social justice equate to Nazism. From this program it appears that Hitler's image can be associated with and manipulated to fit pretty much any "ism," belief or emotion that Beck sees fit. However, for understanding how this shapes America's image of Hitler, the number of references to Hitler appears more important. According to a July 18, 2010 *Washington Post* article by Dana Milbank: "tallies from Glenn Beck's show on Fox News since Obama's inauguration: 202 mentions of Nazis or Nazism, according to transcripts, 147 mentions of Hitler, 193 mentions of fascism or fascist, and another 24 bonus mentions of Joseph Goebbels. Most of these were directed in some form at Obama - as were the majority of the 802 mentions of socialist or socialism on Beck's nightly "report."

Being fair to both sides of the political spectrum, desensitization to the Hitler image is not simply a product of the far right. Both Jon Stewart of *The Daily Show* and Stephen Colbert of *The Colbert Report* have tried their hand at using Hitler as both political commentary and comedy. Stewart, who recently took over Walter Cronkite's spot as the most trusted newsman in America, also commonly uses Hitler to reshape the viewer's understanding of various political groups and beliefs. On the June 16, 2005 episode of *The Daily Show*, Stewart notes: "Adolf Hitler, one of the worst mass murders in all history, has now become the go-to metaphor in comparison for anyone you have a minor

disagreement with,” going on to plead, “please stop calling people Hitler when you disagree with them. It demeans you, it demeans your opponent and, to be honest, it demeans Hitler. That guy worked...too hard to be that evil to have any Tom, Dick and Harry come along and say ‘yeah, you’re being Hitler’. You know who was Hitler? Hitler!” While he begs his audience to actually attempt to understand the gravity of the image of Hitler, Stewart’s use of Hitler comparisons continues to make the desensitized, casual and comedic version of Hitler the prevailing image in America’s historical knowledge.

While writing this piece, I found America’s understanding of Hitler in unsuspected places. Unknowing visitors at work became research subjects as they goose-stepped down a path to the comic delight of their like-minded friends. Co-workers quoted the “Soup Nazi” episode while searching for their lunches in the fridge. Even Lady Gaga’s music video for *Alejandro* prominently features an emasculated understanding of Nazi power. I eventually had to stop adding to the running list of “Hitler Mentions,” be it in film, television or daily life, or else this piece would have tripled in length. However, the fact I had enough to stop jotting down references demonstrates the pervasive nature of America’s historical image of Hitler. Through constant reference in the media and popular culture, Americans have become desensitized to the figure and history of Hitler. Rather than a historical warning of an evil regime, these create a figure more accessible to the viewer. With increasing reference, the image has shifted from powerful to paranoid. With the increased emotional break down of the figure, Americans have found Hitler’s paranoid physical representations a platform for humor.

DIALECTICAL INTERVENTION #3:

REFLECTIONS ON HEINER MÜLLER’S *DER AUFHALTSAME AUFSTIEG*
 DES ARTURO UI AT THE BERLINER ENSEMBLE

The multiple traditions of staging Brecht in Berlin’s theatres are as varied as the plays performed: historicized or modernized, with some attempts at remaining loyal to Brecht’s mid-century model, others violently deconstructing and confronting Brecht and his texts, and some in-between. Yet one production remains both aesthetically challenging and politically engaging, even after celebrating its 15th anniversary in June 2010: Heiner Müller’s staging of *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*. Performed more than 375 times, audiences in Berlin and the world over have come in throngs to see this match between Brecht and Müller, who expressed in 1979 what has since become a mantra of directors, “To use Brecht without criticizing him is treachery” (HMW 8: 231).

JOSÉ ENRIQUE MACIÁN

Perhaps ironically, Müller’s production has attained a legendary status within the German theater landscape, something beyond criticism. Rather than attempting to review the staging, I plan to reflect upon it. The production is a museum piece in the best sense of the word: a masterpiece in a gilded frame. Only the devotion of those who continue to perform in it, allow the dust that collects on every masterpiece to be swept away: the last completed act of a long-dead theater maker and his greatest popular success.

Working with a radically abridged script by his stage designer Hans-Joachim Schlieker, Müller reduced the action of Brecht’s play to its essence, concen-

trating upon its protagonist. The source of this *Arturo Ui*'s longevity has been, without a doubt, the performance of Martin Wuttke in the title role. Wuttke, now almost 50 years old, has continued since the premiere to deliver the same spectacular performance of verbal and physical virtuosity. Never naturalistic or sentimental, through a tour de force of unabated theatricality, Wuttke holds the attention of the audience. As Müller said when asked to explain the success of his staging, "All Berlin wants to see the Führer."

Besides Wuttke's performance, this production is simply an excellent example of a particular post-Brechtian staging tradition: directing after Brecht, using and challenging him. As a writer, Heiner Müller developed his own im-



age-based language to unbalance the written word. He layered quotations and allusions in a process of entering into a dialogue with the past in order to produce a desire for a future different from the present. Müller sustained a bombardment of associated and conflicting references in his work as a director, creating stage images used to confront the performance text. He staged *Arrangements*, relying on concentrated gestures and tableaux, referencing preexisting images in direct relationship to his dramaturgy, centering performance in a process of re-presenting, returning, and digging up.

Müller distilled the themes of a text into single images, metaphorically inscribing the text onto the performers' bodies. This desire for creating stage images in order to permit audiences to reflect on a distilled meaning is what I label the "condensed image" (*verdichtete Bild*). The composing of condensed images for the stage is at the heart of Müller's directorial works and is visible in his production of *Arturo Ui*. Attention is given to the establishing of a stage picture: in the stage design, grouping of performers, and use of gesture (cf. Macián). Here, the grouping of performers and the use of gesture to communicate a social meaning finds its roots in the Brechtian stage tradition, most notably in his own use of *Arrangements* and the social gesture, *Gestus*, where, to quote Brecht, the social themes of a scene are "translated into positions and movement" (241).

Veering from Brecht, Müller incorporated a surrealist interest in making the metaphor real through formal expression of the body. This difference is noticeable when comparing Müller's staging of Brecht's gangster parable with another legendary production of the same play: the 1959 staging by Manfred

Wekwerth and Peter Palitzsch, performed more than 500 times until 1974. In the Wekwerth and Palitzsch production, Ekkehard Schall portrayed the title role as a figure between Charlie Chaplin and a Chicago Gangster with Hitler's mustache and verbal bark. As a staging of the division within the Nazi Party preceding the death of Hindenburg, Ui demands blind trust from those around him in the eleventh scene. Schall, representing Brecht's slumped Ui jumped up, directing his text to his fellow actors. Between nervousness and excitement, Schall's Ui stomped about the stage, filling the empty space with bravura. His wide, exaggerated gestures were between a horrifying characterization of Hitler and slapstick.

Wuttke, once competing with the expectations of a theater-going audience familiar with Schall, takes a different approach to interpreting his role. He cites Schall's verbal *Gestus*, a choking inability to say the word "*Glauben*" (i.e. faith or belief). However, except for the discovery of the Hitler salute, in a stretching out of his hand towards the audience, the physical *Gestus* is different. Schall shifts between a rigged Hitler-like stance, his hands clasped before his genitals, and frantic, wide gesticulation. Wuttke transforms himself into a physicalization of the symbol that he represents. He slowly walks downstage towards the audience, with quick glances to the other actors but always directed towards the spectators with the cold austerity and restraint characteristic of Müller's work for the stage, interrupted with verbal explosions. At the moment of "*Glauben*," Wuttke kneels to the ground and shapes his body into the form of a swastika. In a single image, Müller confuses the realities between Brecht's play, the history of fascism, and the contemporary moment of the performance.

Müller's complication of the Brechtian use of *Gestus*, *Arrangement*, and tableaux is a stance against the Brechtian fable and towards Kafka: "gestures are described/performed without a reference system, not orientated off of a movement (praxis), not reducible to one meaning, more strange [*fremd*] as alienating [*verfremdend*], without moral" (HMW 8: 224). As scholar Günther Heeg has pointed out, Brecht's tableaux are tribunals in which the meaning of the fable is made explicit and the audience sees who is guilty (cf. 37). With Müller, the images are to be organized and interpreted by each spectator individually. For scholar David Barnett, while the Brechtian sign system pertains to the real world outside the theater, a kind of hyperrealism, Müller began to use a system where the imagination of spectators "could be revived and memory reactivated" (8). The images onstage act as "associative signifiers" (9). Müller's sign system is one of mythology and visual art. Thus, Müller's visual montage of metaphors stands in contrast to a more Brechtian storyboard use of tableau. Brecht's 1941 parable makes Hitler's rise to power analogous to the 1930s gangster underworld. The parallels are drawn between a society of corruption, manipulation, and violence, with both fascist and capitalist structures. Müller estranges the play from the Brechtian fable. *Arturo Ui* is no longer about fascism but about the mechanism of politics.

The references in Müller's *Arturo Ui* staging are abstracted. The action of the play is continually punctuated by the sound of Chicago's "L" Train, which at the same time is the transport of troops going into battle and the trains leading to death camps. Wuttke's shoulder is marked by a red circle, like the mortal spot on Siegfried's back below a linden leaf. Dogsborough's country

estate under poplars is represented by Arnold Böcklin's "Isle of the Dead," a painting once admired and acquired by Hitler.

The production begins with Goethe's seductive "Erlkönig" in Schubert's composition, which is interrupted by the pop group Paper Lace's "The Night Chicago Died." In a sort of overture, the key figures are presented to the audience, standing still onstage in an opening tableau. Wuttke's Ui is first revealed as the personification of a German Shepherd, growling more than speaking text, he stalks about and watches guard over the engine/altar which dominates the center of Schliker's sparse stage.

The production ends with Liszt's "Preludes" – signature of the German *Wochenschau* – which is replaced by a ragtime version of the wartime "Ich hatt' einen Kameraden." The prologue of Brecht's play has been made into an epilogue, replacing Ui's contention for the markets of the world and Brecht's rhymed moral. The entire cast is presented in the large *Schlußtableau* promised by Brecht, ending in a slow march towards the spectators to the overture of Wagner's *Tannhäuser*. The mixture and bombardment of such differing allusions creates a layering of citations that are then left to the audience to unravel and interpret. This culminates in Müller's understanding of his work as archeological, where one history buries another creating a sense of continuity and in which one layer of history must be uncovered at a time.

Along with Müller's intensions for this production, the staging has become an experiment in the life of a performance. Although the *Arrangements*, *mise-en-scène*, and blocking have not visibly changed, the performance has changed. The nature of performance requires it to change. Thus, the question must be posed: What remains? At the March 2010 performance, exactly fifty percent of the cast, 14 of 28 roles, continue to be performed by the same actors from the 1995 premiere. Other than Wuttke, these actors includes Volker Spengler (Giri), Martin Seifert (Givola), Stefan Lisewski (Dogsborough), Margaritha Broich (Dockdaisy, and now Mrs. Dullfeet), Michael Gerber (Sheet and Ragg), Veit Schubert (Clark), Axel Werner (Goodwill), Heinrich Buttchereit (a *Händler*), Uwe Preuß (Dogsborough Jr. and a bodyguard), Ruth Glöss (the *Blutige Frau*), and Uwe Steinburch (a bodyguard). These actors have aged with this production. Some roles have been replaced due to death, performers leaving the Ensemble, or simply dropping out of the performance. Some of the newer additions to the cast, such as Jürgen Holtz, who has reinterpreted the actor role originally performed by Bernhard Minetti as a washed-up drunk, has a long history as a performer with Heiner Müller. Many others do not. And although, for instance, Martin Schneider performs Roma with great talent, one continues to yearn for the dry matter-of-factness once given to the role by Hermann Beyer.

Perhaps the greatest irony of this production is that Müller is known by a new generation of the theatre-going public in a performance that was, due to his decreasing health, his least prepared staging. In fact, the decision to direct *Arturo Ui* was in hopes of creating a financial success for the Berliner Ensemble; Müller had often disparaged the play written with Hollywood aspirations in Brecht's oeuvre. However, in directing the play, Müller was interested in the subtext, the representation of evil, "*Böse*" (HMW 12: 763). With Wuttke, Müller achieved both a financial (and popular) success and also an investigation into the seductive power of evil. The atmosphere of *Arturo Ui*

has become something of a revue, where the audience cackles with laughter and delight when Wuttke seems to discover Hitler's Austrian growl, rhetorical techniques, and theatrical gestures. As Wuttke finishes his full transformation, from sniveling hunchback to militant dictator, he stands before the stage of the Berliner Ensemble and is met with cheers from the audience in approval of his virtuosity. And yet, at the same time the audience cheers on Wuttke as Ui, they are also applauding Hitler. Müller reveals the integrality of showmanship in politics. The masses are again won over by charisma.

At the end of the performance, Wuttke stares into the audience and stretches out his palm, saluting individual spectators. In fifteen years of performance, the late Heiner Müller waits for someone to return the Hitler Salute. Wuttke's final words as Arturo Ui: "For such is man. He'll never lay down his tommy gun of his own free will. [...] If I don't shoot, the other guy sure will! That's logical." The logic of Ui's society. Since Brecht wrote these words, so much in our society has not changed.

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DIALECTICAL INTERVENTION #4: CIBS ARCHIVE

The CIBS Archives offers more material on Arturo Ui. The Archive is available at www.ecibs.org. A= archive pagination.

A: 742-44 / CIBS 15.1 (November 1985): Heinz-Uwe Haus, *Notes on Ui in Greece*: 32-33.

A: 855-60 / CIBS 16.1 (November 1986): *Report on Arturo Ui Symposium*. Bowling Green University; Arturo Ui Production. Direction: Heinz-Uwe Haus. Symposium Speakers: Carl Weber, Marna King, John Fuegi, Martin Walsh, Guy Stern: 61-64; John Steven Paul, *Review of Arturo Ui Production*. Stratford (Ontario, Canada) Festival: 65-66.

A: 1478 & 1521-22 / CIBS 20. 1 & 2 (October 1991): Cover: John Turturro starring in Classical Stage Company's production of *Arturo Ui*. No CIBS Review included. See: Mel Gussow, *NYTimes* (5/9/91); Maria Hylas, *Review of Arturo Ui*, Cyprus. Direction: Heinz-Uwe Haus: 32-33.

A: 1947-51 / CIBS 23.1 (May 1994): *Review of La Resistible Ascension d'Arturo Ui*. Paris. Theatre de Chaillot. Direction: Jérôme Savary: 29-33.

CASEBOOK: ARTURO UI

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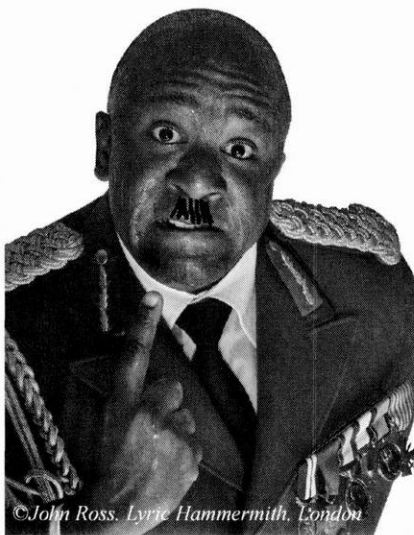
A: 2366-68 / CIBS 25.2 (December 1996): James Stark, *Review of Arturo Ui*. University of Washington Playhouse, Seattle. Direction: Heinz-Uwe Haus: 24-26

A: 2499-01; 2501-08; 2525-27 / CIBS 26.2 (December 1997): Shimon Levy, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui in the Israeli Context*: 24-26; *Ten Graduate Students Respond to Haus' Ui Production*: 26-33; James Stark, *Acting in Brecht's Arturo Ui*: 50-52.

A: 2637-39 / CIBS 27.2 (December 1999): Charles H. Helmetag, *Heinz-Uwe Haus' New Approach to Brecht's Old Gangster Play*: 22-24.

A: 2777-79 / CIBS 29. 1&2 (June 2001): Arthur Horowitz, *Berliner Ensemble's Ui at UCLA*: 24-26.

A: 3067-3073 & 3076-77 / CIBS 32 (June 2003): Norman Roessler, *Strange Bedfellows? Arturo Ui, Al Pacino, and Dubya*: 30-33; R.G. Davis, *Arturo Ui in the USA*: 33-35; Sherlie Leonard, *Arturo Ui in San Bernadino*; Ian Johns, *Arturo Ui at Bridewell, EC4*: 39-40.



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COMMUNICATIONS

from the International
Brecht Society

VOL. 20 No. 1, 2



A: 3587-89 / CIBS 36 (2007): Bradley Gunter, *Ui at the Steep Theatre, Chicago*. Direction: Jonathan Berry: 55-57.

A: 3823-25 / CIBS 37 (2008): Angelos Koutsourakis, *Ui at the Lyric Hammermith, London*. Direction: David Farr: 89-91.

©Philip Glahn



Martin Mazorra, *Popular American Flightless Shitbird*. Woodcut on Canvas, 50" x 100"
 Medium Resistance: Revolutionary Tendencies in Print and Craft. Curated by Philip Glahn,
 Richard Hricko, Nicholas Kripal. Philadelphia, PA / USA. March 5 - April 3, 2010

**ABER WIDERSTAND
LEISTEN: ON THE
POSSIBILITIES OF
RESISTANCE IN THE
VISUAL ARTS.**

PHILIP GLAHN

Benediction

Der Aufbau der Bühne in mobilen Elementen entspricht einer neuen Betrachtungsweise unsere Umgebung: sie wird als veränderlich und veränderbar angesehen, als voll von Widersprüchen in labiler Einheitlichkeit. Der Beschauer muss imstande sein, im Geist die Element auszuwechseln, also zu montieren. BFA 21.1: 260.

Prologue

Meeting at the Ukrainian League of Philadelphia in early June 2010 amidst Ukrainian beers, Nicaraguan cigars and American cigarettes with the ghost of Brecht hovering somewhere in between (most likely in the toilet). Philip Glahn and Norman Roessler met to discuss the state of Brecht and the Brechtian in the realm of the Fine Arts. As the conversation traversed a wide range of topics and touched upon the voices of Clement Greenberg, Roland Barthes, Frederic Jameson, and others the textual headlines intermittently intervened in the dialogue (poetically speaking) and announced the continuing BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the Stanley Cup Final between Chicago and Philadelphia, the recent death of actor Dennis Hopper. Were the interlocutors there to romanticize Brecht? To save Brecht? To terminate Brecht with "extreme prejudice"?

Note: At this moment, Dennis Hopper's character from Apocalypse Now should appear on the TV as an Ansager and recite the following: "What are they gonna say, man, when he's gone, huh? When he dies: when it dies? What are they gonna say? He was a kind man? He was a wise man? He had plans? He had wisdom? Bullshit!"

No, they were there to continue the conversation of the Messingkauf Dialogues. To peer into the abyss, the abyss that Büchner had told us about ("Jeder Mensch ist ein Abgrund!") and with cool sobriety that balanced the emotional with the cognitive (without restless Verwandlung) make the haze of tobacco smoke talk, if not sing.

You are Assistant Professor of Critical Studies & Aesthetics (and currently chair of the Painting & Drawing program) at Temple University's Tyler School of Art. Recently, you co-curated the exhibit Medium Resistance: Revolutionary Tendencies in Print and Craft as part of the larger Philagrafika Exhibit here in Philadelphia. To be honest, you are not the typical subject for interviews conducted at CIBS. Yet, you have published on Brecht and politically engaged art in academic and art publications such as Art Journal, Afterimage, and BOMB and your current book project deals with the post-war American reception of Brecht in the visual arts. So, can you give us a brief cartographic explanation of how you arrived at Tyler via the study of Brecht?

Though I read some Brecht plays and poems as part of my high school and college education in Germany, it was not until I came to the US to study art history in the late '90s that I really took a closer look at Brecht as a theorist and critical thinker. Greg Sholette, an artist, activist, and at the time Curator of Education at the New Museum of Contemporary Art, where I worked as an intern, got me to re-read Brecht. We talked a lot about the possible methods and strategies of socially engaged work and looked at past examples and debates as points of departure. Sholette also introduced me to Brechtian writers and artists, especially Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, whose book *The Public Sphere and Proletarian Experience* had influenced his own practice; that book shaped my study of the history of public art. I went on to write my

dissertation at the Graduate Center/City University of New York, for which I traced the reception of Brecht's work in postwar US visual arts. As for how I arrived at Tyler - the position I hold there is relatively unique, in that I am a contemporary art historian in a studio program. With regard to the methodological proximity of theory and practice in Brecht's work and, by extension, my project, it is a perfect fit. The position was originally established to foster a regular and pointed dialogue between art making and discourse. It's very challenging and very rewarding, as almost all my students are artists, filmmakers, artisans or designers. Everything that gets read and said in the seminar room is critically applied and tested in their work, while their production informs the conversation in class.

Have we at the IBS been overly myopic toward the literary and theatrical and missed the large amount of discourse on Brecht in the Fine Arts? How would you characterize the reception of Brecht in your discipline?

The presence of Brecht in the visual arts discourse and art history is maybe best described as ghost-like. His name turns up in interviews with artists and essays by the most dissimilar critics and writers. Brecht appears, for example, in a conversation between Andy Warhol and Gene Swenson; in Michael Fried's infamous critique of Minimalism; in Allan Sekula's reconsideration of documentary photography; and in Dan Graham's contribution to the Art Workers Coalition's Open Hearings, as he demands a return to "socially good works." You might think that there is an underlying consensus about who Brecht is and what he stands for, but in fact Brecht is invoked in all kinds of ways to support greatly diverging views on art and politics: Clement Greenberg's Brecht and Herbert Marcuse's Brecht and Jameson's Brecht all are calls for a continued avant-garde practice in the arts, but they carve out very different, even contradictory strategies. So this is how my project came about—the variations in Brecht's reception as a barometer or gauge of how artists defined their own work within the larger culture at specific points in history. To look at different moments in history and to get an idea of an era's outlook regarding radical social and cultural change is fascinating.

Are you unique in your concentration on Brecht, or are there more like you in the Fine Arts?

There are a few studies that make use of Brecht as an art historical lens, mostly essays and chapters of biographic studies of various artists, especially with regard to postwar performance art. But in most cases Brecht is adapted to fit the artist's work, in the worst cases radicalizing otherwise fairly conventional practices. But with a generally renewed interest in art as social practice over the past few years, there have been some really great Brecht projects, like the 2009 Istanbul Biennial, curated by the collective What, How & For Whom, who gave the entire exhibition a Brechtian umbrella, asking about the current relationship between cultural production and its economic and socio-political context in a time of crisis.

We know that you are working on a monograph concerning the post-war American reception of Brecht, could you give us a little overview on what this research entails?

The project (tentatively titled *The Brecht Effect: Strategies of Resistance in Postwar American Art*) examines the ways in which the theories and strategies of Brecht provided the methodological basis for a revolutionary art in America in the 1960s and '70s, and continue to prove essential to politically committed art today. Tracing Brecht's profound impact on three seminal artists of the 1960s and '70s, Martha Rosler, Hans Haacke, and Yvonne Rainer - themselves key models for artists coming of age in the last two decades - the book aims to provide a new history of, and outlook for, the perennial problem of political engagement in art, via the evolving influence of its most overlooked protagonist. I call that influence the Brecht Effect. The project is a triangulation of Brecht's Weimar prose and theater, Vietnam War-era art activism, and art as social practice following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Establishing this relationship through the study of specific historical examples enables the analysis of the limits and possibilities of factors crucial to the continued making of an avant-garde art: class and labor, progress and technology, subjects and audiences.

If you were to summarize Brecht in a nutshell, what is his use value for you?

We live in a world that, despite all of the drastic economic and socio-political changes that have occurred since Brecht started to write, is still largely governed by questions of ownership. Who has access to the means by and ways in which we know and navigate our environment, shape our experience, tell our stories, construct our fantasies? To enable the participation in the production of experience lies, I believe, at the core of Brecht's work, as well as the demand to understand the notions of participation and experience as determined by historic specificity. Hence, Brecht can never just be applied but provides a method of thinking and making in and with one's time. And the continuous return of artists, activists, and intellectuals to Brecht's work is testimony to the practicability of his methods. Brecht has survived fatigues as well as fashions but tends to reappear during times of crisis, when the question arises again of how to tackle problems of representation and communication, of the participation in the making and disseminating of ideas and images, stories and histories.

What texts of Brecht have you found most useful in your research?

The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication has been key to me, since it explicates the idea of transforming experience into an active and dialectical process. It is probably the most canonical Brecht essay: a short, poetic, analytic text that in a very simple and pleasurable manner articulates the very foundations of one of the central mechanisms of modern and contemporary communication, providing the reader with an insight that not only explains this mechanism but allows the reader to reflect on his own position within that structure. That text has a special importance for the arts; there are many examples of "participatory works," ranging from Happenings to more recent trends like "Relational Aesthetics," that, in many cases, remain mere infantilizing gestures of participation. But the "two-way" quality of communication that Brecht demands does not just mean outfitting the radio with a button

to literally talk back into the ether, but the form and content of what comes through the speaker into the living room remains public, hence, allows for an intellectual and emotional engagement with what is presented, leaves room for thought, for critical reflection, for self-attained knowledge.

But *The Brecht Effect* is a history of reception, so I have looked mostly to texts read and referred to by the artists in question, such as “Five Difficulties When Writing the Truth” and “Emphasis on Sport.” I turned to “The Legend of the Dead Soldier” when discussing Martha Rosler’s Vietnam War photo-montages and to Galileo when assessing Hans Haacke’s systemic, scientific analyses of the working and viewing subject in art and the responsibility of the artist as facilitator and mediator of information. But just as amazing and insightful are the various texts about Brecht and writings influenced by him, an example of the latter being Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies*.

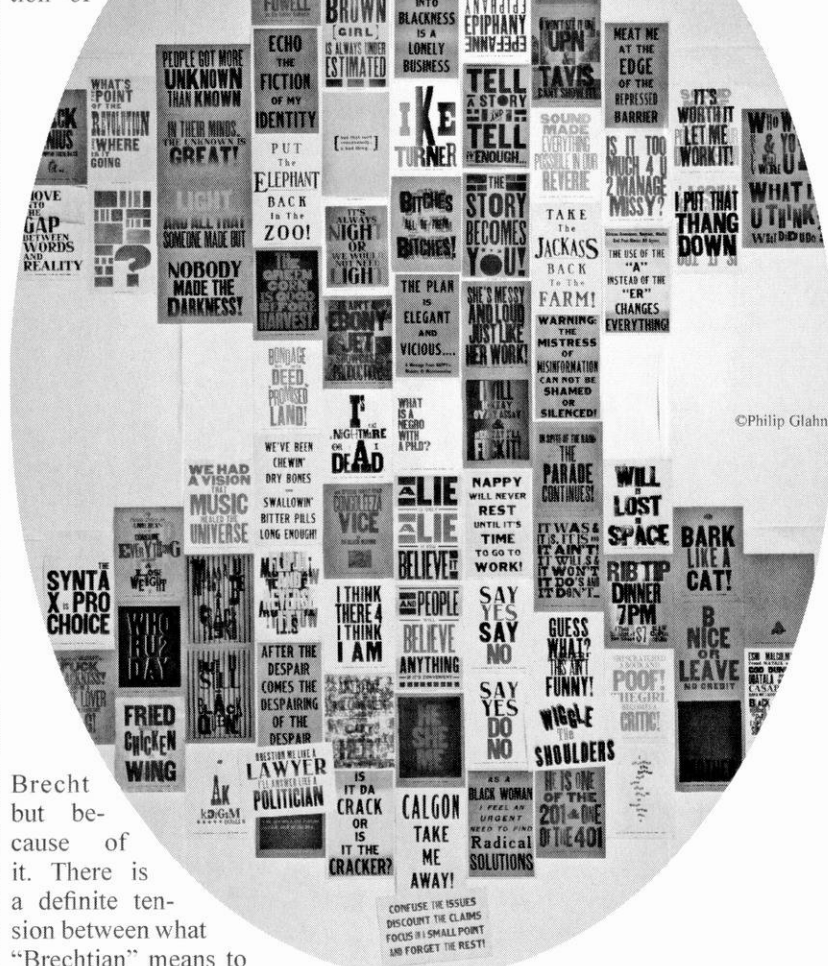
For most Anglo-American scholars, John Willett’s *Brecht on Theatre*, published in 1964, is still the standard. Recently IBS scholars Tom Kuhn (*On Art and Politics*) and Marc Silberman (*On Film and Radio*) have added to Willett’s translation work. Being German, you of course, can work with the *Schriften* in the BFA. Are there any untranslated sources in the *Schriften* that you find useful?

Overall I stuck to the translated texts, mostly those from the Willett book and some that I came across while looking for the availability of Brecht’s writings to American and English-speaking audiences, such as *Die Hauspostille—Manual of Piety*, published by Grove Press in 1966, and “Against Georg Lukács,” which appeared in the *New Left Review* in 1974. I did look to my edition of the *Gesammelte Werke* from Suhrkamp a number of times, though, for a few texts I did not find an English version of, or to double-check a translation, including “Anmerkungen zur Mutter,” “Das Denken als ein Verhalten,” “Preis oder Verdammung des Galilei,” “Rede über die Widerstandskraft der Vernunft,” and *Me-Ti: Buch der Wendungen*.

Clement Greenberg and Roland Barthes are two authors who stand in contrast to the Brecht Effect and published on him. Could you address their contribution to Brecht Studies?

I argue that Greenberg and Barthes are both part of the Brecht Effect, as they both use Brecht at specific moments to forge ways of intellectual and artistic practice. Greenberg is often cast as the disillusioned Marxist who turns his back on revolutionary politics as a consequence of the Hitler-Stalin pact, takes the politics out of art-making and instead advocates a medium-specific, intra-aesthetic, defensive formalism. And while all that is true, rarely does any Greenberg scholar acknowledge the fact that the writer’s first published text was “The Beggar’s Opera. After Marx: Review of *A Penny for the Poor* by Bertolt Brecht,” which appeared in the *Partisan Review* in 1939 before Greenberg published his influential essays “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” (1939) and “Towards A Newer Laocoon” (1940). Or that he followed those latter two texts with “Bertolt Brecht’s Poetry” in 1941. This is precisely the Brecht Effect: rather than serving as a “difficult, powerful counterexample to all the critic wished to see as the main line of avant-garde activity,” as he does for T. J. Clark, Brecht in fact had a decisive and positive formative effect on Greenberg:

Brechtian strategies of estrangement and distanciation, of rejecting any kind of cathartic illusionism in art, made the progressive, committed production of art seem possible. Greenberg became a defender of a formalist avant-garde and its history not despite his admiration of



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Brecht but because of it. There is a definite tension between what “Brechtian” means to certain people and practices in different situations and what we or Brecht himself may consider to be the essence of his work. But this tension, this necessary reflection and self-reflection on the method-as-method rather than as-doctrine, lies at the heart of a dialectical practice. And Barthes’ work, especially his early writings collected in *Critical Essays* and *Mythologies*, are an execution of this practice in

thinking, seeing, and writing. To Barthes, Brecht is the key figure who shows us how to look at the subject of a text and at the text as a subject-making device at the same time. It is a method of reference and self-reference, of being the object and the subject of history at the same time. This is extremely empowering stuff!

We understand that you have interviewed several figures in Brecht Scholarship. Would you care to share some anecdotes?

All of the people I interviewed for this project were extremely generous with their time and insights, including the artists whose work I focus on, Martha Rosler, Hans Haacke, Yvonne Rainer, as well as other *Zeitzeugen* like Ron Clark, the director of the Whitney Independent Study Program; John O'Brian, the editor of Greenberg's writings; and Jeff Kelley, the author of *Childsplay: The Art of Allan Kaprow*. The artists were a bit apprehensive of historicizing themselves, and it was at times difficult to find the way back to Brecht and other influences on their work, especially when those influences were most pertinent a few decades ago.

I had a very memorable conversation with Eric Bentley one afternoon in his Upper West Side apartment. I did not find out much that I hadn't already read in his essays and interviews, but his recollections about Brecht as a person, his outrage at what he called the playwright's "Stalinist worldview," and the Brechtian paraphernalia throughout his house left quite an impression on me. He did tell me about the time at Black Mountain College when Wesley Huss staged Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan* in the spring of 1953. Unfortunately there exist no records of how the play was staged or perceived or who acted in them. Bentley told me that *The Good Woman of Setzuan*'s producers and cast had included John Cage and Merce Cunningham, but upon my inquiry, Cunningham himself had no recollection of such involvement. But it is precisely the absence in the work (or memory) of artists such as Cunningham, John Cage, and Kaprow, who were exposed to Brecht at places like Black Mountain College or at Living Theatre performances, that constitutes the Brecht Effect at a given moment in the history of postwar American art.

One avenue that many pursue is to seek other authors who deliver a Brechtian argument. Individuals do this for reasons of disciplinary preference, etc... Adorno and The Frankfurt School played this role for many decades. Recently it has been Walter Benjamin. Why not just stick with these figures? What does Brecht do better or differently?

I think that a figure like Adorno has at times dominated the art historical discourse because negative dialectics have been a way of critically looking at cultural production at large without needing to adhere to problematic notions of revolutionary change, progress, and utopia. In the absence of a coherent, forward-thinking Leftist politics that actually seeks to look beyond reform, the realities of so-called real-existing Socialist and Communist states and the repeated declaration of capitalism as the best and only viable form of socio-economic governance, the myths of post-industrial society, the absence of class structures, and the transformation of the proletariat as revolutionary subjects into masses of consumers, a negative aesthetic allows for critical insights and

the possibility of analysis without the burden of considering the next step.

To trace the reception of Benjamin's work would be a fascinating project, and I find it indeed curious that essays like "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" and "The Author as Producer," arguably Benjamin's most Brechtian essays and very much indebted to the conversations between the two, are more widely read, disseminated, and known than any of Brecht's writings. But maybe it is not all too surprising considering the perception of Brecht as a staunch Communist or, maybe worse, an opportunist and hypocrite. Even Benjamin's most political writings all carry with them an air of his messianic earlier work, or maybe that's how we think of them. Benjamin took his life in 1940 and never lived to see the consequences of the overt perversion of aestheticized politics, which turned so many postwar artists and intellectuals away from any defined political commitment for years to come. This is ironic, of course, since it was Benjamin who differentiated between the aestheticization of politics and the politicization of art.

Fredric Jameson's, *Brecht and Method* (1998) seems to be playing a large role in the Fine Arts reception of Brecht. Do you draw upon this work?

Yes, absolutely. To my mind, Jameson's book on Brecht is the most rigorous and thorough analysis of why Brecht's work as a mode of thinking, seeing, and acting has retained its relevance to this day. It is all about the "Nützlichkeit," the usefulness of Brecht, which Jameson, in turn, gets from Brecht himself, starting his book with Brecht's famous ruminations about what, if anything, it ought to say on his grave marker: "He made proposals. We carried them out." And to Jameson these proposals are not didactics but "The Great Method"—dialectics.

Every now and then in our conversation, the name of Jacques Rancière, the French philosopher and critic, has popped up. Does his work animate your approach to Brecht or to your discipline?

Jacques Rancière has attained an important status in contemporary art discourse. Many artists, including Paul Chan and Thomas Hirschhorn, have been influenced by his writings, such as *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and *The Politics of Aesthetics*, and some have even made work in a sort of dialogue with Rancière. A few years ago, *Artforum*, arguably the most prominent art magazine today, published a special issue on Rancière, including an interview, artists' responses to his texts and ideas, and an essay titled "The Emancipated Spectator," which has since been published as an extended book version by Verso. In it, Rancière expands on the key points made in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, laying out some of the book's main argument for a discussion of the relationship between the work of art and its viewer. Rancière takes both Brecht and Antonin Artaud as examples of modern ways in which the problem of the viewer or spectator has been addressed in the past, casting what I consider to be a rather simplistic picture of Brecht as a playwright and theoretician of spectatorship. Rancière argues that the notion of the passive spectator who needs to be jolted out of complacency and led onto the path to enlightenment by the artist who in turn is obviously "in the know" is an antiquatedly hierarchical idea that privileges one kind of knowledge, and one kind of knowing,

over another. He makes the argument for an “equality of intelligences,” the need to acknowledge that everyone knows the world in their own way and that only by accepting and exchanging the multiplicity of such knowledges can art be a true vehicle of communication and transformation. I find this a fascinating and very necessary idea but one that I don’t believe to be un-Brechtian. Quite the contrary.

It is an idea that if understood as Brechtian would also acknowledge that an “equality of intelligences” has been a myth in the arts for a long time, and that if it retains such a status will continue to function as what Barthes calls a naturalized language obfuscating mechanisms of ownership and access that stand in the way of actually implementing a politics of equal intelligences. For Brecht it was never as simple as pulling the proverbial wool away from the viewers’ eyes to reveal some essential truth, but he aimed to enable an understanding of one’s own place in the structure of material and immaterial production, a structure that ought to be equal, but in reality is far from it. The intelligences and the experiences of the worker and the peasant, the thief and the prostitute play a central role in Brecht’s oeuvre, both in form and in content. But they struggle not merely to be heard, to take part, but to determine their own function in the greater narrative of our worldview so as to transform reality rather than to preserve the ever-changing images we marvel at in its stead. Alexander Kluge has spoken of a heterotopy of experiences, not as something that needs to be acknowledged (we already live in a commercial universe that revels in exotic facades of authenticating differences and nomadisms, diversity and post-national identities) but as something that as a new constellation of parts articulates a third picture, one that acknowledges but transcends the binary of the ideal and the real.

Before we get to our discussion of the Medium Resistance Exhibition, perhaps you could add a word on the Istanbul Biennale, which ran from September – November 2009 and which used the Brecht/Weill song from the Threepenny Opera, *Wovon lebt der Mensch?* as a conceptual framework for the exhibition. It was through this event that we first started talking to each other, although neither of us was able to attend the event. The best we could do is to share the two texts, the Biennale Guide and Reader, generated by the exhibition. What are your general thoughts on this exhibition and its drive to produce a political aesthetic?

I think it is both timely and long overdue. As you said, I haven’t been able to travel to Istanbul and see the exhibition myself, but I admire the very fact that the event had a concept and that it was this very political, probing concept that put itself, the art shown therein, and global exhibitions like biennials under great scrutiny. It asked hard questions regarding the relation between art and global commerce, an increasingly international art production and display, sponsorship, marketing, and cultural labor. But to me the main question was very simple: art was once considered to be a weapon; can we still, or again, consider it to be one? Do we need to? Brecht seems like a perfect framework for that question. Not that there are any simple answers to this question, but if you think about it, it’s really the only interesting question. Why else would one make art if not to forcefully engage with one’s world and have that engagement result in something other than what is already there? What else than tear down or at least chip away at the inhibiting, stultifying, and repressive parts

of our business-as-usual? Too many of the big exhibitions have either no topic or concept or framework or opt for something esoteric, inclusive, and benign, missing a great opportunity to challenge its artists and audiences, especially since events like the Whitney Biennial or survey shows at the New Museum are extremely well visited but fail to elicit much of a critical discourse. And I don't think that every exhibition needs to be as "political" or invested as the Istanbul Biennial, but I do think the same question, the question of how art functions within a highly charged and contested culture, can be asked in many different ways and approached from a number of angles. And these turn the viewing of art into a potentially more communicative exercise.

Your exhibition, *Medium Resistance*, was listed as an associated independent project with a larger event, *Philagrafika 2010*, the first presentation of what is planned to be possibly a Bi- or tri-ennial event devoted to the graphic arts. The exhibition was entitled *The Graphic Unconscious* and was held at five different leading art centers in Philadelphia. The artistic director, José Roca in his introduction to the Exhibition Guide cites Walter Benjamin from his 1931 essay *A Small History of Photography*: "It is through photography that we first discover the experience of the optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis" and then goes on to ponder, "Could there be a print unconscious? (8-9). Perhaps a tie-in to an earlier question, but Roca cites Benjamin and you cite Brecht. Any thoughts here?

I very much like the questions that Roca and the other curators pose following the Benjamin quote you cite above, and I think that they are closely related to *Medium Resistance*: "Can the ethos of printmaking serve as a framework for understanding contemporary artistic production? Can a close reading of the realm of contemporary art from the perspective of print help illuminate, in some way, our understanding of the world?" I am not so sure that printmaking is an unconscious, but there should be a conscious effort to reevaluate contemporary art according to questions that printmaking poses - questions of seriality, collaboration, dissemination, audience, site, craft, public, and labor. I think that these questions aren't being asked often enough and would surely change the role of artistic production and the way in which art is being taught. We cited Brecht in our catalogue because we felt that these are Brechtian issues.

I especially liked those parts of *Philagrafika* where questions of printmaking transcended the medium, thus challenging image and object production at large: questions of what the appropriate site of display is for a certain piece, who its audience is, what its function and utility are, what its value is. A lot of printmaking aspires to be art, to enjoy the same privileges traditionally associated with high art, such as originality and authenticity, intentionality and aura. I find it much more interesting when art aspires in its artistic function of dialectically producing and reproducing reality to be more like print and craft or at least those qualities in turn canonically associated with the mediums—functional, popular, intelligible, democratic.

Temple University's Tyler School of Art was one of the exhibition sites. On display were seven exhibits: Thomas Kilpper's *State of Control*, a video of his utilization of the floor of a former GPR State building for large-scale prints devoted to the history of surveillance and resistance; Carl Pope's *The Philadelphia Cottage Industry Association Ad Campaign Project*, in which murals and billboards were painted throughout North Philadelphia promoting local businesses; Francesc Ruiz's *Newstand*, a newsstand containing

dozens of covers of imaginary periodicals about Philadelphia; Superflex's Copy Light, an actual workshop site that showed how to produce paper-shaded hanging lamps; the artist Swoon's printed paper figure installations around the city meant to be discovered by accident; Barthélemy Togo's Heartbeat (Philadelphia), which used local newspapers marked up by ink pen to remake and reclaim public discourse; and Young Hae Chang's Heavy Industries' North is North, which used large scale projection of an original text to alienate a typical travel narrative. I really liked this installation. I was astounded by Kilpper's imagination (i.e. to use the floor of a building as a printing press) and also how the video detailed the tremendous amount of craft skill and labor that went into the event. At the same time, I felt somewhat empty because I was only watching a video of the art process and did not have the opportunity to view anything concrete from the process. My other favorite was Togo's Heartbeat. The use of everyday printed matter, the newspaper, remade through the simple intervention of an ink pen came across as a very Brechtian maneuver: simple if not primitive, alienating the ubiquitous and familiar, and empowering the individual as creator (i.e. we create the narratives to begin with and we can re-create them as reader and writer).

What the curator, Sheryl Conkelton, did at the Temple Gallery was amazing. I was very much taken by the Superflex piece because it shed light on many of the things I felt were key in this overall investigation of printmaking as a lens or investigation of artistic production. Copy Light was a workshop where visitors could produce replicas of famous modern designer lamps. And these replicas were based only on the images of those famous designs printed on paper or Mylar and then glued onto a wooden frame. Superflex provided a space where the making of an object of art and design was taken apart into its most literal elements, then reconstructed. In the process, the visitor-maker of the lamp ended up not with a coveted, expensive, licensed duplicate of interior design history but with an understanding of how labor and value relate, as well as craft and consumption, the ability to see in the dark and cultural capital—it spelled out that the utility of the production of such an artifact functions on several levels depending on the combination of elements involved.

Interestingly enough, one of the students involved in the project, in helping the visitors in the making of the actual lamps, who had been struggling with his own working class background and his new-found privileged position as creator-apprentice in an art school, took one of the Superflex lamps and presented it to his professors as his own work, reiterating the project's analysis of artistic labor and alienated, manual labor. Apparently it did not go over quite as planned. Unfortunately I missed it.

MEDIUM RESISTANCE: REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCIES IN PRINT AND CRAFT. CURATED BY PHILIP GLAHN, RICHARD HRICKO, AND NICHOLAS KRIPAL. ICEBOX, CRANE ARTS BUILDING, PHILADELPHIA, PA. MARCH 5 – APRIL 3, 2010

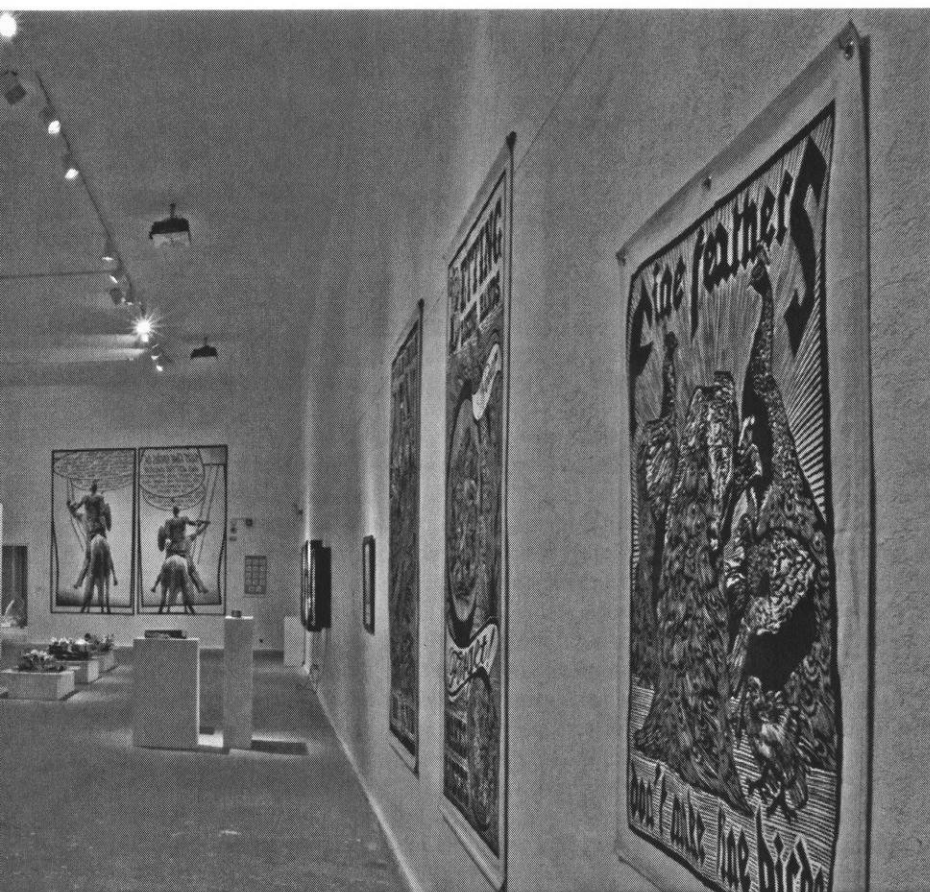
You were co-curator of this event. Tell us how it came about and what your goals were for the exhibition?

When we started this project in the fall of 2007, we were looking at works that literally combined print and craft - artists using clay to print with or putting images on ceramics. That in turn led us to think about the attributes and qualities print and craft as mediums share and where they diverge. And so



© Philip Golan

it occurred to us that both mediums have been traditionally located in a space between or apart from high art on the one hand and mass production on the other. Even though this is an immensely powerful place to be, the discourse around print and craft appeared overwhelmingly conservative, tending to argue either for print and craft as forms of high art or for a somewhat nostalgic, if not outright reactionary notion of artisanship. We wanted to resist this either-or dichotomy (hence the title) and place examples of print and craft in a trajectory of avant-garde production that defines the mediums in a triangulated relation to art and non-art production, hence, to use print and craft in order to articulate, problematize, and transcend the stagnant but ultimately very much alive and practiced myth/stand-off between art and industrial fabrication. In the end all the works contributed to an investigation of art's role within a greater context of the contemporary making of images and imaginaries, ideas and ideals, of how we map social environments and political fantasies, embellish gender, write ethnicity, project the domestic and narrate histories, back-light urban experience and make, by hand, in our minds, through our signs, with machines and distributed through old-fashioned and the most advanced apparatuses of communication, our visions of the world and our place in it.



In your introduction, you cite Brecht's text, *The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication* and his metaphor of communication as a "vast network of pipes." Why do you find this phrase so striking and appropriate?

Beyond the idea of art as a means of dialogue between work and viewer as well as among the audience, the "network of pipes" articulates the extent to which the works in the exhibition establish relationships with specific moments, places, and experiences that lie outside the traditional purview of art. And the quality of the relationships is key here: In Ashley Hunt's *Corrections Project*, for example, the viewer has to navigate the American penal system as a complex history of incarceration that takes into account questions of demographics and education, privatization and commerce, individual and public responsibilities, mechanisms of control and surveillance, shifting ideologies of ethics, morals, and justice, the perspectives of inmates, victims, and corrections officers. The project never merely utilizes a singular narrative or point-of-view to tell the story of *Corrections*, thereby starkly contrasting and challenging the ways in which we're used to imagining the stories of crime and punishment - via simplistic, symbolic projections onto ancient cop-and-robber

psycho-stencils that range from empathetic, transcendental-existentialist ruminations to the absurd, gritty reality-spectacle of the COPS pseudo-documentaries. And this is what we meant by taking a look at the exhibited works' articulation of labor: to relate the experience produced by the works to other ways in which images and things, ideas and stories are made—who makes them, and how, with what means, and for whom. This is how art-making is essentially about class as it pertains to questions of who owns and has access to the production of knowledge. And this is how the notion of avant-garde art retains its contemporary validity and urgency.

Bruce Metcalf reviewed the exhibition for American Craft Magazine. He took umbrage with your introduction, but not the show itself, citing the "leftist rhetoric" that sounded as if it could come from Mao's Little Red Book. Do you think if you had cited Benjamin instead of Brecht, he would have proclaimed you a democratic citizen of the world?

It was frustrating that Mr. Metcalf was not able to do precisely what we aimed to with this exhibition: to both scrutinize and look beyond conventional ideas of art, craft, and other forms of production. Stating that our attempt to cast print and ceramics as craft "is not so provocative as it might seem," Metcalf went on to praise the exhibition as an argument for "the continued relevance of skilled work in the visual arts." This precisely the problem: he reinscribes the most conservative definition of skill onto craft rather than exploring its actual and potential implications at a time when the quality, circumstances, and sites of material and immaterial labor have drastically changed due to technological innovation and political upheaval. What he considers the left-leaning agenda of the catalogue essay is merely a modest attempt to consider, as part of the overall exhibition, what "skill" and "work" mean in art, in craft, in advertising, on the Internet, in a sweatshop and a community garden, at GM, Fox News, and Walmart. No, new this is not. But as Metcalf himself demonstrates, to think craft beyond its tiresome function of having to serve as the refuge of the individually "well-made" - whether that quality is bestowed by hand or photoshop or concept, where "skill" is the authentic artistic and artisanal affirmation of a neo-liberal humanism - appears quite radical after all. It just goes to show how art and politics, to this day, are thought of by many to be best kept nicely separated.

I enjoyed the exhibition, particularly Pope's project. It was quite effective how he used very simple stenciled posters to make you stop, think, and then think again, saying to yourself, "Wait a second. Did I just see that? That's hilarious, but should I be laughing? And, do I really think that about race?" And then, a bit later, I read Pope's own thoughts on the work in Exhibit Guide:

With the use of humor together with an unconventional narrative organization, it is my intention to upset the ways in which the viewer read and construct meaning from written texts by forcing him/her to provide the context and the subtext with and between the signs (39).

Perhaps I'm going a bit far here, but I thought both Medium Resistance and the Tyler Exhibit of Philagrafika were stunningly, through and through... Brechtian. Better than most theater productions of Brecht plays, these exhibition sites seemed to be infused

with a Brechtian ethos that ran through the biographical as well of the theoretical of the little, sex-addled, stinky master from Augsburg. To go further: perhaps better Brechtian Stücke than Brecht himself even conceived. Of course, no actors on stage, but the exhibitions created living, historicized stages filled with gestus-ridden objects and texts and, at the same time, an audience (at least me) that was awake and ready to utilize the amateur expertise of the sports spectator. To harken back to Street Scene again, perhaps the Brechtian is an empty stage, devoid of human actors, but leaving space for the audience to intervene onstage and become the actors themselves.

I agree. I think that Brecht's actors are merely means to get the people on stage, or better, to extend the stage into the audience in order to ultimately dissolve the separation. And this goes back to my remarks regarding Rancière: I think that a Brechtian art or project is less concerned with turning people into actors or teaching people how to be actors than to be actors—not to hand out weapons but to turn into tools the things, experiences, fantasies one already has and participates in, to take ownership, to declare, to make use of. But that also means to know and to understand that there are a number of connected ways of knowing, especially more than a right and a wrong way, a true and a false, a mainstream and an alternative way.

During the course of the evening, you asked me what was the Brecht play that really delivered Brechtian ideas in the best and most effective method. My response was that the best Brecht plays are probably the *Schriften*. And I think your exhibition extends the idea. But what a paradox. Brecht is mostly known as a playwright, and when looking for the greatest use value of Brecht (or to use computer parlance, the "killer app" for Brecht) we usually look to the plays. These are the most handy references, and also to be business-like, they are the most brandable and consumable references. Yet, maybe they are the weakest link in that amorphous thing we call the Brechtian?

Maybe they are the weakest link because plays are most easily associated with Brecht - it must be hard for a director to stage a Brechtian play these days that does not elicit a premeditated response to any sort of strangeness, where one identifies as canonically "Brechtian" any attempt at skewing the conventionally unconventional, which somewhat negates the *Verfremdungseffekt* as a strategy. At the points where Brecht or Brechtian works transcend the possibility of reinscribing categories but instead foil expectations, no longer affirming that which we already know, that's where "the Brechtian" attains true usefulness. That is the reason the Brecht Effect is so manifold and complex, necessarily historical and always in development, which is also why I think Brecht is harder to use as an example or method of critical intellectual and artistic pursuit than many other thinkers, writers, and makers, and why people reflexively turn to his plays, which appear to be, paradoxically, quintessentially Brechtian.

DIALOGISCHE
FORTSETZUNG:

FRAUEN IM THEATER:
GESPRÄCH MIT SOFIA SIDIROPOULOU
BERLIN DEN 13. JUNI 2010

MARGARET SETJE-EILERS
SOFIA SIDIROPOULOU

Frau Sidiropoulou, Sie sind Leiterin des Abenddienstes beim Berliner Ensemble. Sie kommen aber aus dem Musiktheater. Erzählen Sie bitte etwas über Ihren Weg ins Berliner Ensemble.

Ich bin im Raum Stuttgart groß geworden, habe in Wien Musical studiert und nach meinem Studium als Schauspielerin und Musicaldarstellerin gearbeitet. Nach einigen Jahren habe ich dann den Entschluss gefasst, diesen Beruf nicht mehr auszuüben und -auf zu neuen Ufern - etwas anderes zu machen.

So bin ich kurzerhand, ich war damals noch in Wien, nach Berlin gezogen, auf gut Glück. Hier habe ich dann erst mal ein Jahr lang gejobbt und meine Gesangsausbildung fortgesetzt, einfach weil ich gerne singe. Irgendwann habe ich mich dann an verschiedenen Theatern und Kultureinrichtungen beworben, nicht auf eine ganz bestimmte Stelle, ich war für vieles offen. Das Berliner Ensemble hat mich dann zum Vorstellungsgespräch eingeladen und ich hatte großes Glück. Zunächst als Vertretung eines erkrankten Mitarbeiters und anschließend wurde ich stellvertretende Abenddienstleiterin.

Sie beaufsichtigen eine ganze Menge Mitarbeiter im Abenddienst.

Wir haben circa zwanzig Mitarbeiter, überwiegend Studenten, die dem Abenddienst des Hauses angehören.

Das ist sozusagen ein zweites Ensemble, das am Berliner Ensemble auch täglich auftritt.

Ja, so könnte man das ausdrücken. Präsenz ist auch bei uns, beim Abenddienst, wichtig.

Alle Mitarbeiter sind erstaunlich gut informiert - über die Stücke, die Darsteller, die Gäste, die kommen. Ich habe in meinen Gesprächen mit den Mitarbeitern des Abenddienstes selber gesehen, wie viel eigenes Interesse sie mitbringen. Sie haben meistens die Inszenierungen schon gesehen und wissen Bescheid, wenn man sie zum Beispiel über eine bestimmte Schauspielerin etwas fragt. Haben die Mitarbeiter eine besondere Vorbereitung?



©Margaret Setje-Eilers

Nein, Vorbereitung gibt es keine. Die meisten unserer Mitarbeiter haben sich am Theater beworben, weil sie theaterbegeistert sind, unter ihnen sind z.B. Schriftsteller, Studenten der Literatur- und Musikwissenschaften oder kommen aus anderen Bereichen. Sie alle möchten gerne das eigene Interesse oder ihre Passion für das Theater mit der Arbeit verbinden. Tagsüber wird studiert und abends ist man im Theater. Die meisten arbeiten an mehreren Tagen in der Woche und fühlen sich mit dem Haus sehr verbunden. Der Abenddienst gehört sozusagen dem BE an, wir sind ein Teil davon, dank unseres Intendanten. Unsere Mitarbeiter

arbeiten ausschließlich hier und nicht z.B. abwechselnd noch an anderen Theatern. Das wirkt sich positiv auf die gesamte Atmosphäre aus, die Zuschauer treffen auf gut informiertes, engagiertes und freundliches Empfangspersonal. Wir freuen uns, wenn unsere Gäste diesen Eindruck von einem Besuch im BE mit nach Hause nehmen.

Nach einer Vorstellung mit sehr vielen Schülern im Publikum haben wir uns kürzlich über Frank Wedekinds Frühlingserwachen (Claus Peymann, 2008) unterhalten. Sie haben als Leiterin des Abenddienstes eine besondere Perspektive, denn Sie sehen auch wie das Publikum auf die Stücke reagiert. Seit 1890, als Wedekind das Stück schrieb, hat die Jugend teilweise andere Probleme, trotzdem hat das Stück genau getroffen.

Ja, wir hatten uns über die Aktualität von Stücken unterhalten. Ein Shakespeare ist und bleibt aktuell, ebenso ein Lessing und so ist es natürlich mit Wedekinds Frühlings Erwachen auch. Sie bleiben aktuell, weil die Themen bleiben. Die jeweilige Zeit verändert ihr Gesicht, ihre Ausdrucksweise, im Wesen aber bleiben sie dieselben. Daher trifft das Stück auch heute noch. Eine Frage war, ob die Jugendlichen, die das Stück sehen, sich mit den Figuren und der Geschichte tatsächlich identifizieren können. Regt sich etwas bei ihnen oder sind sie so abgebrüht, dass sie gar nicht mehr wahr – oder annehmen können, was da passiert? Ich kann immer wieder beobachten, welche Reaktionen bei den Schülern entstehen und wie sie diese Geschichte erleben. Auch wenn es manchmal turbulent zugeht, wenn viele Schüler eine Vorstellung besuchen, so trägt der Eindruck, sie hätten nichts mit bekommen vom Stück und seiner Geschichte. Man sieht und hört es dann am Schlussapplaus, dass sie sehr wohl was mitbekommen haben und auch berührt sind.

Die Darsteller sind in diesem Stück nicht so viel älter als die Schüler. Die Begeisterung der Schüler in dieser Vorstellung hat direkt auf das Geschehen auf der Bühne gewirkt, nicht?

Ja, durchaus. Die Schauspieler spüren natürlich die Reaktionen des Publikums. Entsprechend lebendig und erfrischend war auch das Publikumsgespräch im Anschluss. Besonders interessant fand ich die zahlreichen Fragen der Schüler, weil man hier unmittelbar merkt, wie die heutige Generation auf bestimmte Themen reagiert, welche Meinungen und Sichtweisen sie hat.

Sagen Sie bitte etwas zu den Publikumsgesprächen, die ich besonders anregend finde, und bitte auch zu den Einführungen zu den Stücken.

Bei der Einführung durch den Dramaturgen oder die Dramaturgin Verfahren die Zuschauer z.B. einiges über die Entstehungsgeschichte des Stücks, die Biografie des Autors, die Inszenierung etc. und können natürlich auch Fragen stellen. Im Publikumsgespräch geht es darum, den Zuschauern die Gelegenheit zu geben, sich in Anwesenheit der Schauspieler, Dramaturgen und des Regisseurs ihre Meinung und Fragen zu äußern- und Antworten zu bekommen. Das ist dann sehr interessant und spannend.

Welche Auswirkung haben die Publikumsgespräche auf die Inszenierung? Wird sie geändert?

Das kann ich mir nicht vorstellen. Wichtig sind sie dennoch. Ein Stück braucht Resonanz.

Sie sind in diesen Publikumsgesprächen wie auch immer überall im Theater grazios, effizient aber nicht aufdringlich anwesend. Erzählen Sie, wie sieht Ihr Arbeitstag aus, damit Sie alles organisatorisch und elegant fertig bringen?

Mein Arbeitsbereich umfasst alles Organisatorische im Vorderhaus. Mein Arbeitstag beginnt in der Regel am Nachmittag und endet, wenn alle Zuschauer das Haus verlassen haben. Ich beginne damit, dass ich alles für die Vorstellung vorbereite, die Programme für den Verkauf, überprüfe alle Spielstätten, ich mache sozusagen alles flott für den Abend. Dann ist noch Zeit für das Administrative.

Haben Sie besondere Treffen mit den Mitarbeitern oder sind sie so geübt, dass sie einfach kommen und machen, was sie sollen?

Besondere Treffen gibt es keine. Wir sammeln uns täglich eine Stunde vor Vorstellungsbeginn, dann beginnt das "Briefing". Was ist heute zu beachten, gibt es Umbesetzungen, wer nimmt welche Position ein, etc...

Sie haben sicherlich ab und zu berühmte Gäste, Schauspieler und Politiker im Publikum. Wie gehen Sie mit diesen Menschen um, die vielleicht nicht so gesehen werden wollen? Kündigen Sie ihren Besuch bei den Mitarbeitern an?

Nein, das mache ich eigentlich nicht.

Erkennen Sie diese Gäste immer, wenn sie ins Foyer kommen?

Bisher ja. Das läuft eigentlich recht unspektakulär ab. Man ist anwesend und auch vorbereitet. Aber das sollte auf möglichst unaufdringliche Art und Weise vorstatten gehen. Man weiß, das sind die Bodyguards, man weiß, wo die Herrschaften sitzen. Sie sind da und es gibt natürlich erhöhte Aufmerksamkeit.

Dafür haben Sie aber eine besondere Begabung.

Auch bekannte Persönlichkeiten möchten, nachdem sie empfangen werden, einfach einen unbeschwerten, schönen Theaterabend verbringen.

Mit so vielen Menschen im Haus, gibt es auch Probleme unter den Zuschauern, gesundheitlich und mit falschen Plätzen und so weiter. Einiges habe ich schon beobachtet. Sie lösen diese Fälle schnell und äußerst höflich.

Das ist sehr wichtig. Der Zuschauer kommt ins Theater und möchte einen schönen Abend verbringen. Gibt es ein Problem, bemühen wir uns, das zur Zufriedenheit unserer Gäste zu lösen.

Also treten Sie auch jeden Abend auf, nicht auf der Bühne, sondern im anderen Raum.

Ja, so kann man das sagen, man wird gesehen.

Bleiben Ihnen besondere Probleme oder Erfolge in Erinnerung?

Ja, durchaus. In jeder Hinsicht. Das Positive überwiegt glücklicherweise. Besonders freue ich mich, wenn Gäste das

Gespräch suchen, diese Begegnungen sind für mich persönlich das Salz in der Suppe und daran erinnere ich mich immer wieder gern zurück. Oder z.B. über Wiedergefundenes, das ein Gast verloren hat. Einmal kam ich mir vor wie Sherlock Holmes, auf dem Boden kriechend, suchte ich nach einem Brillanten und fand ihn. Einer Dame war er aus der Ringfassung gefallen.

Sie verbringen fast jeden Nachmittag und Abend im Theater. Gehen Sie auch in Ihrer Freizeit ins Theater? Ins Berliner Ensemble zum Beispiel?

Nicht so oft wie es meinem eigentlichen Interesse entspricht. Das kommt wohl daher, dass man auch mal einen Abend nicht im Theater verbringen möchte.

Vielleicht können Sie mir auch zu dieser Gelegenheit sagen, in welchen Musicals Sie aufgetreten sind.

Nun, das ist schnell erzählt. Neben eigenen Solo-Abenden wirkte ich u.a. in Anatevka am Theater an der Wien und bei The Buddy Holly Story in Hamburg mit. Als Schauspielerin war ich tätig u.a. am Volkstheater in Wien, der Villacher Studiobühne, im Klagenfurter Ensemble, beim steirischen Herbst.

Man spürt Ihre große Begeisterung für diese Theaterwelt, wenn man Sie beim Berliner Ensemble sieht. Sie freuen sich mit dem Publikum auf den täglichen Theaterabend.

Ja, das stimmt. Die Menschen verlassen ein Haus in einem anderen Zustand, kann man fast sagen, als sie gekommen sind. Auch ich bin Zuschauer, wenn ich ins Theater gehe. Ich sehe ein Stück und etwas passiert ja dann mit mir, ich erlebe, also reagiere ich und etwas verändert sich. Diese Veränderungen bei den Menschen zu sehen, das ist interessant. Die unterschiedlichen Meinungen, die Kommentare. Begegnungen finden statt. Und Bewegung. Alles ist dann in Bewegung. Das finde ich toll!

Jeden Abend so viele Kommentare... Als Leiterin des Abenddienstes schauen Sie mit einer einzigartigen Perspektive in das Theaterleben am Berliner Ensemble. Glücklicherweise haben Sie uns durch dieses Gespräch auch ein wenig hereinblicken lassen. Vielen Dank.

ICH HABE SHAKESPEARE, ANTONIUS UND KLEOPATRA, GELESEN, EIN PRACHTVOLLES DRAMA, DER MICH SOGAR ERGRIFF. JE MEHR DIE HANDLUNG IM MITTELPUNKT SCHEINT, DESTO REICHER UND KRÄFTIGER KÖNNEN SICH DIE TRÄGER ENTWICKELN.

SIE HABEN KEIN GESICHT, SIE HABEN NUR STIMME, SIE REDEN NICHT IMMER, SIE ANTWORTEN NUR, SIE HABEN DIE HANDLUNG NICHT WIE EINE GUMMIHAUT, SONDERN WIE EIN WEITES FALTIGES GEWAND UM SICH. WO DIE HANDLUNG KRÄFTIG IST, DA MÜSSEN DIES MÄNNER NICHT WANDELNDE MUSEEN SEIN, MAN MUSS SICH NICHT AN IHNEN SATT FRESSEN KÖNNEN, ES IST AUCH NOCH DAS STÜCK DA. DAS MEDIUM ZWISCHEN ZUSCHAUER UND BÜHNE IST: DIE SEHNSUCHT, ZU SEHEN. JE DEUTLICHER EINE GESTALT IN DEN EINZELHEITEN, DESTO GERINGER DIE VERBINDUNG MIT DEM SEHENDEN. ICH LIEBE DIESES STÜCK UND SEINE MENSCHEN.

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE MARNA KING THEATRE COLLECTION OF GERMAN THEATRE MATERIALS DONATED TO DIE AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE, ARCHIV DARSTELLEND KUNST IN MAY OF 2006 IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING AND RESEARCH. ITS CONTENTS DOCUMENT PREMIERES OF SPECIFIC GERMAN THEATRE PERFORMANCES IN PRODUCTION FROM THE YEARS 1968 TO 2000. DOCUMENTATION IS LIMITED TO STADTS/STAATSTHEATER AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT THEATRE VENUES SUCH AS THE MÜNCHNER KAMMERSPIELE AND THE MAXIM GORKY THEATRE IN BERLIN. DOCUMENTATION VARIES BUT THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION WERE SOUGHT FOR INCLUSION: ARTISTIC TEAM AND CAST LISTS, IMPORTANT LOCAL AND REGIONAL NEWSPAPER REVIEWS, *THEATER HEUTE* AND *THEATER DER ZEIT* REVIEWS AND ARTICLES, INTERVIEWS, ORIGINAL PREMIERE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PRODUCTION AND KING'S EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF PERFORMANCES IN TERMS OF STAGING AND PRODUCTION ELEMENTS. 479 SPECIFIC PERFORMANCES ARE DOCUMENTED. EACH IS PACKAGED IN ITS OWN FILE FOLDER. 1,037 ORIGINAL PRODUCTION PHOTOGRAPHS, 193 THEATRE PROGRAMS, AND KING'S INFORMAL INTERVIEWS AND CONVERSATIONS WITH THEATRE ARTISTS, ARE FILED SEPARATELY.

THE FOCUS OF THE COLLECTION:

THE MATURATION OF A MONTAGED, COLLAGED ASSOCIATIONAL THEATRE AESTHETIC AS EVIDENCED IN REPRESENTATIVE PRODUCTIONS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY FROM 1968-1992; PERFORMANCES OF PRODUCTIONS THAT KING VIEWED AND DOCUMENTED IN THE FRG FROM 1981-1993 (155 FILES).

THE ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTATION OF PRODUCTIONS FROM THE GESTATION PERIOD OF THIS AESTHETIC KING DID NOT VIEW FROM 1968-1983 INCLUDES THEATRE REVIEWS, OTHER PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS, ORIGINAL PREMIERE PHOTOGRAPHS AND HER NOTATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTIONS (239 FILES).

DOCUMENTATION OF PRODUCTIONS VIEWED AND DOCUMENTED IN THE FORMER GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC FROM 1992-1996 TRACE THE TRANSITION AND EVOLUTION OF DIFFERING ASSOCIATIONAL, PRESENTATIONAL POST-BRECHTIAN THEATRE MODES FOLLOWING THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL. THE FIRST PHASE OF THIS STUDY CONCENTRATES ON PRODUCTIONS BY MAJOR THEATRES IN THE FORMER "EAST BERLIN" (43 FILES).

THE SECOND PHASE OF FORMER GDR STUDY IS LIMITED TO PRODUCTIONS OF THE FOUR THEATRES WITHIN STADTSTHEATER SCHAUSPIEL LEIPZIG VIEWED AND DOCUMENTED DURING ITS 1995-1999 SEASONS. THIS SPAN OF TIME REPRESENTS THE FIRST FIVE YEARS UNDER ITS NEW INTENDANT WOLFGANG ENGEL, A MAJOR OPPOSITIONAL DIRECTOR FROM THE GDR IN THE 1980'S. ENGEL, HIS DIRECTORS AND ACCOMPANYING DRAMATURGICAL AND ARTISTIC TEAMS, ASSEMBLED FROM THE "TWO GERMANY'S," USED THE EXPLORATORY PRESENTATIONAL MODES DESCRIBED ABOVE TO PRESENT A REPERTORY OF PLAYS PAST AND THE PRESENT THAT COULD SERVE AS VEHICLES TO EXPLORE CONTEMPORARY ISSUES AND PROBLEMS OF THE CITIZENS OF LEIPZIG AND THE SURROUNDING REGION (42 FILES).

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THE ARCHIVE IS A FASCINATING COLLECTION OF MATERIAL THAT TELLS A NUMBER OF STORIES, INCLUDING: A) THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ASSOCIATIONAL THEATER AESTHETIC IN THE LATTER PART OF THE 20TH CENTURY; AND B) THE THEATER HISTORIES OF THE GRD / FRG BEFORE THE FALL OF THE WALL; AND C) THE TWO GERMANYS AFTER THE FALL. YOUR OWN PROFESSIONAL STORY IS EMBEDDED SOMEWHERE IN THIS COLLECTION; AND THIS STORY IS OF INTEREST FOR OUR READERS. SO, BEFORE WE GET TO THE ARCHIVE, LET'S TRY AND TRACE YOUR CAREER ARC.

I became fascinated by theater in performance at an early age. My original intent had been to pursue a broad program of study in theater in order to become a director. Frequent positions as a stage manager and assistant director allowed me to directly study the process of directing. After realizing deficits in my own background, which limited my ability to create conceptual structures crucial to the embracing point of view needed by a director, I turned to the component within that process which most interested me and for which I had a natural talent – costume design. Since the actor/image symbiosis is present within each moment of the drama, a costume designer is still at the center of the communication process.



1978 SEEMS TO BE A PIVOTAL MOMENT IN YOUR CAREER: DIETER GIESING, FORMER OBERSPIELLEITER OF THE MUNICH_KAMMERSPIELE, AND THE DEUTSCHES SCHAUSPIELHAUS HAMBURG, CAME TO YOUR DEPARTMENT AS A GUEST DIRECTOR FOR A PRODUCTION OF SPRING AWAKENING FOR WHICH YOU SERVED AS THE COSTUME DESIGNER. THIS EXPERIENCE INFLUENCES YOUR INTEREST IN GERMAN THEATER TRADITIONS AND SPECIFICALLY "ASSOCIATIONAL THEATER AESTHETIC." COULD YOU DESCRIBE THIS TRANSFORMATIVE MOMENT WHEN YOU REALIZE THERE WAS ANOTHER WAY OF DOING COSTUME DESIGN? WHAT DID GIESING SAY OR THAT MADE THE FIGURATIVE LIGHT BULBS GO ON.

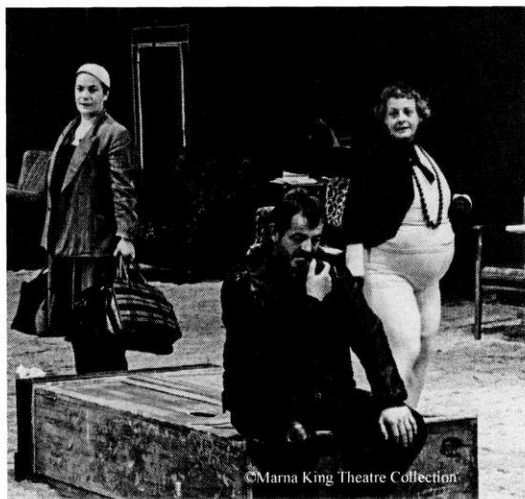
Giesing brought with him a model of the German scene design he had privately commissioned, an evocative design consisting of a high wooden fence, wide angled with a split opening in the center; attached to its back a "boardwalk" for the young to use for egress and horseplay. Floor action in front of the fence served for all other scenes with only occasional stage props to aid a scene. Except for my design of turn of the century children's school clothing, I was asked to rethink the costumes in more contemporary period modes to fit iconic character or group definitions of behavior. Our final choices remained fluid and spontaneous until opening night. For the first time I had an individual voice not dictated by the script. In fact all elements which the audience saw and heard had a separate voice which added additional meanings for each person in the audience to receive and factor into the collaged

whole. I had only questions as to how I, and my colleagues, could develop such provocative processes for communication. The answers I sought were in Germany.

I arrived in Munich in 1981. Geising had graciously consented to serve as my informal mentor. At the Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel Residenz Theater I watched the last six weeks of his rehearsals for *In der Sache J. Robert Oppenheimer* by Heiner Kipphardt. Giesing invited me to production discussions in the Cantina and at informal dinner sessions. He introduced me to theatre directors and designers with whom he worked at the Residenz Theater and elsewhere. For the first three of my visits to Germany he suggested key productions I should see throughout the

country while never told me why.

I had to find the answers and define the theater aesthetic I was experiencing in my own terms. After I had learned which were deemed significant theater premieres and why I wished to see them, I was on my own.



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COULD YOU SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THIS CONCEPT OF ASSOCIATIONAL THEATER AESTHETIC? WHAT CATEGORIES DOES IT OPERATE THROUGH, UNDER, WITH? DOES IT OPERATE AGAINST OTHER AESTHETIC TRADITIONS?

The expectation of associational theater is to engage each audience member in an individual or communal dialogue - the driving force

in the theater of both Germanys during the late 20th century. The ultimate intention of what is called Imagist Theater in the FRG is to place contemporary man on stage so that the audience member can see himself in relation to his own present condition. The condition explored may be political, social or psychic. The viewer is challenged to actively think and react to what is being communicated. The physicalization of the production is developed through a contrapuntal relationship to the script. Characters, staging, sound and all scenic elements - often metaphorically or symbolically - project meaning in a collaged, montaged manner. Linear logic and expectation is thus replaced by an assimilation of the above. This means no two audience members will perceive what they have experienced in exactly the same way. The nature of the individual's response at any one moment can be intellectual, emotional or visceral. The glue that holds the elements of the production together in this Regie Theater is the director's singular angle of vision on the issues being explored. Often a production dramaturge works closely with the director.

A panoply of theories and strategies are selectively used as stimulus. These include systems of thought such as post-modern theory and existentialism, theatre strategies such those of Brecht, Artaud, Beckett, also Robert Wilson and influential visual imagery from art and theater of all ages or of specific artists such as Joseph Beuys and Edward Hopper. Neo-German Expressionism can also act as a prism. Does this aesthetic operate against other aesthetic traditions? Not necessarily. Each

production varies as to how it "references" other aesthetic practices. What is different is the freedom to choose whatever techniques seem most effective for communication in each particular production.

1 1989 SEEMS TO BE ANOTHER PERSONAL AND HISTORICAL TURNING POINT FOR YOU. YOU RECEIVED A FULBRIGHT TO STUDY IN GERMANY: WHAT WAS THE OBJECT OF YOUR RESEARCH? OF COURSE DIE WENDE OCCURS IN THE SAME YEAR, SO HOW DID THIS CHANGE THE SCOPE AND DIRECTION OF YOUR RESEARCH?

One of my major goals that Spring was to explore and collect information on the FRG Theater of the 1970s as it developed the new associational aesthetic. I discovered past photographs and theater reviews were insufficient for me to develop a viable opinion of any production for which I had not been present as an audience member. I needed to be able to use my own experiences as a sounding board. Also, after viewing over forty current productions in the 1989-90 season, I concluded the driving need of FRG theater makers to reach their audiences with the essential truths and painful dilemmas of the current Zeitgeist had diminished greatly. The theater aesthetic developed to support that earlier need to communicate now often appeared empty and pretentious in performance. Scenography had expanded to fill the void in significant dramaturgy. The significance of Die Wende in theatre terms meant the gates were now open to productions that heretofore had not been accessible. Everyone including myself could hardly wait to go East. The book I had intended to write was now only half the story.

YOU BECAME AN ADVOCATE FOR ASSOCIATIONAL THEATER AESTHETIC IN AMERICA. HOW WERE YOUR EFFORTS RECEIVED IN UNIVERSITY THEATER AND AMERICAN THEATER IN GENERAL?

Since my venues for communication were limited to university teaching, presentations in academic forums and articles in academic journals, I can only comment directly on educational theater in the U.S. In my own department reception varied. In the disciplines within theatre in production, acceptance steadily increased, especially as theater practices elsewhere became more flexible. I taught my graduate students associational methods of approach to design as well as traditional modes. The nature of the result in production depended on the flexibility of the director. In general, understanding makes possible future experimentation. Since the associational approach was initially foreign to many, my presentations and many of my articles consisted of chronologically revealing a German production I had seen through the professional photos taken of it in order to demonstrate the potential relationship and dynamism of related elements within. Only then could I express personal viewpoints. I've observed over the years that many associational techniques have gradually been selectively adopted by American theater but often without the compelling desire to create a dialogue with an audience.

YOU SEEMED TO HAVE COME TO BRECHT LARGELY THROUGH STAGE RECEPTION (AS A PROFESSIONAL AND AS A SPECTATOR) RATHER THAN THROUGH HIS WRITINGS. YOU MENTIONED SPECIFICALLY TWO 1981 PRODUCTIONS, MUTTER COURAGE UND IHRE KINDER IN BOCHUM WITH ALFRED KIRCHNER AS DIRECTOR AND BAAL IN SCHAUSPIEL KÖLN DIRECTED BY JÜRGEN FLIMM. WHAT DID THESE PRODUCTIONS DO?

Both demonstrated for me the advantage associational theater possesses when ap-

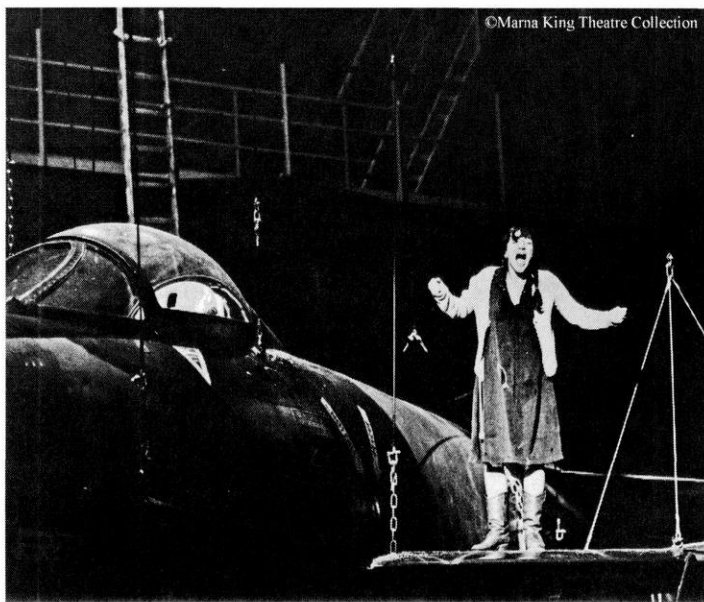
plied to Brecht in production. Each links the force of a Brecht's parable to the present disquietudes and anxieties of its audience. I've chosen the *Mutter Courage* production as a demonstration.

In 1981, Germans feared newly-elected American President Ronald Reagan, in consultation with General Alexander Haig as Secretary of State, might trigger World War III. If so, both Germanys expected to be at the epicenter of the nuclear conflagration. The photograph on the cover of the *Mutter Courage* book-length program depicts exhausted American soldiers sprawled on a Vietnam hillside, the title beneath, *Neue Kriegsfibel*. Modern war images of all the recent or current wars illustrate Brecht's *Kriegsfibel* within. On one side of the stage a large TV continually cycles in English, then German, the launching of a huge nuclear missile. The actors casually enter and lounge about on armchairs and wooden folding seats. After an actor spray paints "für den dritten Weltkrieg" on a blackboard he ambles to center to be-

gin examining the Brecht text aloud, the cast then gathers around a rehearsal piano to sing the first Brecht song. The stage is the setting, supplemented only by small props and costumes from storage.

The narrative unfolds simply without Brecht's text introductions. *Mutter Courage* is a strong, vibrant modern woman never cowed by the challenges she faces. Comic yet

macabre touches surprise. The priest hurriedly throws his robe under the piano lid as the Protestant army overruns the camp. An older now prosperous prostitute, Yvette, enters to visit with Courage wearing a costume fat suit, adorned only by a necklace. Death appears before the execution of Swiss Cheese. This seedy clown figure in white mask and shabby street attire becomes the onstage observer, often from within his small, portable pup tent. After intermission he watches from a perch high above. Fat, linked German sausages hang around his neck. Death sings one Brecht song and at times introduces key scenes as a master of ceremonies. The visceral moment no audience member will forget is the arrival from above of a genuine Fiat 19 fighter plane from the last war slowly descending from the fly loft. We see the cables that suspend it. No matter that it is an authentic killing machine used by the Germans in the 1940's. Katrin savagely beats on the plane with a wooden mallet to vent her frustrations and to warn the town. As enemy soldiers close in on



her, she scrambles onto one wing and is killed with a single bullet.

ARE THERE OTHER PRODUCTIONS, BRECHT OR NON-BRECHT, WHICH WERE PARTICULARLY HELPFUL FOR YOU IN UNDERSTANDING BRECHT?

Yes, many. Most productions of West and East German theater of these years are influenced in some way by Brecht's staging techniques. All demonstrate the concept that the drama is presented on a theater stage – no make believe. The 1984 premiere of Sophocles' *Oedipus* at Schauspiel Köln, directed by Jürgen Gosch, wove Brechtian and Beckettian precepts into a fascinating web. Gosch, a theater exile from the GDR, had been trained as an actor in Brecht precepts at Schauspielschule Berlin. Study the Oedipus, Jocasta, chorus photo. Placed in the center of a

cavernous black
void are the
tiny



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structure signifying the pal-

Jocasta must navigate all entrances and
There is no escape.

steps
and tent
ace. Oedipus and
exits on these treacherous steps.

The figures dominate the purposely-dwarfed scenic piece. Karl von Appen's designs for original Berliner Ensemble productions often used this distortion of scale as a device. The only other scenic element, that of the slim, cone like arrow pointed directly at Oedipus, graphically demonstrate his pre-ordained fate. The three principal masked actors, wearing identical sheet wraps, reference *Antike* Greek theater. However, Gosch completely destroys the accustomed dignity of Sophocles' powerful characters by placing over-sized grotesque *Fasnacht* masks atop disproportionately weak bodies, precariously balanced on high, awkward cothurni blocks. Brecht visually undercut the dignity of those in control. The chorus of four commoners who drag the Greek tragic face mask about the stage are miserably caught in the middle of the conflict. The contrast makes the power relationships quite clear. The

visualization of Oedipus's angry face off with Teiresias is a graphic extension of a Brecht's use of the *Gegenfigur*. The Hölderlin translation serves as a counterpoint to the above.

YOU HAVE LEFT A DISTINGUISHED AND ACCESSIBLE HISTORICAL RECORD THROUGH PUBLISHED WRITINGS, CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS, AND THEATER PRODUCTIONS. WHAT FUNCTION DOES THE ARCHIVE SERVE THAT THE TRADITIONAL ACADEMIC RECORD DOES NOT SERVE?

By the time I retired I realized that the working files I had kept for reference contained a history of many productions premiering within specific time periods. Each contained numerous primary sources. Were these records just accidental research or could they be of use to others? I consulted a colleague from the German Department who has spent years onsite researching 20th century German theatre and film. He felt the records were uniquely valuable because of the manner in which they were collected. Each was a complete history in itself. He advised me to assemble the files into a collection and contact only the best theatre archives concerning possible donation of the materials. As to your second question, many professors donate their papers to their own university. What happens when one's reputation recedes from memory in following years? If one's material contains numerous primary sources subject to variable interpretations, the scholar donating materials should consider placing them in an accessible archive holding similar subject matter.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE YOU TO ORGANIZE YOUR MATERIAL FOR INSTALLATION AS AN ARCHIVE? AND, WHO IS THE CURATOR IN BERLIN?

Since many of the files were incomplete, I spent three years fleshing out each file by adding missing reviews and other found information, converting script to print, labeling each source, and archiving the materials via a system I had created for the purpose. I employed two graduate students to assist me.

Frau Sabine Zolchow is my archivist and asked me to assure readers she welcomes all inquiries concerning the collection.

THIS IS FOR FUTURE BRECHT AND THEATER SCHOLARS: WHAT GREAT BOOK IDEA IS WAITING TO BE FOUND IN YOUR ARCHIVE? DON'T MAKE IT TOO EASY! KEEP IT A MYSTERY ... BUT PERHAPS A FEW HINTS.

I think Brecht scholars would find the use of much of the Post-Brecht aesthetic in all productions during the transition period within the former GDR intriguing. In general, the collection offers theatre scholars endless opportunities for interpreting the primary sources collected. And a note: All my individual file identification cards, which list the contents of each premiere file as well as all labels, comments, notations and interviews, are in English.

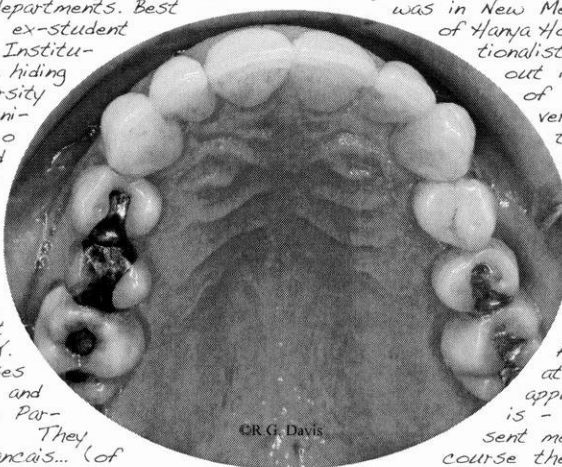
Anyone who longs for theater to be able to directly serve as a vehicle for exploration of contemporary issues and problems for and with its community should refer to the section on Leipzig. It was a thrill to be able to watch audiences of all ages embrace Schauspiel Leipzig as its sensory Zeitgeist.

The Steckel and the Castorf *Puntilla* productions are quite complete: eyewitness account, premiere photographs, reviews, programs etc... If interested, read my two articles on the productions in *CIBS* 17.1, "Can Brecht Be Relevant" and 28.1, "*Puntilla* as a Site for Alienation and Despair."

You are a longtime resident of San Francisco, where you were one of the leading progressive performance activists for many decades; however, you are originally from the East Coast. So, before we get to San Francisco paint us a brief picture of your origins and formative experiences. Looking back on your childhood what experiences or events stand out as pushing you to become the theater artist you later became or are now?

DIALOGUE
WITH
R.G. DAVIS

I studied dance at the age of 17, also saw Piscator's Rooftop Theatre while in high school... a smart, informed English teacher ordered tickets for those interested. I began to draw sets, thinking to be a set designer. Went to universities... took up journalism, then finally majored in Economics, while dancing in dance departments. Best was in New Mexico: Elizabeth Waters, ex-student of Hanya Holm... also studied with Institutionalists (Veblenites) who were hiding out in Albuquerque at University of New Mexico... I left university... went to Chicago and found dance teachers... then to New York and then to study with Marceau... then found American Mime Theatre of Curtis. Studied with that group in and around NY. Also took acting classes at Studio ... and at Berghof Acting Studio ... and bright to Par-Decroux. They sent me to the Com-media Français... (of mime) course they didn't teach



One of the early points of the American Brecht reception was the Off-Broadway production of The Threepenny Opera at the Theatre de Lys in Greenwich Village, which ran from 1954-1961. Using an adaptation by Marc Blitzstein and utilizing performers such as Lotte Lenya, Bea Arthur, and Charlotte Rae it was a highly successful production. Did you see it?

Yes I saw that production before I went to Paris. It was wonderful and startling because Lotte Lenya was in it, who held it back from being silly ... and the dinky, shabby theatre fit the production ... plus the singers were good and the show was not kitschy as is usually done with 3PO... the girls become sexy magazine ads... And Macheath a TV face. This was closer to Weill and BB - surely due to Lenya in the mix.

You arrive in San Francisco and very quickly become an assistant director at the famous Actor's Workshop, founded by Herbert Blau and Jules Irving. Why did this organization appeal to you?

I disliked New York City, and had heard about the SF Actors Workshop in Paris - so thought to go there. Also had heard a "Cowboy Beatnik" speak at Mistral about the wonders of SF... Of course, he was not in SF anymore, but parading around on the notoriety of it all, but seemed like open territory. I was one of four to five assistant directors to that company. I thought Mime belonged in the theatre as Barrault* had done,

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PRESENTS

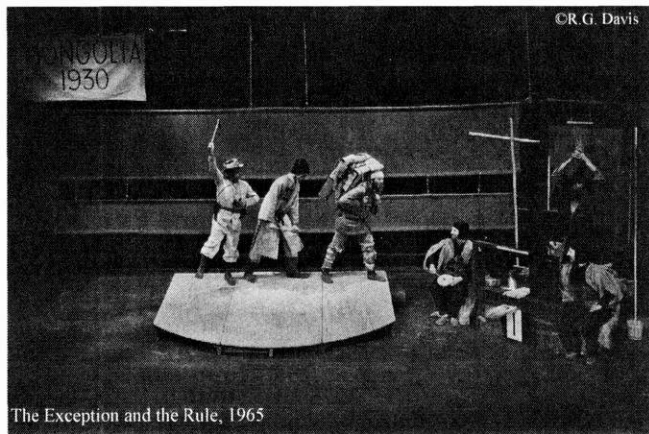
11TH HOUR
MIME SHOW

R.G. DAVIS
MIME TROUPE

SUNDAYS, 11P.M. TO MIDNIGHT
ENCORE THEATRE
430 MASON STREET

WEEKLY FROM DECEMBER 11

ACTORS WORKSHOP PUBLIC EVENT



The Exception and the Rule, 1965

C.R.G. Davis

not as a solo or individual art event as Decroux espoused.

It was around this time that you discovered Brecht, no? You read John Willett's *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (1959) and also were involved with two Brecht productions at the Actor's Workshop: *Private Life of the Master Race* and *Galileo*. How did these experiences introduce you to Brecht? What did Brecht and his aesthetic offer that were not offered by the likes of Beckett, Artaud, etc...?

The Brecht work I first did was *Private Life scenes* - surely Willett's translation - I made the panzer and soldiers all one mass of chairs tables and people from the scenes - No slides! Imagine how much a breakthrough that was. Scenes played out then they all regrouped and became the transition tank group/tables chairs people. Snappy piece of work. It was only a few scenes done in workshop conditions - one performance and a critique.

I had done Beckett's *Act without Words II* ... it was a mime and we did it late night in a series of shows after the AW (Actor's Workshop) shows ... attracting artists and experimental theatre folks. That was an R.G. Davis Mime Troupe show. Judy Collins did us all in grey, the goad was done by Robert Hudson (wonderful piece of sculpture) - bright grey light, frieze effect.

This was mime, not pantomime, which I usually have to explain. Marceau is pantomime; Barrault and Chaplin mimes. Decroux spoke both tongues (both elements came out of his studies), but usually performed in Mime. I have had to explain the difference forever. After all, the only idea that people have about BB is "Alienation" so its similar necessary response to "bumper sticker thinking."

You also have mentioned two other formative experiences in your reception of Brecht: Giorgio Strehler's *Servant of Two Masters* production in 1962 and Carl Weber's Berliner Ensemble-inspired production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Could you tell us more about these experiences?



Congress of Whitewashers, 1969

C.R.G. Davis

In order to get out of the bourgeois theatre - by that time I begin to see the AW as a liberal outfit. My new political friends, the New Leftists - non-party Marxists (Landau, Scheer, Lichtman, O'Connor, Dowd, Weinstein and a few others) and I thought we should find a way to get out into the parks where more people assemble than in the pay-theatre. The AW people began to dislike their audience and the liberal tilt ... bougy programming was barely interesting anymore.

Commedia dell'arte as done by Strehler in the *Servant of Two Masters* was a break thru... he took the play and put it on a small stage - stage within the stage. All the onstage exaggerations were fine, while offstage they were actors working the house - an epic turn of a silly play ... making the Piccolo world famous. Good performers doing a play that was trite but by setting it in its own space - false space - thus making it epic: bb, alienation, verfremdungseffekte, distancing, defamiliarization... and pretty damn good.

If we may, could we go back to Willett and Brecht scholarship at that time? The late 1950s and early 1960s was the first real reception of Brecht into American intellectual and theater culture. Eric Bentley, Martin Esslin, and John Willett led this reception and Bentley (through his play translations) and Willett (largely through his translation of Brecht's theoretical pieces, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, 1964) are still very dominant today. How did you feel then about those authors and their mediation of Brecht to the American public? We know you will have cause to revisit these names in the 1980s, but for now could you tell us how you felt then?

By the time I got to Willett, I had seen or heard Bentley do an imitation of BB on tour, I also began to read Willett's books and the three parts: text, alternate versions, and dramaturgical notes. Incredibly good idea, you get a chance to examine what they did, what else they didn't do, what they thought. Now how about that!

I heard Eric Bentley's shows on record - awful, exaggerated "political" with a "pee" and translated poorly - all to fit his vague notion of what BB was about. I once asked him while he was in Chicago - giving a speech - "How could he do so many translations of Brecht if he wasn't a Marxist?" (or some variation of that). He answered, he could. Sure why not? That is what America is for - to retranslate Marxists. Marx, Communists and Trotskyites translated into bougy texts.

*Martin Esslin, the cold war warrior, had spoiled the reception of Brecht. Esslin's book, *Choice of Evils* - Brecht the poet but not such a good playwright. Willett's first book didn't get much play here, and his *Brecht on Theatre* was full of theory that made no sense but agitated the anti-thinkers ... that is, unless one read the plays or even better saw the productions. Willett's Vintage Press books didn't come out early enough. Like Fugie's latest prurient escapade, (*Brecht & Co: Sex, Politics, and the Making of the Modern Drama*, 1994) Esslin's book appeared on all sorts of shelves to explain Brecht to the theatre folks. Bentley's translations all with Grove Press did the same Fugie thing.*

Grove Press is run by Barney Rosset, whose son, Peter Rosset, is a very good scholar about agro-ecology as well as Latin American matters connected to the Zapatistas was one person in that family who has something to offer other than commercial junk. (read: capitalist bourgeois anti-commie subversion).



C.R.G. Davis

Now, let's turn to your involvement with the R.G. Davis and then the San Francisco Mime Troupe. Most of this experience you detail in your book *The San Francisco Mime Troupe: The First Ten Years*, which by the way, still reads great and is a wonderful description of progressive American Theater in the 1960s. Why did you leave the Actor's Workshop and start your own theater troupe?

Leaving the AW was a organic, or natural move, towards the rising tide of hippie and anti-war people. AW director, Herbert Blau, had written two plays about the angst of gum-souled liberals. I was far more attracted to the Marxists who were alive, and the post-beatnik, hippie movement that was also anti-war and dancing in the streets - out of the establishment's control... "Make love not war." A good idea in practice (praxis).

I associated with a group of Marxists, Cuban fellow travelers ... Che, Fidel, Ho, were our guides. And as thinking people we were not hippies, but smoked, not beatniks but were anti-establishment, not only artists, but engaged ... and if I contributed anything it was to cross over from the avant-garde to the hot political figures and put them together on a project that caught everyone up to their necks and into their brains. Not anarchistic jive in those days as much as it prevails now.

© R.G. Davis



A Minstrel Show is one of the famous and iconic pieces of the Mime Troupe. Could you tell us how this show was originated and what effect it had on San Francisco at the time?

It stopped racism in the USA - right then and there. It came out of the avant-garde work I had done. Saul Landau added all his talents and wrote half the script, and I did the research on the form. It was suggested by Nina Serrano (Landau at the time). It took 9 months, lots of experiments with young blacks, and whites (not actors!) ... some of our own actors who were barely commercial ... catching them on film, on the ways to destroy a watermelon is different ways (Eisler did music for 14 ways of rain!). We used the

film in the show, sang the repetitive text "Watermelon..." harmonizing and repeating as Reich later did with serial (cereal) music - perfect for the show - sung live on stage while the film was of a watermelon dropping out of the back of the bus, stabbed, shot, abused etc...

We didn't let up. I pushed every button we could find - why integration wouldn't work. It was an empty gesture - we were closer to Malcolm X than MLK, but then I didn't know MLK was eventually to go all the way from civil rights to anti-Vietnam War, to workers then to the poor. (Bang!!!)

You turn to Brecht in 1964 with *The Exception and the Rule* and then, just before you leave the group in 1969, the Mime Troupe produces *The Congress of Whitewashers*. How did these productions go? Considering how much you would be involved with Brecht in the 1970s, why so comparatively so little Brecht produced by the Mime Troupe?

The Exception and the Rule was put back into Kabuki-Noh form, with a designer who got it. Fred Reichmann ran a red cloth across the stage and we used mimetic elements from Japanese theatre to get at the performance. Small stage on a stage for the desert and so on. But it was only half a performance. To fill in, I asked Robert Scheer to speak after the Brecht piece. Scheer had recently come back from North Vietnam - one of the earliest if not the earliest returnees - and was more exciting than our little play. After a while I put up a banner over the action: "Urga 1930" because I thought it was loaded with older influences. We said we used Bentley's translation but we didn't. We used one adapted by our Trotskyite actor, Fred Hayden, who went back to the German and other versions to get it clearer. The lead actor was a Communist Party member so he could play a nasty jerk with out any compunction. But I was told by Fred Hayden recently he had to coach Manny Brookman on his lines. Now there was a cross for ya-Trotsky and Commies working together to remember the text.

Congress of White Washers or *Turandot* was a parting shot at the SFMT. It was a big work, almost a failure, but great learning eventually made itself pos-

sible when on stage I realized what Uncle Bert meant by moving the text forward. Each character had to shove the whole play forward. And after murder it in the parks, we finally did it indoors. It was about the role of intellectuals and the company was now riddled with communal ideas, Maoist jabberings, left-wing dopey ideas, and artistically simple-minded agit-prop considerations. The hippie movement became more oppressive and the ultra leftists were out of tune with reality - both identity politics and non-Marxist and Maoist jabber (not complete half Mao half this and that) imploded and impeded such groups as ours.

I had suggested we do a play on Che's peregrinations. It was to be a wagon show, medieval pageant, the company was to create it from a committee working on the play - under the direction of a leftist who was part of Peoples Park uprising... They never came up with a script. I was tired of the meetings, the court cases. We had about 6 or so arrests, about 5 contracts broken by the Governors, constant pressure to suppress the SFMT, and the dopeyness of the collective communal hippy jabberplus the smallness of the thinking. I went off to the Conspiracy Trials in Chicago and made a film interviewing them - good documentary whereby they are all out front - the intelligent Dave Dellinger and the silly, trite ding-alings. Got Tom Hayden to do an imitation of Judge Julius J. (Hargman) Hoffman.

After I left the SFMT, it turned against such things as BB. In fact, Joan Holden's adaptation of *The Mother* was similar to the Theatre Union's massacre in 1934-35 - more melodrama. Lee Baxandall wondered in a phone call to me if he should stop it; they abused ("abused") his adaptation. He didn't too bad. Since the first melodrama was a popular hit in the 1940s, the SFMT collective turned to musical comedy and now only does it. Since the current writer sings and his wife acts and the texts are all the same, commercial entertainment is now called "political." Nothing BB about it, in fact the opposite, a good example of the opposite kind of popular entertainment expected from liberals and desired by liberal centrist audiences.

Joseph Chaikin, in many ways, lived a very parallel professional experience - albeit in New York through - the Living Theater and then the Open Theater. The Living Theater's production of *Man Is Man* in 1962 is listed as a seminal experience in his book *The Presence of the Actor* (1972). What do you think of his work and his mediation of Brecht?

At the end of my book, I wrote an essay on the 6 groups of alternative or radical theatres. We had had a radical theatre festival in 1967. It included SFMT, Teatro Campesino (Valdez had come out of the SFMT) and Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet. Good work by all. I tried to incite some mixing and sharing with people who were similar. Both Valdez and Schumann were visual people as I was and we were more like-minded at that time than with Joe Chaikin, Richard Schechner and their gurus - Julian and Malina Beck.

As for religious people I could accept Peter Schumann's beliefs since it was usually accompanied with greater prescient insight than any other theatre person. But he could also be called non-theatre... a sculpture worker with live human (puppets) who make bread. Valdez at the time was hot on rabble rousing for the union, then later became a cultural nationalist and an identity politics official - opportunely taking the Chicano identity all the way up through the Chicano movement to Hollywood. Enrique Buenaventura once warned: "To sup with the devil you must use a long spoon."

Everyone loved Joe Chaikin but the performances were "heart rendering." His subject was his heart ailment. He was much more human than the Becks, and was a good person compared to that Cultural Imperialist, Peter Brook.

Can you tell us more about your Epic West project from 1975-1980?

Two articles of importance: 1) "Music from the Left." *Rethinking Marxism* 1.4 (Winter 1988); and 2) "Unwrapping and Remapping Brecht's *The Mother: The Old Left and the New Left Shuffle*." *Rethinking Marxism* 4.3 (Fall 1991). These were written while studying, researching producing and lecturing on Brecht. As I noted somewhere else, after writing my book on the early days of the SF Mime Troupe, I realized we didn't have much theory and therefore it was necessary for me to study the stuff and read all the plays and perhaps become somewhat an expert on the work, which occurred only after seeing as many of the plays and films of plays of the original BE productions. Austro-Hungarian Proverb:

"First look in the Horses Mouth, then the other end."

The IBS Debates of the 1980s and 1990s are pretty well documented in CIBS. Some cantankerous back-and-forth-through letters and articles centering on Eric Bentley and John Fuegi, I believe. What were the issues?

I joined the IBS in the early 1970s and stayed close to John Willett, Antony Tatlow, Darko Suvin, Michael Morley, Carl Weber (who was co-director with me of Epic West - the theatre section). From these folks, I learned how to think Brechtian, without having to mention the "V-word" every other sentence. A few others added insight like John Lyons, however I recognized the West Germans as an annoying anti-communist element in IBS that turned it often into a less interesting and more academic Germanistic event. Of course the cruel turn was when prurient Fuegi wrote his opus published by Grove Press. But then there were earlier signs that a hatchet job was a-coming from other quarters. Esslin had done it earlier, Bentley never had much to do with the society when Willett was alive, since Willett's and Manheim's translations made Bentley's work either overdone - "agit-propish" or underdone not dialectical. Willett's description of Bentley -- "Sentimental". Bentley was fine as an anthologist and early peripatetic researcher for theatre elements (In Search of Theater, Vintage Press, 1954) before Ted Shank took over and ran his own sham-scheme theatre collections. Bentley's discovery of Etienne Decroux & Jean Louis Barrault I remember reading early and later used some of his translations of plays - not Brecht - but the classics.

Fuegi I think they already did him up well - Willett, John Lyons, Carl Weber, Antony Tatlow, Darko Suvin, Michael Morley and others do it all - unfortunately only in and IBS Yearbook. There is a book that needs to be done as a companion to the Fuegi tome that appears in all the Libraries I have seen around. It needs to be in another place as well. As for my view of Fuegi, "prurient" is the key word, I think he would have liked to be the cock-man (womanizer) that he said Brecht was. After all anyone who had all his plays written by the women who he slept with or loved must have had some enormous, I mean ... great attraction.

"Fuegi needs to be waterboarded by someone." (I heard someone say that -

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it's a repeat). But to fit him into the commerce of BB in the USA Grove Press published the slander so Grove is following the Martin Esslin, anti-commie line again as ever. Did Fucgi get CIA money to do the hit piece, if not, why not?

Your recent interests concern Ecological Aesthetics. First, what do you understand this to be? Second, are Ecological Aesthetics a natural evolution of your progressive theater history and your reception of Brecht?

Ecological aesthetics is that which makes people think feel, love nature as more important then human beings. The subtext is that we don't have an aesthetic that puts nature first, as a real need. As a trained organic gardener/farmer, I need to put my fingers in the soil every day. Everyone needs that or some aspect of nature in their lives besides consumerism and artistic stuff. Just to jolt the whole off course, I think that an ecological aesthetic would have to avoid, replace, the art this culture has devised to avoid nature. Paintings, sculpture, dance and so on, even the theatre stuff, are riddled with anti-nature aspects.

Do you still perform?

I have done story-telling performances in the Farmers' Markets with a scroll cranky (Schumann's ideas) on "Organic Food Production in 12 minutes." I recently directed (performing while directing) a production of Los Olive Pits for El Teatro Campesino (March 2010). We are presently working on an oratorio (October 2010) on "Glacial Melt/Sea Level Rise. It will be what Eisler suggested was a progressive form, while using the work of Lovelock, Hansen, and Thompson. Music by Joyce Todd and text by R.G.Davis for 16 person chorus, 8 musicians 4 soloists and flip charts to explain what is going on up there and down here.

MAN WIRD STARK, WENN MAN EINSAM IST, UND
DAS BESTE VERHÄLTNIS ZU DEN MENSCHEN IST: WEIT
WEG (19.10.1916)... ICH LESE DIE BIBEL. ICH LESE SIE LAUT,
KAPITELWEISE, ABER OHNE AUSZUSETZEN: HIOB UND DIE KÖNIGE.
SIE IST UNVERGLEICHLICH SCHÖN, STARK, ABER EIN BÖSES BUCH. SIE
IST SO BÖSE, DASS MAN SELBER BÖSE UND HART WIRD UND WEISS, DASS
DAS LEBEN NICHT UNGERECHT, SONDERN GERECHT IST UND DASS DAS NICHT
ANGENEHM IST, SONDERN FÜRCHTERLICH (20.10.1916) ... DAZWISCHEN
HINEIN LESE ICH SPINOZA. NIETZSCHE MAG ICH NIMMER... SCHREIBEN KANN
ICH, ICH KANN THEATERSTÜCKE SCHREIBEN, BESSERE ALS HEBBEL, WILDERE
ALS WEDEKIND. ICH BIN FAUL. BERÜHMT WERDEN KANN ICH NICHT. WERDE
ICH ES, GEHE ICH NACH AMERIKA UND WERDE COWBOY, REITEN DEN GANZEN
TAG, SCHAUE DEN HIMMEL AN, RED MIT DEN STIEREN UND BELAURE DAS
GRAS. JETZT WERDE ICH GESÜNDER. (21.10.1916):...DER FREIE WILLE –
DAS IST EINE KAPITALISTISCHE ERFINDUNG! (1920):

BB: GBA 26 JOURNALE 1 107-108 & 114

©Steve Giles

0:00 My name is Bertolt Brecht

0:03 I am living at er 34th West 73rd Street New York

0:14 I am born, born in A February the 10th

0:24 19 ner 18

0:39 I am n the United States, I

00:42 I h my Pierce Gibbs

0:45 I ha to leave Germany er 33 in February

0:54 wh Oak power

0:58 The Den

1:00 se ment

1:05 fine I had to leave er for Sweden Stockholm

1:16 I ere for one year

1:21 The aded N and Denmark

1:28 and I had e Sweden

1:33 and I wen land

1:38 there to w Lisa for the United States

1:49 I am a play es

1:55 I am/ve writte ns and songs

2:02 and plays in the fight st Hitler

2:09 and of course they can be considered therefore as revolution

2:19 course, I of course was for the overthrow of that government

The Moss Gallery is housed in an unprepossessing building in a run-down area on the Western edge of Nottingham city centre. You arrive there on a foggy November morning devoid of mellow fruitfulness, only to discover the blue front door locked tightly shut, and wonder if you have come to the right place. You ring the doorbell, more in hope than in anticipation, wait several minutes, then, just as you are about to depart empty-handed, the door opens. You wonder if this door was intended for you alone, and realise that the doorkeeper is as bemused as you are, quite taken aback by the unexpected appearance of a visitor for the Brecht exhibition. Explaining that you have been commissioned to review the exhibition by the International Brecht Society cuts no ice, and you are shown up several flights of stairs to the garret that houses the exhibition space. At the top of the stairs you are greeted by an array of portraits of five men; one of them is Richard Nixon, another might be Clint Eastwood, the rest are swallowed up in the anonymity of post-war American history. As you approach the entrance to the main display area you see another portrait in similar mode, Bertolt Brecht.

HEARING BERTOLT
BRECHT:

DEREK HAMPSON
PETER HOFER
PETER SUCHIN

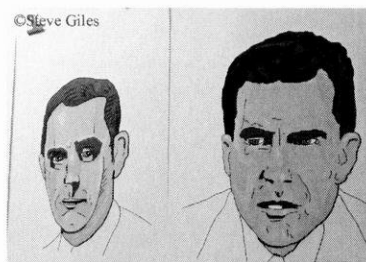
MOSS GALLERY,
NOTTINGHAM,
ENGLAND.
NOVEMBER 3-27,
2010

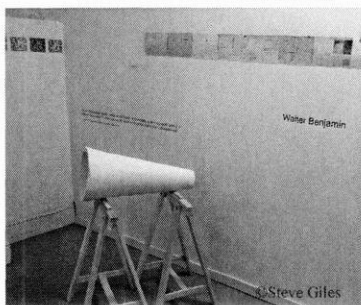
STEVE GILES

On the wall separating the foyer from the first of two exhibition rooms you see a series of texts: Peter Suchin's manifesto "Interrogating Art,"¹ together with extracts from two studies of Walter Benjamin, by Momme Brodersen and Terry Eagleton.² The Brodersen extract is a quotation from Ruth Berlau, whereas the Eagleton texts express his bemusement that Brecht did not deny that his name was Bertolt Brecht when interrogated by the McCarthy Committee (86), and outline Brecht's reformulation of realism (88).³ This eclectic and oblique selection of texts sets the tone for the exhibition, which contains no texts by Brecht himself other than an extract from his testimony to the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in 1947, which *Hearing Bertolt Brecht* ostensibly seeks to "restage."

This blue-toned visual representation of Brecht's testimony dominates the first exhibition room, whose walls also display a series of short quotations printed in red extracted from Stanley Mitchell's "Introduction" to Walter Benjamin's *Understanding Brecht* and Roland Barthes' *Image – Music – Text*. The first room also contains a white cone resting on wooden trestles that resembles a megaphone. The one-page Exhibition Guide indicates that this is Peter Hofer's *Listening and Speaking – a Visual Likeness* (2010), "a sculptural representation of the distribution and reception of sound [...] this most intangible of mediums." From a more concrete Brechtian perspective, one might also be tempted to contextualise Hofer's sculpture with reference to *Das rote Sprachrohr*, the agit-prop theatre group immortalised in *Kuhle Wampe*.⁴ Hofer's conception of sound is, however, consonant with the actual sound of the exhibition, which is particularly prominent in the second room. Instead of being confronted by a visual representation of Brecht's testimony, you encounter a sound recording of overlaid voices, presumably from the HUAC hearings, which – like a Barthesian writable text – are almost impossible to disentangle. While this "blend and clash of voices" (Exhibition Guide) may foreground the intangibility of vocal messages, thematised again by the Hofer sculpture, it would also seem to preclude any political or socially critical impact of this retransmission of the hearings.

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On opposite walls of the second room you see reproductions of the portraits at the entrance to the exhibition: Brecht, linked with a quotation from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, facing J. Parnell Thomas, Richard Vail, John McDowell, Robert Stripling, and Richard Nixon. The Adorno text cites one of the verbal leitmotifs from *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, but the Exhibition Guide does not mention this.⁵ The third wall displays another, classic quotation from Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, expressing an implicitly anti-Brechtian view of the relationship between aesthetics and

politics, while the fourth wall presents a series of coloured index cards covered in jottings, underscored by the name "Walter Benjamin" (who did not author the jottings) and framed by quotations from Eugene Lunin's *Marxism and Modernism* and – almost imperceptibly – Jacques Derrida. The Derrida text is taken from *The Post Card*, and reads, "Look closely at this card, it's a reproduction."

The texts in the exhibition – together with their visual configuration – clearly highlight the artifice of aesthetic representation, and mediate an understanding of Brecht that focuses on the self-conscious dimension of epic theatre and the ensuing critical stance of the spectator; they also draw to some degree on post-structuralist approaches to Brecht.⁶ The *Exhibition Guide*, on the other hand, draws attention to discussions on aesthetics and politics conducted by Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno in the 1930s, in which "Brecht's didactic theatrical practice was contrasted with Benjamin's support for new technologies of artistic reproduction, and with Adorno's championing of abstract art."⁷ While Brecht's supposed didacticism is challenged by the quotations from Barthes, Lunin and Mitchell on the exhibition walls, the texts cited in the exhibition date not from the 1930s but primarily from the 1950s and 1960s. Furthermore, the exhibition includes no texts from Brecht and Benjamin themselves. The exhibition is stimulating, provocative and even amusing – but why not let Brecht speak for himself, either by citing his own writings or by playing his own voices, so that we can indeed hear Brecht above and beyond the cacophony of his traducers.

1 Published in Y Productions (ed.), *Producta* (Barcelona, 2004).

2 Momme Brodersen, *Walter Benjamin. A Biography* (London, Verso, 1997) and Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin. Or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London, Verso, 1981).

3 On Brecht's reformulation of realism, see Steve Giles, "Realism after Modernism: Representation and Modernity in Brecht, Lukács and Adorno," to appear in Jerome Carroll, Steve Giles, Maïke Oergel (eds), *Aesthetics and Modernity from Schiller to the Frankfurt School* (Peter Lang, 2011).

4 See John Willett, *The New Sobriety. Art and Politics in the Weimar Period 1917-33* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1978): 207.

5 On the anomic dimensions of *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, see Steve Giles, "Materialism and Modernity in Mahagonny: Brecht's Double Dystopia," *Mahagonny.com*, *The Brecht Yearbook* 29 (2004): 307-22; and Bertolt Brecht, *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, ed. and trans. Steve Giles (London, Methuen, 2007).

6 On post-structuralist approaches to Brecht see Steve Giles, "Post/Structuralist Brecht? Representation and Subjectivity in *Der Dreigroschenprozeß*," *The Other Brecht I. The Brecht Yearbook* 17 (1992): 147-63.

7 Many of Brecht's contributions to these discussions have only recently been translated into English: see *Brecht on Art and Politics*, eds. Tom Kuhn and Steve Giles (London, Methuen, 2003): 213-62. The theoretical interplay between Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno in the 1930s is discussed in Steve Giles, *Bertolt Brecht and Critical Theory. Marxism, Modernity and the 'Threepenny' Lawsuit* (Bern, Peter Lang, 1998): 113-66.

When driving down New York City's West Side Highway one takes a U-turn on Clark Street and goes several blocks back uptown on West Street. Here, between Bank and Bethune Street, on the ground floor of the Westbeth Artists' Housing Complex, is the home of The Brecht Forum.

Founded in 1975, as the New York Marxist School by a collective of civil rights, community, labor, anti-war, and solidarity activists, the Brecht Forum currently presents over 200 events per year

ON BRECHT
EXHIBIT
BRECHT FORUM
NYC
APRIL 2, 2010

ILSE SCHREIBER-NOLL



including classes, public forums, dramatic readings, art exhibits, musical performances and popular education workshops.

The Forum is funded by individual contributions from supporters with only occasional grants and fundraising events. It is run primarily by volunteers organized in committees and collectives who are coordinated by three full-time staff: The Director Liz Mestres - a founder and former freelance graphic designer; Outreach Coordinator Kazembe Balagun - a New Yorker with a degree in Philosophy and German Literature; and Development Coordinator Max Uhlenbeck - a former graffiti writer who is also an editor of the activist magazine, *Left Turn*.

This year marks the 35th Anniversary of The Brecht Forum, and the Forum is opening its

year-long celebration of this milestone in its history with a month of activities dedicated to Bertolt Brecht, whose name they adopted and whose ideas inspire them.

The celebration began on April 2, with the opening of an exhibition entitled "On Brecht." The work of seven artists filled the wonderful large and sunlit space. They all had dipped into Brecht's world and produced works from woodcut portraits of Brecht to wild colorful oil paintings, woodcuts on canvas, motorized boxes, books, collages and even a Video projection.

The participating artists are: Uruguayan artist Antonio Frasconi, German artist H.D. Goelzenleuchter, American artists Crista Grauer, Rosalind Schneider and Daniel Waldron, Taher Shafie of Swiss-Iranian descent and German-American artist Ilse Schreiber-Noll who also served as the curator of this exhibition.





Two huge banners covered the windows: one of Bertolt Brecht, a woodcut portrait by Antonio Frasconi and the other a woodcut of Mother Courage by Ilse Schreiber-Noll, both with quotations of Brecht's work translated by Eric Bentley. "Herr Brecht," whose face was strewn throughout the exhibition in Antonio Frasconi's masterful drawings and woodcuts, would have been pleased.

Frasconi, one of the United States most foremost printmakers and renowned woodcut artists, presented portraits of Brecht and Jack the knife while H.D. Goelzenleuchter's large scale woodcuts, Daniel Waldron's exquisite collages and Taher Shafie's wild, expressionistic paintings went off into free interpretations of Brecht's work and ideas. Crista Grauer made a motorized box which, by the push of a bottom, lights up and starts to turn. One can watch carefully carved woodcuts, characters from Brecht's plays through a window, walking and dancing around a drum. Ilse Schreiber-Noll with her

powerful woodcuts and small handmade books mostly focused on Brecht's "Buckower Elegies" and his play, *Baal*.

Very special was the video projection by Rosalind Schneider entitled "Brecht: A Portrait," a collaboration with Schreiber-Noll's woodcut portraits of Bertolt Brecht. Ms. Schneider was able to create a visionary portrait of Brecht. He looks at us then fades away and blends into the waves of the ocean. Sensibility and technology are triumphing and Brecht and his work go in and out of our consciousness as it does in the memory of contemporary times.

The highlight of the opening night was a performance by Tannis Kowalschuk and Leese Walker who presented excerpts from their two-woman theatre piece entitled "10 Brecht Poems." By using theatre, music, visual art, and storytelling techniques they brought these poems to life. They used satire and a variety of performance styles to examine the horrors of war, the importance of solidarity and need for dissent.

Tannis Kowalschuk is the co-founder, actress and artistic director of the North American Cultural Laboratory Theatre based in the Catskill Mountains north of New York City. Leese Walker, who produces "FreePlay Sundays," a monthly improv night at the Brecht Forum, is the Artistic/Producing Director of Strike Anywhere Performance Ensemble.



They met in 2001 and discovered that their ideas and ideals were similar. Both had read Brecht and believed that the message in his work related to what was happening in the USA then, and that his poems and other works continue to resonate in our times. To continue the Brecht theme, the Red Channels film collective is organizing an "On Brecht Film Series" that will begin in April with screenings of *Kuhle Wampe* and *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* and will continue throughout the anniversary year.

There was a special event for the closing of the "On Brecht" exhibit on April 28. The performance group Exilkabarett presented its work-in-progress, Hanns Eisler's "The Hollywood Songbook" with musical performances by Darren Chase, Jessica Goldring and Bill Solomon along with films by Noe Kidder. During his five years in exile preceding his eventual deportation from the U.S., Eisler lived in Southern California, where he composed *The Hollywood Songbook*. Written in a mixture of styles (Twelve Tone, Romantic, Blues), the song cycle is based on poems by Brecht, Goethe, Hölderlin, Rimbaud and others. The cycle has been called the "moderne Winterreise," evoking the existential dilemmas of the wandering artist. The songs, often fragmentary and diaristic, superimpose the destruction of war and the bitterness of exile onto Hollywood landscapes.

MEDIUM RESISTANCE:
REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCIES IN PRINT AND CRAFT

To title an exhibition in terms of *resistance* and *revolutionary* is to issue a tall order for the works on view. Using the word *revolution* PHILIP GLAHN in particular might seem to imply a certain naiveté, if not ignorance - flagging an oversimplifying self-aggrandizement that grossly neglects the historically complex relationship between artistic production and radical social change. In most art historical and political discourse, revolution is cast as a phenomenon of distant times and faraway places, as a dated ideal marred by histories of failures and violence, by stories of usurpation by a culture greedily consuming spectacle and difference, in a socio-economic system that has proudly portrayed itself as the winner of a cold war between incompatible ideological alternatives and condemned its arts to perpetual reproduction and reformism. Such a scenario, indeed, would make our title hard to live up to.

But *resistance* and *revolution* here refer to a different scenario: a trajectory of artistic production that originates with the historical avant-garde's efforts to establish a new relation between art and life. Over the past years, an increasingly transnational flow of currencies and commodities and a seemingly seamless exchange of knowledge and information through ever-expanding communication networks have forced artists and intellectuals to rethink notions of community and participation, democracy and collaboration, accessibility and audience. As concepts of the "nation state," "the people," and "class" are being replaced by notions of "empire," "multitude," and "cultural paradigm," it is urgent now to ask how the structures and mechanisms of who produces and owns images and identities, the ways in which knowledge and experiences are distributed, have changed and where certain relations and dependencies have been retained. The recent economic crisis, for example, suggests that maybe the notion of class - and with it questions of ownership and agency, public and private - is not as outdated as the discourse of post-industrialism has made it appear. What, then, are the parallels and differences, the trajectories and contingencies between specific historical scenarios, which compel artists to examine their roles as cultural producers in relation to social entities and markets, other forms of labor, of making things and ideas, giving form to experiences and fantasies? What strategies of intervention and resistance, of analysis and representation are still valid or outdated, which ones need to be abandoned, rethought, rearticulated, reinvented? This moment presents an opportunity to critically reconsider some of those strategies, and warrants a look at the historical avant-garde's attempt to question the notion of artistic autonomy and the institutionalization of art with the ultimate goal of radical social and political transformation.

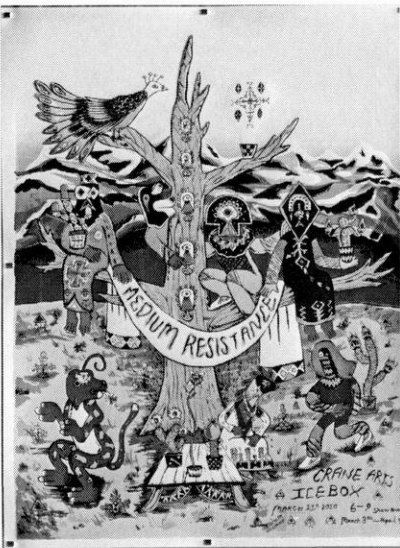
To avant-garde artists like the Dadaists and the Productivists, print and craft offered an opportunity to redefine the use-value of artistic production. In posters and vessels, journals and kiosks - often produced in collaboration, as multiples (at least potentially), and distributed outside the esoteric confines of cultural institution - these artists aimed to establish a more direct and pragmatic relation to the language and imaginary of a literally pedestrian audience. Their sites of production were workshops, not studios, and they thought of themselves as constructors, as workers, rather than idiosyncratic artistic creators. And their sites of communication and reception were no longer the bourgeois temples of reticent high art complacency, but the street and the bar, where, as in Bertolt Brecht's vision, art would be debated in a manner customarily reserved for sports - passionately, with great investment, and everyone as an expert. The divide between art and life, between aesthetics and politics, was not be simplistically collapsed but *articulated* in order to turn spectators into actors, to make the participation in everyday life a matter not of consumption but of active involvement in the processes and mechanisms of seeing and knowing the world.

If today's writing about craft production is any indication, little of this legacy has endured. Recent discourse tends to force craft and print works into not-so-recent, even outright conservative categories: as fine art, they must be autonomous, original, and auratic; as artisanship, they must rely on tactility, skill, and apprenticeship. In both instances, crafts and printmaking are defined in defensive opposition to the forces and effects of mass culture, reproducing an old-fashioned binary in which art and artisanship provide a substitute sphere of "authentic" creative experience rather than a critical engagement with cultural production at large.

While the "craft-as-art" faction merely reproduces an outdated, if not reactionary definition of art as categorically disinterested, it is the introverted artisanship argument that misses the opportunity to

engage with a renewed interest in craft and print as critical contemporary mediums of cultural production. Richard Sennett, a leading voice in the recent debate around craft, defines "the craftsman" in terms of the assertion of the human element, an "enduring, basic human impulse" in a depersonalized, industrial world, and he defines craft within the tradition of artisanship as a specialized form of production within modern culture at large. In a medium-defensive manner that, ironically, conjures the familiar specter of Clement Greenberg, Sennett describes craftsmanship as "doing something well, for its own sake," emphasizing "skill . . . the time it takes," "problem-solving and problem-finding," and "learning how to concentrate." Likewise, the craft scholar Glenn Adamson's position, though more complex and less intra-medial, also relies on a conservative definition of making and labor, defining craft as "knowing how to make something, through a detailed engagement with materials and process."

In contrast, critics and historians like John Roberts and Sandra Alföldy consider the notion of materiality and process as determined by artistic and sensual *as well as* social and political dimensions. Alföldy discusses the making of objects and images



in relation to the dialectics of the doctrines of “high” art’s formalist modernism and the mass production of voracious consumer society, as a shifting engagement with the context of making and seeing, knowing and using things. Roberts takes this analysis one step further, relating artistic labor to social and technical labor, the skill of making to the skill of thinking, individual production to technical reproducibility. Presenting all of these elements as an evolving set of relations, determined by subjective fantasies and personal abilities as much as superficial trends, socio-economic structures and ideologies, Roberts liberates craft in particular and artistic production in general from the demands of medium-specificity to include all forms of critical, reflective, and reflexive production.

Medium Resistance seeks to expand on this notion of craft as artistic, social, and technical labor. Invoking historical avant-garde practices such as Dada, the Bauhaus and Productivism, and, more recently, Tactical Media and Interventionism, the works assembled reassess the mediums’ expressive, communicative, and material possibilities to articulate experiences beyond conventional aesthetic, social, and political boundaries. Ceramic multiples and posters, cardboard projectors and books, to name just a few examples, straddle the lines between art, craft, and mass production, strategically exploring each format’s relative autonomy and usefulness, its potential for participation and collaboration, communication and dissemination, aesthetic, social, and technical labor.

The question of usefulness and use-value is central to Medium Resistance - not whether an object is useful, but *how* it is useful, to what end and to whom, distinguishing symbolic gestures from bona fide artistic practice. Some of the works in Medium Resistance address the question of use on a pragmatic level - websites to be perused, pages to be turned, puzzles to be put together, posters to be pasted up, stencils to be stenciled, projectors to be handled - in order to literally engage with the making of images and the processes of representation. Other objects point to the limits of such practical implementation, articulating the dialectics of aestheticization and functionality, estranging materials and forms from their traditional categories to examine the expectations we bring to them about how they are supposed to “work”: elements of egalitarian furniture reassembled to construct socialist visions, decorative patterns mapping geopolitical landscapes, ceramics and fabrics shedding their presumed ideological passivity, bestowed though mass production and ornament, by taking on the role of markers of urban experience and narrators of recent events. In both cases, usefulness becomes a form of practice via the works’ quality of reference and self-reference, as each work articulates its own making and relates to other kinds of production.

No image or object, no text or concept displayed here is handled in-and-for-itself, as an abbreviated, infantilizing gesture of “taking part.” The use-value of the multitude of things and ideas, comments and visions assembled in Medium Resistance resides in their active participation in cultural production—posters evoke sentiments, vessels contain expectations, books build imaginaries, and digital media distribute knowledge—and in the possibilities they open up for their audience to give meaning, project experiences, lend knowledge, *make sense*.

We acknowledge the limitations of our endeavor, the fact that we take out of circulation, put upon display, behind glass, and onto pedestals things that are meant to be used. Some of the artists featured in Medium Resistance are able to offer the audience work that complies with its original intention to transcend the site of the institution, to be made and seen as part of an everyday experience, in various locales and

situations, and therefore produce a multiplicity of contexts. Posters are wheat-pasted around Philadelphia, their images and narratives collaged into the urban landscape of advertisements and street signs, tourist markers and phone-sex flyers. Projectors are set up outside to throw faint images of geopolitical interventions onto building facades and newspaper boxes, giving bystanders and passersby an opportunity to ponder sites far removed from East Coast urban Americana as well as ruminate on the very act of projecting our sights onto faraway people in faraway lands - perhaps inspiring them to turn around, repossess the device, and exchange the projected image for their own, thus recirculating representations and impressions. But we think of participation as a manifold, a Brechtian exercise. In his oft-cited essay "The Radio As an Apparatus of Communication," Brecht observes that the

radio is one-sided when it should be two-. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would know how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him.

And while there is much to be said for the possibility of literally communicating through art, of speaking directly into the microphone on the other side of the ether, we think of participation as the usefulness of that act or object that transcends the very real myth of aesthetic disconnect by establishing not a reactive but an *active* relationship between the viewer and the work, one that allows - maybe relies - on the audience to bring their own experiences and expectations, ideas and fantasies in order to add and compare, spar and dissent. And that relationship must be one of substance, of rigor, rather than small talk or chatter, as the original notion of artistic autonomy has expanded to include its dialectical opposite, a sort of esoteric occupationism - digitally networked and "relationally aesthetic" platforms that abuse the emancipatory potential of communicative encounters by creating superficial and insubstantial substitutes for artistic, intellectual, and political agency.

We consider Medium Resistance to be part of a network of pipes, one public among many, where relationships are established going in and coming out: strategies and concepts studied, discussed, transformed, and applied elsewhere. Like the works themselves, this project is an act of mapping, a chart gauging what works and how it works in relation to other forms of production. It brings together critical, creative practices engaging with specific forms of labor—with the production of suburban modularity and a national prison system, of digests of historical significance and the fleeting norms of fashionable appearance, of slogans that market goods and attitudes, of surfaces and things that veil their origins and function in an embattled and historically specific terrain demarcated by class, ethnicity, and gender. Medium Resistance contains works that in their multitude form not a coherent, singular, universal platform for radical change, but a set of practices of analysis and resistance that strategically and contingently assemble and reassemble to shed light on and intervene in how the world works at a given moment in time. These practices reside between an all-too-distant, removed contemplation of things-at-large and a collapse of creative practice into the enthusiastically hyper-productive relativism of global capital. They claim a relative autonomy through critical involvement in the tactical reappropriation of the tools, mechanisms, and structures at our daily disposal to comprehend and actively make the world around us.

1

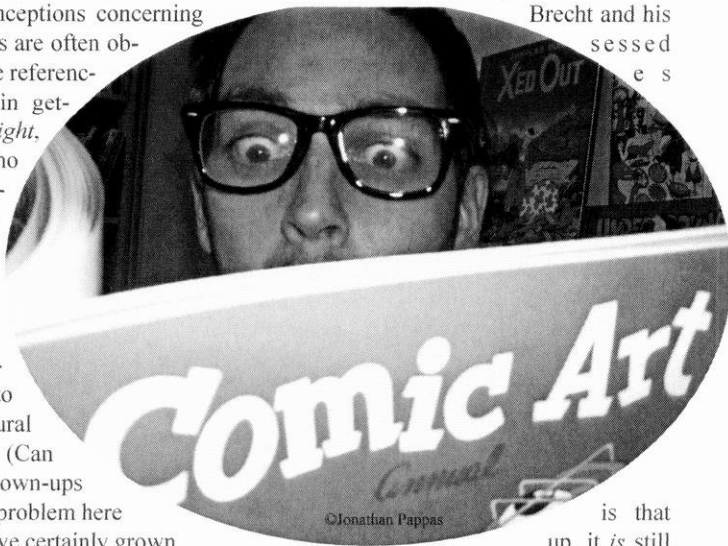
In Bertolt Brecht's 1938 essay on the crime novel, he writes that, to the readers who read and champion this "flourishing branch of literature," "reading crime novels has assumed the character and strength of a habit. It is an intellectual habit."¹

WAITING FOR THE
SIGN:
ARE COMICS
"ART" YET?

JONATHAN PAPPAS

Brecht goes on to point out that there is a logic in crime novels that is absent from what he calls "psychological novels," and that the reader is never deceived by a crime novel. When Brecht must begin his essay with an announcement of the genre's validity, I am reminded of Douglas Wolk's indispensable book *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean*,² when he opens with the questionable claim that "It's no longer news that comics have grown up...a form that was once solely the province of children's entertainment now fills bookshelves with mature, brilliant works..." He goes on to name-check some revered writer-artists of the form, a mainstream comics anthology, and various museum exhibits as graphic fiction's acceptance into the wider world. I am also reminded of the scholars who write in this journal and others about the widespread inaccuracies and misconceptions concerning

Brecht and his
sessed
e s
Brechtians are often ob-
with policing the referenc-
to Brecht and in get-
ting Brecht right,
just as those who
follow and ap-
preciate com-
ics are always
looking for
The Sign, the
indicator that
comics have fi-
nally been let into
the larger cultural
conversation. (Can
we sit at the grown-ups
table yet?). The problem here
while comics have certainly grown
news for most people.³



is that
up, it is still

But why should we care if this art form is cordoned off from the mainstream? Why should we care if Brecht's plays are misunderstood and maligned? Both are still motor-ing along. Shouldn't we be happy with the comics-gallery shows and media coverage, and even relish the cloistered insider's-club that is comics, or that is Brechtian writing? Not if we take an artist-centric point of view, or if we actually value the art at hand. Douglas Wolk seems certain that his rightly beloved words-and-pictures storytelling mode that goes by so many names is entrenched in the dialogues and in the cultural firmament of people who care and read about art. But the somewhat desperate posturing of his opening salvo puts the lie to the argument, even as his book sets the bar for what we should expect from comics criticism. Comics have grown up, sure. But where's **The Sign** that they've arrived in the larger consciousness? Wolk makes a brilliant case for why comics *should* be discussed. But it is hard to see that they *are* discussed with any regularity or diligence, despite the efforts of standard-bearers like Wolk himself.

And while he makes the essential point that “comics” are a medium, not a genre, he overestimates the position of this medium in the public consciousness - the popular as well as the critical - and he ignores the cause of this neglect.

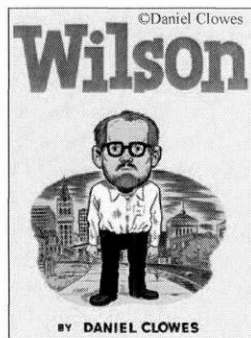
1997's *Dangerous Drawings: Interviews With Comix and Graphix Artists*⁴ includes interviews with art comics “stars” like Daniel Clowes, Chris Ware, and Art Spiegelman⁵. Then and now, the medium is, as Ware agrees in his interview, “ghettoized,” and then and now Spiegelman is traveling with the “Comics 101” slide show, preaching to the converted. Then and now, Phoebe Gloeckner is a transcendent artist, tragically uncelebrated by a wide audience. Reading the interviews is the opposite of going back in a time machine and experiencing the medium circa 1997. It reads like circa *now*: the work produced in this distinct medium is captivating, it operates on its own level within its own idioms and vernacular, and it goes largely ignored.

The implicit message of Wolk's book, *we've arrived*, would more accurately read *we're not there yet*. His saying it doesn't make it so, and his otherwise circumspect book is actively ignoring a power structure of critical gatekeepers that do indeed ghettoize the art form by quashing its coverage, and therefore its potential to be appreciated by a wider audience. *Reading Comics* is a black swan, a rare specimen that is larded with both well-considered critical theory and the exuberance of the superfan. It is indispensable because it operates simultaneously as a gateway primer to the uninitiated, and as catnip to the committed acolyte, or as Wolk calls them, the “super-readers.” Better than anyone else who writes critically about “graphic novels” or “art comics,” Wolk understands that those who understand comics deeply - as metaphor, as art, as communication, as cultural artifact, as entertainment - do so from the feverish perspective of the fanatic. Whether comics are enjoyed or intellectualized or both, they are never held at arm's length.

There is nothing clinical or algebraic about appreciating comics, though there can be theory. Wolk gets that. His book is comprehensive and extraordinarily thorough. I would use the word “exhaustive,” except for that word's flavor of tedium, and Wolk's crackling book is anything but tedious. Though he overplays the widespread acceptance of comics-as-art, he has produced a prototype for the type of book the medium deserves.⁶

2

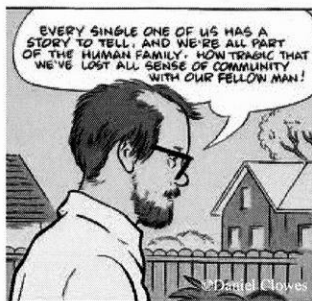
Wolk is quite certain that we are in the midst of an art-comics Golden Age, and I'm quite certain that he's right. One of the gold nuggets to come tumbling forth this year is Daniel Clowes' *Wilson*⁷, an innovative and bittersweet saga told in one-page gag strips. *Reading Comics* was published before the 2010 publication of *Wilson*, but Clowes is one of those “art comic” bigwigs repeatedly name-checked as an auteur in Wolk's book. Wolk doesn't like Clowes' earlier stuff like *Ice Haven* and *Like a Velvet Glove Cast in Iron* but eventually claims “the most striking comic about its artist to come out in the '90's...was Dan Clowes' *Ghost World*.” (That book and the successful film that was made from it were at one time collectively - falsely - hailed as *The Sign* that comics had arrived). With today's media so savagely fractured, it's hard to tell if people have made a big enough fuss about *Wilson*. Actually, it's not hard - if I'm wondering about it, it means that they did not, after all, make a big enough fuss. It's been out since last spring and I've seen some press, but did it enter the consciousness like it should have?



A story told in words and pictures can have the same heft and resonance as a story told in words alone, but you could have fooled me from the way that people *talk* about comics. The unique structure of *Wilson*, a big glossy hardback, is such that each page features a stand-alone old-fashioned gag strip complete with punchline. The twist is that each strip is a linear extension - a chapter - of the book's larger narrative. The color palette and cartoony forms recall kiddie comics and Flash Gordon but don't let the bobble heads and sherbet hues fool you. Story-wise, we are not in the world of jetpacks or lollipops. This is astringent mid-life, and late-life, angst with no chaser. The abrasive main character, the lonely middle-aged Oakland resident Wilson, offers up a running personal commentary on life's inequities that veers wildly from pithy, indignant musings to bittersweet reminiscence, to vitriolic rants. He lurks in coffee shops and his unwelcome overtures to hapless strangers may begin with a hokey "Hey brother," or "Hello, sister," before they inevitably skid off into a frustrated outburst. But where Wolk, in an online review, sees "big invisible ironic quotation marks around almost every element of *Wilson*, from its cover ('60s-style lettering! Big-head caricature of main character! Woo!) on in," I just see heartache and laughs delivered together with the same punch.

The plot follows Wilson along a heartbreaking trajectory that includes the death of a parent, running afoul of the law, reconnecting with an ex-wife, and kidnapping the teenage daughter he never knew he had. When his personality thwarts his attempts at connecting politely with other human beings, these outbursts are often dropped into the last panel of a strip, producing actual, *unironic* laughs, but the humor is also delivered in more muted varieties that usually gets called postmodern. The simple reversal mechanism works as punchline, but also as a portrait of acute discomfort and alienation. There is anger and shock in this book. The subject matter and emotional quotient are adult, the characters revealed with great care and humor and sadness, and the arc of the story is, shall we say, novelistic. So why isn't it accorded the equivalent attention given a work of literary fiction? Maybe I've answered my own question by mentioning the "cartoony" colors and shapes. Wolk is excellent on this subject of comics' association with two-bit escapism and juvenilia. He's the guy who can tell you the names of all the Green Lanterns, as well as the blue-skinned Guardians who employ them within the elaborate mythology of the DC comics universe. But he can rattle them off while name-checking theoretical tracts and mythic modalities at the same time he's reminding you that *Ghost World's* protagonist, Enid Coleslaw, is an anagram for Daniel Clowes.

To his credit, Clowes seems intent on avoiding classification. He blurs the line further by rotating his drawing style from page to page. The visuals both match and help to make the mood and emotional content of each strip. On one page, Wilson might look stumpy and über-cartoonish, sporting a Snuffy Smith schnozz, while on another, Clowes' trademark hairy-realism-meets-Archie-comics style puts us back in the world of his *David Boring*. Page 9's masterly use of black might recall the work of Philadelphia artist Charles Burns of *Black Hole* fame. On page 62, the diagrammatic panel composition might bring to mind the repetitive, coldly perfect work of Chris Ware. On some pages, gray or blue or purple ink washes out all other color to accentuate loneliness or sorrow, often arriving just before or after a page that looks like it came from

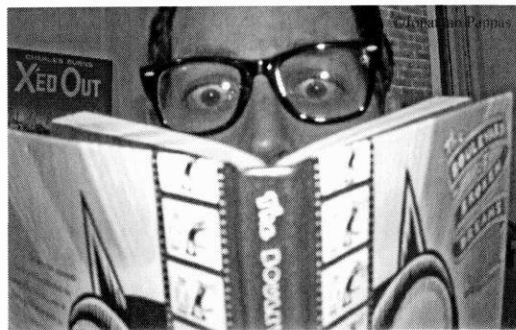


the funny pages of fifty years ago. These decisions provide a crackling frisson, and all are thoroughly rooted in the exploration of character. Using the conventions of an ephemeral and juvenile form, Clowes tells an adult story, and gives us something new.

Clowes has achieved old-guard legend status in the comics world, but how will he and other comics artists of every stripe gain broader recognition in a scenario that restricts us all to becoming experts on the stuff we already like? Clowes has got a lot of books left in him, and this is a boon to all of us. He's established, sure, and his *Wilson* is

brilliant and thematically mature, but so was his other stuff. With *Wilson*, we know that he's capable of boundless invention and re-invention. At least, *some of us* know. There's a firewall between what we can call the general reading public, and the readers and creators of comics. The wall isn't there by accident.

Wolk is a major comics critic, if I may be permitted an oxymoron, (they don't have those yet) and Clowes is a major comics artist. Wolk's take on



the book was published as part of a round-table comics discussion on a website called Techland, a conversation that I promise cannot be located without some very pointed web searching. Should we be happy for the sheer fact that the Times even *has* a best-seller list for graphic novels? It's not exactly a weekly feature, but it's *there* if you look for it. Is that **The Sign** we've been waiting for? Wolk now works for the Times writing an occasional comics round-up column. Is *that* **The Sign**? If it is, we are in worse trouble than we thought. In November 2010, the comics, film, and pop culture corners of the internet were flush with the report that filmmaker Alexander Payne (*Election*, *About Schmidt*) was set to direct the feature film adaptation of *Wilson*. That's encouraging in a way, but if Terry Zwigoff's *Ghost World* and the film adaptation of Harvey Pekar's *American Splendor* series taught us anything, this is not **The Sign** we are looking for. Those films were successful in their way, but, like Zwigoff's brilliant documentary about the artists in the Crumb family, *Crumb*, they did not expand the serious discourse on the medium.

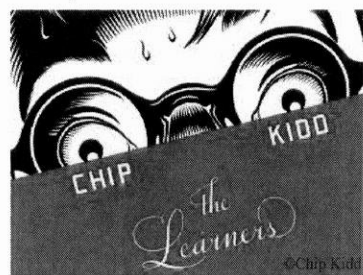
3

In October of 2010, the worlds of prose fiction, big-time book design, and contemporary graphic novels collided in October at the main branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia as writer/artists Charles Burns and Chipp Kidd teamed up to lecture on current projects. It's a testament to the duo's popularity that they spoke to a full house in the branch's large auditorium, especially since the event overlapped with a Phillies playoff game. And it's a testament to the small-mindedness of old-guard media that a local Philadelphia website that I've written for in the past, that purports to cover culture and ideas, rejected my write-up of the event. Or maybe that rejection only speaks to the whims of an individual comics-hating editor. Either way, I'd like to mention as measuring stick that I was once paid by this same site for a brief distracted musing on the renaming of my local commuter train. The Burns/Kidd piece I wrote was a thorough and considered piece of cultural reporting, and you can't tell me that it wasn't rejected due to the perceived and long-outdated low-art stain of "comix."

The presentation at the Free Library would be of universal appeal to anyone inter-

ested in the rigors of artistic process, in the specialized powers of a visual medium, in artistic collaboration, or in storytelling itself. Kidd and Burns have been friends and collaborators since the 1980's, and they shared a table onstage as they flipped through slide shows of the work that they produce both independently and together. They set out to illuminate the intersection of their artistic and thematic sensibilities, and they did so with candor and humor, with Burns (*Skin Deep*, *Black Hole*, *Big Baby*) playing dry straight man to Kidd's cut-up. Both artists are established enough that their words don't have the flavor of justifying the medium, or their own work. They are rare in that regard.

Kidd, a writer and Knopf art director who is best known for his innovative book designs, (including books by Updike, Amis, Ellroy, Ondaatje, and on and on, along with the iconic skeletal T-Rex for *Jurassic Park*), opened the evening. Burns, the Philly-dwelling ink-on-paper comics maestro, commercial illustrator, and bard of the creepily disaffected and horror-stricken, followed. It was clearly Burns' crowd, but Kidd won them over from his opening words. A droll and witty speaker, he lit up, unabashedly gleeful, while discussing his new Captain Marvel photo book *Shazam! The Golden Age of the World's Mightiest Mortal*, a manhole-cover-sized coffee table book about the classic superhero of the 1940's, a time when the character was Superman's only real competition for caped-hero market share. Kidd has almost single-handedly invented this genre of fetishistic design books about specific superhero characters, which feature familiar comic panels alongside foreign pirated editions and photos of obscure collectibles and ads (Witness his *Batman: Collected and Bat Manga* as well as his work with the artist Alex Ross and the more literary Art Spiegelman collaboration *Jack Cole and Plastic Man*). The whole superhero motif can be the elephant in the room when comics are discussed. Wolk embraces it; he can wax intellectual over what Spiderman really *means* as well as he can discuss the etchings of Hogarth. Kidd, of course, doesn't blush or get defensive either, blithely referring to Batman as a "miracle of design" and "a design solution."



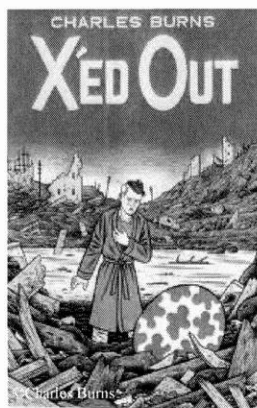
In a natural segue, Kidd pointed the evening toward Charles Burns by projecting the first Burns-drawn image he'd ever seen, a comic book cover from the 80's, glimpsed while Kidd was still in college. A slide or two later we saw the first book they collaborated on, once Kidd had become established in the art department at the publisher Knopf. He reached out and hired Burns to illustrate the cover for an obscure collection of short stories, and Burns' distinctly retro horror-comic-meets-Brylcreem-ad style was already in evidence in the grinning handsome-man character he drew for that job.

Kidd also showed a fascinating sequence of slides that depicted stages of the Kidd-Burns collaboration on the book design for *The Learners*, Kidd's recent (and second) book of literary fiction. The illustration is a Burns drawing of Kidd himself, or his desperate googly eyes, anyway, in their trademark architect-frames, freakishly leering over the book's title. Kidd even showed a slide of Burns' *pencil work*, a revelation for the many fans that associate Burns' artwork with his bottomless black inkwell.

And Kidd had some fun projecting a rare - and fittingly strange - Batman drawing that Burns had been asked to draw by DC Comics for an anniversary issue some years ago. (It was rare because Burns does not draw superheroes. He is of the adult and modern breed of comics artists whose work can span many genres but never men-in-

tights. He can and does depict the arcane, the eerie, and the supernatural, but, never, as a rule, the conventional.) The full-color Batman drawing - clever, unsettling, satirical, gross - drew immediate laughs of delight, not least from Kidd.

Even the presence of color itself in the Batman drawing was anomalous for a Burns drawing. His work, mostly in black and white, is rightly renowned for that absolute mastery of black, whether deployed in voids, shadows or lines. Truly the Burns signature is linework itself - exquisite black brush-made lines that vary in texture and width at his will. His anniversary bat-drawing showed a squishy, befuddled Batman crouching awkwardly in an evening forest, contemplating a sick-looking live bat held up in one gloved hand. The drawing had been rejected by a bewildered DC editor as too weird, but with a follow-up slide, Kidd demonstrated that Burns had not just been after a queasy joke. The drawing has a strict and literal provenance in the 1940's Batman artwork of canonized comics legend Dick Sprang. It was just that, like a true artist, Burns had "Burnsified" it beyond recognition, and there we all were at the Burns-Kidd nexus. For a little while, it didn't matter how this stuff was perceived by the broader cultural spectrum; the conversation at hand was the only one worth listening to.



Burns took over the mike and the laptop, and with occasional helpful interjections from a cheerleading Kidd, took the audience through his own history as an artist, and through parts of his new striking new book *X'ed Out*. Burns' masterwork to date is generally considered to be *Black Hole*, a saga that was originally serialized in almost ten years of comics before being collected by Pantheon into a stand-alone hardback in 2005. If not his masterwork, it certainly contains a trove of boilerplate Burnsiana, from his fondness for dissected animals, strange diseases, snakes and monsters, comically deformed faces, various oozing apertures and orifices, punk rock, the angst of the young, sex, outer space, and the thematic fear of the body's transformation.

Most of this stuff has taken up residence in *X'ed Out*, along with the addition of full color. The new book, a tantalizingly brief first part to a proposed trilogy, gives every indication that it will turn out to be the real masterwork. As Wolk noted in the *New York Times*, "There's nothing quite as creepy as a creepy drawing: almost real, but just wrong enough to suggest it's wearing only the torn-off skin of reality. Charles Burns's comics are fluid, smooth and as solidly built as a vintage TV set, but they shudder with the chill of the uncanny."

At the Free Library, Burns toggled between slides of the old and the new, between his own work and that of other artists. He led the rapt audience through some of his career to date, before displaying and reading some of the seminal texts of his childhood that inspired him - directly, literally, as the slides made clear - all the way up to the William Burroughs-meets-Tintin phantasmagoria of *X'ed Out*. He laid out the bread-crumb trail of his childhood reading, of sci-fi B-movies from the fifties and sixties, of the strips from William Gaines' early iteration of *Mad* magazine that were inked by artists like Harvey Kurtzman and Bill Elder. He showed a series of rare American editions of Tintin storybooks from the Belgian artist Herge, which were given to a young Burns by his father. Imagery from the Tintin books has long been mischievously embedded in Burns' work; now he's playing with Herge's flat, bright color palette as well.

Burns guided the evening into a very specific artist's talk. He pulled back the curtain on his own development to show how much of his lauded affinity for compositional

himself balked at a similar term during the interview, telling a graphic designer who'd called in that he had never understood just what a graphic designer was. Crumb remarked that he pictured someone who sat in front of a computer all day. *You're exactly right*, said the caller, or words to that effect, *and that's why I pursue my real art on my own time*.

The "whither comics?" question is an important one because the medium remains egregiously ignored, and the ossified power structure of editorial middle-management needs to crumble away already. We are all still waiting for **The Sign**. But maybe, as Wolk seems to suggest, comics are better enjoyed than championed. An even better primer to this world than Wolk's isn't even really a book, it's an all-comics issue of the literary journal *McSweeney's*: the infamous Issue Number 13 from 2004 that was guest-edited by auteur cartoonist Chris Ware and is still in print as a stand-alone hardback. It's a full sampler of criticism, historicity and artwork. "Issue 13" is a must, and both Ware and Wolk are encyclopedic, but even they are fallible. The medium is rich and varied, and these two share the same glaring and unforgivable omission: the miraculous, underrated medical-illustrator-turned-graphic-novelist Phoebe Gloeckner. But then again Gloeckner, who deserves a long article of her own, won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2008. Maybe *that's The Sign* we've been waiting for.

If you're into comics already, all you can do is continue to beat the drum and wave pages of cartoons in peoples' faces. If you're not, it is a great time to pick up any one of the books mentioned above and begin. Engaging with the medium, like engaging with Brechtian Theater, is what Brecht might call an "intellectual habit," and it is a habit that settles in with a tenacious permanence. Be warned, though, that you will also likely be infected with the need to champion the cause of the medium that never seems to get its due.

1 Kuhn, Tom and Giles, Steve. Eds. *Brecht on Art and Politics*. Bloomsbury, 2003.

2 Wolk, Douglas. *Reading Comics: How Graphic Novels Work and What They Mean*. Cambridge: DaCapo Press, 2007.

3 Also riddled with this champion-of-the-under-appreciated tone is the 1924's "The Krazy Kat that Walks by Himself," an essay by art critic Gilbert Seldes from his book on art and popular culture, *The Seven Lively Arts*. This highly entertaining essay, in praise of George Herriman and his *Krazy Kat* newspaper strip, stands as one of the earlier mature responses to the comics medium, and is reprinted in full in 1986's *Krazy Kat: The Comic Art of George Herriman*, edited by Patrick O'Donnell, Karen O'Connell, and Georgia Riley de Havenon. It is an excellent place to start an exploration of comics, for reasons of both chronology and quality.

4 Andrea Juno, ed. *Dangerous Drawings: Interviews With Comix and Graphix Artists*. Juno Books, 1997.

5 The American "adult" comics artists of today, many influenced by the underground "Comix" movement of the 1960's, have wildly varied styles but what most share is a formal style that is both intimate and off-putting. This dichotomy between the accessible and the impenetrable is part of what has boxed comics out of many literary discussions. Certain formal aspects of the material - cartoony drawings that alternately comfort and disgust by evoking juvenile source material, and the use of humor - serve to draw the reader in, while the bald autobiographical nature and heavy use of narration can put the material at a remove from the reader. This remove can operate as a cousin to Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, it's a framework that announces itself and deletes the effect of audience immersion. It is not "experiential." Good places to start looking into the 1960's "comix" movement: Danky, James and Kitchen, Denis. *Underground Classics: The Transformation of Comics into Comix*. New York: Abrams ComicArts 2009, and D.K. Holmes, ed. *R.Crumb: Conversations*. University of Mississippi Press, 2004.

6 Wolk's book is similar title but in little else to a popular series by the artist Scott McCloud. In his books *Making Comics*, *Inventing Comics*, and *Understanding Comics*, McCloud uses a comics format to discuss the medium's process and theory.

7 Clowes, Daniel. *Wilson, Drawn and Quarterly*, 2010.

El día jueves 07 de octubre 2010, dirigida por Alberto Isola, se estrenó en Lima, la pieza de Bertolt Brecht *Madre Coraje y sus Hijos*. Alberto Isola es uno de los actores y directores de mayor prestigio en el Perú, y su sola decisión de realizar este montaje es un hecho muy importante, siendo una gran oportunidad para el público que hace varios años no tenía ocasión de ver las piezas de este dramaturgo.

MADRE CORAJE
EN
LIMA, PERÚ

SARA JOFFRÉ

Para la puesta en escena ha reunido a un equipo de actores que respaldan con solvencia su propuesta como director. El personaje de Madre Coraje lo interpreta la actriz Teresa Ralli, una mujer joven pero ya con una trayectoria importante dentro del teatro peruano. El antecedente inmediato que tenía yo sobre Madre Coraje en escena, fue el trabajo de Meryl Streep en 2006, y en la inevitable comparación lo que más extrañé en la escenificación peruana fue el humor responsable de Tony Kushner.

Igualmente en lo que concierne a los aportes de la dirección, en ambos montajes, el de Nueva York y el de Lima, sigue quedando claro que en Madre Coraje el momento más difícil de realizar es el de la inmoliación de Katrin, la hija muda, (atención, pero no sorda) de esta madre difícil. En las dos puestas se acudió a salidas espectaculares que tornan el momento más bien en un aporte circense que profundo. Me gustaría irme de este mundo viendo este tramo de la obra como imagino y sustento que debería hacerse. Pero estas son elucubraciones de una persona, sudamericana, que conoció a Brecht en aquellos años cuando se le representaba libremente y sin siquiera imaginar que para una puesta de Brecht lo primero que hay que tener es un buen respaldo económico para los derechos del "estado Brecht".

Haciendo un poco de historia, para los posibles investigadores, anotaré que Bertolt Brecht ingresó a nuestro país como judío y señalándolo así en el programa de mano, lo puso en escena en este convencimiento el grupo Hebraica en 1962, montando algunas de las escenas de "Terror y Miseria del Tercer Reich", seguros de que quien criticaba así la actitud fachista del gobierno alemán, era judío. El primero que nos dio a conocer en el Perú, a Bertolt Brecht, en artículos y críticas de teatro, fue nuestro escritor y poeta Sebastián Salazar Bondy, en cuyo teatro es evidente la influencia brechtiana.

En el Perú, durante los años, comprendidos desde 1970 a finales de los 1980s, la gente joven se apropió del autor nacido en Ausburgo, era un tipo demasiado cercano, y tal como en muchos lugares de América Latina, Brecht estuvo presente en el ideario de los teatristas que deseaban hacer un teatro de rico contenido. ¡La efervescencia! Brecht "nacionalizado" latinoamericanizado, y convertido en guerrillero y poeta; así transcurrió su dramaturgia entre nosotros y en tal forma fue apropiado y representado. Sus declaraciones ante la HUAC, no fueron conocidas hasta muy entrados los noventa. Así pues durante todos esos años la gente tuvo un Brecht a su imagen y semejanza en muchos frentes.

Actualmente Brecht como posibilidad para un montaje y gracias a los "derechos" es no solo un clásico sino un artista de élite. Este cambio de escenarios para sus obras -

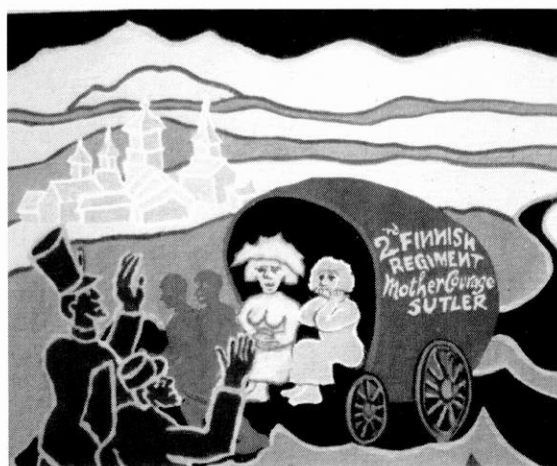


como muchas cosas en este mundo- tiene sus pros y sus contras ya que la calidad de sus textos y la lógica de sus exposiciones llegan a otros lados, a otras mentes. Es así como actualmente en la puesta en escena cuya presentación dio motivo a estas reflexiones ofrecer el teatro brechtiano ha servido para que muchas personas que no habían tenido oportunidad de conocer al dramaturgo alemán, puedan hacerlo. Para muchos

será la primera ocasión de verlo y opinarán; para otros será la oportunidad de discrepar y volver a esgrimir la vieja discusión sobre distanciamiento o no distanciamiento y otras exigencias, no precisamente teatrales.

Pero es un hecho que Alberto Isola, arriesga una puesta en escena de un autor cuya presencia estaba haciéndonos mucha falta. Es importante poder acceder a las obras y a la esencia de los planteamientos de nuestro escritor de piezas, mientras su pensamiento no se vea modificado por cualesquiera sean los acontecimientos y como dijo muy bien el mismo: "se cantará también en los tiempos oscuros..." Por todo ello celebramos esta oportunidad de ver a Brecht en la ciudad de Lima, conociendo además que en el tiempo transcurrido, desde el estreno a la fecha en que hacemos este comentario,

la asistencia del público es nutrida. Comprobamos que Bertolt Brecht, sigue siendo ese joven poeta que revolucionó el mundo teatral hace más de 80 años, y que parece va a seguir haciéndolo largamente...



All illustrations by Hugh Bulley and reproduced with his consent. The Mother Courage series was painted in 1989 in Paradise Valley, Arizona in honor of his cousin John Willett for his work in translating and introducing Brecht to a wider audience. The Mother Courage illustrations as well as many others based on classic texts can be found in: *Drama in Colour: Series Paintings* by Hugh Bulley. Visit www.bridgeman.co.uk for more information.

For such an esteemed and researched dramatist, Bertolt Brecht's work is not as popular as would be expected.

The groans and eye-rolls emanating from my peers when I bring up Brecht have become expected. There is a common misconception amongst the theatre's new generation that "Brecht is boring." Perhaps this stems from the alienating techniques faithfully utilized in many American productions; the audience simply doesn't get to invest in the story in the manner they do in more narrative-based musicals and plays. Perhaps the belief comes from the constant reference to Brecht as being "an influence" for more 'exciting' and experimental practitioners like Augusto Boal or Peter Brook. Perhaps its simply because some of his work is now well over fifty years old and is therefore clearly out of touch and archaic. Yet still, his influence seems to pop up everywhere, and often in the least-expected places. The work of Ntozake Shange, Lynn Nottage and Suzan-Lori Parks are three such places. All three women are award-winning African-American playwrights, respected for their individual style and striking socio-political commentary. And all three have come to Brecht, specifically his play *Mother Courage and her Children*, for inspiration and guidance. This article chronicles their incorporation of Brecht's principles into their own works and examines why this piece is the common source for such diverse works.

The combination of Bertolt Brecht and Ntozake Shange is not one that many 20th Century dramatists would have expected, nor approved. Shange, of *For Colored Girls...* fame, is known for her free-flowing and acerbic poetry, sinuous storylines, feminist themes, and poignantly captivating subject matter. Critics claimed that Shange's work with *Mother Courage and her Children* ended up "betraying Brecht and distorting American history" (Rich). The general consensus was that what the production lacked in conception, it made up for it in politics. The production was part of the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park and was given a full run, but low attendance and critical reviews kept the production from being produced elsewhere. The play has not been published.

The controversy is rooted in Shange's transference of the set and characters from the battlegrounds of the Thirty-Years War to the fields of post-Civil War Texas during the campaign against the Plains Indians. She tries valiantly to find a time in American history that parallels the trying and tense times of the original, but Brecht's setting allows for a very ambiguous framework of good and bad that Shange's chosen setting does not. The Plains Indians were being driven off their native land by a newly recombined government that utilized its freshly emancipated slaves as soldiers in the effort. *Mother Courage*, Anna Fiercesome here, is one of those freed slaves. She roams across the battlefields selling supplies to anyone who will pay instead of only supporting her natural ally, the persecuted Indians. Rather than positioning herself against the government that kept her family enslaved for so long, she readily serves them without any interest in usurping her oppressors; instead of supporting the government that freed her, she refuses to let her sons join up with the so-called Colored Cavalry (or 'Buffalo Soldiers') employed to violently relocate the Indians. It is only when the Ku Klux Klan arrive at the end of the play that she shows even the slightest hint of a political stance as she tries to protect her daughter and even then, it is self-sustaining act. Unfortunately, this new version does not present a woman stubbornly resistant to politics, cursed by her insatiable need to make a buck or selfishly clinging to her children rather than letting them venture from the nest smartly. They see a woman who has overcome horrendous

AFRICAN-AMERICAN
WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS
USE OF MOTHER
COURAGE AND HER
CHILDREN:

NTOZAKE SHANGE
LYNN NOTTAGE
SUZAN-LORI PARKS

JULIA MORIARTY

trials and tribulations and is now exerting every ounce of control over her life that she can since she finally has the power to do so. The audience applauds her. This is not what Brecht intended.

Ntozake Shange imbued the adaptation with her strong voice and vehement sense of moral justice. She was drawn to an adaptive format for this piece due to her self-proclaimed disinterest in plot. In an interview Ms. Shange stated: "It's very hard for me to write a storyline - I don't understand storylines. I understand language... But in narrative there isn't always drama. I can write really good scenes, but that doesn't mean anything happens" (Power). Shange is also drawn to more violent depictions of the injustice she strives to address. Her style "implies the opening of wounds that would be left to bleed as part of a healing process, inspiring solidarity and seeking the spiritual transcendence of a corporal existence where women are vulnerable" (Shange). Her attraction to the brutal realities of life is not dampened by Brecht's work. Indeed, Shange often abandoned Brecht's alienating techniques to better drive home her point. The gestus has been removed, the scene titles have been altered to be less informative and more preparatory, music remains but has a more emotionally connective purpose than separating: "In 'The Song of Great Capitulation' the theme of God being the great provider becomes 'His Eye is on the Sparrow'" (Gussow). The question becomes: why bother adapting Brecht when you do not intend to stay true to his piece? Shange also provides her opinions on this question: "If I must come to terms with being a descendant of imperialist assimilationists who were willing if not eager to murder and destroy other people of color, in the name of a flag that represents only white folks, then let me use a vehicle conceived in the heartland of one of history's most cruel ideologies, Nazism" (Rich). It is clear Shange manipulated a white archetype to juxtapose her view of race relations in this country. She also wanted to shock viewers into an understanding of the parallels between our own country's actions and those of Nazi Germany. Brecht was the obvious and deliberate choice for Shange, though her critics did not understand these points as clearly.

When Lynn Nottage began to write her Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Ruined*, she intended to update *Mother Courage* to the jungles of the civil war-riddled Congo. When she met the courageous women who live in the midst of that war, she abandoned the adaptation though the ghost of the play never left her. Nottage explains, "*Ruined* [became] a huge departure. I didn't want to use a Western theatrical construct. I felt that was totally the antithesis of what I wanted to do with the play" (Gener, 184). Nottage's play is rife with discrimination and abuse. For the erudite audience member, another layer of injustice is unveiled when the two protagonists are compared. Her heroine, Mama Nadi, is the proprietor of a nonpartisan brothel who sees her prospects stripped away as she continually makes the compassionate choice over the savvy one. Anna Fierling is concerned only with money and clinging tight to the few things she owns while she tries to profit off the war. She sacrifices her family for the sake of her business. Mama Nadi attempts to avoid being caught up in the war by not choosing sides but the war forces her out of business anyway. These small kindnesses are the antithesis of *Mother Courage*'s actions and this inverse relationship shows Mama Nadi has a hope for happiness where *Mother Courage* has swindled her happy endings away for a better deal on leather. Both women strive desperately to cling to their business and their family but neither has found a way to protect both.

Nottage makes a significant effort to connect emotionally with the audience in the hope that the connection will strengthen its resolve to stop such violence from continuing. Interestingly enough, Nottage and Brecht both rely on the emotions of the

audience to relay their cause but they do so conversely. Brecht would undoubtedly warn Nottage of the cathartic amnesia that such emotional substance can have on the audience but Nottage's audience is oversaturated with the dilemmas and disasters of the media world. Nottage is relying on these personal accounts to awaken her audience to its need for action. This method has worked well for Nottage in the past. *Intimate Apparel* addresses issues of class head-on as the poor and wealthy are served the same clothing, but the clothes become drastically different depending on who is in them. Nottage and Brecht both craft their pieces to elicit a desired response. Nottage also uses music throughout the play, though more to set the mood of the scene than to cast a more dramatic light on the situation. The *gestus* appears subtly as Mama Nadi compulsively applies red lipstick to reinforce the importance of seduction. For those who know Brecht, there is more than just inspiration in Nottage's play.

Suzan-Lori Parks is another playwright with a similar penchant for aggressive depictions of social injustice. Similar to Brecht, Parks frequently recreates historical moments on stage; unlike Brecht, Parks enjoys manipulating historical events to better state her case through the juxtaposition of the real and the depicted. What Parks does here is actually an embrace of Brecht's *Verfremdung*, that ever-elusive and misleading "alienation." In *The America Play*, *The Foundling Father*, a black man, dresses up as Abraham Lincoln and "shot" repeatedly by customers as a type of a sideshow. This is a use of audience distancing that is perhaps more severe than in Brecht's plays, however the ironic situation is quite reminiscent of the Shen Te's dilemma in *The Good Person of Szechwan*.

In *Fucking A*, Parks presents a Hester Prynne-type character, of *The Scarlet Letter*, in a Mother Courage-esque situation. Hester Smith is forced by society to be an abortionist to raise the money to free her imprisoned son. When playing by the rules does not earn her son's freedom, Hester turns to vengeance. Her actions do not gain her son's freedom, but inadvertently deprive her of her grandchild and steal her son's life. The pairing of these two literary classics into this new piece allows Parks the benefit of a common knowledgebase in her audience. She is then able to twist the expected relationships and plot to reveal the hypocrisies and injustices within this world. It is not because Hester is a bad person that bad things happen to her; nor is it because the world is stacked against her. Bad things happen to her because she is too blinded by her sense of vengeance to accept a new reality. She could have run off happily with the butcher. She could have left the Rich Lady alone and gained a grandchild. She could have accepted her son when she first saw him and saved him from his fate instead of denying him and condemning him to death. Her actions caused her ultimate ruin. The world was not kind to Hester Smith, but she is also to blame for her fate. In this way, she is Mother Courage whose haggling and dealings led to her isolation.

As Carol Schafer points out, in *Fucking A* "the battleground is not on land; rather, it lies in a different kind of alien territory: the human body. Throughout the play, human bodies, particularly those of women and the poorer classes, are objectified as pieces of meat" (196). Parks implicates the capitalistic society that is built on racism and class-ism in the downfall of Hester Smith just as Brecht does with Mother Courage. By reworking these classics, Parks assumes a level of impending failure to the piece: neither Hester Prynne nor Anna Fierling have traditional 'happy endings' so why should Hester Smith? The addition of songs, violence and similar characters from *Mother Courage* only add to the connection between Brecht's and Parks' works. Their themes are so similar that the pairing makes quite a bit of sense, yet many reviewers failed to make the connection. *Fucking A* is one of two sequels to *The Scarlet Letter's*

heroine Hester Prynne that Parks wrote, the other being *In the Blood*. It is curious that many critics overlooked the many similarities between *Mother Courage* and *The Scarlet Letter* but this may be more socially driven than ignorant. Suzan-Lori Parks is an incredibly prolific and independent writer whose scathing critiques on the state of the country are notable in her own right, as are the works of all three women. She does not need to borrow from another writer to prove a point, let alone a German Marxist. Her focus is often on the plight of African-Americans in modern America and, like Ntozake Shange, her voice has been celebrated as a strong African-American voice for the contemporary world. Why would she align herself with such a thoroughly white man?

It is Brecht's approach to instigating social change that has attracted all these playwrights. After all, it was not Brecht's intention to force-feed social change down his audiences' throat but to spoon-feed them little doses of medicine until they became immune to the propaganda of the status quo and started to question for themselves what was honorable and what was intolerable behavior. Activism has its spectrum of success but students are taught about Rosa Parks' simple stand more than the Weathermen's calculated violence when learning about the Civil Rights movement. We are also a society raised on the moral idiom "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." If Brecht's work could ever be considered a 'subtle' form of social protest then perhaps it was the hope of these playwrights that their message would stick better based on this proven type of protest. Brecht intended to wake up his audience to the realities of what was going on outside the theatre's doors and so do these women. Whether it be Ntozake Shange's disgust at the inequality still faced by minorities, Lynn Nottage's revulsion to acts of war allowed to continue in the Congo or Suzan-Lori Parks' distrust of the capitalistic model that our country is now so thoroughly invested in, Brecht's play serves as the perfect model to present issues for appraisal and relevant action. Why wouldn't these playwrights base their plays off such an esteemed framework? Perhaps the better question is: Why haven't more?

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Second Conversation (13th April 1958)

*Please tell me something about Brecht's understanding of music. Did he prefer a certain type of music? For example I read on 8th June 1943, 'hear the act of Don Giovanni on the radio in the night. this peak has never again been scaled, and it rose up at the very beginning!'*¹

Brecht never went to concerts because you weren't allowed to smoke there. Besides, he also had a lot on. Although I have to admit, he did make exceptions. If a concert piece by one of his friends was performed, he suddenly appeared – I never sent him an invitation – and listened to it. He did this because he possessed, as I said, a Chinese politeness. His taste in music was excellent – with one weakness. You have to understand that Brecht saw all the arts, equal as they all are, from the viewpoint of a playwright, a dramatist. Art only existed for him in terms of its usefulness. This is what he was interested in.

Usefulness in music – and that's also the way he listened to it outside the theatre – he found in Johann Sebastian Bach's music. Also Mozart, who he admired very much. Further, he liked certain Turkish, Chinese and Algerian music; flamenco, as in folk music; or the ancient and stylistically formal music of ancient China. I once played him a record, *Die Jungfrau auf den sieben Sternen*, or was it *Sieben Jungfrauen auf einem Stern*², where he was so thrilled by the way in which the texts were recited. And he admired Spanish flamenco.

He never knew what to make of Beethoven. I wrote something about this in the remembrance issue of the journal *Sinn und Form*³. He couldn't come to terms with it. Brahms – out of the question. Also Strauss – quite impossible. Schönberg he found too melodious. And that's not just a frivolous, witty remark; no, that music made him hot and bothered. He often said, 'It's a kind of broken Lehár', or 'It's like Lehár' – which it really isn't. And you have to understand that Brecht protected himself in a way. He got involved with music only as far as it was useful for him.

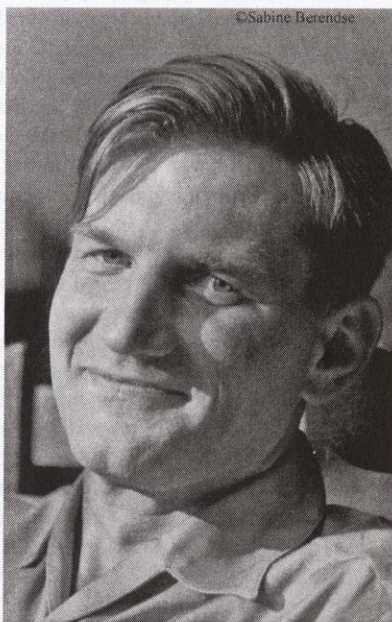
As, indeed, he read for the most part, only what he could use. Brecht, who was a brilliantly educated man, highly educated – an astonishingly deep education in parts – read, as he got older, only things which he could use, either for information or as a stimulus to thought. He read certain academic books only for this purpose. Brecht wasn't a *l'art-pour-l'art*-reader. Even the crime novels, which he read with touching dedication, interested him like a game of chess. How do you weave together the threads of a story? Brecht studied crime novelists to answer this question, and he always complained loudly to me if he found out in the middle of the book that he had already read it three times. He had just forgotten it. Then he put it aside. An eternal

EXCERPT:

HANNS EISLER:
CONVERSATIONS WITH
HANS BUNGE

ASK ME MORE ABOUT
BRECHT!

TRANSLATOR:
SABINE BERENDSE



battle: 'aren't there any new crime novels?' That was Brecht's cry nearly every day. And all his friends were continually on the look out for new crime novels.

Besides that, he read very difficult things. He was very much interested in physics. He had a strong mathematical ability even though he didn't have any mathematical technique. Similarly in music ... So, Brecht had this odd talent for mathematics. (...) I couldn't pin down what this talent was. 'Out-mathematicising a topic', this is the expression he used. Selecting a topic, cutting it up in into different scenes and assessing what it is that connects them all – this is what he called 'out-mathematicising' (...)

But tell me, why is it that everything by Brecht is still so original? Why does everything sound so fresh? Why doesn't it sound hollow – the sounds which you hear so often, especially in plays by progressive writers? (...) Brecht is still so fresh, original, important – simply unique. A person, who sees a Brecht play for the first time is especially gripped by its originality. And if he were to learn now how this originality was produced – that is with most rigorous thought and most thorough, relentless analysis of a situation or the behaviour of a person in certain circumstances – he would be astonished. Because it is originality produced through a thought process. Strangely enough, originality only happens when it's made concrete. That was no trouble for Brecht. He'd say, 'You know, once we've got the framework, the rest is nothing; I'll do it in no time.' For months he was interested in only the construction of a play. The production which dazzles people so much today, he saw as by-product, as an extra. His unmistakable instinct for German phrases, for the German language, was innate to him and which he used so freely that he was never aware what virtuoso work it was. But having the ability to use the German language to produce real images can't be separated from the ability to analyse a situation. And in reverse only such an uncompromising view of human behaviour leads to such original linguistic creations.

It's such an astonishing case. I've thought about it long and hard and I think it comes out of the fact that Brecht skips over a whole period of German literature. As it was, Brecht skips the whole so-called High German period, which led to a language of officialdom or, actually, to what you call the classics. Brecht doesn't follow on from Lessing or Goethe but from Luther. He skips the classic period. I told him that a long time ago and he admitted it. It's a strange step back. And just as Luther himself takes as his starting point the vernacular ('to watch the people's mouth' is one of his most famous remarks) so Brecht takes as his, the true people's language (...)

This power that quite a young man can go this way, driven by a tremendous poetical genius is absolutely astonishing. It's one of the few such cases in literature. He was stimulated, though, by Kipling, by the Chinese, by Grete Reiner's (I think that was her name) translation from the Czech of *Schweyk*⁴. You'll find that *Mutter Courage* has echoes of *Schweyk*. He absorbed it from the translation of *Schweyk* which was written in Prague-German. These inspirations are so inimitably original. That really is astonishing. Quite astonishing.

¹ *Brecht, Bertolt. Journals: [1934-1955]; translated by Hugh Rorrison; edited by John Willett, London: Methuen, 1993.*

² *The Virgin on the Seven Stars or The Seven Virgins on one Star.*

³ *Sinn und Form. Sonderheft Bertolt Brecht.* (Berlin), Rütten & Loening, 1957.

⁴ *Schweyk in the Second World War.*

From: Hanns Eisler Gespräche mit Hans Bunge. Fragen Sie mehr über Brecht. Übertragen und erläutert von Hans Bunge. VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, Leipzig, 1975. Copyright by Deutscher Verlag für Musik, Leipzig.

Ich will mit dem Folgenden Bertolt Brecht probeweise in einen Fremdheits-Diskurs von Wahrnehmen/Recherchieren, Denken, Produzieren/Gestalten und Handeln einbringen. Mit seinem Werk sind andere, notwendig globale Weltwahrnehmungen einübbar – was mich speziell als Theaterpädagogin interessiert.

BRECHT: AUF IN DIE
FREMDE. ODER AUCH:
BRECHT AUF IN DIE
FREMDE

GERD KOCH

Anregungen von François Jullien

Am 1.6.2007 hielt François Jullien (ursprünglich Gräzist, jetzt Professor für ostasiatische Sprachen und Kulturen in Paris) den Eröffnungsvortrag zu einer Veranstaltungsreihe mit chinesischen Theaterstücken, Lesungen, Workshops, Performances, Seminaren, pop-kulturellen Events im Berliner Theaterkombinat HAU – was eine Abkürzung für das alte Hebbel-Theater nebst einigen anderen Spielstätten ist = Hebbel am Ufer (HAU).

Die Kuratorin leitete die Veranstaltungs-Reihe mit einer Anekdote ein: Die chinesischen Verhandlungspartner seien gleich am Anfang überzeugt gewesen, dass hier eine gute, Erfolg versprechende Sache und Kooperation im Entstehen sei, bedeute doch HAU im Chinesischen in der Regel so viel wie *gut, bestens, prima*. Und in der Tat: es war eine gelungene, auch gut besuchte Veranstaltungsreihe. Und das lag nicht zuletzt an dem anregenden Beginn und einer *lecture demonstration* – jeweils gegeben von François Jullien.

François Julliens Eröffnungsvortrag hatte den Titel „Der Umweg über China“, und das ist im übrigen auch der Titel eines seiner Bücher (Berlin 2001) – das den Untertitel trägt: „Ortswechsel des Denkens“. Jullien empfiehlt, pragmatisch und erkenntniskritisch, epistemologisch, ein Denken durch Ortswechsel vorzunehmen, zu präzisieren und zu riskieren als ein Vorgehen, ein Vorwärts- und Umwege-Gehen mit offenem Horizont, mit Wahrnehmungsbefähigung und mit Aushalten von Differenz. Ich zitiere Jullien: „Das Denken den Ort wechseln zu lassen, um andere Arten von Intelligibilität (Verstandesleistungen, Anm. gk) zu berücksichtigen, um durch einen Umkehreffekt die Ausgangsbedingungen der europäischen Vernunft zu hinterfragen.“ (Umschlag-Seite 4) Jullien sind unvertraute Orte diejenigen, die einen „radikalen Außenstandpunkt“ (S. 96) einnehmen lassen: „Ich hatte beschlossen, einen Seitensprung nach China zu machen, Abstand vom europäischen Denken zu gewinnen und so wieder etwas Spielraum in der Philosophie zu haben. Mit anderen Worten, ich wollte Chinesisch lernen, um die griechischen Texte besser lesen zu können und zu versuchen, die vermeintliche Vertrautheit mit ihnen zu verlieren. Um hinter das zu kommen, was sie nicht sagen, ihre ungewollten Aussagen, und auch um die Kohärenzen zu untersuchen, die sie tragen und ihre Vorentscheidungen bilden. Ich suchte eine Position der ‚Heterotopie‘ (also nicht vollends kolonisierte, sondern Räume und Zeiten, in denen eine gewisse Eigen-gesetzlichkeit noch herrschen kann, Anm. gk) ...: Ein ‚Ort‘, der einfach anders ist, ein *Anderswo*, das es mir ermöglicht, die Tradition, aus der ich komme, in eine andere Perspektive zu setzen. Dafür bietet China einen wichtigen und vor allem radikalen Außenstandpunkt, der mit keinem anderen zu vergleichen ist.“ (S. 96)

Es geht Jullien darum, unbequeme und unordentliche Wege zu gehen – ganz ähnlich Bertolt Brecht in seiner Passage zu „Dialektik und Verfremdung“ (Werkausgabe Bd. 15, S. 360 f.): „... Verfremdung als ein Verstehen (verstehen – nicht verstehen – verstehen) ... Häufung der Unverständlichkeiten, bis Verständnis eintritt ... Das Besondere im Allgemeinen ... Das eine verstanden durch das andere ... Der Sprung ... Einheit der Gegensätze ... Praktikierbarkeit des Wissens ...“

Und China musste der ferne Ort eines Ortswechsels für Jullien sein; Indien etwa wäre noch zu nahe gewesen: „Indien steht am Ende unserer metaphysischen Erfahrung, China jenseits von ihr. Wir haben mit Indien eine große Sprache gemein, nämlich die indo-europäische. Außerdem haben wir zu der arabischen und der hebräischen Welt, die nicht zu unserem Sprachraum gehören, quasi kontinuierlich geschichtliche Beziehungen unterhalten; mindestens ein Teil des griechischen Wissens wurde uns von der arabischen Welt überliefert. Ich musste also eine Kultur finden, die der griechischen wirklich direkt gegenübersteht, ein ursprüngliches Denken, indem man eine andere Emergenz (ein spontanes, quasi selbsttätiges Herausbilden, Anm. gk) des Denkens lesen kann: da blieb nur noch China übrig.“ (S. 97 f.)

Jullien will keine Chinoiserie, keinen Exotismus betreiben (vgl. zum Exotismus Victor Segalen: *Die Ästhetik des Diversen. Versuch über den Exotismus*. Frankfurt am Main 1994); er will nicht primär so genanntes traditionelles chinesisches Wissen generieren. Er will das Umwege als Prinzip gewissermaßen in Dauer setzen, als Verhaltensregel: „der ‚Umweg‘ nimmt kein Ende“ (S. 189). In einem Gesprächs-Notat von Brecht aus dem Jahr 1955 heißt es unter der Überschrift „Der Umweg („Der kaukasische Kreidekreis“):“: „Die Umwege in den neuen Stücken sollte man genau studieren, bevor man einen abgekürzten Weg geht. Er mag *länger wirken*. (sic!, Hv. und Anm. gk) ... Kurz, man wurde, um kurz zu sein, langweilig.“ (GBA, Bd. 23, S. 303)

Jullien formuliert seine Verhaltensregel, sein Muster/Modell/Ver-Fahren - doppeldeutig: ‚sich verfahren‘, sich verirren, steckt auch darin; siehe Julliens Wort des Umwegs, siehe auch: den griechischen Begriffskontext von Methode: *metá* und *hodós*: *metá* = nach, mit, zwischen; *hodós* = Weg und *Methodós* als Weg zu etwas hin bzw. auch den Weg als ein Dazwischen, das, was zwischen Orten ist, auch ein sog. Umweg kann es sein. Der „Umweg über China“ ist ihm „Werkzeug für das Denken“: „Da China die Rolle eines ‚Enthüllers‘ spielt, kann man die Unterscheidungsmerkmale des europäischen Abenteuers und seiner Philosophie besser erkennen. Jenseits von ihr, und weil die Humanwissenschaften weitgehend nur von der westlichen Erfahrung her konzipiert wurden ... haben wir so die Gelegenheit ... an der *Neukategorisierung* des Denkens zu arbeiten ... Dafür bedarf es meiner Meinung nach einer List, eines Wegs, einer Strategie. Deshalb habe ich von Griechenland aus einen so weiten Umweg über China gemacht ...“ (S. 189); „... auch in der Absicht, wieder *Dissenz* herzustellen (der sich die Chance einer Heterogenität des Denkens nicht entgehen lässt) [vgl. Chantal Mouffe: *Über das Politische. Wider die kosmopolitische Illusion* (Frankfurt am Main 2007) = Antagonismus vs. Konsens als Grundkategorie des Politischen, Anm. gk] ... Man kann also sagen, dass es darum geht, die Bedingungen für einen Dialog - den berühmten ‚Dialog der Kulturen‘ - zu schaffen. Dialog im eigentlichen Sinne des Wortes: es bedarf gleichzeitig des *dia* der Differenz, der Positionen und der Konzeptionen, und der Logik. Sonst besteht die Gefahr, dass sich ... dumme - weil geschlossene Identitäten bilden.“ (S. 193)

Hier berührt sich Julliens Denken mit dem des international, global denkenden Wohlfahrtsökonom und Nobelpreisträgers Armatya Sen, der vor kulturellen, politischen wie personalen „Identitätsfallen“, also vor dummer Identität, warnt im Zusammenhang der Diskussion um einen sog. *clash* der Kulturen: Sen zeigt in seinem Buch „Die Identitätsfalle. Warum es keinen Krieg der Kulturen gibt“ (München 2007), dass die falsche Illusion einer einzigen (undifferenzierten und eindimensionalen) Identität diesen ‚Krieg der Kulturen‘ konstruiert und zugleich fatal vorantreibt. Kulturen sind für Sen immer Identitätsmischungen, tragen in sich kontroverse Dynamiken (aus) und sind keine Einheiten, die etwa nach einem Rasse- und Blut-Reinheitsgebot gebildet sind

- obgleich immer wieder solche herrschaftssichernden Zuschreibungen und Reduktionen von Komplexität sowie auch interne Macht-Anmaßungen an der Tagesordnung sind. Mit den Worten von Elke aus dem Moore gesprochen: „Reinheit und Originalität existieren nicht. Sie werden als Illusion entlarvt.“ [Elke aus dem Moore, in: VIDC (Wiener Institut für Entwicklungsfragen und Zusammenarbeit) Kulturen in Bewegung (Hrsg.): Blickwechsel. Bielefeld 2007, S. 90] Differenz und Abweichung sind - wenn man es denn so ausdrücken will - das Normale. Also keine identitäts-festigende Tiefen-Verwurzelung, wie in Deutschland sehr beliebt ist zu denken; denn - so der Philosophiehistoriker Kurt Flasch in seiner Dankesrede am 2. 5. 2010 bei der Verleihung des Lessing-Preises für Kritik in Wolfenbüttel (nach dem Rundfunk-Mitschnitt, Deutschlandfunk; transkribiert durch gk) -: „Wir Menschen haben, was man uns auch einreden möge, keine Wurzeln. Ich bin wirklich erstaunt, wie in den letzten Jahren, letzten Jahrzehnten, diese Rede, worin wir alles verwurzelt seien, Mode geworden ist. Es gibt kaum eine Woche im Fernsehen, ohne dass man hört, irgendjemand sei in der türkischen oder islamischen Tradition verwurzelt, oder wir seien in der antiken Welt oder im Christentum verwurzelt. Der Mensch hat keine Wurzeln. Hätte Gott uns eine Wurzel verschafft, dann wären wir Bäume. Wir haben aber Beine bekommen, um hinzugehen und wegzugehen. Und das ist die einfache Wahrheit ... Also so etwas geht in den Kopf der Menschen und wird nicht kritisiert ... und ... Lessing (mahnt): Laßt euch das nicht gefallen. Ihr habt Beine zum Weglaufen, zum Hingehen, wie ihr es für richtig findet. Ihr habt keine Wurzeln.“ Also Hybridität, auch „Multiversum“ „Experimentum Mundi“ und „Ungleichzeitigkeit“ (im Anschluss an Ernst Bloch), „Hyperkulturalität“ (Byung-Chul Han Berlin 2005), „Kreolität“ (Edouard Glissant) sind empirisch das Vorherrschende. Sie tragen Spannung in sich: Es stellt sich die Frage nach der Resilienz, also nach dem Aushalten von Spannungen; es gibt Zug und Gegenzug; es kann ein gefährliches Unternehmen werden; Spannung ist sowohl naturwissenschaftlich wie gesellschaftswissenschaftlich von Bedeutung.

Jullien fasst am Ende seines Buches zu „Der Umweg über China. Ein Ortswechsel des Denkens“ seinen Antrieb zusammen - und mir will das ganz brechtisch erscheinen: „Dem Denken so eine *neue Spannung* zu verleihen, ist auch eine Art und Weise, der Langeweile (siehe oben Brecht: kurz zu sein, macht langweilig, Anm. gk) des Denkens ein Ende zu bereiten, zu der sein Konformismus es verurteilen wird.“ (S. 194) Jullien behauptet nicht, „dass China die größte Alterität darstellt“; „aber“, sagt er, er „habe (s) ich entschieden, aus der theoretischen Unbequemlichkeit heraus ... einen Spielraum für das Denken zu schaffen.“ (S. 194)

Unvertrautes wahrnehmen

Bei Jullien und Brecht werden andere und ungewohnte Formen des Denkens als die gewohnten auf ihre Leistungsfähigkeit untersucht (Brechts Begriff der „Materialprüfung“ passt hier).

Das, was bei Jullien als *Umweg* benannt wurde, ist ironisch zu lesen; denn es ist kein unnützer Umweg, sondern ein produktiver Weg zur Erkenntnis. Der Erziehungswissenschaftler Horst Rumpf hat einmal darauf hingewiesen, dass man fälschlicherweise davon ausgehe, dass die erzieherische, pädagogische Arbeit mit dem Szenischen und im Szenischen in der Pädagogik einen misslichen Umweg darstelle. Er sagt: „*Probieren, Umwege, Irrwege* (Hv. gk) bei der Erforschung der neuralgischen Punkte und Phasen von Lernprozessen sind nicht als Zeitverlust zu verbuchen.“ (S. 165)

Ich habe als Pädagoge/Theaterpädagog/Erziehungswissenschaftler vielfältige Er-

fahrungen namentlich mit Brechts Lehrstücken: Sie zeichnen sich in der Spiel-Praxis lernernder Kollektive zur Selbstverständigung - ganz im Sinne einiger Überlegungen und Lehren von Jullien aus seiner China-Kennntnis - durch Situativität *und* modellhafte Struktur aus. Lehrstück-Spiel-Praxis ist ja auch eine Art Spiel/Simulation im/ mit Ortswechsel, ein Praktizieren im Möglichkeitsraum Theater. Durch Jullien sind mir zwei Stichworte für die Lehrstück-Spiel-Praxis augenfällig geworden: *Modell* und *Situation*; denn ich bekomme vom Brecht ein Text-Modell, und meine Spiel-Praxis mit anderen wird durch das Situative bestimmt/eingestimmt. Bertolt Brechts Lehrstücke sind Differenz-Erfahrungs-Stücke, Übungsstücke im Unterscheiden; Geschmeidigkeitsübungen für Dialektiker.

Brecht geht es um das Zeigen und um den Umgang mit dem uns Unvertrauten. Während der Diskussion junger Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftler unter dem Titel „Alles schon gesagt?“ zu Bertolt Brecht auf den Brecht-Tagen 2010 im Literaturforum des Brecht-Hauses in Berlin - geleitet von Hans-Thies Lehmann - führte Konstantinos Kotsiaros richtigerweise den Begriff des „objektiven Unvertrauten“ ein.

Ich will Brecht beispielsweise in die Nähe des Ansatzes von Alexander von Humboldt stellen: Nachforschung, Erforschung, Nutzen und Vernetzung verschiedener Forschungsweisen, Entwicklung unterschiedlicher Darstellungsweisen; keine Kolonialisierung im Denken; Brüchiges, Unvollendetes, Unvertrautes als Unvertrautes, als Fremdes würdigen; Forschen und Organisieren verbinden; neue Lesarten entwickeln – Fremdheit, Befremdetheit bewahren.

Die künstlerische Produktion eines Bertolt Brechts kann als *re-reading* und *re-writing* einer polyglotten, polyphonen Welt verstanden (als ‚rethinking the global‘) werden bzw. seine Produktion kann im Zuge eines begegnenden Beerbens als Muster dafür verwendet werden. Bertolt Brechts Haltung sollte einfallsreich kopiert werden (ich spreche als Pädagoge/Praktiker); denn zum Kopieren bedarf es Kraft, Fantasie, Antizipation; ein komplexer, multivalenter, multitechnischer Vorgang - und das Vervielfältigen ist eine Aktionsweise von Evolution.

„Natürlich muß das künstlerische Kopieren erst erlernt werden, genau wie das Bauen von Modellen ... es gibt eine sklavische Nachahmung und eine souveräne ... Die Veränderungen des Modells, die nur erfolgen sollten, um die Abbildungen der Wirklichkeit zum Zweck der Einflussnahme auf die Wirklichkeit genauer, differenzierter, artistisch phantasievoller und reizvoller zu machen, werden um so ausdrucksvoller sein, da sie eine Negation von Vorhandenem darstellen – dies für Kenner der Dialektik.“ [Brecht: Hemmt die Benutzung des Modells die künstlerische Bewegungsfreiheit? (Gespräch zwischen Erich Alexander Winds und Brecht 1949), Werkausgabe, Bd. 16, S. 715 f., auch in: Theaterarbeit]

Der, der übernimmt, der eine *translatio*, einen Trajekt, eine *transition* ingang setzt, also eine Wechselseitigkeit auf fremdem Terrain stiftet, muss aufmerksam und wissend, dynamisch und nicht statisch tätig werden.

Er muss Fremdheit und das Andere zu erfassen trachten; er muss aus den Bedingungen zugleich des heutigen (kognitiven wie mentalen) Wissens wie aus damaligem Wissen heraus aktiv werden können und auch von seinen eigenen persönlichen Befähigungen ausgehen, er muss ein Scheitern, sein Scheitern einkalkulieren, er muss einen erinnerten Gebrauch mit einem neuen Gebrauch und mit neuen Verwertungszusammenhängen koordinieren können; er arbeitet gewissermaßen historisierend, verfremdend und präsent, abständig und nahe, im brüchigen Zeitkontinuum usw.

Die Befähigung der Vornahme eines (geographischen und/oder mentalen) Ortswechsels könnte man m. E. auch übersetzen mit der menschlichen/anthropologischen Be-

fähigung zur „Ex-Zentrität“ (siehe Helmuth Plessner; den Hinweis auf Plessner im Bezug auf das Theater verdanke ich Christian Gedschold), also zur Abweichung vom mir sicheren Hier-und-Jetzt-Zentrum bzw. von mir selbst, um meine raum-zeitliche Stellung als Lebewesen in der Welt selbst zu bestimmen. Ortswechsel im Verständnis von Jullien und Brecht wäre dann als ein mentales Überschreiten zu verstehen und zu traktieren [vgl. Ernst Bloch: Denken ist Überschreiten; Brecht: Der Denkende liebt die Welt wie sie wird - und dies wissend und reflektierend zu erleben und zu genießen (Brecht: Genuss, genießen als sinnliche Reflexion?)].

Manche Stücke Brechts sind Parabeln, und das gleichnishafte *Endprodukt*, statt der prozessualen Produktion, wird hervorgehoben (etwa analog dem klassischen, lehrhaften Fabelverständnis). Es kann nützlich sein in diesem Zusammenhang des Umwegdenkens und des Denkens mittels Ortswechsel, an die griechische Bedeutung und auch an den mathematischen Sinn von Parabel zu erinnern: Parabel kommt von *para* = neben und *ballo* = werfen, meint das „Daneben-Gehende“ (was im Deutschen ja auch die schöne Bedeutung von: ‚es ist etwas schief gegangen‘, ‚es ist etwas misslungen‘ haben kann) - also auch hier Sprach-Bilder von Zeit, Raum, Wechsel, Weg, Ort: das Nebeneinanderwerfen, das Danebengeworfene, das Schräge/Abduktive, der Vergleich, ein Nebeneinanderstellen, das Anlegen, das Nebenhinwerfen. Man sieht, die Prozessuales und Räumliches meinenden Begriffe „Weg“, „Umweg“ und „Orts-Wechsel“ liegen der Metapher und dem tatsächlich Tun eines „Daneben-Gehens“ als eines parabelhaften Erkenntnis- und Produktionsvorgang nahe.

Brecht und Jullien haben sich Unvertrautes und Fremdheitserfahrungen zugemutet – muten wir uns ebensolche zu!

Chor zu Dritt

IM Tomasso
Der Dichter
Gargantua

Wolfzeit 8. Mai 1945 - 9. November 1989
Umher das Land

1.
KEIN HERZ LEBT GROSS IN SEINER STILLE

Daß ihm
die gesellschaftliche und moralische Heuchelei ein
Dorn im Auge war und ebenso
die Mächte, die den einzelnen beherrschen,
seine Triebe,
Besessenheit von dunklen wie hellen Leidenschaften -
ihm keine Ruhe gelassen.
Leben
du bist ein vollkommenes Triebwerk,
Glückseligkeit, Sturmesbrausen, Zartheit köstlichen Öls.
Aber falls Sie
weitere Informationen über mich

FERNROTTUNG
AKTENKUNDIG

ODER

SCHILAFES
MÖRDER
SCHWARZE
SONNE

HEINZ-UWE HAUS

VERSUCHE

einholen möchten, wenden Sie sich bitte
an die Anwesenden.

Es ist Ihnen freigestellt

alle Auskünfte zu erteilen. Natürlich

sind Sie herzlich mit eingeladen.

Vereinbart ist demnächst

die Entsendung von ein paar Mann zur praktischen Weiterbildung.

Ah, Sie sind über unsere Struktur unterrichtet. Sprich nun

von der Fortpflanzung.

2.

DYSMORON

Sie haben mir unsere Aufgabenverteilung

klar gemacht. Ich kenne auch ihr Konzept. Natürlich

sind Sie herzlich mit eingeladen. Keine Frau

wird mit einem Mann verbunden, ehe sie das

neunzehnte Lebensjahr erreicht hat. Und ein Mann

darf zeugen, bevor er das einundzwanzigste Jahr überschritten hat oder

darüber hinaus ist, sofern er

von kühler Veranlagung ist. Vor dieser Zeit

ist es nur einigen

erlaubt, mit Frauen umzugehen.

jedoch nur mit unfruchtbaren oder schwangeren, damit sie nicht

gezwungen werden, unnatürliche Auswege zu suchen. Übrigens,

damit das Thema zwischen uns nie mehr vorkommt...

Ich habe Tomasso gesagt: Sie brauchen

keine Angst zu haben, daß ich Sie nach der Partei

oder Sonstigem frage. Wer was leistet, wer was ist,

den respektier ich. Was er früher gedacht hat, ist gone.

Ältere Frauen und Beamte

sorgen für den Liebesgenuß derer, die zu stürmisch sind

und allzusehr bedrängt werden, je nachdem sie es,

insgeheim von ihnen angegangen, erfahren haben oder

auf den Turnplätzen merken. Ode im Parteilehrjahr.

Jedoch wird die Erlaubnis

von dem obersten Beamten der Fortpflanzungsangelegenheiten

erteilt, dem Oberarzt,

der selbst dem Triumvirn "Liebe" untersteht.

Wir hätten das Thema von uns aus auch nicht

an die große Glocke gehängt, die aber,

die sich bis zum einundzwanzigsten Lebensjahr des Beischlafs enthalten,

und mehr noch die, die es bis zum siebenzwanzigsten tun,

werden in den öffentlichen Versammlungen durch

Ehren und Lieder gefeiert. *Ich* war nie drin.

3.

WER DICH VERLEUGNET, DER MÖGE DAS UNGLÜCK NICHT AUF SICH
NEHMEN UND HÄTSCHELN

Der möge zurück es weisen, ihm,
 wie die Steinebrecher den Steinen, Mauergestalt verleihend.
 Da nach Art der alten Spartaner
 bei den Übungen alle, Männer und Frauen,
 völlig nackt sind, erkennen die Beamten,
 die die Aufsicht führen, wer zeugungsfähig und wer
 ungeeignet zum Beischlaf ist. Mass für Mass.
 Es kommt auf die körperliche Veranlagung an
 und wer am besten zusammenpasst. Die Anfrage
 ist schon raus. Ich habe gleich gefaxt. Dann erst
 weihen sie sich, nach einem Bade, dem Liebeswerk. Das hab ich
 eigentlich auch gehofft. Große und schöne Frauen
 werden nur mit großen und tüchtigen Männern
 verbunden, dicke Frauen mit mageren Männern.
 Sehen Sie irgendeinen neuen Grund, warum Tomasso
 es plötzlich so eilig hat? Und schlanke Frauen mit
 starkleibigen Männern, damit sie sich in erfolgreicher Weise
 ausgleichen. Ich melde mich. Ich glaube sogar, es brennt.

4.

WILD STEHN SIE AUFGERICHTET, UNTEREINANDER

Wer machte aus Verrat Liebe, aus Untreue
 Folgschaft, aus Kriecherei Mitarbeit, aus Angst Mut,
 aus Egoismus Nächstenliebe? Darüber wird noch
 im Einzelnen gesprochen. Zunächst bleibe ja ohnehin alles beim Alten,
 außer dass wir den Vertrieb koordinieren sollten. Im Schlafgemach
 stehen schöne Bildwerke berühmter Männer, die die Frauen
 anschauen. Darauf richten sie die Blicke durch das Fenster
 zum Himmel und bitten IHN, er möge
 ihnen einen tüchtigen Nachkommen schenken. Also
 dann auf bald. Sie hören von uns. Es wird.
 Sie schlafen in zwei getrennten Kammern bis zur
 Stunde des Beilagers. Vorausgesetzt, dass wir uns soweit
 einig geworden sind. Dann aber erhebt sich
 die Aufseherin und öffnet beide Türen von außen.
 Damit bei uns eine sofortige Einsatzbereitschaft gegeben wäre,
 sobald unsere Technologie auf den neuesten Stand gebracht worden ist. Diese Stunde
 bestimmen der Astrologe und der Arzt, die sich bemühen,
 die Zeit zu treffen, in der Venus und Merkur östlich der Sonne
 in einem günstigen Hause stehen, in gutem Aspekt
 zu Jupiter, sowie zu Saturn und Mars. Wenn man sich einigen würde,
 seh ich nichts, was uns hindern sollte, Nägel mit Köpfen zu machen.
 Zunächst bleibe ja ohnehin alles beim Alten, ausser daß wir
 den Vertrieb koordinieren sollten.

5.

GELOESCHT VON OBEN DER AUFRUHR

Und aus ihm sich Beinkleider zu machen. Es wird für ein schweres Vergehen angesehen, wenn sich die Zeugenden nicht drei Tage vor dem Beilager jeder Befleckung und jeder schlechten Tat enthalten. Das Wachpersonal und die Lehrer, allesamt Informanten, haben infolge des vielen Nachdenkens nur schwache Triebe und sind mit ihren geistigen Kräften nicht voll beteiligt; deshalb, weil sie immer über irgend etwas grübeln, bringen sie nur schwächliche Nachkommen hervor. Daher wendet man hier besondere Maßnahmen an: man verbindet diese gelehrten Kundschafter mit fetten Frauen von sanften Sitten. Die Kader aus dem Apparat, oft jähzornig und ohne Art, verbindet die Partei mit Genossinnen, die von Natur aus lebhaft, lebenstüchtig und schön wie der achte März sind.

6.

BESTEHENDES GUT GEDEUTET

Das Leben erwartet uns alle, die wir Lieben und politisch-operative Lageeinschätzungen erstellen. Die wir lieben den wilden Duft von Meer und Minze. Immer wieder Fragen. Zur Effektivität und Intensität der Zusammenarbeit mit den IM. Die Planvorgabe, die es zwischen den Brüsten birgt. Anzahl der Treffen, Treffdauer, Einhaltung des Treffrhythmus, Auslastungsgrad der konspirativen Wohnungen. Damit sie nicht gezwungen werden unnatürliche Auswege zu suchen. Wie hältst Du es mit dem operativen Aussagewert der verarbeiteten Informationen, menschenbildende Stimme?

(Deutscher Gesang)

Jetzt Seid Ihr Dran!

**SHE'S MESSY
AND LOUD
JUST LIKE
HER WORK!**

**I WILL
ICKRAY
OYAY ASSAY
&
HENTAY I'LL
FUCK IT!**

**NAPPY
WILL NEVER**

To The
FARM!

**WARNING:
THE
MISTRESS
OF
MISINFORMATION
CAN NOT BE
SHAMED
OR
SILENCED!**

**IN SPITE OF THE RAIN,
THE
PARADE
CONTINUES!**

NORMAN KOESSLER
 Editor, CIBS
 Temple University
 Intellectual Heritage Program
 214 Anderson Hall
 1114 W. Berks St.
 Philadelphia, PA 19122 / USA

NO
 DANCING

THIS
 PROJECT
 STARTED
 IN
 CONFUSION
 AND WILL END
 IN
 DISARRAY

11:11
**PUMP PUMP
 PUMP IT UP!**

**COLD
 FOWELL**
in the future

**A BROWN
 (GIRL)**
 IS ALWAYS UNDER
 ESTIMATED

VENTURING
 INTO
 BLACKNESS
 IS A
 LONELY
 BUSINESS

**UPN
 TAVIS**
CANT SHOW IT

AT THE
 EDGE
 OF THE
 REPPRESSED
 BARRIER

PEOPLE GOT MORE
**UNKNOWN
 THAN KNOWN**

IN THEIR MINDS,
 THE UNKNOWN IS
GREAT!

**ECHO
 THE
 FICTION
 OF MY
 IDENTITY**

PUT
 The
ELEPHANT
 BACK
 In The
ZOO!

**IKE
 TURNER**

**BITCHES
 ALL OF THEM
 BITCHES!**

**TELL
 A STORY
 TELL
 IT ENOUGH...**

SOUND
 MADE
 EVERYTHING
 POSSIBLE IN OUR
 REVERIE

IS IT TOO
 MUCH 4 U
 2 MANAGE
MISSY?

IT'S
 WORTH IT
 LET ME
 WORK IT!

LIGHT
 AND ALL THAT
 SOMEONE MADE BUT

**NOBODY
 MADE THE
 DARKNESS!**

**THE
 CORN
 IS GOOD
 BEFORE
 HARVEST!**

IT'S ALWAYS
NIGHT
 OR
 WE WOULD
 NOT NEED
LIGHT

THE PLAN
 IS
 ELEGANT
 AND
 VICIOUS....

**THE
 STORY
 BECOMES
 YOU!**

TAKE
 The
JACKASS
 BACK
 To The
FARM!

THE USE OF THE
 "A"
 INSTEAD OF THE
 "ER"
 CHANGES
EVERYTHING!

I PUT THAT
**THANG
 DOWN**

**BONDAGE
 DEED,
 PROMISED
 LAND!**

**THE
 BONY
 JET**
PRODUCED BY

WHAT
 IS A
 NEGRO
 WITH
 A PHD?

**WILL
 I
 CRY
 AT MY
 ASSAY
 &
 WHAT I'LL
 ROCK IT!**

IN SPITE OF THE RAIN,
 THE
**PARADE
 CONTINUES!**

**WILL
 BE
 LOST
 SPACE**

**BARK
 LIKE A
 CAT!**

WE'VE BEEN
 CHE WIN'

**I
 THE
 NIGHTMARE
 OR
 I
 DEAD**

**NAPPY
 WILL NEVER
 REST
 UNTIL IT'S
 TIME
 TO GO TO
 WORK!**

**SAY
 YES
 SAY
 NO**

IT WAS &
 IT IS, IT IS
 IT AIN'T!
 IT WILL &
 IT WON'T
 IT DO'S AND
 IT DON'T.

**RIB TIP
 DINNER
 7PM**
First 100
 who come
 are free!

**B
 NICE
 OR
 LEAVE
 NO CREDIT**

**WHO
 RUZ
 DAY**

**FRIED
 CHICKEN
 WING**

MARC SILBERMAN
 UNIV. OF WISCONSIN MADISON
 DEPT. OF GERMAN 868 VAN HISEHALL
 1220 LINDEN DR
 MADISON WI 53706-1525

**SAY
 YES
 DO
 NO**

**GUESS
 WHAT?
 THIS
 FUNNY!**

**POOF!
 THE GIRL
 BECOMES A
 CRITIC!**

BROTHER

AS A
 BLACK WOMAN
 I FEEL AN
 URGENT
 NEED TO FIND
**Radical
 SOLUTIONS**

**WIGGLE
 The
 SHOULDERS**

HE IS ONE
 OF THE
**201 & ONE
 OF THE 401**

ISSUES
 CLAIMS
 ALL POINT
 AND FORGET THE REST!

COMMUNICATIONS

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY 39 / 2010