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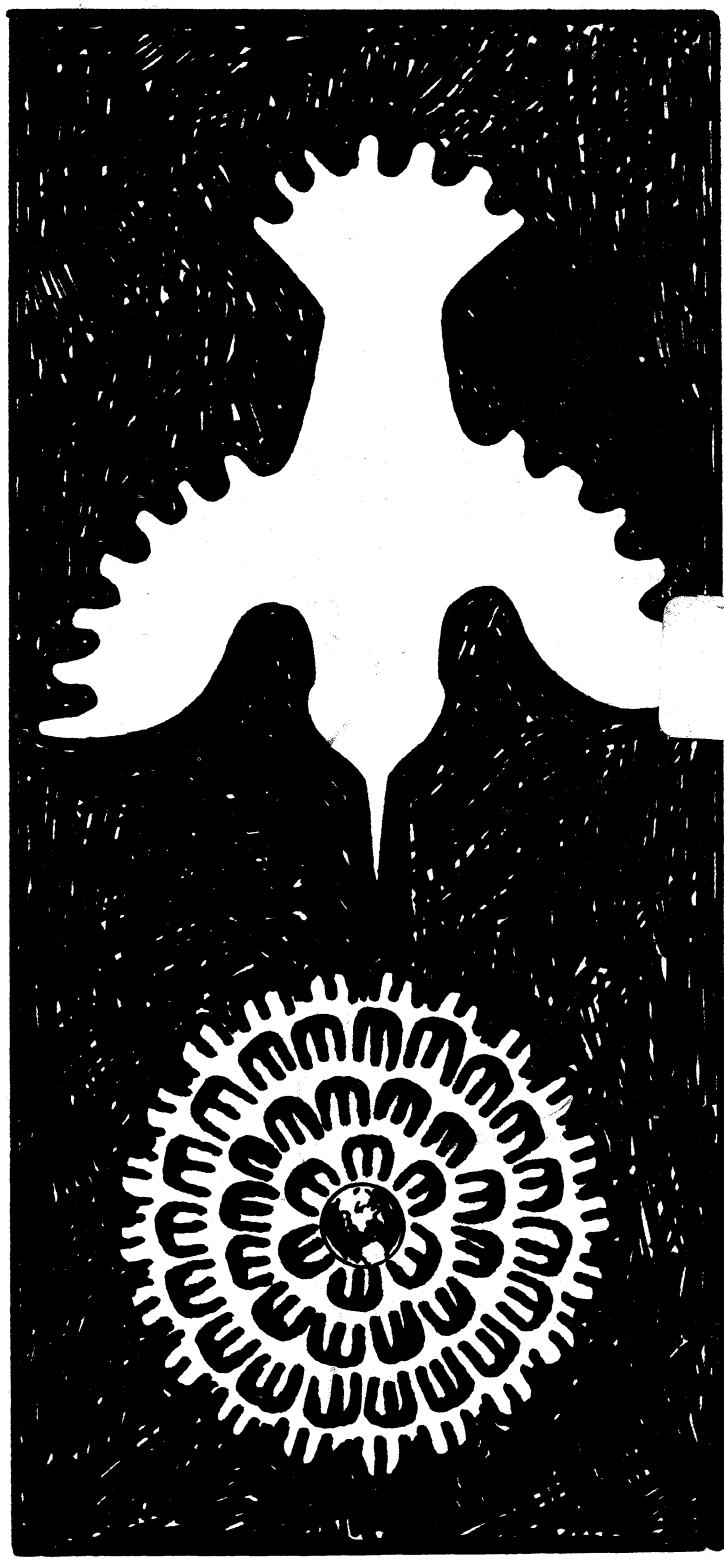

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editor's note

This issue of Communications reflects the diversity and international impact of Brecht's heritage for scholars, theaters and the broader public. Sieglinde Lug presents a case for re-reading Brecht's women characters, carrying on a discussion initiated by Sara Lennox two issues ago and continuing in future issues, while John Rouse addresses Brecht's concept of adaptation. A number of production reviews indicate that Brecht is alive and well and still packing a punch. The reports suggest that Brecht's importance is reaching around the globe--not without the support of the IBS. The Symposium on Brecht in Latin America at this summer's Joseph Papp Festival in New York City, reviewed from two different perspectives, bodes well for collective work with the Asociación de Trabajadores e Investigadores del Nuevo Teatro (ATINT). It is in this spirit of cooperation with friends from Latin America that Chista Cantú designed the cover: the Nahuatl goddess of oneness (a hummingbird) and the Aztec earth symbol, a flower. The President's and Secretary/Treasurer's reports outline the year's work for the IBS. Finally, the Notes and Bibliography document the continuing interest in interchange and communication about Brecht and his works.

All IBS members who will be attending the Conference of the Modern Language Association in Washington, D.C. are encouraged to drop in on the IBS double session (December 27). The business meeting at the end will discuss next year's Brecht sessions, future IBS conferences, raising membership dues and updating the IBS Constitution. Janelle Reinelt is in the process of gaining official organizational status for the IBS with the American Theater Association. Please check and respond to her call for papers in this issue for the Brecht session--from now on a regular feature--at the 1985 ATA Conference.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I want to thank all members who voted in the election for officers. Antony Tatlow, Karl-Heinz Schoeps and I were reconfirmed in our offices, and we are happy to announce that Darko Suvin (McGill University, Montreal, Canada) will be joining us as Vice President. Membership renewal will begin at the end of the year when the Brecht Yearbook, Volume 12, appears. Please return the membership form immediately with your dues.

I want to take this opportunity to thank personally Emma Lou Thomas (UCLA) and the Thomas Memorial Fund for making a generous contribution toward the publication costs of this issue of Communications.

Marc Silberman

THE "GOOD" WOMAN DEMYSTIFIED

Sieglinde Lug

"Alles wandelt sich," the beginning of a Brecht poem, reveals a fundamental attitude towards all being and is not necessarily limited to changes in a Marxist direction. This attitude places human systems and concepts into a historical framework, in contrast to accepting them as reflections of eternal human nature. A world that was made by man is subject to change by man--or woman, as one should add. Likewise, feminist criticism would have no basis without the conviction that present conditions are historically developed, thus changeable. Since both Brecht's writings and feminist writings are essentially re-visions, they imply a more or less hidden agenda for change.

Brecht's technique of showing the world as changeable is the Verfremdungseffekt in its most general sense; it is his unexpected use of the familiar in order to stimulate fresh thinking about it and thus question it. That technique tends to deflate every sort of myth about human nature, including those about women. The idealized image of woman as man's redeemer and representative of absolute goodness and purity is just such a myth cherished in literature since medieval courtly love poetry and also in the real life of people who had the means and leisure to develop and uphold such dreams; as Simone de Beauvoir succinctly stated: "The myth of woman is a luxury."[1] Since in Brecht's literary world adverse economic conditions play so major a role, luxurious dreams have difficulty surviving.

Brecht was steeped in traditions but found suspect anything that is expressed in pompous terms or clichés. As we know through innumerable stories about his life and general way of dealing with traditions in his writings, he was a "resisting observer-reader"--a term I have adapted from the title of a recent book by Judith Fetterley: The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction.[2]

As a feminist resisting reader, I am intrigued by Brecht's irreverent demystifying of clichés which tend to intoxicate the viewer-reader with exalted emotions. Since Brecht throws an ambivalent light on most accepted traditions, the rather emotion-laden concept of femininity would not totally escape that. This is probably so without any intention; in fact, Brecht's "playing on female stereotypes" has been convincingly analyzed elsewhere.[3] It should be clear, however, that I do not intend here to deal with Brecht's personal or theoretical views of women nor his actual treatment of them.[4] My essay focuses on the intrinsic communicative aspects

of Brecht's artistry with respect to certain prominent clichés about women. The analysis will concentrate on three of his most popular dramas where I see the effects of his art most clearly.

The Western tradition of putting woman on a pedestal in an imagined, not real framework,[5] represents a male dream of something perfect outside himself. The most influential poet of German literature continuing this myth of woman as the guiding principle and representative of absolute goodness and purity is Goethe, with his much quoted Eternal Feminine. When Faust enters Gretchen's bedroom, he finds merely an orderly girl's room, but the restless man projects a dream of everything that is not in himself onto its atmosphere. To mention some key concepts from his monologue, this dream mixes girlish sacred purity, tranquillity, bliss, order, contentedness, motherliness--the image of a heavenly angel. Since all these qualities are not in him, they are projections of his psychological needs, an idealistic image of what he--sometimes--yearns for, a beautiful myth. Simone de Beauvoir defines the relation of this myth to reality: "Thus, as against the dispersed, contingent, and multiple existences of actual women, mythical thought opposes the Eternal Feminine, unique and changeless. If the definition provided for this concept is contradicted by the behavior of flesh-and-blood women, it is the latter who are wrong: we are told not that Femininity is a false entity, but that the women concerned are not feminine."[6]

Critics have often referred to Faust as an influence on Brecht, but the parallel to Goethe's Iphigenie seems more obvious when one considers Der gute Mensch von Sezuan. Both works, with women as protagonists, focus on the idea of how to be absolutely and consistently good in the face of pragmatic considerations. In Iphigenie the latter considerations are voiced by Pylades in Act IV, Scene 4: the difficulty of remaining absoultely pure and good in the life of action which, however, is male. Against that stands powerfully and victoriously the absolute purity of Iphigenie, the savior-woman who has a forgiving heart for all the men who have erred--and have even committed crimes--and need to be guided and redeemed, but not for the mother who has committed murder also. Iphigenie's rejection is mentioned in passing, but is quite indicative of the general framework: the female, who represents non-active being and guards all social virtues, will not be forgiven if she sins against a supposedly eternal natural order; however, in the active striving life of the male guilt is inevitable, thus forgivable, even necessary in his overall development. While the poetic effect of Iphigenie is powerful, the image of such intoxicating, unreal perfection embodied in the protagonist is also disconcerting; in addition, even Iphigenie in several places is made to deplore the restricted fate of the woman. But while Iphigenie--and Goethe--can recognize the fact, they find it unchangeable, something that Brecht would not accept on principle.

In Brecht's drama Der gute Mensch von Sezuan, the sex-neutral word Mensch refers to a woman, thus suggesting the cliché that goodness per se is represented by a woman; at least such is the surface appearance. Although the prevalent view is that Shen Te cannot survive in pure goodness, I am inclined to examine more closely how good her goodness actually is in this drama and for whom. Her goodness does not appear as a positive capacity, but as a negative inability, that is, she cannot say "no." Sun, her lover, puts that in the cynical context of her behavior as a prostitute (4,1541).[7] Shen Te herself defines it as the "Verführung, zu schenken" (4,1570). Thus her will to do good does not arise from a moral conviction which then could be trusted but is merely the easiest way for her, the path of least resistance and of finding most approval.

The first people Shen Te is trying to "help" show themselves to be abusive, insensitive, and parasitic. By being given some food without the possibility to help themselves they are also made dependent on her. It is difficult to believe that their depiction in such a manner should lead us to see their situation only as a result of social circumstances. One cannot resist the feeling that Shen Te's help is really no help at all to them. The most ambivalent aspect of her "goodness" is revealed when it turns out that what is supposedly good for Sun is disastrous for the old couple and also for the pilot in Peking who, through bribery, has to lose his job before Sun can get it (4,1542). The money which she gives Sun is borrowed from the old couple, and when she is not able to return it, they are irreparably ruined. What in much criticism is called Shen Te's uncompromising goodness actually appears in a questionable light at best, and at worst as ignorance and selfishness. Thus, to think of her as lovable is really a stock response to the cliché of the child-woman whose emotional nature precludes reasonable goodness or "friendliness", Brecht's toned-down version of the pompous concept of absolute goodness. My own and my students' reactions to Shen Te have always been a deep sense of frustration with her so-called "goodness" which seems rather simple naiveté and lack of foresight. I believe that the depiction demonstrates less that absolute mythical goodness of woman cannot survive but that its value is questionable. In the general questioning of pompous concepts, "Billigkeit" appears more difficult and probably more valuable than the absolute "Gerechtigkeit" (4,1577). The woman who will blindly do anything for her lover seems admirable and lovable only because her concern supports the male ego; a man in such a role evokes only contempt and pity, as the pathetic professor in the film Der blaue Engel shows.

The question for whom "goodness" is actually good is raised masterfully by Shu Fu, the barber, and his plan to help. He is quite intoxicated by his own unselfish goodness when he plans a romantic but Platonic evening with Shen Te (4,1550).

Among other hints that question the concept of goodness is the fact that it can only exist separately from all practical affairs, defined as the business world of men by Sun (4,1558), which also reminds us of Pylades' objections in Iphigenie. Considered in connection with the whole drama and Sun's reactions in general, Shen Te's allusion to the role of woman as man's redeemer when she hopes to change Sun by calling forth the good in him (4,1554), gives this cliché a doubly hollow ring. Thus Brecht's technique, while introducing the clichés of women as pure goodness and the redeemer of man into an unexpected and questionable context, makes us look at them anew, thereby deflating them.

This comparison of course does not suggest that Goethe, when he wrote Iphigenie or Faust, necessarily believed in the reality of the beautiful myth; he himself called Iphigenie "ganz verteufelt human." But the male idealist sees beauty in such qualities as purity, goodness, blind devotion only as long as they can be guarded by women; otherwise they would hinder male progress. The woman's realm thus becomes a refuge from the vicissitudes of the male's active life. Brecht's drama reveals the contradictions of such a myth, even if Brecht personally may have indulged in such luxuries.

Purity and goodness in classical woman figures are detached from sexuality. Even those women who display a sexual side do so only for the man they love rather than for their own sensual urges. This cliché is given an ironic twist in Brecht's drama where goodness actually means the inability to say "no" which, in Wang's words (4,1494), is the defining characteristic of the prostitute. Of course, at the same time the prostitute with the golden heart as a savior has become a cliché figure in literature. The short speech of the policeman, who speaks as the representative of social morals, in one and the same paragraph calls Shen Te's former prostitution not respectable, but immediately he suggests selling her to a husband to enable her to pay the rent. Thus the institutionalized selling of love or sex in marriage is made to appear respectable.[8]

Connected with the cliché of woman as goodness per se is the myth that her role as polar opposite to that of man is necessary, healing, and complementary. In Shen Te and Shui Ta we can observe a drastic male-female split within one person. While Shen Te blindly gives, Shui Ta is called in to do the dirty work; he has to take care of practical affairs after they have already reached a crisis point. Shui Ta is clearly not the same throughout the play. He does not only stay increasingly longer, he changes his character also: initially he shows himself as simply practical and reasonable, trying not to go beyond solutions necessary for survival, while only in his final appearance does he assume those exploitative traits that put him in so bleak a light that he has been compared to Mr. Hyde. It seems that

the more Shen Te mindlessly gives, the more he has to go to the other extreme to make up for it. But even towards the end he does not seem a mere monster; for Sun he turns out to be useful, since he offers him a place to work and to take responsibility for himself, as his mother observes (4,1584-4), rather than calling forth an abstract goodness in him as Shen Te wanted to do.

Walter H. Sokel--without clearly framing it as a male-female contrast--has already recognized that the schizophrenic split in Shen Te "cripples and distorts human nature;"[9] and John Fuegi has pointed out the "complete exploitation of societal pre-judgments of the 'nature' of men and women."[10] I would go further and argue that those specific myths about woman and man, instead of complementing each other, work in opposite directions, since they do not allow for a harmonious integration of such qualities as reason and instinct, but instead they create the polar opposites which tend to nullify each other. Shen Te's actions are so excessive on the one side that, to balance hers, Shui Ta's reactions increase in excessiveness. Thus, both excesses become more and more difficult to correct.

The polar feminine-masculine split, besides calling forth excesses, also requires deceit since both sides have to hide certain parts of their personalities. On her wedding day, Shen Te does not want to think of Shui Ta. In other words, in the presence of her husband the new wife should not show her common-sense business talents, just as the expected child should be able to see the myth of the mother only.

By splitting the one person into stereotypical "masculine" and "feminine" aspects and showing that polarity as destructive and deceitful, Brecht--consciously or not--makes suspect the cliché of the constructive and healing quality of polar contrasts in men and women. In answer to Brecht's question in the Epilogue whether we need a new person, a new world, or different gods, the prevalent reaction by critics has been to point to social circumstances alone and call for a different world. That answer is based on the assumption that Brecht's Marxist convictions require economic solutions or changes of systems. Looking at the intrinsic message of the drama, however, the Shen Te/Shui Ta division appears as a major issue in itself, which is linked to the economic one, not subordinated to it.[11] It seems that a more viable person would be one who can balance and integrate the qualities of Shen Te and Shui ta.

Connected to the myth of woman as goodness is the myth of motherhood with all its emotional connotations. Adrienne Rich, in her investigation of the myths surrounding motherhood, speaks of the powerful psychological effect of the "atmosphere of approval in which I was bathed,"[12] when she fulfilled her "ultimate

destiny" and became pregnant. She remarks about Rilke's Third Duino Elegy, which deals with the mother-woman image: "The woman, yet again, as healer, helper, bringer of tenderness and security. The roles (or rules) are clear: nowhere in Elegies is it suggested that a man might do this for a woman, or that the woman has her own inner complexity" (p. 190). Besides evoking sentimental images of unconditional love and security, Motherhood has also been the most feared--because powerful--aspect of womanhood and thus probably the most important one over which to exert legal and social control. All these aspects have an idea in common, however, that "anatomy is destiny." It is still used to confirm myths about motherhood, and, although in general attempts to overcome the limitations of man's anatomy dominate the whole history of civilization, women have not traditionally shared in that privilege.

In several Brecht plays, these familiar stereotypes appear in such a way that we are called upon to question their believability or at least their value. When Shen Te first discovers that she is pregnant, her reaction is that of the happy woman who immediately sees her fulfillment in it, without thought of consequences or problems. When she becomes aware of the imminent danger of poverty for her child, she in essence declares her readiness for any corruption against others to avoid need for her child (4,1572-3) and later to let the child see only the myth of the sweet mother Shen Te (4,1585). Against the background of all our cultural connotations of motherhood, her reactions seem touching on the surface. But in this depiction we can see the truly revolting aspect of a kind of maternal cliché that encourages savagery against the rest of the world on the one hand,[13] and on the other can exist only with the aid of lies that preserve the image of the sweet mother for the child.[14] Thus, in this drama the value of our myth of exclusive and madonna-like mother love is questioned.

Motherhood supposedly also evokes a protective attitude in fathers. Brecht describes Sun, however, in the following manner: upon his hearing about her pregnancy his cynical, exploitative attitude towards Shen Te switches to concern for "his son" and her need for "protection" (4,1588-9). Thus, it is suggested that the "protection" may be a sweet word for control. To show that he has not changed his personality in the gentle hope of paternity, he immediately tries to use his new knowledge to blackmail Shui Ta for his own gains.

The very word "mother" in our culture seems to arouse a whole host of sentimental feelings, so much so that Brecht's increased use of mother figures in his dramas has been called indicative of a "mellowing" attitude,[15] even though the figures themselves may contradict such feelings. Since Mutter Courage is sometimes called the archetypal mother figure,[16] we should investigate the depiction of her maternal

side systematically. The title itself, i.e., the combination of "mother" and "courage," conjures up the stereotypical image of the mother courageously fighting for or defending her children. That image is, however, immediately demystified: what people called courage--she explains matter-of-factly--was the consideration of business survival; in the process, of course, she had to endanger her children and herself (4,1351). The notion that the mother image ought to be kept pure for the children is ridiculed when she admonishes the sergeant to speak decently to her in front of the children. Her "concern" is due to her literal interpretation of his use of the expression "auf den Arm nehmen" (4, 1352), which is mild in comparison to the following description of the different fathers of all her children --which happens also in front of the children. An added irony here is that by convention motherhood is only good--even sacred--when it is legal. Only in marriage can fathers have legitimate control over their offspring and thus the future. In Mutter Courage such assumptions are shattered.

When Brecht puts pompous religious phrases like "unglückliche Mutter, schmerzensreiche Gebärerin" (4,1357) into Mutter Courage's mouth, the discrepancy between those clichéd words and her very being creates parody. The fact that the children have to draw her wagon shows clearly that her business is as much in need of the children as it is for their benefit. When the commander praises Eilif and hopes that Mutter Courage has more sons for the army, Brecht evokes the whole irony of the cultural paradox of asking mothers to love their sons with unconditional devotion, but to sacrifice them joyfully and proudly as cannon-fodder. On the rediscovery of her son after two years, the "joy" does not rob Mutter Courage of her quick business mind for even one second: she immediately sees it as an opportunity to get a fantastic price for her capon by taking advantage of the cook's position.

The third scene (4,1372) presents a striking parody of the daughter's initiation by the mother into love's social rites. Mixed with the clichés "Himmelsmacht" for love and the wooing of the woman described as "the man kissing the ground under her feet," she asks her if she washed her feet, and ends with the practical conclusion that after all those beautiful games, she will be the man's servant. Thus we find an effective literary clarification of the dichotomy between the ideal of the pedestal and the lack of a "chair" in reality, i.e., the idealized image as against the scarcity of practical rights throughout history. On the same page, Mutter Courage ironically refers to her son's counting on mother love for getting money, using the business term "spekulieren" to express it. As long as her business is not harmed, however, she will live up to the institutional expectations of mother love. When Schweizerkas' life is in danger, she bargains for it as for a coveted item in a bazaar, just as the love for profitably completing a business deal kept

her from rushing to greet Eilif after a two-year absence. Her self-control when confronted with her dead son's body confirms her overpowering urge for survival.

We understand Mutter Courage's statement that a historic moment to her is not the burial of the Commander but the injury of her daughter (4,1408) in the context not of a specifically maternal feeling but in that of all her disillusioned remarks about wars, the structure of power and priorities and what they do to the little people. In fact, through her remark, Brecht also questions our traditional concept of history, which stresses war, institutions, and a few prominent personalities to the exclusion of the lives of the majority of the people.

When peace comes briefly, Mutter Courage is ready to go through the motions of motherhood: she "owes" it to Schweizerkas to go to the services, including wearing a black mourning dress for the occasion (4,1411). A little later, after Eilif is led to his execution in her absence, her questions about him are answered with so many hints that the mythical "true" mother would never have missed them; but she is too preoccupied with business and survival; thus the irony of the end of the play, when she thinks she still has one child, is made possible.

Even Mutter Courage's rejection of the cook's offer to join him without Kattrin is more complex than "maternal." On the one hand, Kattrin, besides being her daughter, has been her faithful companion through hard times; on the other, the cook presents an opportunity only slightly better than what she already has. She neither claims to love him nor does she have any illusions about what he or any rather poor man can offer her. Since Mutter Courage always proves to be a quick practical thinker, there is no reason to assume that she followed a vague maternal instinct rather than humane and rational considerations.

The dramatic nature of the play's final scenes is characteristic of Brecht's later dramas. He protracts the action beyond likelihood when Kattrin is shot only after she has become victorious; then we do see a glimpse of a bizarre and touching image of the mother regressing and singing a lullabye for her dead daughter. This scene destroys the critical distance of the audience as much as the eleventh scene, for which that claim is usually made. With such an ending, Brecht's anger at the audience's misinterpretations of his message is surprising. The emotions evoked by the lullabye scene are, of course, enhanced for those who are imbued with the sentimental motherhood images of our culture; it is easy then to forget the implications of the portrayals earlier in the play which instead seem to represent one great questioning or refutation of the sentimental notion of motherhood as expressed in the title.

At the end, Mutter Courage is driven on by her business or rather survival instinct, and we cannot help but see her with the wagon carrying on her petty commerce, even if she finds out the truth about her last child. Business, not the search for her missing Eilif, is the driving force in her. If Mutter Courage is an archetype of anything, she must be the archetypal businessperson or survivor. She touches us less as a mother than as one of the little people who continues living and doing business doggedly because she does not see the world as changeable. Being a mother for her is comparable to the fate of poverty-stricken mothers of all times where the home--if there is one--is not a refuge but a tough workplace. Mutter Courage does not fit into the emotional dream of the maternal, although the play's title and the lullabye scene evoke such notions; through her, the concept is demystified.

The questionability of the established conventional thought patterns about motherhood is revealed nowhere more clearly than in Brecht's obvious delight when he describes the maverick personality of "Die unwürdige Greisin." The title character in this story radically cuts all those "natural" ties to her children during the last two years of her life, after having been the stereotypical self-sacrificing mother up to then. The youngest son's shocked reactions represent the community's frustrated expectations. Brecht quite clearly questions the existence and the value of the absolute and eternal maternal instinct as well as the notion that a mother does not need any other identity. Interestingly, this break in her life happens at the time of her husband's death; thus readers are made to ask themselves how beneficial the institutions of marriage and motherhood in their conventional forms have been for women.[17]

Finally, in our third example, Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis, the theme of motherhood again plays an important part. Grusche, even more readily than Mutter Courage, is called the archetypal mother.[18] I find, however, that the title Charles R. Lyons gives his chapter on that drama--"The Dream of Goodness and Compassion Realized"[19]--places the emphasis more appropriately on generally compassionate rather than maternal aspects. While the biological mother in the play is shown as totally lacking any inborn maternal instinct, I see Grusche's actions as humane rather than maternal, if we are not to be influenced by pre-conceived notions of motherhood. In fact, the child is initially forced on Grusche, which eventually elicits her response that he looks at her like a human being (5,2023). All her early reactions are described as the gradual coming closer to a human being in danger, which is quite different from an instinctual attraction to a baby. When the singer comments: "Schrecklich ist die Verführung zur Gute" (5, 2025), it reminds us of Shen Te's "Verführung zu schenken." When Grusche finally adopts the child, it is because she had to endure a great deal for him. Brecht presents a

similar idea in a generally humane context through Shen Te's song in the third scene: she wants Wang's water while it is raining because it is more precious on account of what he endured for it.

Thus, Grusche's development towards adopting a child is that of any caring human being, even if Brecht does use a woman figure to do so; it does not represent the workings of a mythical instinct. Also her lack of concern about Simon is not one of self-sacrifice on account of the child: she says quite clearly that she cannot worry about him if he does not understand. Thus, her human pride is concerned, as is a certain impatience with the man, if he is not capable of sharing difficulties with her; this is actually the opposite of that "indulgent motherliness" which treats men like children.

In the trial scene, the attorney voices all the usual clichés about motherhood being the exclusive natural property of the biological mother. Because of the clear discrepancy between such beliefs and the facts, particularly when we see the material reason for the biological mother's sudden maternal feelings, Brecht casts such emotional concepts in an ambivalent light.

Grusche's answer (5,2096), demonstrating her simple human caring, is sufficient refutation of the preceding pompous clichés. The happy end is unproblematic as in a fairytale in contrast to the ending of Mutter Courage or Der gute Mensch von Sezuan. Although Brecht does use the term "motherly" here in that general final dream of an "ideal" world, he seems to do so in the same manner as he used to appeal to the emotions at the end of Mutter Courage. Again looking at the intrinsic message of the play, the distinctly "maternal" appears only in official statements in front of the judge and in the final emotional sentence, not in the description of the growing relationship between Grusche and the child. Of course, Brecht did not go as far as he could have, because he did not question the sex of the nurturing person,[20] but the manifestations in the play point beyond clichés of the innately maternal towards the generally compassionate. When Adrienne Rich analyses the myth of motherhood, she stresses that it was not by motherhood itself that she felt alienated, but by the institution of motherhood: an established desirable pattern of behavior limited to women.

Although myths about the feminine are not on Brecht's official agenda, his manner of depicting them helps to set the stage for the questioning. Such issues are also linked to economic ones, as we have seen in Der gute Mensch von Sezuan; this link is especially striking, however, in Der kaukasische Kreidekreis: the economic issues of the frame story are illustated by issues that involve concepts of the feminine, and thus the two disputes are interrelated. Brecht--consciously or not--

did not let the image of the "eternal woman" stand without challenge, even though such questioning is not consistent throughout his writing. Moreover, his theories about the need to shock the audience into seeing the familiar or ordinary with questioning, critical eyes are directly applicable to feminist thinking. Brecht's art of depiction in some of his most successful dramas discredits the mythical status of woman.[21] In the process of deflating ideal abstract concepts in general, a healthy demystification of the "feminine mystique" takes place at the same time.

FOOTNOTES

[1]The Second Sex, trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 293.

2Judith Fetterley, The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

[3]Sara Lennox, "Women in Brecht's Works," New German Critique, (Spring, 1978), 83-96. The conclusions of this article are based on a combination of the message of Brecht's works and his known intentions in general, in contrast to my own analysis of the effects of Brecht's writing techniques.

[4]Hellmuth Karasek writes about Brecht's double standard towards the women in his life, "bei der dem Mann recht ist, was die Frau billig macht," and "dass Brecht sich, Mann, der er war, durchaus Vielfalt zubilligte, während er weibliche Einfalt verlangte," in Bertolt Brecht: Der jüngste Fall eines Theater-klassikers (München: Kindler, 1978), pp. 188, 187.

[5]For a striking formulation of the contradictory vision of the woman, see Marguerite Yourcenar in her recent acceptance speech at the Académie Française: "One cannot pretend that . . . the Academy was particularly misogynist: it simply conformed to the usage which placed a woman on a pedestal but did not yet permit itself to offer her a chair." Quoted in Ms. Magazine, April 1981, 39.

[6]The Second Sex, p. 286.

[7]All references in parenthesis are to Bertolt Brecht, Gesammelte Werke (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1967).

[8]Karasek analyses the hypocrisy in this situation: "Brecht sucht und findet auch den für ihn wohlvertrauten Kontrast, daß die Hure ihren stellungslosen Flieger ganz aufrichtig und gar nicht hurenhaft liebt, während der Flieger bei der Liebe hurenhaft fragt, was dabei für ihn herausspringe" (p. 61).

[9]"Brecht's Split Characters and His Sense of the Tragic," in Brecht. A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Peter Demetz (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1961), p. 129.

[10]"The Alienated Woman: Brecht's The Good Person of Sezuan," in Essays on Brecht, p. 194. In his first footnote, Fuegi also makes the important point that Brecht himself uses the sex-neutral "person" as a translation for "Mensch" which

may indicate again that he was possibly not aware of the implications of the male-female split. Fuegi did an important analysis of the "total alienation of woman in Sezuan's savage capitalist milieu," (p. 193) but his statement that "women must give up themselves in a hopeless attempt 'to become themselves'" (p. 196) implies that the "feminine" is a given, that women are "by nature" more compassionate, less savage than capitalism demands. [11] While Marc Zimmerman suggests that Brecht here shows the transcending of man/woman polarities as a goal, he describes it as an intermediate goal on the way to revolutionary movement in general. In my interpretation, it is difficult to detect a subordination of one to the other in the actual work. "Brecht and the Dynamics of Production," Praxis 3 (1976), 119.

[12] Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 26.

[13] This depiction anticipates the findings of a study about the questionable value of the exclusiveness of family relationships to the detriment of society as a whole. Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, The Anti-social Family, (Thedford, Norfolk: Thedford Press Ltd, 1982).

[14] Sokel has already pointed out the fraudulence of this idealism divorced from action (p. 130), although only the detachment from action makes it possible, of course.

[15] Martin Esslin, Brecht: The Man and His Work (New York: Doubleday, 1960), p. 254. While Esslin connects the "mellowing" to Brecht's "reintegration of his violently divided personality" (p. 254), he also calls Mutter Courage "a battle-field of contradictory impulses" (p. 239).

[16] Esslin, p. 239.

[17] An interesting parallel to this context can be seen in the turn-of-the century story, "The Story of an Hour," by the American writer Kate Chopin. A woman, believing that her husband was killed in an accident, is overcome by a sense of freedom and self-assertion, although he was obviously not a bad man, just rather overbearing.

[18] Fuegi, The Essential Brecht (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1972), p. 157. But Fuegi also adds in footnote 7 (p. 263) that Brecht depicts the "questionable nature of the mother instinct. It is interesting that very often in Brecht's plays

it is only those who are not 'real' mothers that have a 'good' mother instinct. Kattrin, the sucker, it might be argued, is a better 'mother' than Mutter Courage. Grusche, in turn, is obviously a better mother than the child's 'real' mother. Likewise, we might remember that Shen Te begins to call more and more frequently for Shui Ta when she discovers that she is to become a 'real' mother."

[19]Bertolt Brecht: The Despair and the Polemic (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. 132. Lyons, however, uses other clichés like the "unappealing" nature of Marie Farrar's sensuality compared to Grusche's "loveliness and purity" (p. 135).

[20]Lennox, p. 91.

[21]Oscar Mandel's admiration for strong and active individual women figures in Brecht is contradicted by calling him "a troubadour in his devotion to womanhood," since the troubadour is devoted to a very inactive, idealized image of womanhood. "Brecht's Unheroes and Heroines," in Medieval Epic to the "Epic Theatre" of Brecht, ed. R.P. Armato and J.M. Spalek (Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1968), p. 242.

ADAPTING THE ADAPTER

John Rouse*

Throughout his career, Brecht was an active practitioner of the pleasurable art of adaptation. When writing, and when directing, he adapted other people's plays. He also adapted his own--or so one should label the activity of a man who incessantly reexamined the latest version of each play in the light of his present social and theatrical situation. We can, of course, perform Brecht or any other playwright without considering either the relationship between his historical situation and ours or between the theatrical possibilities available to him and those available to us. To do this forestalls the question of how to theatrically interpret Brecht before it is even raised. Once we do raise this question, however, we raise with it the question of adaptation. We might find it useful to see if Brecht's own principles as adapter can assist us in interpreting Brecht.

The term adaptation normally refers to work on the written text--deletions, additions, transpositions, and translation; Brecht's Coriolan adaptation, for example, was above all a translation.[1] A text sometimes needs to be attuned to the needs of particular actors. Its language sometimes needs to be modernized, or at least clarified. Playwrights make mistakes (Jesse, in the 1954 version of Mann ist Mann, has lines onstage after he has exited). Brecht, who was trying to create a repertory for a particular ensemble of actors and a particular audience, made full use of such adaptation work. Adaptation may also have, however, a more radically interpretive function--a function first revealed with consistent effectiveness by Brecht in his postwar productions at the Ensemble and disseminated, into the European theatre at least, as an often-seized theatrical possibility by directors influenced by Brecht.

Adaptation is one weapon of many in the arsenal of Brechtian theatrical interpretation. This mode of interpretation is, in turn, guided by some well-known principles. There is a nicely succinct, if incomplete, list of these in Brecht's first draft for a 1954 description of the Berliner Ensemble's unique characteristics. Characteristic number seven is particularly important for our purposes: the attempt to make "the dialectical manner of considering things into a pleasure" (GW 16:724). This has always seemed the most important item on the list to me, since it identifies both the intended development of an audience and a mode of analysis that intervenes in the reality it mediates, criticizes reality by giving it shape,

and aims ultimately to help stimulate and guide practical intervention in the real world.

Following this principle, a critically realistic theatre should concentrate on the "contradictions in people and their relationships with each other" and reveal "the determinants under which they develop" (GW 19:547). More precisely, the theatre's job is not simply to make these determinants recognizable, but to make them recognizable as constitutive elements in human relationships. Historical determinants, as Brecht notes, are not "dark powers (backgrounds); rather they are made and maintained by men (and will be changed by them): they are constituted in what is happening now before us" (GW 16:679).

"Was eben da gehandelt wird macht sie aus"--Brecht is speaking here not about reality--or not only about reality--but about the theatrical illustration of reality, the moment-by-moment structuring out of interpretation. We know the priority Brecht gave the fable as the "heart of the theatrical production," and we know too his definition of the fable as the "complete composition of all the gestural incidents" (GW 16:693). But it is important to stress that what Brecht calls the "gestural incident," or sometimes the "individual occurence" (Einzelgeschehnis), is perfectly equivalent to what is called the individual interpretive "beat" in American theatre parlance. In the italicized paragraphs with which the Courage-Modell describes the fable's progress within each scene, each sentence identifies such a beat: "Recruiters roam through the country looking for cannon-fodder. Courage presents a sergeant with her family, created in various theatres of war," etc.[2] Both as playwright and as director, then, Brecht made radical and telling use of interpretation's potential to focus at the ultimately specific level of the individual beat--not just at the level of each scene--and to elucidate the dialectical development of human relationships through the structuring together of these beats.[3]

The theatrical interpeter begins, of course, with someone else's fable, someone else's interpretation of historical experience. This interpretation must be critically examined. The process begins, usually long before rehearsals, with the "study of the text, the peculiarities of its author, the time of its creation" (GW 16:755). The goal of this research is to achieve a double interpretive focus. On the one hand, the text is considered as social document, its illustrations of social relationships under particular historical determinants is reinterpreted in light of an examination of the historical period in question. On the other hand, the text's structures are read as mediations of the author's personal and historical experience. Here analysis looks for indications of historically conditioned limitations of knowledge or insight on the part of the author or for his conscious

or unconscious acceptance of the dominant ideology of his class or time. If the author's depiction of social contradictions or of the historical determinants that influence these contradictions prove inadequate, if the text's mediation of historical experience reflects too strongly an ideological obfuscation, and if the text proves too resistant to the intervention of critical interpretation using the vocabulary of theatrical performance (acting, set, costume, etc.) available to the interpreter, then the author's fable must itself be restructured, its language altered, its closure forced open--moment by moment, beat by beat. This is the most basic, and the most radical interpretive function of adaptation--the intervention of theatrical interpretation into the text itself, as part of the total elaboration of interpretation using all the possibilities of the theatre.

The work normally associated with the term adaptation has frequently been performed in the German theatre by the dramaturge, not infrequently himself a playwright. So, for that matter, is the more radically interpretive adaptation work developed by Brecht. My description of this activity should have indicated, however, that we must understand adaptation as part of the work we normally, in America at least, consider as "directing." Brecht's use of adaptation cannot simply be passed off as the marginally admissible reworking of one playwright by another, but as the work of a director who gives textual interpretation priority--and who arrogates to himself (or to an interpretational team consisting at least of the director, dramaturge, and designer) the right to rework any text for any single production.

Moreover, we must also examine Brecht's productions as the completion of his adaptations. Sometimes the text of a beat needs to be restructured to help support interpretive characterization--but sometimes it does not, precisely because a characterization has developed the way it has, or a particular way--a gesture, a manner of delivering the text--has been found that can alienate, comment on, interpret the text without any significant rewriting. It is, for example, impossible to adequately interpret Brecht's treatment of Lenz's Hofmeister by an examination of the text alone. Lauffer's bow in the first scene, the crude, condescending manner of delivery developed by Erwin Geschonneck for the Geheimer Rat and by Friedrich Maurer for Wenzeslaus--these are as much part of the adaptation as the rewriting of the text itself.[4] Indeed, such developments in theatrical interpretation are influenced by and influence the rewriting of the text in turn. And they influence such rewriting radically: of the six versions of the Hofmeister text Laurence Kitching has identified, the last three were developed during rehearsals.

The principles and practices of adaptation I have discussed thus far can be applied to the interpretation of any play--classical or contemporary. There is another set

of relationships that come into play in the interpretation of an historical text, however. Especially considering that Brecht's own plays must now be considered historical, I should mention them here. These relationships concern the question of how the interpreter uses his examination of the text's mediation of its historical period. This historical reality is, of course, no longer ours. Ours has developed out of it; we remain linked to it. But this very development also separates us from this past. Now, one can cover up this historical distance through the mythology of "a-historical" human experience. One can ignore this distance, uncritically hauling the text into a simplistic "relevance" to some topical context. Or one can attempt a lovingly accurate historical reproduction.

Brecht did none of these. Rather, he attempted to capitalize on the dialectical nature of history itself. What happened then is not what happens now, but the two are connected. Analysis can reveal the same problems, constituted differently. Or what happened then can be analyzed as a stage (usually the beginning) in the development to what is happening now. Interpretation's focus remains firmly on the present. Our problems are what interest us--our own historical situation, our possibilities for intervention in this situation. Brecht never denied that old plays should be used to help us understand the present. But he did attempt to underline the historical distance between the text's present and ours, both in order to invite his audiences to practice the dialectical mode of analysis on history itself and because, as Peter Palitzsch has pointed out, the topicality of an old play becomes all the greater, the more distant its period appears.

I have attempted no more than a basic outline of Brecht's practice of adaptation. The outline requires fleshing out, but it is hopefully complete enough to suggest a general interpretational posture toward historically distant texts and theories--including Brecht's. I do not think we can question either the commitment of Brecht's theatre or the direction won for the theatre by his use of critical dialectics as a basic tool for the awakening and disciplining of this commitment in an audience--and, indeed, quite simply for the realistic examination of reality. Having said this, however, I will also say that every other aspect of Brecht's theatre work should be critically reexamined. I mean not only that Brecht's plays should be reexamined using his own interpretational techniques, but that these techniques themselves should be critically reexamined.

Brecht's theatre attempted to develop a specific kind of audience at a specific historical juncture. Our historical situation is already different, and must be interpreted differently in our theatres. Certainly, Brecht's theatre techniques are both themselves historical and now part of a dominant theatrical practice that cannot be accepted uncritically by any theatre that still hopes to be realistic.

To deny ourselves the possibilities developed by the San Francisco Mime Troupe, for example, or the Living Theatre, or even the theatre of Robert Wilson, would be both nonsensical and unproductive--and hence, un-Brechtian. Further, Brecht's plays should be accorded the same critical courtesy Brecht accorded the historical plays he directed. They should be read into their historical context--that of the first half of the twentieth century--and criticized from the perspectives of our own present. Finally, although I accept the direction revealed by Brecht's Marxism, mine has been informed differently from Brecht's and hence should create a different theatre. For example, the work of men like Marcuse and Lacan has allowed us to trace the interventions of ideology at the level of the psyche. Without falling into the trap of bourgeois ideology, it should be possible for us to raise the question of how the impact of historical determinants on consciousness may be psychically similar across changes in the determinants themselves. It should also be possible for us to explore more deeply than Brecht cared to the private experience Brecht considered unimportant in the illustration of social reality (see GW 15:282). Commenting in an interview on the "Brecht-Müdigkeit" widely felt in West Germany, Ernst Wendt has said that Brecht knew too much about his characters. It is perhaps time for us to re-complicate these characters. For example, to dissolve the Singer's epic description of Gruscha's decision to keep the Governer's child back into the enactment of the figure itself. Or to examine the transformation of Galy Gay as an example of the particular form of psychic terrorism developed in this century rather than as an example of a positive commitment by the individual to the group marred only by this particular individual's choice of the wrong group.

On a general level, Brecht's dramaturgy can and should be seen as the attempt to develop a new tradition for historical and contemporary plays--a tradition defined by the dialectical direction of his theater. We could hope that this tradition might unite us all, however different our particular cultural and theatrical seizure of it might be. But we cannot ignore either the cultural and social differences that separate us from each other or the historical distance that separates us from Brecht. Our reality is different from Brecht's. Our methods must also develop differently, if they want to be Brechtian.

FOOTNOTES

*This is a shortened version of a paper presented at the IBS Symposium in Portland, Oregon, in May 1982.

[1]According to Manfred Wekwerth, Schriften: Arbeit mit Brecht (Berlin: Henschel, [2]1975), p. 202.

[2]Brecht, "Anmerkungen zur Auffuhrung 1984," in Materialien zu Brechts "Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder", ed. Werner Hecht (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1964), pp. 19-20.

[3]Cf., Manfred Wekwerth's comments on the Drehpunkte, or turning points between beats in a scene, Schriften, p. 119.

[4]For a more detailed discussion of Lauffer's bow, see my "Brecht and the Contradictory Actor," in Theatre Journal, (March 1984). For a description of Geschonneck's Gehimer Rat, see Arrigo Subiotto, Bertolt Brecht's Adaptations for the Berliner Ensemble (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1975), p. 22. For a description of Maurer's Wenzeslaus, see Egon Monk's unpublished rehearsal note, quoted by Laurence P. A. Kitching, Der Hofmeister: A Critical Analysis of Bertolt Brecht's Adaptation of Jacob Michael Reinhold Lenz's Drama (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1976), p. 101.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR CHRISTOF NEL

by Gregg Benzow

B: Brecht said with regard to In the Jungle of the Cities that he wrote it during long and lonely walks around Augsburg. His sentences were mixed liked "cocktails" so that entire scenes were evocative of certain textures and colors. That sounds like Rimbaud. Are you using Rimbaudian or Brechtian methods in your rehearsals?

N: I think I am using exactly the method that Brecht himself describes; that is to say, I am attempting to dissect the play into Language, Body Language, Sounds, and Pictures and trying to mix them. My biggest job with the actors in these four short weeks right now is to break the psychological fastenings generally used in their work--to take them away. First, we discover the scene in a general sense--check out what's in it--then I work without words. I simply take the essence out of the scene and work the entire time with that--without words. This way we find the right language; that is, the right body language and visual language. Secondly, and separately from this, I dissect the spoken word so that we can work on the nouns, that is, on those things that one can hold on to--the main ingredient which Brecht describes: the cocktails that get mixed. Brecht noted that he didn't really have any logical sense in mind, but that the ingredients, the individual contents, created friction between themselves. I think that In the Jungle of the Cities is a very avant-garde play, was then, and still is.

B: What do you mean by avant-garde? Brecht said himself that the avant-garde isn't revolutionary, but rather a component of society because it must live inside, not outside the society to earn its bread.

N: I would say it like this: I don't believe that young Brecht was a revolutionary. I think he was a middle-class son from a small town who had never seen a big city like in America. These experiences that he describes were imagined--a fantasy--because during his youth he was nevertheless a part of the existing system. I find, however, his fascination for power very interesting. I don't think it was decided then yet for Brecht whether or not he would become a fascist or a communist. He was moved by the emotional force of power; that was something positive for Brecht. He didn't keep a critical distance. Thus, he was himself occupied with smashing the old system just like the rest of the avant-garde of avant-garde literature after the First World War.

B: In Jungle there is always something ominous in the struggle between Garga and Schlink; that is to say, a certain subliminal psychological subtext. Psychology, however, isn't exactly something that Brecht normally agreed with. Would you comment on that?

N: Brecht was very involved with Expressionism, and I believe I see a strong connection to Dada in this method of mixing words. The psychology, I find, is a thread. . .a thread of reality in this play, and I believe it is also one of the successful attempts in our century at writing old mythology. It reminds me very much of the story of Oedipus where a fight between two men also takes place--between a young man and an older man and where, as a matter of fact, the younger one destroys the older. And neither knows what they are doing. They both know that they must fight this fight, but they carry it out unaware. I interpret that in this play as being very similar to that which is described in Oedipus; a similar mechanism--actually a mechanism which lies outside of human beings--where, and this has to do with some very ancient knowledge, where apparently struggle and destruction are two of the most powerful parts of life. I don't believe, however, that this struggle can be explained through psychology. I think the root of struggle is mythological.

B: Don't you find though that certain things in the play don't ring true?

N: That it's cold. . .I find that very realistic. I think this story is real in a very deep sense. I believe it describes a kernal of truth: that love and destruction coincide. I think it is a terribly bitter, angry, and painful story but also real.

B: Would you call it a love story?

N: Sure!

B: Even though it appears Schlink does things just to get his kicks?

N: Definitely! That's called fighting! Fighting means to enjoy, to want the fight. That's asocial. It's bothersome. It's pointless. It also bugs me! It pisses me off, but I think that is the eroticism of struggle.

B: How do you see Garga and Schlink?

N: Well, I don't take sides for either one. I find it tremendously exciting that an author would write something like this; that we are supposed to observe the

stuggle, perhaps the rules, but not the outcome. I think that is extremely important. It seems to me that truly good cinema has a better grip on that than the theater. I try to follow the fight and to love and hate both characters. And I try with the appearance of the lynch mob at the end to show that we must love this struggle because, when this battle is no longer fought, there will be a great loss. I am trying to tell the story of the "battle" and not the characters. When the struggle is over, there is a great emptiness in the world.

B: Do you think Brecht is too intellectual?

N: I don't think he is so intellectual in his early works. What excites as well as angers me in this play is that I find Brecht very bourgeois. He undertakes an unbelievably tricky story, a truly deep, old and mythological story and at the same time he shies away from it--he plays with it. It seems as though he doesn't put cash on the barrelhead. In a certain sense as a writer one has to fail with such a story; the way Heiner Müller fails with his stories, or Hölderlin. I think it is difficult to master such material, and oftentimes I think Brecht toys with it. Anyway, I would call this the root of being intellectual, but then I'm no different myself.

B: That's something Americans would call 'very German'; but how in the past have German audiences responded to this play?

N: There have been a couple of very exciting productions; one by Peter Stein at the Kammerspiel in Munich, and the other--which I really liked--was by Klaus Michael Grüber in Frankfurt; with that one, actually, a whole new era was introduced into the theater. That was the first time a non-performing artist worked with the stage. I believe it was Arroyo. At the moment, the whole tradition we are moving in to bring theater and the fine arts together, goes back to this production. In the Jungle of the Cities really is, therefore, a key play.

B: In general, could you say that Brecht has an important role in contemporary German theater?

N: Hard to say. Rather too small a one; by that I mean that contemporary German theater, as far as I know it, has sacrificed all too fashionably and without a struggle the social and political position which Brecht occupied in the course of his life; that is to say, the efforts to really penetrate and understand 'Society' and to put this in a materialist perspective have been a little too

rashly derided by the intellectual theater caste. I think, at the moment, it would be good in this unbelievable chaos that reigns in our country--in this chaos of concepts--to spend more time with the conceptual apparatus on which Brecht worked and on the clarity he strove to achieve.

B: Have you wondered at all how Americans might react to this production? And have you found it at all necessary to make certain changes because of American tastes or expectations?

N: I don't know them. I think what Americans expect is in the actors. It is already provided without them knowing it. I am trying here to be as clear as I possibly can so that they will get something out of it. Whether the audiences will like it or not, I don't know.

B: Have your encounters with American actors and their methods of performing brought up any particular problems?

N: What I've noticed from their training is that they seem to depend a great deal on the text; that is, on the spoken word. They attempt to feel their way into the text basing their character very closely on that text. Secondly, they peculiarly establish an understanding that what is going on is just play-acting. With the agreement of the audience there seems to be a kind of code. What's going on here is a "we're-playing-at-playing-theater". And they play as if they didn't have a body; as though their bodies were there only to serve the spoken word.

B: Are you saying the geste is missing?

N: Yes, the materiality of the body; that the body has its own language to speak.

B: You are working on that I take it. . .?

N: I'm really working very hard on that. There's a sentence in the play which I can only roughly recite: in the tenth scene, where he is describing the impossibility to communicate, Schlink says there is only one single possible unification for people and that is the unification of the genitals, but even there the unification is destroyed by language. That sentence appears to contain exactly what we're talking about right now: that speech can lie more easily than body language. Very often the spoken word is a lie which conceals the body's language. Actors here concern themselves too much with the language of words. I would say, with that they are concerning themselves too much with

guises and lies. I am trying now, at least, to open up this contradiction and present it, and to work on it with them until they see this contradiction.

B: And do they see it?

N: Yes, I would say they do. I'll have to see how it all adds up when everything's put together.

B: Certainly no easy task. . .

N: Well, I can only speak from my experience with these actors, but I'm really surprised how talented they are. I think to be able to survive in this crushing machinery of quick and meaningless productions, as I see it, an actor apparently has to have incredible assets from the start. But I can't imagine how someone can survive as a creative being when he plays a new role every four weeks and is always afraid whether he will be successful in it or not.

B: This would seem to reflect a kind of Garga and Schlink, only here it's between the actor and the system.

N: Yes, but I don't know it's a love story!

(See accompanying review by Gregg Benzow.)

THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE ON THE AMERICAN PRAIRIE

Interview with Director John Ahart

by Herbert Knust

November 3-5 and 9-13, 1983, the University Theatre at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, presented The Caucasian Chalk Circle, adapted by Eric Bentley; directed by John Ahart; scenic design by Tom Sulek; costume design by Rory R. Scanlon; lighting design by Ted Mather; music composed by Myron Fink and Samuel Magrill. Each performance had a different casting from the acting company. The following is a slightly edited version of an interview held on February 7, 1984.

K: Mr. Ahart, you have in the past directed plays by Brecht. Which plays did you prefer and why did you choose The Caucasian Chalk Circle for the last production?

A: Actually, I've only done three full-length Brecht plays: Mother Courage, The Chalk Circle I've done once before, and The Good Person of Szechuan. And I like all three of them very much. I guess it is my habit to choose a play that is exciting, interesting or valuable for me to work on at that moment. For instance, one play of Brecht's that I have not yet done but that I want to do very badly, is Galileo; but you asked me also why I chose The Caucasian Chalk Circle this year. We actually choose our plays about a year in advance. At the time when we were making up the season, I was looking for something that would address major issues in this country, unemployment, for example, and injustices to the lower class, and in particular some of the political situations that were distressing to me. The Caucasian Chalk Circle seemed to make the direct statement that I was looking for. As we put on the season, the situations in the Middle East with Lebanon and Central America became so dominant in our thinking of world affairs that during the actual rehearsal and performance time these issues were more pressing to me in some respects than the earlier ones and that sort of took over.

K: When I first read the announcement of the play in the Krannert calendar and came to the sentence "Provocative questions are posed about justice, compassion and understanding which may at times violate the conventions of society," I thought that the interpretation might be rather mild; but when I saw the per-

formance and also read your notes in the program and the quotes you had chosen from Brecht's poetry, I gather that you were after the social and political implications. Apparently you feel it to be a very poetical play, but you also see it as a very political play?

A: Yes. Perhaps I should clarify that the early statements that were released to the press and were in our promotion I had nothing to do with. But in any case, yes, I think it's a very political play. Obviously we associate Brecht with political theater--and yet that has certain connotations for me that I try to avoid. For example, I happen to be really distressed by Ronald Reagan as President of this country. But I chose not to put Ronald Reagan on stage as one might have done. In a lot of the Brechtian productions there have been instances where slides of current events and so on have served as a kind of counterparts to the direct line of the play. I chose not to do this in part because I feel rather strongly that, at least in this country, you are then likely to be able to speak only to the people who already share your views. If in some ways our production therefore may at first not seem to have taken advantage of the political thrust, it was because I was trying to deal with these issues in a way that went beyond contemporary political polarization.

K: Both in West Germany and also in the United States, the prologue ("Dispute over the Valley") which Brecht later turned into the first scene, is usually left out; in some cases for political reasons, because it might alienate the audience too much, while on the other hand it was felt that artistically it doesn't really contribute that much. You used the Bentley adaptation. I forget whether he includes it or leaves it out.

A: He didn't include it when it was first published, but then it was added. I said earlier, I have done the play twice. The first time, several years ago, I did not use the prologue. So my sense of the play based just on my previous experience was that the prologue is not really necessary. However, I looked at it again and I believe that if I were doing the play with less strong feelings about wanting to address contemporary issues, then I would have included the prologue. That doesn't mean that it couldn't be done, but I felt here that it might cloud the issue, it might divert attention to the Soviets and the Germans after World War II, and I didn't want to distract from the relevance of this play to our own time.

K: You chose the Bentley text rather than the Manheim translation. Was there a particular purpose or is it more playable, do you think?

A: I have to admit that I chose the Bentley text because, when I first did the play, that was the only one available. And in a sense that has become the play for me. My German is not good, and I have to admit that I was much more comfortable with the Bentley text. When I looked at the two, I felt that there was a poetic quality in some of the Bentley work that was not there in the Manheim. There were a few lines in the Manheim translation that were more interesting to me and some clarifications of just what was originally intended by Brecht. I don't think I would defend this terribly staunchly--but on the whole I prefer Bentley.

K: Bentley somewhere defines Brecht's "epic theater" as "poetic theater." So he must have gone after the poetic qualities also in his adaptation. On the other hand, a graduate student in our department, who wrote a Master's thesis on Bentley's adaptations and translations, came to the conclusion that Bentley put Brecht perhaps too much in the psychological tradition of theater and did not sufficiently bring out the sociological context.

A: There are other Brecht plays where the Manheim or Willett translations are much better than Bentley's, and so I don't always feel this.

K: Let me ask a few questions about the stage designs, the costumes, and the roles of some of the players. I was quite impressed with the imaginativeness of the settings. I've seen the slanted stage before, in a play directed by Piscator in Berlin in the early sixties--he used it for certain graphic, demonstrative purposes. What advantage did you see in the slanted stage for your production?

A: How that stage came to its final form is really a complicated series of events. I was looking for a way to take advantage of the play's being in the Caucasus, not so much because of the literal geographic placement but for the topography. A dangerous place to be--that you're on the precipice. It was a matter of finding a convention that would make that work in the theater, without trying to be too literal; obviously if your were making a film, you could be quite literal. In part the slanted stage was to give the actors a chance to feel that--razor edge, so we've got that ridge along the top, the fact that people charge up the back and are partially hidden and seen and that you're always almost in danger of falling off this thing down into the pit. That seemed to have some value for the feel the actors gained as they worked on this stage and transferred that to the sense of the play.

K: Yes, some of the backdrops emphasized that, I'm thinking of the abyss when Gruscha must cross the dangling bridge, and the swinging backdrop somehow rein-

forces what you said about the danger of this venture. But the slanted stage also allows some clever tricks, I thought. There is one scene which sticks out in my mind as very memorable: when the soldier Simon returns from the war and finds Grusche and the child, and they speak across the brook that separates them. The slanted stage allowed the rolling down of a blue band which stylized the brook. And then, in the performance which I attended, this seemingly artificial separation between them--they were close yet far apart--and the poetic, restrained way in which they spoke nonetheless conveyed the passions underneath--I think it was a high point of the play. The audience was there rather breathless--so a technicality that highlighted a profound human situation.

A: Yes. I think that's true and there are some things that work better than you anticipate, and others you almost discard.

K: There was another rather "telling" backdrop for some of the scenes: the icon, the saint. In the second part, this saint is crossed out, I think with red paint, in the kind of rebellious scenes in which Azdak appears. But then I noticed that Azdak wears the same headgear as the holy figure. Was he considered to be some sort of a worldly saint in contrast to false saints perhaps, under whose emblem the establishment was leading such a corrupt life?

A: I think that probably we're at a point now where we have to admit that the productions takes on certain statements in part as a result of accident.

K: Then such accidents were not unfitting, for I think such meanings also emerge from the text.

A: The costume designer wanted to do certain things and so did the set designer, and the way they came together was not as direct as the final product implies. For instance, had it not been in the Caucasus and in the Byzantine culture, we probably would not have had as many Christ images on the stage as we did. It was not that we started out to deal with Christianity or the Christ figure and so on in such a direct way. The Byzantine culture then caused us to insert into the sense of justice the Christ figure, which led the costume designer to choose a halo for Azdak, suggestive of the personification of justice. And the crossing out, for instance, of that backdrop with the saint was partly because I kept saying that this palace of justice had been violated again and again; in fact, it was not as violated as I wanted it to have been in its final form. I kept thinking, for instance, of a lot of the Holy Land images, where obviously there's been so much warfare, and in a sense all you have to do is walk around

the streets and see the machine gun bullets, and although this takes place in a time when the machine gun was not around, I was looking for the equivalent to that. Violence leaves its scars for many centuries, and so that crossing out of the Christ figure was in a sense an effort to remind us of that, a willingness to violate.

K: I really think it's very much in the Brechtian line--he uses Biblical allusions a great deal. There are other scenes, for example: Azdak and "Saint" Banditus, as good friends, honor each other, because both in a way do "miracles" of justice in an unjust society. And I also noticed that in the shack of this aunt in the mountains, Aniko, the wife of Lavrenti (Gruscha's brother), there was a picture of Mary and the Child. On the one hand an ironic allusion to the false religiousness of Aniko, who sees the "fatherless" child as a problem, but then also a reference to the situation of Gruscha, who through her Christian virtues is protecting the child. Now the costumes were rather fascinating. The governor, the fat prince, the aristocrats wore these peculiar mixtures of costumes: some people thought they were frog-like, I thought they were pig-like, but there was also some likeness to some strange animals from outer space, yet human at the same time, fantasy animals, but the way they moved and talked was very threatening. Was that accidental or was there more of a purpose behind it? Why were these costumes chosen?

A: Perhaps I should tell you some of the complexity of this. Maybe you can tell me, whether a sense of this, even though it might have been subliminal, came through to the audience. We began trying to decide: who were these actors. We had to acknowledge that the play was taking place in a theater, that it was presentational in form, that we needed a justification for the beginning of the play--since I did not have the chorus on stage, initially, and we could not work out a way to put the chorus on the stage, having abandoned the prologue. So my image of the play was that it was being performed by refugees. I don't think you'd ever have gotten that, but I started out with the assumption that refugees have become the same, no matter what part of the world they're from, and that the Vietnam refugees and the Middle East refugees and Afghanistan or Central American refugees, all have this kind of amalgam of cultures. And that in fact we literally have in Champaign-Urbana a huge number of refugees that we ignore everyday. It's very easy to walk around the campus and not be aware that they are here. And so I started out by thinking that this play and the chorus and the storyteller could be imagined to involve refugees who literally lived in this building, Krannert Center, and that somehow <u>if</u> the audience had by mistake come to see a play at 3:00 a.m., these refugees might be coming out of the woodwork saying "What are you doing here?" And as they came out of the

woodwork and saw this audience here, then they would address them. And as they address them, since this play was in the Caucasus--obviously it's not entirely consistent--but they began to pull out their trunks their artifacts, their icons that are the remnants of their civilizations passed along from person to person and include the rather elaborate Byzantine pieces that were parts of the costume, put over their own sort of refugee costumes. It also includes things that they might have manufactured to tell the story, so I was always thinking of it as almost a folk art, theatrically in the tradition of Man of La Mancha. More things come out of the trunk than could ever have possibly been in there. But they're at least consistent with the basic ideas that if the people were going to tell us this story, they would tell us the story in ways that they would be capable of having developed. So to some degree the costume designer was trying to provide heads, and body masks in the case of the ironshirts, that might conceivably have been the best of refugee folk art. And in that case, yes, there are some that resemble pigs, some almost like outer space, but we sort of said: well, that's all right, because the costumes underneath are like mixtures of East and West that the Caucasus represents.

K: That hadn't occurred to me--in Brecht's text the actors are villagers who had gone through World War II and are trying to reorganize their land anew. But what you say makes sense especially with regard to the singer or narrator. I wasn't able to figure out exactly what was suggested by his dress. He struck me as a mixture between saint and vagabond, a wise man and a vagabond who had experienced alot. And this vagabond quality is what you. . .

A: Yes, exactly. I literally said to the actors, the ideal storyteller would be a man who is in Champaign-Urbana, who is a Vietnam veteran, who is a street person wearing a huge coat, you may have seen him, and often as you go by in your car on University Avenue he will step into the street and scream at the cars passing by. That he is the victim of a conflict like Vietnam and that his story is so all-consuming that he is not able to let go of it. Again, I'm exaggerating, I suppose I would not be able to justify that if you carried it to its extreme. But it was a way of thinking about the nature of the storyteller.

K: It is interesting what you did with the ironshirts. They appear as monstrous bodyguards in threatening uniforms--symbols of the ruling powers; but then they could don their armor and some humans crawled out of their shell. The ironshirts seem rather influential for the action of the play.

A: Yes, the ironshirts are the violent forces of the rulers, whoever they may be. They have to be taught to be ruthless, but they manage. Once there, they

become almost faceless--all shell, like tanks driven by a remote commander. Of course, they have many more implications than that. I think our nine foot tall faceless forms became surprisingly attractive and even seductively humorous. And yet, they were so clearly violent and destructive. Their presence conveyed more than words suggest.

K: I don't know if it was a coincidence, or if there was some purpose, since you had different casts, but in the performance that I saw, Grusche was played by a black women. There were also other black students in the cast, I think one was a farmer, one was a soldier, and I felt this was rather effective. Because what you have here, in addition to Brecht's differences, are apparently racial differences; and I had to think of his calling Gruscha a "sucker,"--and in the present situation you can extend this to a whole race--so that was probably a purposeful criticism. It was a fine performance by Celeste Williams.

A: Yes. I thought she was one of the best of the performers in handling Brecht. She played the storyteller in the other cast. I don't know whether you knew that or not. So it was interesting to see her do those two roles, Gruscha and the storyteller, obviously large roles and not very often would anybody be asked to play both roles.

K: I also enjoyed the role of Azdak (played by Karl Bockemeier). My students, who had read the play in German, felt that he was a little bit too idealized. He struck them as a kind of Robin Hood figure, who philosophizes about what he is doing. Whereas in the text, and I think also on stage, it really comes out that he is also quite a rascal. And this double function I guess was a difficult task.

A: Yes, there's no question that's the most difficult of all the roles. I've always felt that the character is Brecht, and the youth of the actors is the biggest handicap. There's no question but that you really need a more mature actor who's been through a great deal in his own personal life, and who's not afraid to admit that he's more a rascal than perhaps they're willing to admit. So the terrible paradox that it takes a rascal to provide some justice becomes much more painfully true, I think in that case.

K: The last scene puzzled me a bit. That was the actual Chalk Circle scene where the two women fight about the right to keep the child, and we know for what reasons. Gruscha, who isn't as clever as Azdak is and doesn't quite see through his devious thinking, finally is provoked enough to tell him what kind of a scoundrel she thinks he is in the service of the establishment, and he

seems to enjoy that very much. On the one hand he says: don't antagonize me, on the other hand I got the feeling that she wins him over, so that in his mind it was already decided that she should get the child. But then you twice have the confrontation in which the two mothers are supposed to pull the child out of this vicious circle here. Ultimately we know that Natella, the biological mother, does try to use brutal force, with Gruscha unable to do so, unable to tear up the child. But her care is her strength, and that finally makes her win the child. Why, at the end, did everybody shout "Pull, pull, pull!", suggesting or dramatizing that they really both should pull physically. I could never quite explain this in my mind. Maybe my anticipation that Azdak was already won is wrong, that only afterwards he made the decision. How is one to understand that?

A: Well, I think I would have to admit first of all that to keep that last scene going with actors, to generate the kind of intensity of concern that I think the characters have, was very difficult for us, and I may really be admitting that, as a director, you end up doing anything you can to generate some dramatic moment here and you don't want to lose the intent of the play, but in some ways you undercut the intent of the play. I ended up feeling that perhaps Azdak had not, when he chose the chalk circle, had not decided to give the child to the one who didn't pull, and that it was--I'm really talking about how an actor works here, not how a playwright works or how an audience responds to it--that it was much more difficult to sense the drama of the event if you assume that he knew how he was going to dispense the justice until the last moment. And in some ways that seems to be consistent with the way Azdak worked in the other cases, although they're much shorter cases, he sort of just kept going with a funny logic, when he found a way to justify what he wanted, why, he ceased doing it and said, well that's it. And so in order to build that last scene to a climax, which I suppose some people would say is anti-Brechtian in itself, but in order to make the decision an important one or one that we remember, it seems to me that it is valuable that Azdak himself cannot really justify what he feels is basically right until the last moment--and in that sense he and all the people there are wanting it to work out, and damn it, it doesn't work out. He seems to have no choice but still to give the child to the natural mother, and yet that's wrong. When does he get the inspiration? Just at the last second, and says: well, I'm not going to do it. And here's why. Your thought about her winning him over with her attack I think is absolutely right. I think that the way Azdak finally enjoys the rhetoric of Gruscha is quite clear in the script and that it was understood by the actors, but they were not really able to play that as successfully as I think we all can imagine it being. And so that earlier moment--it seems to me we didn't quite make it.

K: I somehow remember the detail because it came out in our class discussion. My students asked me and so I focussed in on that, trying to find out why he was so cheerful all of a sudden, and gaining time for her, and agreeing in a way and then still fining her thirty piasters for having used up his patience. At the end he may have thought Gruscha, a servant maid, would surely be stronger physically than the governor's wife--and then he changed his tack. A very complex character, Azdak.

A: Yes, absolutely.

K: Do you see any particular difficulties bringing Brecht to the American audience? A great deal has been said about American dramatic conventions not favoring Brecht's so-called epic theater. In a recent issue of Communications, for example, Luis Valdez, playwright and founder of a Chicano theater group, says: "I have seen enough college and university productions of Brecht never to want to see one again; because they water him down so quickly and he becomes so middle-class that it does not interest me to see Brecht in the United States. It isn't well done here. It's just more of the same gringo blandness." Would you agree with that opinion.

A: Well, I think we've done Brecht a real disservice. My sense of the plays is that they have been bland. Most of the productions have been painfully dull. And to me these plays should not be that at all. I guess I'm not sure that I agree in the sense of how we got there. Particularly in the academic situation we've talked so much about Brechtian theories and we've been so preoccupied with the intellectual analysis of Brecht's intent and the forms he uses and determined that somehow they should not sucker us into a soap opera--a kind of soap opera mentality and emotional reaction. We've in many instances deliberately allowed them to be dull or thought they should be dull. Yet they're violent plays. They are really violent plays. They attack us, they ought to attack us where we live. So in alot of instances it's a misguided belief that Brechtian plays can only be understood by the intellectual. I assume that Mr. Valdez may well be relating genuine Brechtian plays to a kind of rough theater as Peter Brook talks about, Breughelian--to make that parallel with the painter. Actually I think that's the heart of Brecht. And in this country there is an audience for that kind of theater if we provide it for them. For instance, I've got a summer theater that has been working with American themes for nine years, plays about Lincoln and American history from roughly the last 160 years, and I use alot of techniques that in one way or another are related to Brecht. And I feel they reach an audience that wouldn't come to most conventional theater, and could not easily respond to most conventional theater,

so that affirms for me that these are not plays outside an American audience's capacity to appreciate.

K: If, after all you have said--and I thank you for that--some obstinate interviewer would come back now and point to the Brecht-line you quoted, among others, in the program:

You should show what is; but also
In showing what is you should suggest what could be and is not
And might be helpful.

what would you reply, as a concluding statement, regarding your staging of The Caucasian Chalk Circle?

A: What is, is too little justice, too little compassion, too little caring. What could be? We could stop waiting for the perfect Golden Age. We could help a little more now. All of us rascals could work at it. As unlikely a candidate as I may be, I could work at it a little harder, a little longer. Ultimately, Brecht's play has to be about me. For each of us, it has to be about me.

(See accompanying review by Ingo Seidler)

recent productions

IN THE JUNGLE OF THE CITIES directed by CHRISTOPH NEL
Intiman Theatre, Seattle, August 1983

by Gregg Benzow

In August 1983 Seattle saw its first major Brecht production in nearly 13 years. For the occasion, a German director (Christof Nel) and an Austrian designer (Andreas Braito) came to this city for the task. Nel acted under Peter Stein at the Berlin Schaubühne for two years and has also gained a reputation with major directorial achievements, including Lorca's Blood Wedding, Horvath's Kasimir and Karoline, Drums in the Night by Brecht, staged in Stuttgart, Sophocles' Antigone in Frankfurt, and Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus in Hamburg. In 1983 he received much critical acclaim for his production of Brecht's Three Penny Opera in Hamburg, where he has also done Brecht's Kleinbürger Hochzeit.

Intiman's three-quarter arena stage was transformed into a pit of rubble, dirt, concrete, old tires, and damp dusty tarpaulins which carpeted the aisles and crept up the walls. Add to this piles of bricks, acres of worn, beaten suitcases, and a half-ton wooden wall that collapses before your eyes to reveal a neon/day-glo painted jungle behind it, complete with dinosaurs, and you have a good idea of the set. There was also the hum of the house air-conditioner throughout for that added touch of lonely-late-night-pump-station-parking-lot, replete with buzzing lamps. In short, you have forgotten you saw Noel Coward's "Hay Fever" here last time--that must have been somewhere else!

But so much for the material plane; there was also the play--a veritable cacaphony of subliminal messages. It is a resolute mixing of meaning and the lack of it, a merciless subjection of the audience to its own judgments and reasoning. This is not a play tied into a neat little bundle, not a play that will leave you feeling the world is necessarily a nice place to be. This play surreptitiously unravels the spectator. It attacks the jugular of the subconscious with the mythology of the human condition, its amalgamation of love and hate, and the arrogance of adolescence which claims to know more because it feels the need to know more than the world can offer it.

You can see the play, says Nel, "as if it was being lived on the edges of a bomb crater, after an atomic war. But the look of the play is not science-fiction. It it is more like the siege of Stalingrad or like post-war Germany among the ruins". Nel uses these background metaphors for Brecht's Rimbaud-like vision of life as a fascinating hell. But that vision is less a matter of actual war, or any literal devastation, than of the half-horrified, half-fascinated discovery of our own

destructive power. This is a play about the collision of wills; a dragnet of conflict so strong that some must fight while others are swept into the maelstrom. Struggle and survival. Triumph and subjugation. (Remember Genet's Querelle?) At the root of this struggle is the mythology of an ancient race set in motion. We hear them; we see them; we have been led to observe them--first by Brecht, then by the director.

Nel's revelation was to introduce a new character into the play: "The One Who Opens the Door", and in the process he succeeded in creating the magic necessary to understanding this play. He uses it to join the civilized and the savage, the mechanical with the natural, the ambivalent with the definitive. This makes In the Jungle of the Cities interesting for us today for the simple fact that no other major dramatic author has left us such a naked, intense record of passion, frustration, and conflict; and no director has brought this so forcefully and dramatically out into the open.

Imagine the setting as described above, add to it the opening music to the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey followed by a sudden hammering which disturbs the air. Next, a chisel breaks through the wall; then an arm; a face--a man: The One Who Opens the Door. This figure high above us, like some explorer or invader, then lowers a rope-ladder, and, gripping a flashlight between his teeth, descends perilously to the floor. Next to him--conveniently--a power saw; then in an outlandish din--sparks flying--he cuts open the locks on this door, flings it open, and out pops George Garga--stunned, shaken, afraid!

The associations are numerous: a Pandora's box, or a "Journey to the Center of the Earth", only in this case as the play progresses, it is more like a journey to the center of the soul, a fantastic voyage, where it seems you and I have broken into the cavern of a strange and unseen world.

This was certainly one of the most spectacular opening moments of a play I have ever seen. It could be its originality, its artistry or its effectiveness as an alienation device. By identifying only with this one man we saw all the other people as strangers. We did not know them; we were never allowed to know them--and what peculiar people they were too. So we were left no choice but to observe them from afar. And yet so near. We could practically touch them. We were existing in their environment and surrounded by their actions. We, the audience, were interlopers on the set. The play stood still as we moved around it. Then, when all was said and done it was "The One Who Opens the Door" who read the closing lines of the play from a book he found in the rubble. And at the curtain he was also the one who took the pictures of the lynch mob with a Polaroid camera and passed them out to the audience: a last gesture before this fantastic world faded to black.

There is really much too much to recount in this limited space, but suffice it to say, for those of us familiar with Brecht there was unanimous approval of this production. For much of the rest of the public there were ripples of consternation, confusion, disgust, and patrons who couldn't wait and walked out mid-sentence. Now that's immediacy!

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A MILANESE KINDERKREUZZUG performed by DANIO MANFREDINI

Die Etage, Berlin, October 1983

by Wolf Siegert

Danio Manfredini will never be considered a Brecht disciple. But one could well compare him to the young Brecht, and not only in Italy. Born in 1957 in Cremona, he grew up in the Milan area, and after studying philosophy and working in a chemical factory, he was trained by Cesar Brie and Dolly M. Bertin as an actor in the troupe Centro Sociale Isola. There he came to know Iben Nagel Rasmussen from the Odin Theatret, and together they began to develop an actors' study and training program in Spain. After more than three years Manfredini hit upon some material that allowed him for the first time to constructively formulate his experiences and training into a performance: Brecht's Kinderkreuzzug.

Between October 18 and 23, Manfredini was invited for a guest appearance at the Kreuzberg stage "Die Etage". Only a few people knew of this. Hardly a performance with more than ten in the audience, but we who came experienced an Omaggio a Brecht - Primo Movimento of seductive playfulness, genuine artistry, strength and cheerfulness. No weariness here veiled in grief. Everything that today lies so cripplingly like a "must" on too many Brecht performances is there: the sparse movable sets on stage and the Brecht curtain, the pleasant narration, the montage of dialectic fluctuation, and, and, and. . . But when, after the performance and in a later meeting, I once again asked Manfredini how he had come to this wonderful and lively Brecht honoration, he replied: "I don't know." Initially the play might have become an Omaggio a Rasmussen, but then Manfredini suddenly hit upon this Brecht poem and found the ideal subject matter for a performance. Everything that had been achieved in the lab and in the studio over the years unfolded qualities which come very close to those of the Brechtian stage--and all that without any kind of more intensive encounter between the young actor and the honoree. In

Manfredini's 90-minute improvisations on the Kinderkreuzzug the star of naiveté, so seldom rising, shines as a beacon of high quality.

There he is, he who will guide the children; his name is Michele, and he is embodied by a wooden puppet. The dog, who once brought the latest news about the missing, is called Lele: a toy elephant that runs on wheels. In the role of the Jew: Pesce Volante, personified in macintosh and boots by Danio Manfredini. And as this figure leads impending Death before our eyes in a headless dance and then dies, Manfredini transforms himself: now into the two brothers. One, in red-brown overalls: the other, his alter ego, a small puppet tied to his stomach. As they separate themselves from each other, they still remain bound together by a red string. Even when the one brother begins to turn circles in place, the other stays tied to him--like a large, widely swinging pendulum, the little one circles the big one, guided by him through the air on the string.

Much of the experience could be contained in Brechtian terminology--and yet it should not be described thus. What is distanciation, after all, when we were able to experience the way that Manfredini granted his figures their own adequate forms and transforms himself into one of them as a marionette, which he awakens from its cold wooden stiffness in each performance. Manfredini's performance fascinates, but does not depress; it is theater, but it does not lie. When I sought him out once again, in preparation for these lines, I asked about his birthdate. It is February 11, one day after Brecht's. Datum omen est.

Translated by Bonnie Lynch

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ST. JOAN OF THE STOCKYARDS directed by ROBERT BROWN
The Brecht Company, Ann Arbor, March 1984

by Ingo Seidler

When, after a delay of almost thirty years, Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe was first staged (Gustav Gründgens, Hamburg, 1959), the bourgeois press agreed that capitalism had "really" never functioned in the manner demonstrated. Even more unanimous was the consensus that the German Wirtschaftswunder-scene, with its prosperity and security, had little in common with the portrayed conditions of raw monopoly capitalism in Chicago. It was a mistake, critics concluded, to have pulled the play out of the closet, smelling of moth balls.

When the Brecht Company at the Residential College at the University of Michigan staged the same play last March, no such reaction was forthcoming or even imaginable. The intervening twenty-five years of economic history clearly have taught us a lesson or two, and the "rejuvenation of Brecht that we owe to Reagan and Thatcher" (John Willett) was very much in evidence. Detroit's proximity was hardly needed to bring home the play's newly acquired grim relevance. Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose--even though some of the details are different and oil, computers or missiles, rather than meat, the main areas of activity, the cyclically recurring crises caused by overproduction, speculation and economic manipulation have been, are and will be with us as long as Capitalism is. St. Joan turned out to be, among other things, the Lehrstück par excellence of that fact.

Director Bob Brown (who had previously staged Puntila, Arturo Ui and A Man's a Man) is himself a product of the Brecht Company, as is Elizabeth Harrell (Joan Dark). Martin Walsh (Pierpont Mauler) is one of the faculty founders, directors, and dramaturgs of the Company. The rest of the cast consisted of current students or recent graduates of the Residential College. Careful, systematic preparation and intelligent direction easily overcame the limitations of a meager budget, an inadequately shallow stage and a very small auditorium. Although the direction was well thought out, it nevertheless allowed for considerable latitude in acting styles, juxtaposing the strong, but also quite straight, direct and emotional approach of Harrell's Joan Dark with the highly sophisticated, ironic and distanced manner of Walsh's Mauler; the rest of the company was situated somewhere between these two extremes, but closer to the Walsh end of the continuum. Critics who claimed you could do things either way, but you certainly had to choose one or the other, were proven wrong. And while there continued to be disagreement as to which style was "better" or "more correct", the performance domonstrated that the two styles did not have to be amalgamated. More homogenized, also too long and brittle, was the music, composed and arranged by Geoffrey Stanton and ably performed by a band of six. The great opportunity of providing, as Brecht would say, "eine gemischte Musik"--half Salvation Army, half Chicago Jazz--was unfortunately missed.

In keeping with the model character of the production, specific historic allusions were kept to a minimum. Simple props and lean staging established very little "milieu", but the text, and thus the political message, remained clear even in most of the choral sections. One important element of the play that predictably fell by the wayside was that of parody: an audience with little knowledge of Shakespeare and none of Goethe, Schiller, or Hölderlin, obviously missed out on Brecht's frequent parodistic echoes; nor could they quite be expected to see the play, with Brecht, as "the ideological self-stylization of the dominant class, but now filled with the contents of their real activities." Though undoubtedly a loss worthy of

some Germanist tears, this particular failure will have to be counted among the built-in and inescapable shortcomings of all cross-cultural translation.

The systematic preparation and close collective team work between director, actors, dramaturg, performers, critics and scholars which characterized this production is not only possible; it may turn out to be the only road to success in staging Brecht in our day and age.

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THE EXCEPTION AND THE RULE directed by R.G. DAVIS

Flinders University, Australia, 1984

by R.G. Davis

Invited by Michael Morley to do a project at Flinders University, I went off to do a large so-called post-Brecht project that would have leaned more on Piscator than on Brecht. A project on the "Life of the Automobile." But circumstances, finances, and the University conditions prevented the project, and of course Brecht was at hand to give help. Exception and the Rule was appropriate given that I had done it twenty years ago, the third year of students numbered about nine, and we could, if needed, use eleven people, the space was small, the style of the production I had used in 1965 was Kabuki-Noh, and since we were in Southeast Asia--why not?

One additional and healthy change: I now thought to experiment and investigate the least explored and most talked-about area of Brecht--at least among theatre people--Brechtian acting, whatever that was. I decided to use what I had begun to discover when teaching at NYU, that there was a not entirely antagonistic relationship between the work of Stanislavsky and that of Brecht. One has to see Brecht's notes on this, but more to the point I thought to replace the suggestions of Stanislavsky with those of Marx. In short, where the Method (or revisionist systems of the elaborate Moscow Art Theatre discoveries) uses "given circumstances" for the description of character and determination of what an actor shall play, who-what-when-where, we used "objective conditions." I found that it was necessary to introduce the few passages from Marx's Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy wherein consciousness is a result of social productive relations.

We talked politics before rehearsals, even gave out an essay by one of the professors on Marxism and posed the question to the third-year student actors: some-

times people think that actors do not have to be political in order to do political plays, that is, one view poses the actor as a technician who can use any technique to get a desired result. I brought up the discussion but the debate was not particularly germane to their interests and experience even though there was a Marxist-Lesbian director about, from England, who from all evidence directed in the guru manner--with heavy Stanislavsky intentions: objectives, super objectives, etc.

Surprisingly, the heavier the Marxist explanation of social situation and condition--with the aid of one spontaneous dramaturgical student--the better were the results. In one such encounter, a student actor playing the Guide went into an urgent state of emotional expressiveness before giving the coolie his own water flask at the Station Han, after the Guide had been dismissed by the Merchant. We wanted something more than energetic emotional urgency and so pointed out that the Merchant was still "looking" (this Elizabethan play!), the coolie was perhaps worried about job retention, and the Guide might help the coolie but had to do it in such a way as to protect him too or the activity would expose the coolie to the Merchant. The Guide/actor changed his offering of his water flask from urgent to clear, cool, serious undercover giving, almost unnoticed by the Merchant, but visible to the audience. In fact the gestural change was now visible, the purpose of the moment stronger and within the Kabuki-Noh style. I figured we had leaped into the future.

The results were satisfying. The production looked good, the students felt like they had accomplished a complex project, and I realized that I had to write a book or at least an essay on BRECHTIAN (aach terrible word) ACTING FROM A MARXIST VIEWPOINT.

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HAPPY END directed by CARL WEBER
New York University, March 1984

by Tony Kushner

Brecht's and Weill's Happy End is a frustrating work; the script, which is for the most part stale and trivial, imprisons a magnificent gathering of songs which bear favorable comparison to their predecessor, Threepenny Opera. Michael Feingold, the American translator/adapter, has labored to remake the play, which is an ungainly melodrama, into a more graceful and well-crafted piece, but he succeeds most in adding a cloying cuteness completely at odds with the sophistication and depth of

the score. Yet in spite of these formidable barriers, Happy End demands to be seen simply because of the powerful lure of the songs.

Carl Weber, in his production of the play at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, tried to recapture some of the political bite that the original script must have had for its 1928 audience--its opening marked by a near-riot--by replacing the Feingold ending with a slightly modernized version of the original concluding scene, and by editing the translation throughout with an eye towards restoring some of the German version's discontinuity and roughness.

Happy End is a parable about the pulverization of dialectical opposition in the high-speed blender of late-Capitalist society. The finale is typical of Brecht's canny understanding of the ways in which all manner of contradictory forces effect false syntheses in the name of profit maximization. Weber's production focused strongly on this, treating the love story between Lillian Holliday and her gangster boyfriend as a microcosm of the more overtly political event, the merger of a religious organization and a gang of thieves and murderers.

The stage was arranged oppositionally, with the Salvation Army Headquarters on one side and the gangster bar on the other, facing each other as if squared-off for battle. The two settings overlapped in an ambiguously undefined central area, which at times was part of the Army HQ, at times part of the bar; behind this central area the musicians were seated, visible throughout the performance. The performing area was large--nearly 60 feet wide--and scaled along the same grand lines as a set for an opera. This size gave a framing distance to the proceedings; events were viewed, in a sense, panoramically, reminding the audience that the narrative unfolded within larger structures. To further this, the set was ringed by a street, on which the poor and homeless wandered, and behind the street were large screens on which Grosz-like etchings were projected, depicting acts of violence, carnality and oppression.

The production's visual style was culled largely from silent films. The actors were dressed in costumes which exaggerated body parts and commented in deliberately obvious ways on the characters' archetypal or mythic identities. Facial make-up was heavy and mask-like, once again in emulation of the look of silent-film-era stars. The performances were broad, full of tricks from Chaplin, Keaton and vaudeville. The songs were treated as musical numbers, choreographed with instantly recognizable quotations from early musical films.

The final act, in which personal difficulties, ideological difference, and contradictions are all swept away as if by magic, was rewritten and staged to amplify the

infantilism inherent in all such happy ends. The last song, "Hosannah Rockefeller," was revised to update its hagiography and drive its caustic message home to a contemporary American audience.

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THE THREEPENNY OPERA directed by JOHN BROOME
University of Colorado, Boulder, April 1984

by Juliette Victor-Rood

In a letter to Eric Bentley, Brecht wrote, "I prefer the university productions to the commercial ones." [1] After many years of attending professional and amateur, commercial and non-commercial productions of Brecht in various parts of this country and always enduring even misguided performances to the bitter end, I was surprised to find a production, at the local university no less, which indicated that Brecht is not (completely) misunderstood by every English language theater director. The Threepenny Opera ran for six nights (April 13-14, 18-21, 1984) at the University of Colorado at Boulder, where the director was a visiting artist, the English director and movement coach John Broome. At a critique of this production, attended by one lone Germanist amidst theater people, the costume designer, David Busse, spoke for the absent Broome. He explained that they had not wanted to follow the "traditional" approach of setting the work in Victorian London and had felt that the writing and music showed the spirit of the Weimer Republic. In addition, they perceived that the direct action of the play is carried on by women; that is, women (Mrs. Peachum, Polly, Jenny, Lucy) advance the plot. They saw the period around 1837 (when the original production was set) as one when women were thought to be dainty and fragile beings. They also felt that setting the work in the 1890s had been overworked and that women at that time were also perceived as "ethereal bubbles."

Seeing the play set in the 1920s means that one who knows a bit about British royalty is at first jarred by talk of a queen's coronation, but this shock also contributes to breaking illusions. Presumably Broome, an Englishman, knows that a queen was not sitting on the throne at that time, nor was her coronation, which figures in the work, in progress. It is true that the work does not specifically name Victoria (who ascended to the throne in 1837), and for that reason the stagers of this production felt that for their audience it should have been just any queen. They also were of the opinion that the costumes from the 1920s were more appropriate to the "gangster" images, and that this would enable them to bring the play's message to a modern audience more clearly. The costume designer intended

that most of the clothes look distressed. Thus effort was expended to make materials look dirty and worn; the edge of one dress was singed to achieve that effect. The street singer, wearing a straw hat and black arm bands, had pants with a torn knee. The tear was a little to neat to look authentic, but then, that also contributes to the audience's understanding that this is just a play. Mrs. Peachum was attired frumpily with a wrinkled housecoat and rumpled stockings, and had her slip showing. Tiger Brown was clad, of course(?), in a brown suit and hat. The very obviously pregnant Lucy wore a lavender dress, a color which in the 1920s indicated a fallen women, though it seems doubtful that this symbolism was properly understood by most of the 1984 audience. Mac was dressed sophisticatedly in a three-piece suit with accessories of spats and an elegant Stetson.

Broome's talent for coaching movement and his special fondness for stillness was immediately evident in the production. The "opera" opened, as expected, with the famous Moritat sung by a street singer. All the characters in the play were on stage, with various singles and groups taking turns being illuminated in stop-motion choreography for the duration of the Moritat. This stylized freeze-to-tableau was striking at first, but the alert shortly tired of the technique because the repititions were rhythmically predictable. Yet it did have the effect of making the audience aware that they were watching a theater production.

Instead of using placards before each song or scene, Broome had the street singer announce the songs, thus expanding his role. This Moritat singer is generally not singled out in the same way that the other "singers" are, but Broome probably made this change to remain as true as possible to Brecht's intent. But it is questionable, in my mind at least, whether a spoken notice can replace a visual one, especially in this age of appeal to the eye. With the growing popularity of rock videos and even music cable television, it is hard to believe that a spoken announcement would catch the attention of the exceptionally youthful audience. But unlike many directors, Broome at least did not completely dispense with the effect created by the placards.

However, with respect to the musical instruments, Broome was unable to comply with Brecht's directives at all. The eight-piece orchestra was down in the pit and stage manager, Elizebeth Lohr, was the person to query about this decision. She explained that if physical and financial problems had not been insurmountable, the producers would have placed the orchestra on the stage. They had discussed that right at the start of planning and decided to dispense with the idea. First, the acoustics of that stage are such that from the back the orchestra would overwhelm the singers (as indeed had happened in a production of The Threepenny Opera on the same stage fourteen years earlier). Second, there really wasn't enough room for

both the actors and the orchestra. Third, there would have been a need for additional costumes for the orchestra. By putting the orchestra in the pit, however, they were able to extend the middle part of the stage and bring the actors closer to the audience. Before singing, the actors walked out on the ramp and were illuminated by amber light; thus they did follow some parts of Brecht's instructions and by doing so, met his intent of clearly separating the dialogues from the songs. "According to Weill, the music was written so as to be sung by actors, that is, laymen."[2] I asked the musical director, Lester Seigel, about their choices in casting. To accomplish a parody of grand opera, the directing powers believed that two of the actors, namely Mac and Polly, had to be singers, rather than, as Brecht intended, all players being actors who can "sing." The young man playing Mac had enough acting experience in addition to his vocal abilities to be successful, but the young woman who sang the role of Polly had, for my taste, a much too pretty, operatic voice and too little acting ability. Bentley writes, "many Brecht songs can, so to speak, be acted without being sung. Lotte Lenya acts songs. . . Conversely, it can be fatal to give a Brecht lyric to a singer: the histrionic values tend to be swallowed up in the musical notes."[3] On the other hand, this production's Polly was a positive character, as Brecht intended: "Es ist absolut wünschenswert, daß Fräulein Polly Peachum vom Zuschauer als tugendhaftes und angenehmes Mädchen empfunden wird" (Schriften zum Theater 2, 98-99). Concerning the instruments, the musical director stated that the absence of strings and the presence of the harsher sound of woodwinds and brass were appropriate for the 1920s: the saxophone conveyed the 1920s jazz style, the clarinet had a screaming tone, and the harmonium, a cheap instrument, fitted the beggars; furthermore, its effect was enhanced by it being out of tube.

The English of this version was apparently a cooperative effort. According to stage manager Lohr, the script was rewritten many times, right up to the last minute, and she used the only complete copy in existence as her prompt book. The translation was much truer to the German than is Blitzstein's adaptation, which many critics find too mild. Broome also felt that the minor characters needed further developement and that was accomplished in addition to introducing more lively, "Brechtian" language in general. All of the songs were re-translated by the director, as was the wedding scene. The audience was definitely surprised to hear the last chorus of "Wovon lebt der Mensch" sung in German. According to the stage manager, Broome liked the "acoustic effect of the harshness of German sounds." He felt that the audience would have understood the message of the song by then, so he could afford to have just that much be incomprehensible to (most of) them. The change to German was added at the last rehearsal, less than 24 hours before opening night, but the German actually seemed to be enunciated more clearly than some of the English. No curtain was used in the production, so that upon

entering the theater, one immediately noticed the minimal and somewhat abstract scenery. The set designer, Randall McMullen, took Georg Grosz as his inspiration. A flat gray collage of images hung suspended from the fly and was divided into three sections. The scenic drop was representative of every locale in the work: it had, for example, Peachum's window and bed from the brothel. The drawings were in shades of gray, and had a deliberately smudged, dirty quality to them because the set designer wished to play upon the harshness of big cities and the dirtiness of their enviroment. Every scene was thus surrounded by this cityscape. The simplicity helped to make the scenes more mobile and less ponderous, and the selectivity helped incorporate the idea of everything fitting in together. For example, at Peachum's business tattered outfits hung like hanged men, thus anticipating the gallows scene in the third act. Likewise, the arching at the top of Peachum's window was identical to the arching on the cage used for a jail cell. The selectivity and simplicity also prevented the audience from getting lost in theatrical illusion.

There were a few minor changes in the work itself of which perhaps the only one worth noting is that the locale of the stable, appropriate to the 1830s, was replaced by a warehouse, appropriate to the 1920s. Similar to what was reported in this publication about the 1983 Guthrie production, "the 'gang' had a slapstick style, which in itself was not contradictory to Brecht but was likely to set American audiences in a burlesque mood" (Communications 13/1, p. 49). Indeed, Brecht suggested to Giorgio Strehler, who was to direct the 1956 performance of The Threepenny Opera in Italy, "that the actors emphasize the play's comic aspects" (Schoeps, p. 129). This slapstick was also evident in the behavior of the police in the third act. Although their ineptitude had already been shown, they broke into a Keystone Cops-like chase. It was mercifully brief. Did the audience understand that "Brecht's Dreigroschenoper and Kurt Weill's musical score represented a critique not only of society but of drama itself, and of the opera in particular?" (Ewen, p. 179). Did they see the work simply as a musical, or as a criticism of society in the form of a musical? Can an audience who loved "Flashdance" appreciate the parody? The play was entertaining, but I do not think that most of the message or the intent was lost. Whether the audience in general was aware that they were getting a truer Brecht than is often available is unclear, but this Germanist, despite reservations, felt fairly content.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Karl-Heinz Schoeps, Bertolt Brecht (New York: Ungar, 1977), p. 410, letter dated Nov. 12, 1949. But as Schoeps points out, a reason for this may be that "a campus production was and still is better than no production at all."

[2]Frederic Ewen, Bertolt Brecht. His Life, His Art and His Times (New York: Citadel, 1967), p. 181.

[3]Eric Bentley, The Brecht Commentaries 1943-1980 (New York: Grove, 1981), p. 116.

"Prostitutes" by Otto Dix

THE BRECHT COMPANY, Ann Arbor

by Martin Walsh

The university town of Ann Arbor with the Motor City of Detroit on one side and the vast rural Midwest on the other is the home of the Brecht Company, INC., the first American theater devoted to the works and method of Brecht since the Epic West experiment of the early seventies. The Brecht Company sprang directly from dramatic activities of the Residential College at the University of Michigan, one of the few surviving "experimental" colleges of the sixties. Drama Program head Peter W. Ferran had regularly offered a stage-oriented course in the "Theater of Bertolt Brecht", creating several generations of undergraduate Brechtians. One of these students, Robert Bruce Brown, together with Ferran and new faculty member Martin Walsh launched a production of of Puntila and His Hired Man in Summer 1979. The project was largely self-financed through an appeal to patrons with some assistance from the University--chiefly in the free use of the Residential College Auditorium, an initimate 225-seat theatre space with an excellent thrust stage, if rather cramped back-stage area.

It was determined from the outset that a different style of theater work would characterize this effort, and it would derive directly from that of the Berliner Ensemble. It was to be an antidote to prevailing commerical and local university theater practice. A long rehearsal period was established with weekly "company meetings" featuring detailed presentations by the project dramaturg, Ferran, and open discussions on practial, aesthetic and political issues by all members of the company: actors, designers, technicians, publicity staff. An attempt was made to keep everyone informed of and involved in the production process as a whole. Major decisions remained in the hands of the director, Brown, the dramaturg (who also doubled as composer/conductor) and the principal actor, Walsh, although a considerable amount of company-wide, cooperative decision making was also achieved.

The Puntila project was largely staffed by graduate and upperclass students from the then Speech Department, the RC, and other branches of the University. The adjustment of professional and specifically "Brechtian" goals to the realities of "student" production was often painful. A folksy but far too cumbersome set, for example, necessitated long and exhausting scene-stuffing drills in order not to kill the pace of the production. Nevertheless, the production was clearly successful both from the point of view of participants and audiences. A turn-away crowd at the end of the two week run assured a very healthy box office which, in the cooperative spirit, was directly divided up into "company shares." Critical respone was also favorable, although the group encountered the kind of parochial theater criticism (still dogging its heels) that can make very little sense of Brecht. "'Puntila' strange but entertaining" ran the Ann Arbor News review, "it may be the most entertaining piece of leftist propaganda ever written".

Brown, Ferran and Walsh together with recent graduate Anne Downing, the producer for the '79 project, began planning for a second summer production not many months later. The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui was quickly decided upon as best fitting the talents of what was now identified as the "company", as well as having an immediate American appeal. The Summer 1980 production was to have a much higher professional input and was to be a larger effort in every respect. The set was conceived more dynamically and economically. It was modular with the basic unit being an open-work cube. Combinations of single, double and triple cubes together with square platforms literally created the levels of Ui's "rise". Professional design and carpentry made the ensemble of units particularly effective and the "Ui-cubes" are still essential elements in many of the Company's recent productions. The production was further enhanced by projections and film, particularly the Prologue and Epilogue and Ui's vision of the dead Roma. Professional poster design, lighting, and sound as well as recruitment of out-of-town actors and Michigan faculty with significant professional theatre experience substantially lowered the proportion of undergraduates involved in the production and gave a more homogeneous effect to the end product.

The "company meetings" also became more abitious with film showings, presentations by university experts, a regular packet of notes which amounted in the end to some seventy pages, and an ambitious series of demonstrations including the Lady Anne scene from Richard III back to back with Brecht's Betty Dullfeet scene in both the original and translation. Some four assistant dramaturgs were at work, including Walsh, who made an extensive investigation of Hitler's speeches and oratorical style and assisted Ferran in making extensive "repairs" to the translation, aiming at a strong iambic pentameter line in the American gangster idiom. A grant from the Michigan Council for the Humanities allowed these multiple educational activities to carry over to the audience in the form of a symposium on the play in production which featured Carl Weber and David Bathrick.

The production of Ui proved to be even more successful critically and financially than Puntila. "Company shares" rose 100% and in addition to sell-out audiences the production attracted considerable attention beyond Ann Arbor. A dilemma immediately presented itself in Fall 1980, whether or not to expand the company into a fully professional concern, dramatically increasing recruitment and fundraising, organizing extensive tours, etc. Many key members were feeling the pinch of their primary professional commitments, and the younger theatre artists were itching to be gone to either Coast. The projected 1981 Summer production never materialized. Walsh kept up a shadow organization with minor grants and a radio production of The Trial of Lucullus in Winter 1981/82 in cooperation with WUOM in Ann Arbor. Brown and Walsh began to resurrect the idea of the Brecht Company in late 1982. The

theater company was officially incorporated early in 1983 and a board of directors solicited. The reorganizers were pleased to find that many of the original company members were willing to try once again to establish a Brecht theater on a permanent basis. The '83/'84 season began with A Man's a Man, again directed by Brown. The play proved more difficult than orginally anticipated, but the production was immeasurably strengthened by the efforts of a new composer/conductor, Geoffrey Stanton of the U of M Music School. A truly "elephantine" scaffold unit with many compartments created by removable strips of old tenting also proved to be particularly effective in the challenging space of the RC auditorium. The "company meeting" idea was also revived though in abbreviated form due to lack of personnel. Guest speakers included Marxist anthropologist Michael Taussig who briefed the Company on such matters as commodity fetishism, rites of passage and the other interesting baggage that Brecht packed into this exciting, untidy early play.

Journalistic response was predictably negative, but the company revived the practice of after-performance discussions with the audience and found both a rich variety of response to Brecht's play and a great diversity within the audience itself. Detroit cab drivers, union men, Spartacists and Democratic Party workers were there too, along with the university personnel and visiting student groups we have grown to expect. An innovative theatre program in the form of a provincial Indian newspaper also proved that the company's strong dramaturgical emphasis was making an impact and helping create a style.

With the aid of a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts and in order to test the waters for possible touring, the Company next produced a travelling production of John Arden and Margaretta D'Arcy's Herod play, The Business of Good Government. It was taken around to several local churches and community centers over the Christmas holidays and gained a very positive response, especially from very young and senior segments of the audience. Since the Brecht Company in its official literature is dedicated to "the works, working methods, and influence of Bertolt Brecht", Arden, the most "Brechtian" of the angry young men of post-war Britain, seemed a logical choice for opening up the Company's repertory to other, related kinds of theater.

The Company's first season ended with a full-scale production of St. Joan of the Stockyards, featuring Liz Harrell in the title role, Walsh as Mauler, Brown directing, and Stanton again providing a full musical score. The "elephantine" structure of Man's a Man was recycled and expanded to create a wrap-around scaffolding with cat-walk access from the theater's balcony, an iron spiral staircase and a second flight of steps creating the high and low worlds of the Exchange and the Stockyards. "Company meetings" included sessions with a stock-exchange phone-

clerk, soup-kitchen operators, and Marxist economist Thomas Weisskopf. Again with MCH grant money a symposium concluded the run and in addition to Weisskopf featured Gisela Bahr, Ingo Seidler of U of M German Department and Alisa Solomon, theatre critic for The Village Voice. With St. Joan the Company had reached a scale of production and level of educational interest comparable to that of its 1980 Ui. The Company itself had gained a level of confidence and identity, not mention fiscal solvency, high enough to guarantee a future.

Plans for the '84/'85 season presently include an original cabaret (Sept.), Howard Brenton's Thirteenth Night (Oct.-Nov.), the premiere of the Lucullus radio production, an expanded tour of the Arden play, the Brecht/Moliere Don Juan (March-April), and Galileo for Fall 1985. Future seasons may include Schweyk in the Second World War, Threepenny Opera, Heiner Müller's Philoctetes, Müller's Mauser together with Measures Taken, an original translation of von Trotta's stage version of Böll's Katharina Blum, more of the British political playwrights, and under our "working methods" rubric, our own Brechtian adaptations of classical pieces, particularly Lysistrata.

The politicasl makeup of the Company is diverse though obviously of a socialist cast. There has never been a desire for a more defined or doctrinaire position, the feeling being that the Company's political education progresses in and through it's work on productions. Its strong dramaturgical basis helps assure that the works themselves are adequately interpreted and accurately communicated. This is considered a healthier approach than attempting to begin with a political-artistic orthodoxy. To date there have been spirited arguments but no fundamentally devisive movements within Company ranks over the big question "why Brecht?"

Small even by "alternative" theater standards, the Brecht Company does seem to represent a genuine "grass roots" movement. There are, apparently, enough people in southeast Michigan interested in doing and seeing Brecht to assure some kind of existence for a Brecht theatre. At a time when checking one's brain in the lobby along with one's hat seems mandatory, this is perhaps cause for some hope. (For more information contact: The Brecht Company, 701 East University, Ann Arbor, MI, 48109)

(See accompanying review by Ingo Seidler.)

reports

BERTOLT BRECHT EN AMERICA LATINA

Symposium at the Festival Latino en Nueva York
August 16-17, 1984

A Dialogue Among the Americas on Brecht

by Marina Pianca

Bertolt Brecht has been present, and very much alive in Latin America for over a quarter of a century. But his presence is not the result of an intellectual curiosity that discovered him in Europe in order to "import" him to the younger continent. He was in many ways an answer to the needs of an awakening new theatre that wanted to move forward within a complex historical moment in order to be with history in its changes, contributing to them from a specific cultural front. Many "artists" literally broke open the doors of protective cultural buildings, ie. theatres, museums, etc., in order to become cultural workers, that is to say, demystified artists with an important historical role to play. But this was not only a revolution in the distribution of art by simply "going into the streets." It involved and involves creating a New Theatre, El Nuevo Teatro, as it is known in Latin America, and Bertolt Brecht was and is a very valuable partner in this endeavor. Brecht himself would have been pleased to see how all his facets have been molded to the needs of this Latin American theatre. For one thing is certain, he is alive and present; yet because he is alive, he is constantly changing as new ways of incorporating his work to our situation evolve. Latin America must be cautious about "imports". We all know too well how stifling an imported culture can be for the growth of a national one. But in this case, Brecht was a choice, not an imposition.

Organized by ATINT (Asociación de Trabajadores e Investigadores del Nuevo Teatro), an association of New Theatre workers, scholars and researchers, the Symposium which took place August 16-17--"Brecht in Latin America"--was designed to continue an interchange of ideas incorporating a dialogue with actors, directors and critics from the United States. The Symposium was part of a larger project, however, the Joseph Papp Latino Festival (August 10-20) at the New Shakespeare Public Theatre. The Festival, under a different name, Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoaméricano, has been in existence since 1976, with subsequent editions in 1980 and 1982. In 1984, Joseph Papp not only provided space for the event, but he also officially "adopted" the project which from now on will be an annual effort, still coordinated by its Argentine founder, Oscar Ciccone, and Cecilia Vega. This Festival was not simply a fortuitous event which happened to start in New York; it is part of a long

history of similar meetings in Latin America, which themselves can be traced to the very first years of the Nancy Festival in France back in the early sixties, when Latin American groups such as Teatro Experimental de Cali (Colombia) and Teatro Arena (Brazil) were first invited to meet with other worldwide theatre ensembles. Manizales, Colombia; Quito, Ecuador; Mexico, Puerto Rico, and San Francisco, California, in 1972, became meeting places for groups from all over Latin America to share experiences and work towards the creation of an authentic Latin American Theatre which, as we have said, is and was closely linked with Brecht. These events showed a clear desire to establish not only a Latin American network but also an international one with special emphasis on continental communication, a dialogue "among the Americas." ATINT is closely linked to this process as the logical counterpart to a New Theatre, an organization of scholars and critics who are working within this movement, documenting it, analyzing it, participating in it, aware of the need for a new critique for a new theatre. This was the context in which the "Brecht in Latin America" Symposium took place.

During the final Roundtable discussion terms like "museum piece", an "academic Brecht", etc., as ways of describing Brecht's presence in the United States left a general feeling among the participants that he is inoperative in this context. Erika Munk reaffirmed that idea when she stated that there is no politically aware group consciously working with Brecht. Nevertheless, for those that have closely followed the development of minority theatres in the US, it became obvious that for many, US theatre is still mainstream and white Anglo-Saxon. Some of the participants from the US that were coming into contact with Latin American "teatristas" for the first time marveled at the vibrant commitment to theatre present in so many of them. Perhaps this commitment could be better understood if that theatre were viewed more as a way of life than a profession, a way of life deeply rooted in the urgency we spoke of during the Symposium. Theatre in that sense becomes simply a possible answer, and in Latin America, Nuevo Teatro is the form it has taken. The dialogue was important because it left open many questions and a desire to continue the interchange, so surely in the future the opportunity to continue this initial dialogue of the Americas will be realized. (ATINT, P.O. Box 1792, FDR Station, New York, NY 10150)

(This is a shortened version of a longer report by M. Pianca, member of the ATINT Executive Committee.)

The Tropical Brecht Comes to New York

by Maria H. Lima

ATINT--Associación de Trabajadores e Investigadores del Nuevo Teatro--in collaboration with the Festival Latino en Nueva York presented by Joseph Papp, sponsored a symposium on "Bertolt Brecht in Latin America" at the Public Theater on August 16-17. A reading of the audience on those two days could reveal the extent to which Brecht seems to be alive and well in Latin America and, in the words of Cacca Rosetti, the young director of the Brazilian Teatro do Ornitorringo (Ornithorhyncus Paradoxus), has become merely a museum piece in the United States. The audience that Thursday, when the Program indicated that the issue of what actually happens in the theater was going to be addressed by the Colombian and the Brazilian groups--the use of Brechtian techniques in the process of creating and staging of a play--was mostly made up of Spanish speaking Festival participants. English translation was done on the side for a group of two or three. On Friday, however, when a panel of critics was to take place (including Cesar Campodónico of Teatro El Galpón in Uruguay, John Fuegi, Editor of the Brecht Yearbook, Santiago Garcia, Director of Teatro La Candelaria in Colombia, Helmo Hernández, Director of the Seccion Teatro y Danza in the Ministerio de Cultura in Cuba, Erica Munk, Theater Editor of the Village Voice, and Joel Schechter, Editor of Theater published at Yale University), language distribution was even, and simultaneous translation into and out of both Spanish and English was required. Although the panel touched the issue of how leftist politics and theatrical professionalism seem almost mutually exclusive in the United States due to what Garcia Lorca would call "the open jaws of the box office", the Friday audience missed the best part of the show.

Santiago Garcia, playwright and critic, opened the Symposium on Thursday with his retrospective view on Brecht's importance in Latin America. According to Garcia, the period 1930-50 is still to be investigated in order to determine which Brechtian elements already existed there, since a great interest in Brecht and in the staging of his plays only becomes evident in the sixties. Garcia reminded the audience of the extent to which theater has played a very important and sustained educational role in Latin American history. Spain and Portugal seized on the theater to Christianize the Indians (when they were not killing them) and to teach them a new language. And when land reform was the issue in Brazil, in the early sixties, many theaters simultaneously staged The Caucasian Chalk Circle for obvious reasons.

Although there are great differences among Latin American countries in terms of theatrical traditions as well as contemporary developments, the countries that have

created what director Enrique Buenaventura called "new theater" can thematically be grouped together in that the plays focus on colonialism and dependence and the resultant social, political and cultural deformation of Latin American reality. Alienated characters are shown as dehumanized by a system of exploitation, violence and fear. This was clearly seen in the work shown at the Festival. Among the invited international groups that performed at the Public Theater were La Candelaria (Colombia), Teatro El Galpón (Uruguay), Teatro Aleph (Chile), Teatro do Ornitorringo (Brazil), Compañia de Teatro de la Argentina, Cooperative Teatro Denuncia (Mexico). As the actors and directors of these various companies made clear, the New Theater Movement has as its main goal to win a new public. Because the working masses do not go to the theater, the "new theater" goes to them. In order to create a national theater of social and historical relevance, theater is done from the point of view of the working class. Brecht's concepts of the "popular" and of a "realist" playing style lie in the background.

Before approaching the radical changes in authorship and spectatorship in Latin American theater that were discussed at the New York Symposium, it is necessary to mention Mel Gordon's contribution in providing historical background on the kind of work we associate with the name of Brecht. An NYU acting professor, Gordon made the audience actually see how close are the ties that exist between "the school of Meyerhold" and the Berlin avant-garde. His film clips of actual Russian productions of the twenties and thirties, "all but one seen by Brecht in Moscow, in 1935," according to Gordon, show how it was Meyerhold and his followers who developed most of the stage practices which we in the West tend to associate either with the name of Brecht or of Brecht's teacher, Piscator.

Speaking about his adaptation of The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny, Cacca Rosetti offers his indelible image for Brecht's influence on Latin American dramaturgy: ". . .an anthropophagic people, Brazilians have swallowed Brecht whole and vomited him back--the same. . .yet different." Rosetti seemed to exult over the not very positive reviews his Mahagonny suffered in the New York City Press in that he sees a radical opposition between the Brazilian and the American-European way of doing Brecht. Brecht is used as a pre-text in Brazil, since the political situation there today comes very close to the reality of Brecht's texts. Brecht comes alive in Latin American theaters because politics is alive there. "To be faithful to Brecht," Rosetti adds, "you have to betray him. Ours is a tropical Brecht."

The "New Theater" in Latin America has succeeded in making theater relevant to the people without seeing the level of entertainment diminished. Collective creations have managed to rewrite Latin American history from the point of view of the

oppressed. The question remains whether the New Theater practices can solely be attributed to experimentalism in Brecht's tradition (Meyerhold and Piscator included) or whether political theater is born "Brechtian." The Mexican playwright Felipe Santander swears to no direct influence although his Los Dos Hermanos and El Extensionista have been praised as indubitably Brechtian. Because Latin American popular theater has grown out of political exigencies that affect the lives of everyone, perhaps it is not meant to be subjected to traditional critical standards. But "answers" to these and a vast array of other important questions will hopefuly emerge from close and continuing work sponsored jointly by ATINT and IBS. Clearly the work has just begun, but the prospects of continuance are very exciting indeed.

(This is the shortened version of a longer report.)

Symposium Program

Introduction: Santiago Garcia (Colombia)

Workshop: The Use of Brechtian Techniques in the Process of Staging a Play, Cacca Rosetti (Brazil)

Workshop: The Dialectics of Representation--The Brechtian Actor in the US, Mel Gordon (New York)

Workshop: The Dialectics of Representation--The Brechtian Actor in Latin America, Artur Fleitas/Cesar Campodonico (El Galpón, Uruguay)

Critics' Roundtable: Brecht in the Americas, Judith Weiss (Chair)
Cesar Campodonico (Uruguay), John Fuegi (Univ. of Maryland), Joel Schechter (Yale University), Erika Munk (The Village Voice), Santiago Garcia (Colombia)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I have to report both on matters practical and matters speculative. First the practical:

As earlier intimated, we now have to ask members to approve an increase in dues. The choice we face is either to cut back on publications or to publish at a loss and hope to recoup such loss through exceptional donations. The second alternative is not really viable in the long term, and reducing the standards of publication would defeat the aim, vindicated so far, of attracting new members. Raising the dues by US$5.00 should keep us out of the red, without compromising standards and allow us to acquire a very modest and necessary surplus which is at present quite impossible. We urge members to approve this step and to continue the drive to increase our membership.

Plans for the 7th International Symposium are advancing and there will shortly be a separate mailing on this important topic, when the details are all in place.
Now to matters speculative. Judging by the weekly chronicles of intellectual fashion, Brechtians should be in a state of considerable disarray--which is maybe not a bad way of lining up. A spate of excoriation has swept through the English-language press. The fact that the New York Review of Books apparently declines to publish countervailing argument also suggests many feel Brecht is not topical anymore, that enough has now been said. And so recent derision--Brecht is aligned with the Khmer Rouge (Fenton)--maybe implies the end of the critical road. Are these the new technicians, the moralists of Reaganomics? A moral fervor, in any event, activates this writing and explains the sharpness and the passion of its denunciations. Yet the connection between rhetoric and reality, as Fenton's particular juxtaposition suggests, is another matter.

It is easy enough to dismiss these quick-fire diatribes on the grounds of incompetence vis-a-vis their topic. Unfortunately, they are symptomatic of something else which cannot be so easily discounted: a slower, more reasoned theoretical discontent. Meeting these issues represents, therefore, a unique opportunity because this particular alignment of problems has not existed before. We cannot retreat to the imagined security of established positions; we need a dialectical analysis that takes congizance of change and is therefore capable of reading Brecht in relation to these changes. For in the West, East, North and South his work is still equated with, and hence selectively, read in terms of specific policies, whereas we need to see both the richness of its experiential reference--this is nearly always simplified, there is never enough subtext--and its historical relativity as a methodology of perception. I could also put it this way: Brecht's work

needs to be de-ideologized, only then can we recuperate its still considerable capacity for theoretical (and practical) clarification.

In terms of performance there must be a connection between an evident sense, particularly in Germany, of insufficiency, an exhaustion of representational credibility, which is itself of course a function of previous success, and this reluctance to rethink rather than simply dismiss the theoretical problems. Occasional references to Artaud are not enough; the problems need to be thought through, and only then can their representational consequences be envisaged. In global terms, of course, the variation in historical forms and conditions inevitably necesitates varying receptive practices. Many people tacitly deny that these facts are interconnected.

The lack of an adequately complex Marxist theory of the Unconscious, so often seen, because inadequately analyzed, as theoretical retrogression, probably led to the virtual exclusion of this topic as a factor in Brecht's work and its reception, except for some exercises in psycho-biographical psychoanalysis. This still remains unexplored territory. The other major, and related, theoretical and analytical problem involves the macrological shift in perspective from positivist and politically determinist scientistic positions to truly historical and relational ones. Once again, this does not imply a rejection of Brecht, or of Marx, but a rereading of them both.

Maybe the new edition, due between 1987 and 1990, will help to establish a wider awareness of the movement within and the real depth of Brecht's work. Hopefully the editors will study Willett's English edition carefully, although the neglect it has suffered in Germany, also among those editors, is not a good omen. Mittenzwei's massive biography, whose publication is envisaged in 1986, may also help stimulate fresh perspectives.

One thing is certain: the problems Brecht addressed have not disappeared. Neither, despite recent critics, does his work constitute a catalogue of disproven solutions. We are, in fact, only now beginning to understand, as the paradigm changes, how rich and stimulatingly problematic that work actually is, though this involves rethinking the way we place it.

Antony Tatlow

SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

It seems we are on track again with an attractive new journal Communications and a well-designed Yearbook. Membership has also picked up slightly, but we also had some cancellations, mainly from libraries. The fact that Volume XI of the Yearbook shows the year 1982 also caused a bit of a problem since many people, especially subscription houses, write and want to know what happened to the 1981 Yearbook. The new Yearbook, Volume 12/1983, should be available by the end of the year. I will send dues notices as soon as the advance copy is in my hands. A word about expenses: since production costs of the Yearbook and of Communications have increased substantially compared to 2 years ago, and since my Department is now charging me for postage and materials, our costs have risen. The Executive Committee proposes to raise dues $5 in each category:

Student (up to 3 years) & retired persons.	$15.00
Regular members (earning less than $20,000).	20.00
Regular members (earning more than $20,000).	25.00
Institutional members.	30.00
Sustaining members	30.00

Members will vote on the proposal at the IBS Business Meeting following the MLA Brecht Sessions (Dec. 27, 1984). Those who cannot attend may contact any Executive Committee member by letter.

A plea for "Nachsicht" from the membership. At times I simply am not able to answer all the mail promptly, but I do try to take care of Yearbook orders relatively quickly (Communications are sent by Marc Silberman as soon as he receives new address labels from me). If you think that an excessive amount of time has passed, and you have not received a Yearbook or anything, write! But remember also, please, that US mail is not perfect. Unforeseen changes in Yearbook publications also cause problems, as you might imagine.

The IBS seems to have an American "competitor" now. If you receive a memo from Dwight Steward, President of "The Brecht Society of America" and editor of its publication Gestus, it is not from us! In fact, I have written to Mr. Steward and invited him to join forces with us. Finally, the budget:

CREDIT		DEBIT	
Checking account	$1,175.99	Communications 14/1 (est.)	$ 700.00
Savings account	333.74	IBS postage (est.)	60.00
Total (9/21/84)	$1,509.73	TLS ad for IBS	60.00
		200 copies of Brecht Yearbook 12 plus postage (est. based on 1983 price of $15.50)	3,100.00
[Checking account Deutsche Bank Dusseldorf	DM 568-]	Total	$3,920.00

I hope to make up the differences (and hopefully more) of $2,410 by collecting dues as soon as the Brecht Yearbook, Volume 12, is available.

Karl-Heinz Schoeps

notices

Brecht-Tage 1984: "Brecht and Music" at the Brecht-Zentrum der DDR

"Music is not an ark," noted Brecht in 1934. Likewise, this year's four Brecht Days, February 8-11, were to be seen not as a historicizing celebration for a classic author but rather as a continuing debate on the function of engaged music in the eighties, even if differences of opinion about the concrete steps and aesthetic positions in overcoming the theoretical and practical material by Brecht, Eisler and Dessau became clear. The spectrum reached from Brecht's early experiences with music in Augsburg and Munich, around 1920, to Friedrich Cerhas 1981 opera premiere Baal; from the rediscovery of Brecht's first musical collaborator, Franz Bruinier, to the GDR State Opera's new staging of Dessau's The Trial of Lucullus, 1983. New rock and jazz works, like Goebbels' and Zerbe's so widely differing Eisler improvisations, or the effectiveness of West Berlin's Hanns Eisler Choir were discussion topics for composers, directors, musicologists and theater people from the GDR, FRG, West Berlin and abroad. Composer Mario Peters explained how a new musical approach to the "classic" Brecht piece was sought and found in the process of the Erfurt staging of Baal. Practical demonstrations were supplemented by podium discussions with themes such as "Brecht as Provocation for Musicians," "Epic Opera as Rebirth of a Genre" and "Brecht's Early Musical Experiences and Their Effect on Theatrical Music." The biggest controversy revolved around the practical and principle question concerning the extent to which classic Brecht theater music can still be used in its "pure" form today, whether or not it could achieve greater effectiveness through revision or adaptation, or how its "use value" is to be determined in changed social and aesthetic situations. (Here is not the place to go into detail, but the Center's comprehensive documentation will certainly be able to provide the opposing viewpoints.) As to complementary artistic performances, Roswitha Trexler should be singled out. She sang five compositions by Franz Bruinier from 1924/25 based on Brecht texts, which where made famous in their later arrangements by Weill ("Pirate Jenny") and Eisler ("Ballad of the Woman and the Soldier"). These were musical revelations because the similarity in Bruinier's melodic phrasing is likely to point to Brecht as "spiritus rector" for his composers. Henschel Verlag also introduced the three volume Brecht Songbook to the public. It documents once again, by means of these melodic models, the way Brecht works: an attitude like Noah's, who knew what holds mankind together. (Heinz-Uwe Haus)

Two New Brecht Periodicals

I. Brecht-Journal, edited by Jan Knopf (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), DM 14-.

"The Brecht Journal considers itself to be the pilot volume of a new periodical dedicated to Brecht's work and impact. It is not a continuation of or some kind of "heir" to the Brecht-Jahrbuch, published by Suhrkamp Verlag until 1980 and now pro-

duced by the "International Brecht Society" in the USA. Neither formal pressure nor deadlines for regular publication will affect the Brecht-Journal. Routine is to be avoided, the reproduction of well-worn generalities is to be excluded. . . The first Brecht-Journal is dedicated to Brecht's aesthetic diversity. Intentionally the playwright is not the main focus, and all "genres" are considered--as an initial entry into the multi-dimensionality which was once called universality. The Brecht-Journal's atmosphere will be marked by a well-founded, knowledgeable cheerfulness which owes nothing to the usual ignorance, blindness or thoughtlessness. . . This then is to be a sample of the Brecht-Journal, which realizes the new conceptualization as completely as possible, not solely differing in the various contributors (beyond that, I think there is still something to be learned, ie. the next mistakes have to be prepared for). Therefore, I alone sign as author for this pilot volume while at the same time appearing as editor. The following volumes are to expand and improve the diversity of Brecht's work through the diversity of the contributors. Whoever is inclined to cheerful scholarship may contact me: Jan Knopf, Riechstr. 34, 7500 Karlsruhe 51, Tel: 0721/887887." (From the Editor's Preface)

II. Gestus, published by The Brecht Society of America

In Spring 1985 the Brecht Society of America will begin publication of Gestus, a quarterly journal of Brechtian studies, devoted to his plays, poetry, political and aesthetic theories, his life, and his influence on modern theatre. Gestus will accept no advertising and be completely free of any outside influence. Submissions of formal essays on any subject concerning Brecht will be accepted in English, German, French, Spanish or Italian. Keeping with Brecht's ideas formulated in his "Prospectus of the Diderot Society" (1936), the journal will also offer a special section called "A-Scenes" which will open its pages to all workers in the theatre. No academic affiliation is required. "A-Scenes" will include informal notes on the success or failure of Brecht productions; problems faced by stage artists in performing Brecht; mechanical or technical devices found to be useful. The Society would like to hear from anyone who wishes to share his/her experiences in presenting the works of this century's greatest playwright. For further information contact Dwight Steward, President, The Brecht Society of America, 59 S. New Street, Dover DE, 19901, Tel: 302/734-3740. (Editor's note: This new society is not in any way connected with the IBS.)

Brecht as a Forerunner of "Punk"

Brecht's rudeness, his intransigent uncouth behavior, has been taken by nearly all commentators as a proof of arrogance and egotismcommunist political program. But perhaps this is a wrong assessment? In an individual's behavior, with all the iso-

lation of that person, when the times are 'nice', a belligerent assertiveness can appear as only that. But place that behavior in a time when subclasses contend as much in culture as in explicit political goals, and the behavior may assume a more than personal character. The emergence of "punk" as a deliberate challenge to corporate employee cultural values, should demonstrate that. Brecht, of course, was not into self-destructive assertions. No safety pins through his flesh, no drug addiction, no squandering of his time or his mind. But the refusal to 'wash', to dress up to expectations, to conform to etiquettes meant to minimize abrasiveness, to conceal his money-mindedness and desire for control of the product of his effort, all of this is "punk". Brecht had no subculture around him to play these values to, if one leaves apart the chic of the proletarian style of dress, which really wasn't Brecht's thing either. He had no subculture for his punk instincts. Brecht didn't color his hair purple, he rather cultivated deliberate insult through slovenliness (which also saved time for his work). But he did have his own music culture, which he tried to extend through interested composers. He wanted a "punk community" first envisioned in his earliest long play, Baal; extended through his writing collectives. . . This affinity over the generations could easily be pushed too hard. The mistake would be not to note it. (Lee Baxandall)

The Theatre Research Data Center

In November 1980 the Officers and Executive Committee of the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) accepted unanimously the finding of its Research Committee to the effect that the most critical need in the field of theatre research is to create a computerized data bank of theatre resource materials. Restricted and piecemeal bibliographic coverage and dispersed research resources had frustrated theatre researchers. The data bank would establish for the first time a comprehensive and accessible base to support the research activities of theatre scholars, artists and teachers. Publication of an annual bibliography of theatre research resources and direct access to the databank through online research services would begin a new era in theatre research. Since that time Theatre Department faculty members provided by Brooklyn College to serve as the Data Center staff have worked with officers and members of ASTR, other theatre professional societies and individual consultants from the field to create the taxonomy of theatre arts which will serve as a base for the data bank structure. They have developed, by consulting with a broad spectrum of theatre scholars and artists, a pilot list of data sources over which the field contributors will maintain surveillance. With the assistance of representatives from ASTR and other theatre professional organizations, ie. the US Institute for Theatre Technology, the American Theatre Association, the International Federation for Theatre Research, the International Association of

Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts, the International Theatre Institute (US), and the New York Public Library at Lincoln Centre, the Theatre Research Data Center staff members have extended the scope of the data base to include collected theatre production documents and have increased the potential of the bank for use by theatre artists. Meanwhile, international interest in participating in the project has been growing. Presentations to the Leipzig meeting of the International Federation for Theatre Research (FIRT), to the meeting of the International Society for Libraries and Museums of the Performing Arts (SIBMAS) in New York, and dialogues conducted in Vienna in conjunction with the Second European Kabuki Conference have generated considerable support for international collaboration. As the data bank grows, we anticipate that it will include citations of international research resources in museums, archives, and collections, and materials on film, tape, disc and in databases. Coverage of books and periodicals will be augmented by references to catalogs of collections of graphic documents: costumes, scene designs and technical plots, and of performance records. A major forward step in the expansion of production records is now being planned in collaboration with the European TANDEM Project. As our project coverage expands, we expect the annual bibliographies and the online research program at Brooklyn College to interest increasing numbers of scholars and artists of the other arts, the humanities, and the social sciences, as well as those of the theatre. For further information call or write the Theatre Research Data Center, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, NY 11210, Tel: 212/780-5998. (Irving M. Brown/Rosabel A. Wang)

Excerpts from a lecture by Heinz-Uwe Haus

Discussion organized by the Theater Ergastiri Thessalonika and the Friendship Society of Greece-GDR on the occasion of Brecht's 85th birthday (January 1983)

For some people, association with Brecht is a welcome dilemma. Like gourmets, they allow a sentence such as this to dissolve on their tongues: Brecht's method does make possible the lively and passionate representation of links to concrete reality, yet it does not hinder the so-called "Brecht style"--the blind repetition of the models--which neither leads to social enlightenment nor aesthetically engages. With reluctance or abruptness they recommend that, with Brecht, we should also let dialectics lie. Their leftist pose surreptitiously becomes rightist behavior; on special occasions (birthdays, funeral rites, performances by visiting troupes) they weave for him a wreath of laurels, and the more faded and the dustier it is, the more emphatic they are. . .

At the 1978 Brecht Dialogue in Berlin it became clear for the first time that an "independent association" with Brecht is possible and necessary. Since then, no one can avoid the fact that significant stimuli for the current reception of Brecht also spring from exposure to the young, anit-imperialistic theater movements of the

"Third World." Missing is a fruitful cooperation, a world-wide exchange between these movements and the earlier experiences; otherwise we fall into the kind of conformity that comes from intellectual inbreeding. Each of us knows he can counteract this with his own work behavior. I am reminded of such varied experimental performances as Neruda's Splendor and Death of Joaquin Murieta, 1974, with an international production team at a municipal theater in the GDR; Carvajal's The Centaur's Downfall, a premiere performance with the exiled Chilean Teatro Lautaro at Berlin's "bat", 1977; Shakespeare's Pericles, a GDR premiere during the 1978 Shakespeare Days in Weimar, or Euripides' Iketides at "bat", 1980. These all reflect my efforts to draw on Brecht's method as well as further discoveries about realism: especially on those of the operative political theater of Latin America, on body language and improvisational techniques, and on my Cypriat encounters. In my production classes in Philadelphia and New York, we did also address the subject of Brecht's political use value by discussing the staging problems of his texts. Most importantly, however, we staged some of them. After all, and I'll say it yet again, what is the Brecht method without its function and its audience? . .

We all know this: the situation in the various cultures and social orders is characterized by the development of diverse contradictions. From a Brechtian, therefore Marxist view, these contradictions do not develop in a rectilinear, predetermined fasion; rather, they constitute a complex process by which appropriating and recognizing general structures must combine with an ability to account for rapid change. In this sense analyzing theatrical procedures according to their social actuality must be politically operative. The facts of the present world situation--the progress in the strength of social, national and human liberation in recent decades--still consigns to the theater its Brechtian functions: to act as a means of ideological change. In my country--I am only familiar with a few productions in Greece, which nevertheless allow me to speculate in a similar way--Brecht is not sufficiently alive today, nor portrayed as such a vehicle of socially motivated and functioning theater, even when intervening in the texts or in the antiquated model concepts in our heads does produce the proper effect. Fashionable chit-chat is not a feasible instrument; nor are dialectics that one merely asserts. Brecht's method--discovering process in reality, seeing the historic in the everyday, preparing people to formulate the right questions--must create connections to reality that are different from those of twenty years ago in the GDR, or today in Cypress, Greece, the US or Cuba. Nevertheless, it must consist of situations with contradictions, constructed figures, narrative arrangements, actions between people; otherwise reality remains at the theater cash box. . .

Today there is no doubt--and therefore in this breadth (Common Market or Comecon, Socialism or Capitalism) I would deny no one his opportunism--that the evolution of the new international balance of power for the benefit of social and human liberation is a strong aid to the politically engaged artist. The action of the director

is like that of the writer or any other producing artist: the performances are part of the system that delivers historical consciousness. In our own theater work, too, nothing is carried out that hasn't first circulated through us. The sound principles of the growing alternative "Green" movement and those of a large portion of the youth, who shun existing norms and perspectives, remind me much more of Brecht's attitude toward tradition than does some empty allusion to the use value of his methods and works. Yet we know precisely, through Brecht himself, that revolutionary struggle and creative activity are not separable. This is the adventure as well as the responsibility. In this regard Brecht has always been an adherent of the concept that "art educates as far as it is art." By this, of course, he is only choosing a point of departure for a social connection that appears between the rise of a new cultural orientation and the creation of authentic works of art. This is indeed a hard pill for the aforementioned gourmets to swallow. There is only one remedy for such a predicament--to practice with Brecht. (Translated by Bonnie Lynch)

BRECHT YEARBOOK

The Editors of the Brecht Yearbook welcome submissions of essays for Volume 13 (1984), appearing 1985. Essays are to be submitted in triplicate and mailed, one apiece, directly to each of the three editors. Submissions should reach the editors no later than **January 15, 1985.** Though the volume may not be given over wholly to the theme of "Performance of Brecht: Theatre and Film," it is anticipated that a majority of the essays will be devoted to this theme. Editors addresses:

Gisela Bahr, Department of German, Miami University, 44 Irving Hall, Oxford, OH, 45056 USA

John Fuegi, Comparative Literature, Univ. of Maryland, Jiminez Hall, College Park, MD, 20742 USA

John Willett, Volta House, Windmill Hill, London NW 3 65J, England

Contents of the Brecht Yearbook, Volume 12:

Ruth Berlau (as told to Hans Bunge, GDR): Nach 25 Jahren des Schweigens
Sarah Bryant Bertail (USA): Women, Space, Ideology: Mutter Courage und Ihre Kinder
Sue-Ellen Case: Brecht and Women: Homosexuality and the Mother
Renate Voris (USA): Inszenierte Ehrlichkeit: Bertolt Brechts "Weibergeschichten"

Joel Schechter (USA): Lotte Goslar's Circus Scene
Reinhart Hoffmeister (FRG): Im Gesprach mit Marta Feuchtwanger
John Willett (UK): Bacon ohne Brecht? The Problem of Mitarbeit
Heinz-Uwe Haus (GDR): In Memoriam Asja Lacis
John Fuegi (USA): Personal Politics: The Business Deals of Herr Bertolt Brecht
"Dorothy Lane" (revised by M. Wekwerth and E. Hauptmann, GDR): Happy End: A Criminal Case Based on Dorothy Lane's Comedy "Happy End"
Volker Lilienthal (FRG): Journalisten als Kopflanger: Brechts Tui-Kritik
David Z. Mairowitz (France): Brecht's Women: A Synopsis Proposal
Michael Morley (Australia): Future Fields of Brecht Scholarship
Antony Tatlow (Hong Kong): Brecht and Postmodernism

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Modern Language Association Conference

The two IBS-sponsored Brecht Sessions at this year's MLA Conference are planned as a back-to-back super-session. It promises to be lively and provocative, with a focus on recent, "non-traditional" stagings and adaptations of Brecht plays. Panel members will make short presentations and then engage each other and the audience in a discussion. IBS members who are not members of the MLA may obtain a pass to the Brecht Sessions at the Conference hotel registration area.

RE-VISIONS OF BRECHT: ADAPTATIONS AND RADICAL PRODUCTIONS

December 27, 1984, 7:00-9:30 PM, Hilton Hotel/Caucus Room

Presiding: Michael Evendon (Allegheny College), Merle Kruger, John Rouse (Tulane)

Panel: Sue-Ellen Case (Univ. of Washington): "Jungle in the Cities in Seattle"
R.G. Davis (San Francisco): "The Exception and the Rule in Australia"
John Fuegi (Univ. of Maryland): "Happy End at the Arena State"
Judith Joseph/Stuart MacDowall: "Fatzer at the Shelter West Theater"
Joel Schechter (Yale University): tba

The IBS Business Meeting will be conducted during the last 20 minutes of the Session. All members are encouraged to attend and to come prepared with topics for the 1985 MLA Brecht Sessions.

CALL for PAPERS

The International Brecht Society in conjunction with the American Theatre Association announces a call for papers for the first annual ATA/IBS Brecht session at the 1985 American Theatre Association convention in Toronto.

The panel, entitled Brecht's Legacy, will focus on theory, texts, and performances of Brecht and those he has influenced in the contemporary theatre.

Abstracts or 10-page papers should be submitted by January 31, 1985. Convention dates: August 4-7, 1985.

Submissions should be sent to:

Janelle Reinelt
California State University, Sacramento
Theatre Arts Department
6000 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95819

Ellen Vincent

notate

notate, the information and news bulletin of the Brecht-Zentrum in the GDR, appears six times a year

No.2/1984

Reports on the Brecht-Tage 1984, focussing on the theme "Brecht and Music"
Reviews of Fritz Hennenberg's book Das grosse Brecht-Liederbuch and of the Berliner Ensemble production of Die Tage der Kommune
Gudrun Klatt on Brecht and Peter Weiss' novel Ästhetik des Widerstands
Plus book reviews and a portrait of actress Felicitas Ritsch

No. 3/1984

Berliner Ensemble dramaturg Jochen Ziller on working at the BE
Responses to Heiner Müller's provocative comments in notate 5/1983 and excerpts from a discussion with Müller in 1981
Wolfgang Wöhlert on Brecht in children's theaters
Konstantin Iliew on Brecht in Bulgaria
Unpublished letters of Lion Feuchtwanger to Brecht and his co-workers while in exile
Plus book reviews

No. 4/1984 Topic: Brecht and the Art of Acting

Erika Stephan on the art of acting
Rudolf Penka on teaching Stanislavski and Brecht
Bärbel Schrader and Klaus-Dieter Winzer on amateur Brecht productions in the GDR
Excerpts from Helene Weigel's notes on BE productions from the Weigel Archive
Plus theater reviews and book reviews

Each issue of notate contains additional notes on Brecht activities in the GDR and around the world. The bulletin can be ordered from Buchexport DDR, 7010 Leipzig, Postfach 160 (15 M/year).

Summary by Marc Silberman

letters to the editor

Oran, June 7, 1984

Dear Dr. Silberman,

...I was able to attend two events in the North African region. The first, a theatre festival in Morocco, during the winter break (Feb. 84); and the second, a theatre conference in Algiers, basically for amateur groups in the Capitol. In Algiers some experts were invited, and lectures were given on the roots of Arab theatre, and the way out of the present 'stale-mate'. I was surprised to note that the most quoted, or rather most mentioned, name was Brecht. So much so that one young director/actor (an assistant to the leading Algerian dramatist Kateb Ycin, whose work is steeped in Brechtian influences) protested on the third and final day of the conference: "What is this, Brecht, Brecht, Brecht!...Brecht is German, I want to talk about Algerian theatre..." His protest brought merriment, again an indication of Brecht's appeal to these young artists. In Morocco the reverse was the case. Publicly there was very little talk about BB; but in the circle of specialists he is a paragon...

Sincerely,

Lamice El-Amari

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September 28, 1984

Dear Mr. Silberman,

I should be grateful if you would let it be known to anybody who might be interested that I am offering a letter by Bertolt Brecht to Ruth Berlau of June 28, 1943 (Santa Monica). The letter is written in pencil. The envelope is also written by Brecht in green ink. The letter is unpublished but mentioned in the book of J. K. Lyon, Brecht in America, p. 72 (bottom). The price is DM 4.000.--.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Jürgen Bay/Erlanger Str. 12 D-8535 Emskirchen, FRG

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PRODUCTIONS NOTED

The Good Woman of Szechuan. Dir: Martha Sharpe. Oklahoma State University, April 1984 (4 performances). Bentley translation.

The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny. Dir: Warren Leming. "The Partisans" troupe, at CrossCurrents Cabaret, Chicago, November 1983. All new music by A. F. Wittek, Leming and the cast; also played in a more extensively modified form with added songs, under the title "Es ist nur Wüste."

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