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COMMUNICATIONS

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

CIBS
Volume 36 (Fall 2007)
Edited by Norman Roessler

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

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For more information on the International Brecht Society, including membership, conferences, contacts visit our website: http: //www.brechtsociety.org

Submission

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For Format and Editorial Guidelines please see the back cover of this journal.

Front Cover Image:

Amanda Palmer of The Dresden Dolls © Pixie Visions Productions / Photoshopped By Bonnie Periale

Back Cover Image:

Premiere of Robert Wilson's *Dreigroschenoper* at the Berliner Ensemble, September 27, 2007 © Lesley Leslie-Spinks

Contents

Editor's Column

Some might claim that the phrase, **Mach Schau!** screamed in a dingy Hamburg nightclub back in the early 1960s was not only an updating of Brecht's phrase, **Glotzen ist nicht Sehen!** but also the necessary dialectical intervention which transformed the Beatles and launched them into the stratosphere of the Culture Industry; however, we at CIBS are far more humble and parochial and choose to use the phrase in conjunction with a photo of Amanda Palmer of the musical group the Dresden Dolls in order to introduce our Fall 2007 edition (Volume 36 for those who are counting). For in this edition we answer the challenge of "Mach Schau!" and offer an expanded palette of performance elements ranging from varieties of musical performance, to graphic design, to website interface. Amanda Palmer and her amanuensis, Andrew Periale, lead us into these areas: in the print journal the reader will find two articles on the Dresden Dolls, a review of their first two albums and a review of their performance piece ***The Onion Cellar***; on our website, the reader will be able to listen to Andrew Periale's audio review of the Dolls' work, complete with clips from individual songs and accompanied by still and video images. As a performance text, CIBS 36 operates in the spaces between print text, graphic design, and website interface.

Mach Schau!

Glotzen Ist Nicht Sehen!

Sticking with the pop music references, this journal could easily have been introduced through the phrase **Let it Bleed!** as the signature design feature of this issue is the use of bleeds. In Graphic Design terminology a bleed is an extension of texts and images past the formal margin area. CIBS 36 makes the term into an aesthetic principle. We bleed everywhere: We bleed the cover page, we bleed the text pages, and we bleed from the text onto the website. By bleeding the cover and individual pages we challenge and contradict the received tradition of the scholarly journal, and the received tradition of reading CIBS. Bleeding attempts to intervene in the act of reading and make the reader conscious of the revolutionary cognitive act of reading. CIBS also bleeds into its digital companion, ECIBS. The text does not end with the print journal. On the contrary, readers will find extended textual material as well as multimedia material on ECIBS. Additionally, some material will **only** be available at ECIBS. For example, if readers want to experience the color version of CIBS, complete with a slide show of all production photos, they must go to ECIBS. If readers want to access and search the newly constructed CIBS archive (1971 – present) it will only be available through the website. If readers want to follow up Erdmut Wizisla's report from the Brecht Archive in Berlin by perusing the selected bibliography of material received by the Archive, they will have to go to the website in order to see Helgrid Streidt's text. Articles by Johannes Freund and Sabine Kebir, interviews with Franz Wittenbrink, Alexander Doering, Tom Kuhn, Lear De Bessonnet, Kelley McCrae, Mimi Lien, and Walter Bilderback, and annual sections such as "Reading Brecht, "Performance Season in Review," and "Notes on the

Let it Bleed!

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Brecht Industry" will likewise only be available at ECIBS. Of course, where does bleeding stop? When is bleeding just branding, commodifying, fetishizing and not some exulted alienation effect? Where's that edition of ***Das Kapital*** when you need it?

Der Beweis für den Pudding liegt im Essen


©Claudia Biester

Along with the new design and interface elements, the reader will find several new areas of concentration in CIBS 36. In CIBS/ECIBS the reader will find a wealth of articles on music and the musical. Reviews of albums - the aforementioned review of the Dresden Dolls as well as outgoing *Brecht Yearbook* Editor Stephen Brockmann's review of Bob Dylan's album ***Modern Times***; reviews of music-driven productions: ***Mahagonny, Happy End, St. Joan of the Stockyards, Die Dreigroschenoper, Spring Awakening, Die Zauberflöte, LoveMusik,*** and ***Galileo.***

Additionally, we have opened new performance sections in this edition: **Street Scenes, Film, Dance, and "Beyond Brecht" Productions.** **Street Scenes** invites readers to view the Brechtian at work in the everyday, whether it be at the **Berliner Ensemble Kantine** (Paula Hanssen) or at the **Marxism Festival** in London (Dougal McNeill). Peter Zazzali (***Absolute Wilson***) and Nels Jeff Rogers (***The Lives of Others***) supply this edition with excellent film reviews and Babak Ebrahimian provides yet another exciting dance review of **Pina Bausch and her Tanztheater Company**. In **Beyond Brecht**, we explore the performative universe that exists alongside our Brechtian preoccupations, and we sit back as our reviewers view these productions through the lens of Brechtian aesthetics.

Are You Looking a Good Time? If so, give up CIBS for ECIBS. At ECIBS we offer a wide variety of dialectical interventions, alienation effects, and intellectual pornography. www.ecibs.org - it's a way of life!

Lest you believe, dear reader, that we are leading you too far astray, we assure you that we have supplied all the CIBS standards of years past. We have numerous reviews of Brecht productions from across the world supplied by some of our most respected and renowned colleagues: Simon Williams (***Mahagonny***), Antony Tatlow (***Causasian Chalk Circle***), Steve Earnest (***Mahagonny***, ***Good Woman of Szechuan***), Gudrun Tabbert-Jones (***Mother Courage***), and Brad Gunter (***Mother Courage, Arturo Ui***). We have reviews and essays from Franka Köpp on Ruth Berlau, Vera Stegmann on ***Fatzer***, and Peggy Setje-Eilers on ***Die Farbe Rot.***

Sadly, we also note the tradition of saying farewell to colleagues and comrades. The great playwright, **George Tabori,** passed away this summer. In wonderful tributes to this brilliant Spielmacher, Peter Höyng and Gerd Koch remind us of what Tabori meant for us Brechtians.

We have also continued the new tradition of the **Performance Casebook**. In our last volume, we presented the ***Mother Courage*** **Casebook** and here we explore ***The Life Galileo.*** Two major productions on the East Coast – at the University of Delaware and in

Philadelphia - are the nexus for a phalanx of reviews, articles, photos, audio and video interviews, and rehearsal footage. Although we have presented a great deal of material in the print journal, an equal if not greater amount of material will be found on ECIBS. Indeed, our first webcast was conducted at the University of Delaware, weaving together an interview with the director and Brecht scholar, **Heinz-Uwe Haus** with rehearsal footage. Moreover, most of our review of the Wilma Theater production was conducted in multimedia format, and hence available only online.

As always CIBS could not have been produced without the participation of a team of individuals. In terms of producing content for this journal I must single out **Andrew Periale** and **Peter Zazzali** as first among equals. Andrew provided not only musical themes, texts, and vocals, but also lent his talented wife, Bonnie Periale, to photoshop the cover page. Peter Zazzali's efforts for this edition are extraordinary as he is directly and indirectly responsible for eight pieces of material in this volume. He wrote five performance reviews, recruited two CUNY colleagues to write reviews (George Panaghi and Robert Davis), and then developed his original ***Spring Awakening*** review into a long-form essay. ***Leuchtendes Vorbild!***

Nels Jeff Rogers and **Astrid Oesmann** provided copy editing services and the team of **Max Margulies, Sam Margulies,** and **Naoko Masuda** are responsible for all the multimedia and website material. **Peter Hanley** at Temple University's Faculty Instructional Support Center has over the last two years patiently answered all my childish questions concerning software, and also has added a judicious aesthetic eye to the journal. **Istvan Varkonyi** and **Linda Tribune** from the Intellectual Heritage Program graciously allow administrative and postal procedures of CIBS to be carried out in the IH offices. **Conlin's Copy Center** continues to put up with my procrastination and last-minute antics. Lastly, I cannot overlook the **Temple Tech Center** – a massive computer center open twenty-four hours a day almost seven days a week which provides all the software and print/edit facilities (Adobe InDesign, Photoshop) a Whitewasher would want.

Many a mistake will be found in these pages. I apologize to all the contributors for this lack of competence. Fortunately, ECIBS will provide redemption: all revisions, proofreadings, corrections, and completions will be found at this mystical-digital place. Somehow I know this ... some faint echo of a clarion call pulses in my head ... My gut instinct bleeds this truthiness ... (*pause*) ... Ok, that fills my quota of religious discourse; no more descending from heaven to earth, but time to ascend from earth to heaven. Let's get on with the show: **Mach Schau** and **Let it Bleed (All Over!).**

Enjoy CIBS 36 Fall 2007.

Norman Roessler

John Gallagher, Jr. as Moritz in the current Broadway production of Spring Awakening

Reports

IBS President

Nach dem erfolgreichen Augsburger Symposium im Juli 2006 haben alle gewiss erst einmal etwas Zeit zum Atemholen benötigt. Schon im Frühsommer 2007 ist nun Band 32 des Jahrbuchs erscheinen, der 24 der Augsburger Beiträge versammelt; ein Zusatzband mit weiteren Beiträgen wird in der Reihe ***Der neue Brecht*** bei Königshausen und Neumann von Jürgen Hillesheim (Augsburg) herausgegeben.

Ein besonderer Moment war wohl für alle die Rede von Dea Loher im Augsburger Rathaus bei der Verleihung des Brecht-Preises. Wie die Erfahrung einer Afghanistan-Reise ihr Selbstverständnis als Autorin, sogar den Sinn des Schreibens selbst erschüttern konnte, das stellte sie in eindrucksvoll sachlicher Sprache dar und demonstrierte noch einmal, wie überaus angemessen es war, den Brecht-Preis an diese herausragende Dramatikerin zu verleihen, die sich ja keineswegs, was Formsprache oder inhaltliche Orientierung betrifft, an Brechts Werk anlehnt und doch exemplarisch einen Brechtschen Grundgestus der gesellschaftlich-politischen Reflexion auf die Verantwortung des Theaters realisiert.

Seit dem Augsburger Beschluss in dieser Sache laufen bereits die Vorbereitungen für das nächste, das 13. IBS-Symposium, das für Mai 2010 an der University of Hawaii in Manoa (Honolulu) geplant ist. Die Initiative und Planung wird getragen von dem dort lehrenden Theaterwissenschaftler Markus Wessendorf. Das Thema lautet vorläufig „Brecht in/und Asien." Es soll die ganze Spannbreite der Thematik ausgemessen werden: die Einflüsse des asiatischen Theaters auf Brecht ebenso wie die Rezeption Brechts in Asien, die Begegnungen zwischen westlichen und asiatischen Modellen der Theaterpolitik und der Politik im Theater ebenso wie die lyrischen, philosophischen, ästhetischen Berührungspunkte zwischen Brecht und den Kulturen Asiens. Mit Kollegen von dort haben Gespräche begonnen.

Zunächst geht es aber um die Finanzierung der Konferenz. Es soll ein möglichst reichhaltiges Rahmenprogramm angeboten werden, womöglich auch Gastspiele aus Japan und anderen Ländern, die Reisekosten der vielen Teilnehmer werden voraussichtlich hoch sein und sollen doch wenigstens zum Teil erstattet werden. Alle Vorschläge, was mögliche Sponsoren und Institutionen angeht, die wir um Förderung bitten können, sind hochwillkommen!

Aus den USA ist zu berichten, dass auf der Jahrestagung der Modern Language Association im Dezember 2006 in Philadelphia wie üblich zwei von der IBS gestaltete Sitzungen stattfanden. Geplant sind auch wieder 2 IBS-Sitzungen im Dezember 2007 in Chicago (zu Brecht in Chicago und zu Brecht and World Cinema).

Für das Brecht-Jahrbuch konnte ein kompetenter neuer Herausgeber gefunden und ernannt werden, Friedemann Weidauer, der für die nächsten fünf Jahre, also voraussichtlich für die Herausgabe der Bände 33-37 verantwortlich zeichnen wird.

Die in Augsburg besprochene Digitalisierung von älteren Jahrgängen des Brecht-Jahrbuchs (die Bände 1-27 aus den Jahren 1971-2002) soll im Laufe des Jahres 2007 abgeschlossen werden und dieser Bestand dann für die Nutzer frei

zugänglich sein.

Dass eine produktive Rezeption Brechts bei kreativen jungen Theaterleuten weitergeht, die nichts mit braver epigonaler Fortschreibung Brechtscher Rezepte zu tun hat, lässt sich vielerorts beobachten. Ich weise besonders hin auf die Arbeiten der „Andcompany" um Alexander Karschnia und Nicola Nord. Sie sind seit einigen Monaten in ganz Europa gefragt (waren auch bei La Mama in New York eingeladen) und haben einen direkt aus der Auseinandersetzung mit Brecht (und Müller) und neuen Theaterformen entwickelten, frischen und eigenen Stil politisch motivierten Theaters entwickelt. Einen Eindruck ihrer Aktivitäten kann man leicht durch die Web-Seite der Gruppe gewinnen (www.andco.de/).

Ein anderer Fall sind Theaterarbeiten von Chris Kondek, den man vor allem als Videokünstler kannte, der u.a. mit der Wooster Group, mit Wanda Golonka oder Stefan Pucher zusammengearbeitet hat. Aufsehen erregte das lehrstückartige *Dead Cat Bounce*, bei dem das Eintrittsgeld der Zuschauer live im Online-Aktienmarkt an der Börse investiert wurde. Dann folgte unter dem Titel ***Hier spricht der Apparat*** eine Bearbeitung ***des Ozeanflugs***, eine Inszenierung, die, angesiedelt zwischen Aufführung, Dokumentation und Lecture-Performance spielerisch das Verhältnis zu Technik und Technologie thematisierte. Und mit Frankfurter Studierenden erarbeitete er ein szenisches Projekt zum ***Badener Lehrstück von Einverständnis***. Beides wurde im Juni 2007 im Mousonturm in Frankfurt am Main öffentlich gezeigt.

Nachrichten über ähnliche Aktivitäten in Brechts „Spur" an die IBS sind immer erwünscht.

HANS-THIES LEHMANN

IBS Secretary / Treasurer

Marc Silberman provided the minutes of the IBS business meeting at the Modern Language Association Conference in Philadelphia on December 29, 2006, which convened at Ludwig's Garten, not far from the conference hotels. Fifteen IBS members – including IBS Treasurer and *Communications* Editor Norm Roessler – contributed to a lively discussion about the 2007 MLA IBS sessions, *Communications* and the *Yearbook*.

Two IBS-sponsored sessions at the MLA Conference in Chicago in December 2007 will include a session on "Brecht and Cinema" organized by Barton Byg (University of Massachusetts, Amherst) and a roundtable with three directors from Chicago, organized by Julie Jackson (Indiana University Northwest). Looking forward to 2008, which is the 50th anniversary of the *Threepenny Opera*, the IBS might consider this topic for its MLA sessions.

Paula Hanssen summarized updated treasury and membership figures (175 members at that point). Marc Silberman reported on the status of the *Brecht Yearbook* and the plans for the 13th IBS Symposium in Hawaii, being organized by Markus Wessendorf for May 19-23, 2010. He also reported on the transfer of the Methuen Modern Drama series (including the Brecht in English translations) to A & C Black in London. Online projects of the IBS include the public-access "Bibliography of Brecht in English translation," and plans to digitize the *Brecht Year-*

book with free, public access. IBS has reached an agreement for digital copyright permission with the *Yearbook* publishers. Initially volumes 1-27 (1971-2002) will be available and searchable on the Internet.

All former and current members should have received an email reminder about membership dues for 2007 and the upcoming election (see below) for the IBS steering committee positions (president, vice-president, secretary/treasurer, Communications editor). The current steering committee members have all been nominated and agreed to continue serving, but suggestions for further nominations will be accepted until Oct. 15, 2007. All who attend the December MLA in Chicago 2007 are welcome at our meeting!

PAULA HANSSEN / WEBSTER UNIVERSITY

IBS ELECTIONS: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

As specified in the bylaws, nominations and self-nominations are invited from IBS members for the positions of president, vice-president, secretary/treasurer, and editor of *Communications*. All positions are open and all current officers are running for the continuing term (January 2008 – December 2009). Nominees from anywhere in the world are welcome and need not currently be dues-paying members of the IBS, although to assume office they would have to become members. Nominations must be received by post or email by October 15, 2007. The election will be conducted electronically via the internet soon after that date. All members who have not already renewed the 2007 membership: please renew as soon as possible to receive the 2007 *Yearbook* (Volume 32: "Brecht and Death") and *Communications*, and to participate in these elections. Renewals may be completed with credit cards at our website using Paypal at 'Membership' on the web site www.brechtsociety.org or direct deposit at the Deutsche Bank in Euros; US$ checks may be sent to the treasurer.

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IBS WAHL - NOMINIERUNGEN FÜR DEN IBS VORSTAND GESUCHT

Nach der Satzung der IBS sind alle IBS-Mitglieder dazu berechtigt, sich selber oder andere Kandidaten für den Vorstand vorzuschlagen. Wir suchen Nominierungen für den IBS-Präsidenten, den Vize-Präsidenten, den Schatzmeister / Sekretär und den Herausgeber von Communications. Alle Stellen sind offen und die jetzigen Vorstandsmitglieder erklären sich bereit, für die nächste Laufzeit (Januar 2008 – Dezember 2009) wieder zu kandidieren. Kandidaten aus der ganzen Welt sind willkommen und müssen nicht zur Zeit IBS-Mitglied sein, obwohl alle Vorstandsmitglieder bei Aufnahme der Arbeit Mitglieder werden müssen. Nominierungen müssen per Post oder per Email bis spätestens den 15. Oktober 2007 erhalten werden. Die Wahl findet kurz danach elektronisch (im Internet) statt. Alle Mitglieder, die den Mitgliedsbeitrag 2007 noch nicht bezahlt haben, sollen umgehend dies tun, um Band 32 des Brecht-Jahrbuchs („Brecht und der Tod") zu erhalten sowie an der Wahl teilzunehmen. Der Mitgliedsbeitrag kann per Kreditkarte mit Paypal auf ‚Membership' in der IBS-Webseite (www.brechtsociety.org), per Direktüberweisung in Euros an die Deutsche Bank oder per US$-Scheck an die Schatzmeisterin geleistet werden.

IBS Financial Report: 2006 - 2007

The following report indicates that we continue to cover our annual expenses and will cover expenses for 2008 as well as some preparatory outlays for the 13th IBS Symposium in Hawaii 2010. Due to the rising value of the Euro against the US dollar and to the fees we pay to maintain a Euro account in Germany, we need to consider raising our membership fees. This will be on the agenda for the IBS business meeting at the 2007 MLA in Chicago, with a possible recommendation forthcoming to the steering committee.

Paula Hanssen
Webster University

Summary of Current IBS Accounts

IBS Checking Count ($US) (includes Yearbook Royalties, Back Orders, New memberships, Renewals 2006 – 2007)	$19,701
IBS dollar savings	$10,332
IBS Euro checking (2900 € x $1.37)	$3,980

Summary of Paid Expenses (in US$)

Digitization project copyrights Wayne State UP	$1,620
Digitization project copyrights Suhrkamp (1200 €)	$1,620
Contribution to restoration of Dudow/Brecht film *Kuhle Wampe*, Icestorm Entertainment	$500
Printing *Brecht Yearbook* 32	$4,800
Shipping *Brecht Yearbook* 32	$ 60
Printing *Communications* 35	$1,650
Shipping *Communications* 35	$324
Total expenses through July 2007	$ - 11,374

Projected Expenses in the Coming Year

Communications 36 [Sept 2007]	$ 2300
IBS Symposium Honolulu 2010 ('seed money' to catalyze UH funding)	$ 5000
Brecht Yearbook 33 [Summer 2008]	$ 5500

Synopsis of IBS Membership

Year	Individual	Institutional	Total
2000	**107**	**89**	**196**
2001	**100**	**83**	**183**
2002	**97**	**90**	**187**
2003	**133**	**84**	**217**
2004	**98**	**88**	**186**
2005	**90**	**79**	**169**
2006	**109**	**75**	**184**
2007 (July)	**53**	**72**	**125 [projected 170]**

Editor / Brecht Yearbook

Volume 32, *Brecht and Death / Brecht und der Tod* appeared in the summer of 2007, and it represents selected contributions to the Twelfth Symposium of the International Brecht Society, which was held in Augsburg in July of 2006. Volume 32 brings to an end my six years of editorship of the *Brecht Yearbook*, and I would like to thank all the members of the editorial board - Antony Tatlow, Carl Weber, Jürgen Hillesheim, Karen Leeder, Marc Silberman, and Vera Stegmann - for their help and advice over the years. I have learned a great deal from each of them. I would also like to thank Erdmut Wizisla, who has been unfailing in his assistance, not only in finding previously unpublished texts by Brecht for publication in the *Yearbook*, but also in locating good photographs and

other visual materials from the collection of the Brecht Archive in Berlin.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the *Yearbook*'s contributors, who have helped to make it the indispensable organ of Brecht scholarship that it is; in my view the *Yearbook* plays a vital role as a venue for ongoing reflection into Brecht, his work, and its ongoing significance, and also as an international forum for different perspectives and approaches. I know of no other publication that so consistently brings together German-language scholarship on Brecht with scholarship from the English-speaking world and from the even larger global context. It has been a great honor and a privilege to serve as managing editor over the last six years.

I am very pleased that **Friedemann Weidauer** from the University of Connecticut is able to take over as managing editor, and I wish him all the best with this challenging, rewarding task. And I personally look forward to continuing my service to the *Yearbook* as a member of the editorial board in the future.

Stephen Brockmann
Carnegie Mellon University

Editor / CIBS

2006 – 07 was a solid and stable year for CIBS. After successfully negotiating the editor transition and first publication under the new editorship, we established, in December 2006, a companion website, **ECIBS or Electronic Communications from the International Brecht Society**, found at the URL www.ecibs.org. The domain has a yearly cost of $120. The original website was set up through templates, requiring little or no expertise in construction and maintenance. Since I am the Web Manager, and have not worked with HTML since the late 1990s and as of yet have not had time to acquire further Web skills (e.g. learning Dreamweaver), this proved most helpful. ECIBS was dominated by a blog design, which seemed at the time to be the best way, in terms of efficiency and website trends, to proceed. Over the course of 2006-07 ECIBS performed adequately. Functioning as a quasi-editor, ECIBS allowed us to solicit and publish reviews in a timely and contemporary fashion rather than our normal historical fashion. The material accumulated over the year through ECIBS proved valuable when it came time to printing CIBS, i.e. we had no dearth of material.

ECIBS also allowed us to capitalize on digital and multimedia opportunities not afforded by the print world: 1) We were able to publish a larger version of CIBS in color format as a password-protected pdf file, available only to the membership; 2) We were able to plan for the deployment of the CIBS digital archive, which had been digitized in Summer 2006; and 3) We were able to publish material in multimedia formats – audio and video.

However, the initial design of ECIBS has proven inadequate and will be redesigned and re-launched to correspond with the publication of the print journal. Neither the membership nor the public has responded to the blog-oriented website in appropriate fashion. Hence, ECIBS will be altered to be less of a contemporary website and more of a reference-oriented website. Instead of a continuous blog, ECIBS will attempt to publish material on a quarterly schedule. Material will be solicited for specific publication dates and the website will be updated at least four

times a year.

This re-design and re-launching is being carried out through the help of Temple University Students and their friends and family, with a small amount of remuneration supplied by the IBS. During the 2007-08 term I plan to acquire the skill set necessary to run the website in its newly-designed form. This will mean becoming proficient with Web design programs such as Dreamweaver and Video Editing Software such as Final Cut Pro.

As for CIBS its cost grew by $300 from last year to ca. $2000, largely because of the page expansion – from 133 to 200 pages. Whether 200 pages will prove to be too thick or too expensive - only time will tell. Mailing costs should remain around last year's price, so all told CIBS will cost about $2,500 to produce. A final note on publication costs. We checked out the cost for full color printing and it looks like color printing will cost roughly $1,500 - $2,000 above the black and white printing cost - a sum which is well beyond our budgetary constraints.

After two attempts, I must accept the fact, that the dream of publishing CIBS in September / early October to coincide with the new theater season is not realistic. We are publishing at about the same time as last year mid-late November. So, from now on I will just shoot for between November 15 – December 1 to publish CIBS.

Norman Roessler
Temple University

Die Bertolt Brecht-Forschungsstätte (Augsburg)

Die Aktivitäten der Bertolt Brecht-Forschungsstätte der Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg standen im Jahr 2006 notwendigerweise und in erster Linie im Zeichen von Brechts 50. Todesjahr. Eine Reihe von länger vorbereiteten wissenschaftlichen Projekten konnte in diesem Gedenkjahr realisiert bzw. vorgestellt werden, z.B. ein Beitrag zur Neubearbeitung des Brecht-Bandes der Reihe ***text + kritik***, die Mitarbeit am ***Brecht-Lexikon*** und ***das Brecht-Yearbook*** 31 2006, ***Young Mr. Brecht Becomes a Writer***, in Gastherausgeberschaft der Brecht-Forschungsstätte.

Im Mittelpunkt jedoch stand die Organisation das 12. Symposiums der International Brecht Society mit dem Thema *Brecht and Death*, das vom 12. bis 16. Juli .in Augsburg stattfand, und gemeinsam mit Professor Stephen Brockmann, Carnegie Mellon University Pittsburgh, und Professor Mathias Mayer, Universität Augsburg, geplant und organisiert wurde. Die feierliche Eröffnung fand am Abend des 12. Juli im Kleinen Goldenen Saal mit dem Festvortrag von Professor Ronald Speirs, Birmingham, *Die Meisterung von Meister Tod* statt. Knapp 80 Vorträge international ausgewiesener Brecht-Forscher, aber auch jüngerer Wissenschaftler, aus fünfzehn verschiedenen Ländern wurden bei dem Symposium gehalten, die besten davon wurden veröffentlicht in ***Brecht Yearbook*** 32-2007, *Brecht and Death* und im Ende 2007/Anfang 2008 erscheinenden Band *Ende, Grenze, Schluss? – Brecht und der Tod* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann). Der Kongress wurde abgeschlossen mit der feierlichen Verleihung des Brecht-Preises an die Schriftstellerin Dea Loher, die im Goldenen Saal des Rathauses der Stadt Augsburg stattfand.

Die Teilnehmer der Kongresses hatten die Gelegenheit, das von der Stadt Augsburg ausgerichtete große Brecht-Festival *abc – Augsburg Brecht Connected* unter der Leitung des bekannten Autors und Regisseurs Albert Ostermaier zu besuchen, das an verschiedenen zentralen Plätzen der Innenstadt etwa zeitgleich mit dem Symposium stattfand und bei dem eine große Zahl international renommierter Künstler in Erscheinung trat.

Einen weiteren vielbeachteten Höhepunkt dieses Jahres bildete die große Ausstellung *Brecht in der Buchkunst und Graphik*, zu sehen in der Toskanischen Säulenhalle des Augsburger Zeughauses. Deren Basis bildeten die Brechtsammlung der Staats- und Stadtbibliothek Augsburg, die zweitgrößte und – bedeutendste der Welt, und die umfangreiche und erlesene Sammlung Volkmar Häußlers, eines Bibliophilen aus Jena, der an der Konzeption der Ausstellung entscheidend mitwirkte. Zu dieser Ausstellung erschien ein reich illustrierter Katalog, der bei der Ausstellungseröffnung vorgestellt wurde (Augsburg: Hesz Print und Medien).

Am 14. August 2006, dem fünfzigsten Todestag Bertolt Brechts, wurde im Rahmen eines Festaktes die von der Brecht-Forschungsstätte besorgte Edition der Werke Brechts bis 1916, *Wie ich mir aus einem Roman gemerkt habe...". Früheste Dichtungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp) vorgestellt, die u.a. acht bisher nicht in anderen Brechtsausgaben veröffentlichte Texte enthält.

JÜRGEN HILLESHEIM

DAS BERTOLT-BRECHT-ARCHIV (BERLIN)

Am 1. Dezember 2006 jährte sich zum fünfzigsten Mal das offizielle Gründungsdatum des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs. Dieses im Beisein von Barbara Brecht-Schall, Klaus Staeck, dem Präsidenten der Akademie der Künste, sowie Dr. Wolfgang Trautwein, dem Direktor des Archivs der Akademie, begangene Jubiläum bot Anlaß zu Rückschau und Ausblick.

Das Archiv erfreut sich anhaltenden Besucherinteresses. Es unterstützt zahllose deutsche und internationale Publikationen, Inszenierungen, Ausstellungen (u. a. die Hannah-Arendt-Ausstellung des Literaturhauses in Berlin und die Caspar-Neher-Ausstellung des Deutschen Theatermuseums in München), Filme, Kunstprojekte etc. Die Chausseestraße 125 ist ein gefragter Ort der Brecht-Forschung.

Durch die Erwerbung der „Brecht-Sammlung Renata Mertens-Bertozzi" und der noch ergiebigeren „Sammlung Victor N.Cohen" hat sich der Bestand auf geradezu sensationelle Weise erweitert (vgl. ***Yearbook***, Vol. 32). Noch immer harren hier bedeutende Dokumente und Fassungen ihrer Erschließung. Mitzuteilen ist ferner, daß das Brecht-Archiv das Foto-Archiv des Berliner Ensembles als Dauerleihgabe übernommen hat.

Im August 2007 ist der lang erwartete Katalog von Brechts Nachlaßbibliothek erschienen (vgl. ***Die Bibliothek Bertolt Brechts. Ein kommentiertes Verzeichnis***. Hg. v. Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv, Akademie der Künste. Bearbeitet von Erdmut Wizisla, Helgrid Streidt und Heidrun Loeper. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007). Die Dokumentation von Widmungen, Besitzvermerken und die Transkription von Eintragungen bieten die Möglichkeit, dem Leser und Autor Brecht gleichsam über die Schulter zu sehen. Unbekanntes ist zu entdecken. Der Katalog ist ein Beispiel für die unentbehrliche Grundlagenarbeit, die in Archiven geleistet wird.

Internationale Kontakte konnten geknüpft werden – unter anderem durch Vortragsreisen, die Erdmut Wizisla unternahm: nach Seoul (Goethe-Institut) und Buenos Aires (Universidad des Buenos Aires / Goethe-Institut).

Ein starkes Gewicht hat weiterhin die Projektarbeit: Im Rahmen einer Vergabe-ABM des Landes Berlin werden derzeit die Bestände komplett digital gesichert. Bislang konnten sämtliche Foto-Bestände sowie das Presse-Archiv erfaßt werden. Langfristiges Ziel des Projektes ist die *Digitalisierung* des Handschriftenbestandes. Findhilfsmittel können intern bereits jetzt in einer AUGIAS-Datenbank recherchiert werden.

Auch die Bibliothek ging online. Neuzugänge sind über den OPAC der Akademie-Bibliothek abrufbar, wobei eine Aufschlüsselung der enthaltenen Beiträge vorgenommen wird. Die retrospektive Erfassung des Bestands gehört zu den Aufgaben der nächsten Jahre.

Anfang 2008 erscheint der erste Band der von Peter Villwock herausgegebenen Ausgabe von *Brechts Notizbüchern* im Suhrkamp Verlag. Das Editionsvorhaben wird vom Institut für Textkritik, Heidelberg, getragen. Die Anschubfinanzierung, die der Deutsche Literaturfonds übernahm, umfaßte die Restaurierung und Digitalisierung des gesamten Bestands von ca. 50 Notizheften sowie die Erschließungsarbeiten im Zeitraum von zwei Jahren (bis Frühjahr 2007). Die Präsentation des ersten Bandes ist für den 17. Februar 2008 in der Akademie der Künste vorgesehen.

Für das Projekt *Exilbriefe an Brecht* (FU Berlin: Institut für Kommunikationswissenschaften) konnte, nachdem Toralf Teuber eine andere Arbeit aufgenommen hat, Christoph Hesse gewonnen werden.

Das Brecht-Haus ist seit Beginn des Jahres 2007 eine Baustelle. Eine Dachsanierung hat ein ungeahntes technisches und finanzielles Ausmaß angenommen. Derzeit ruht die Baustelle, obwohl das Haus weiterhin eingerüstet ist. Vermutlich werden die Arbeiten erst im Frühjahr 2008 wieder aufgenommen. Es ist davon auszugehen, daß das Archiv dann für einige Monate in ein Ausweichquartier ziehen muß. Dort wird es leider nicht möglich sein, Besucher zu empfangen. Nähere Informationen werden über die Websites der Akademie und der IBS zugänglich gemacht. Wir bedauern die Einschränkungen, hoffen jedoch auf eine räumliche Erweiterung in der Zeit nach der Rückkehr in die Chausseestraße.

ERDMUT WIZISLA

FOR MORE MATERIAL FROM THE BRECHT ARCHIVE, GO TO ECIBS AT WWW.ECIBS.ORG FOR A SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS RECEIVED BY THE ARCHIVE IN 2006-2007. THIS LIST WAS METICULOUSLY ASSEMBLED, AS IT HAS BEEN FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, BY THE ARCHIVE LIBRARIAN, HELGRID STREIDT.

Modern Language Association (MLA), Washington, D.C. USA: December 27-30, 2006

Session: *Brecht and Masculinity.* Presiding: Vera Stegmann (Lehigh University)

1. "A Man is a Man: Masculinity in Brecht's Early Poetry," **Simran Karir** (University of Toronto) and Jason Lieblang (University of Toronto)
2. "Die Feminisierung Brechts: Das 'Unsexing' des Autors Brecht in *Baal* und *Hauspostille*," **Paul Peters** (McGill University)
3. "Mack the Knife, Comrade Kurt, and the Man Who Wasn't There," **Theodore Rippey** (Bowling Green State University)

VERA STEGMANN IS A FORMER CIBS EDITOR AND HAS 2 MORE ARTICLES IN THIS VOLUME: CHECK OUT HER REVIEW OF GALILEO (132) AS WELL AS HER ESSAY ON FATZER (165).

This was the first of two IBS sessions at the MLA, and it proved to be lively and productive. All in all, with a few people occasionally walking in and out of the session to benefit from hearing single talks in different sessions, between 18 and 22 people were present in the audience at any given moment, in addition to the scheduled speakers.

At the beginning an unpredictable misfortune almost prevented our full session from taking place: Jason Lieblang had missed his Amtrak connection from Toronto to Philadelphia and could therefore not be present. Fortunately, his colleague **Simran Karir** stepped in and single-handedly read the full paper that the two had collaborated on. She offered a brief theoretical overview of the history and concept of masculinity studies and then proceeded to an analysis of Brecht's early poetry. **Paul Peters's** presentation, spoken in elegant German, offered provocative insights into the "Geschlechterrollen" in *Baal* and in the poems "Von der Kindesmörderin Marie Farrar" and "Vom ertrunkenen Mädchen." **Ted Rippey's** paper concentrated primarily on male figures in *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Kuhle Wampe*, viewed in the context of late Weimar masculinity.

Since the three speakers timed their presentations so well – and this without the technological help of the electronic timer that the MLA provided in each conference room this year for the first time! –, there was ample time for animated discussions with the audience, before the session closed. **Hardcore Brechtians** who wanted to continue discussions and learn more about upcoming IBS activities then proceeded to join us at Ludwig's Garten Restaurant (1315 Samson St., www.ludwigsgarten.com), for fabulous beers, German style food, and the IBS business meeting.

NOT ONLY WAS SIMRAN KARIR BRAVE ENOUGH TO GO IT ALONE AT THE MLA, BUT SHE ALSO AGREED TO A CIBS INTERVIEW IN WHICH SHE DISCUSSES HER DIRECTORIAL EXPERIENCE WITH MAHAGONNY (161).

Vera Stegmann
Lehigh University

Roundtable: ***Brecht Is Dead – Long Live Brecht!" The Fiftieth Anniversary of Brecht's Death.*** **Presiding: Marc Silbermann (University of Wisconsin)**

This roundtable session – planned to summarize and evaluate the events during the fiftieth anniversary of Brecht's death – was set during the final, late afternoon slot of the MLA conference, after many participants had already left for the New Year's holiday at home. Nonetheless the five speakers and 15 participants shared in an informative discussion about the status and future of Brecht on stage and in research.

The session began with *Communications* editor **Norm Roessler**'s (Temple University, Philadelphia) overview of recent American productions, which he divided into "Brecht Industry" stagings that seek mainly to plumb the psychological motivations of the author, the "Broadway Brecht" with stars and high production values (but often subdued politics), and the "blackbox Brecht" performed on small stages with smaller budgets but often with great energy and even sometimes innovations. IBS secretary/treasurer **Paula Hanssen** (Webster University, St. Louis) reviewed some aspects of the 12th IBS Symposium and the Brecht-Festival, both held in Augsburg in July 2006. She focused especially on the attempts to engage young people with Brecht via plays, poetry, and music, and pointed out that this is also an effective approach through recent stagings undertaken at US colleges.

Chris Long (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore) continued with her impressions of the Augsburg events, focusing on the way many participants engaged in "not reading" Brecht, or rather, in reading others who read Brecht, especially Heiner Müller. That the latter's provocation "Brecht zu gebrauchen ohne ihn zu kritisieren ist Verrat" was the Festival's motto, reproduced on its large poster, only emphasized his appropriately persistent presence. **John Rouse** (University of California, San Diego) took a look at the Berliner Ensemble's three-week Brecht-Fest in the late summer as an index of artistic director Claus Peymann's work since he took over the theater. While Peymann has made good on his promise of foregrounding plays by Brecht, Rouse judges his success as one of making the BE into a Brecht museum, a move that may be seen negatively or positively but that does set it off distinctively against the trend of "Regietheater" dominating German theater for the past 30 years.

Finally, **Marc Silberman** (University of Wisconsin, Madison),reported on recent acquisitions at the Brecht Archive in Berlin and on various issues concerning Brecht publications. These included new and forthcoming volumes related to Brecht at Suhrkamp Verlag, ***Der neue Brecht*** monograph series at Würzburg publisher Königshausen und Neumann, the sale of the Methuen Brecht translations to AC Black in London, and a summary of new publications during 2006, which has been a banner year for Brecht research in general. During the discussion questions arose concerning specific productions, statistics of Brecht productions (down in 2004-05, but expected to rise again in 2005-06 because of the commemoration), and how Brecht can be performed in a truly Brechtian way when done, so to speak, in the belly of the dragon.

MARC SILBERMANN / UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Bertolt Brecht Symposium, University of Delaware Saturday, March 3, 2007

The Bertolt Brecht Symposium was arranged to coincide with a new production of ***Galileo*** produced by the Professional Theatre Training Program (PTTP) at The University of Delaware. The Symposium was held in The Ewing Room of The Perkins Student Center on The University's campus in Newark, Delaware.

The Symposium was sponsored by the College of Arts and Science, the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, the Department of English, and the Department of Theatre / Professional Theatre Training Program. Additional assistance for the Symposium was provided by the International Brecht Society *(Communications)* and the International Society for the Study of European Ideas *(Intercultural Group)*. Symposium organizers were Heinz-Uwe Haus and Richard Zipser.

Moderator Richard Zipser, Professor of German, Delaware University introduced the following papers and speakers in the course of the afternoon:

CIBS has all the papers in this volume. Also, check out the website, www.ecibs.org, for our podcasts of the rehearsals and interviews with the actors, director, and music director.

Keynote Address: "The Earth Does Not Stand Still – Thoughts on Brecht's Galileo": **Guy Stern**, Distinguished Professor of German, Emeritus, Wayne State University

"The Actor's Art and Brecht's Theatricality": **Richard Davison**, Professor of English, Emeritus, University of Delaware

"Defining Dialectics Between Space and Storytelling": **William Browning**, Professor of Theatre, University of Delaware

"Brecht in Motion: Translating Galileo to the American Stage": **Mark Harman**, Professor of German and English, Elizabethtown College

"What Can a Galileo Production Reveal?": **Heinz-Uwe Haus**, Professor of Theatre, University of Delaware

The Symposium attracted an audience of about seventy participants, drawn largely from the university itself. Several cast members of the PTTP production of ***Galileo*** were in attendance; Professor Haus directed this production of ***Galileo,*** which premiered that evening at The Hartshorn Theatre on The University of Delaware campus. This reviewer thought that the active participation of the student actors in this symposium and their enthusiasm for both the PTTP production and Brecht's work in general reflects well on Professor Haus' ability to pass his enthusiasm for Brechtian theatre along to his students.

The papers presented at the symposium all made reference to the PTTP production, and largely endeavored to address specific aspects of Brecht's play in the light of this current production. All of the speakers clearly wanted to use this symposium's arena to heighten the awareness of Brecht as a theatrical innovator

for this particular audience. All of the papers were well received, especially the presentation by Professor Stern, who is clearly a dynamic speaker and enthusiastic advocate for Brecht's continuing importance in both theatre and literature. The audience also enjoyed Professor Haus' thoughts regarding the innovative design and staging of this current production.

CRAIG ROTHFUSS

UPCOMING 13TH IBS SYMPOSIUM: UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII MAY 2010

Considering the long gestation period, it may come as no surprise that the planning for the next IBS Symposium on "Brecht in/and Asia" at the University of Hawaii is going well. At this point, the symposium is **scheduled for May 19-23, 2010**. Since this period falls between the end of the spring term and the beginning of the first summer session at UH, there should be no problem of reserving class rooms and lecture halls on campus for the event. This may also be the best time for conference participants traveling on a smaller budget to find accommodation on or around campus (i.e., in student dorms or student hostels). However, accommodation close to campus will probably be limited, and most symposium participants may have to stay at hotels in Waikiki. (There is a public bus from Waikiki to UH; the ride takes approx. 15 minutes.)

As regards the structure of the symposium, I would like to open each conference day with a keynote lecture (plenary session), followed by a series of parallel sessions. I would also like to offer four theatre performances which the symposium participants could attend in the evenings at the Earle Ernst Lab Theatre on campus: one production by the Department of Theatre and Dance (if possible, the first English-language production of *The Judith of Shimoda*, in classical Japanese style staged by faculty/students of the department's Asian Theatre program); two Brecht productions by guest performers and/or theatre groups from Asia (P.E.T.A. from the Philippines may be one option); and one guest production from the West (perhaps a Brecht evening with Martin Wuttke or Ulrich Matthes?). In addition, Kumu Kahua, the major political theatre company in Hawaii (motto: "plays about life in Hawaii, plays by Hawaii's playwrights, plays for Hawaii's people"), has offered to present a special performance of one of their plays during the symposium.

I spent most of the last academic year trying to get the UH administration to support the symposium. After I submitted a preliminary conference budget in early 2007, the Vice Chancellor of Research finally committed $40,000 in matching funds to the event. This summer, the IBS steering committee approved my request for $5,000 in seed money (to initiate the university's first money transfer and to attract other funders). Thus, by the end of 2007 we will have $10,000 on the account which the Dean's office of Arts and Humanities at UH has already set up for the symposium. Most of this "start-up money" will be used to hire a

student assistant who will help me with the symposium fundraising and planning. However, once the $40,000 will be matched they will also cover travel subsidies and honoraria for two plenary speakers as well as a stipend for one guest performer/theatre group performing during the symposium.

If you have any suggestions regarding potential funding sources (in Asia, Germany, and the United States), keynote speakers, panel topics, or guest performers, please contact:

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FORUM

Joy Calico, musicologist at Vanderbilt University (Nashville, TN / USA), and a contributor to *CIBS* will have her new work, *Brecht at the Opera*, published in 2008 by the University of California Press in the series, Studies in Twentieth-Century Music (Richard Taruskin, general editor). Calico's new book argues that the epic theater project is indebted to that most alienating of all theatrical genres: the opera. *Brecht at the Opera* is the first systematic study of the playwright's lifelong and ambivalent engagement with that genre. He completed three operas and attempted two dozen more but never made his peace with it, and his resistance to the narcotic manipulation of Wagner's continuous music and theatricality drove the epic theater project. Calico examines the myriad ways in which epic theater traffics in and rejects operatic conventions,but remains indebted to them nonetheless. His simultaneous work on opera and Lehrstück in the 1920s produced the new audience contract of epic theater; his theory of gestus in the mid- 1930s is reminiscent of nineteenth-century operatic mimesis; estrangement is the dominant aesthetic in today's *Regieoper,* or non-literal productions of canonical operas. The book also examines three little-known opera fragments from his American exile, and argues the significance of opera for cultural politics in East Germany.

NEWS

W. Stuart McDowell is completing work on his book, *Acting Brecht*, which will include original interviews with actors, directors and colleagues of Brecht, including Therese Gieshse, Käthe Reichel, Peter Kallish, Peter Lühr, Manfred Wekwerth, Marta Feuchtwanger; as well as extensive interviews with Erwin Faber, the leading actor in Brecht's earliest productions of *Drums in the Night, In the Jungle of Cities, Edward II,* and Brecht's first film, *Mysteries of a Barbershop*. The book will feature a Preface by America's leading proponent of Brecht's work, Carl Weber. McDowell conducted these interviews beginning in 1968, when he interviewed Wolfgang Heinz and Helene Weigel in East Berlin on a DeWitt Wallace Fellowship, and as a Fulbright Scholar at the Berliner Ensemble, 1974-76. The book examines how Brecht's works were staged and/or revised by Brecht in their original productions, from *Drums in the Night* to *Mother Courage*. One goal of the book is to dispell the myths and fears that surround the performance of Brecht's work, especially for American actors. The book should also serve as important resource for directors and

teachers interested in how Brecht's works were originally staged. Among the works by Brecht directed by McDowell, are the American premiere (in New York) of *Downfall of the Egotist Johann Fatzer*, and the New York premiere of *The Life of Edward II of England*, produced by Joseph Papp and the New York Shakespeare Festival. His writings have been included in *The Brecht Sourcebook* (Routledge Press, 2000), *Performing Arts Journal* and *The Drama Review*. McDowell was founding Artistic Director of the Riverside Shakespeare Company of New York City, and is currently Chair of the Department of Theatre, Dance & Motion Pictures at Wright State University in Dayton Ohio, where he staged *The Threepenny Opera* earlier this year with a grant from the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music.

2007 MLA Conference

Brecht and Film Today (#187)
Friday, 28 December, 10:15–11:30 a.m., Parlor E, Sheraton Chicago Hotels and Towers.

Presiding: Barton Byg, Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst

1. "Musical Materialism: Straub and Huillet's Schoenberg Films and the Brechtian Inheritance," Larson Powell, University of Missouri, Kansas City

2. "From Class Struggle to 'Bourgeois War': Michael Haneke and Brecht in Dialog," Martin Kley, Univ. of Texas, Austin

3. "Brechtian Turns in Pan's Labyrinth," Christine Long, Johns Hopkins Univ.

4. "New Queer Brechtian Cinema: Gregg Araki's Totally F***ed Up (1993)," R. Patrick Kinsman, Indiana Univ., Bloomington

Staging Brecht in Chicago Theaters: A Roundtable (#780)
Sunday, 30 December, 1:45–3:00 p.m., Ohio, Sheraton Chicago Hotels and Towers Presiding: Julie Jackson, Indiana University Northwest

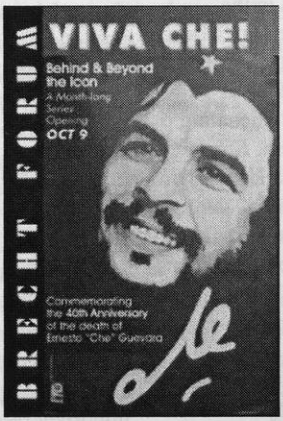
Speakers: Greg Allen, Neo-Futurists Theatre; Nick Bowling, TimeLine Theatre Company; Zeljko Djukich, Tuta Theater

News

In the October 22, 2007 "Talk of the Town" section of the ***New Yorker*** Magazine http://(www.newyorker.com/talk/2007/10/22/071022ta_talk_widdicombe) a report on a party at the Brecht Forum (http://www.brechtforum.org/), commemorating the fortieth anniversary of Che Guevara's death. Wonderfully written by Lizzie Widdicombe, the article reported on an event billed as the "political event of the season" which included extensive merchandise sales of: athletic jerseys with the names of imprisoned Black Panthers, and $75 Che Sweatshirts, $35 T-shirts utilizing the Starbucks logo. Quotes worth remembering from the event:

"I think the spirit of young people connects to Che, even if it's just an image on a T-shirt. The idea is to put more marketable things out there—things that people recognize—and to politicize them."

Most of us don't remember when he was killed. But all of us have seen Che Guevara T-shirts."



In Memoriam

George Tabori, 1914 - 2007

The playwright, stage director, essayist, and novelist George Tabori died in Berlin on July 23 at the age of 93. For the past eight years he had not only lived around the corner from the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, but moreover had been a daily presence at the Berliner Ensemble after Claus Peymann assumed the directorship in 1999 and opened with Tabori's play *Die Brecht Akte* on January 8, 2000.

Tabori is buried at the Dorotheenstädter Friedhof, close to Brecht's last home and grave. To come to the end of his life in Berlin and neighboring the late Brecht in death seems, in hindsight, as coincidental as it is symbolic for Tabori's biography and intellectual landscape: Berlin, after all, was the center of the Nazi dictatorship that affected every one of his generation in Europe and in particular his family and life; and Brecht left a life-long impact on Tabori after they met in California as part of the same exile community in 1947 and converted Tabori to be a man of the theater instead of continuing his promising career as a novelist and screenwriter.

Born on May 24, 1914 in Budapest, György Tábori was the second son of Kornél and Elsa Tábori, an assimilated liberal Jewish family. While György lived the first twenty years in Budapest and spent some time thereafter in the Hungarian metropolis until 1939, he eventually was forced into exile and ultimately robbed of his home, his Muttersprache, and even more importantly many family members. Whereas his father was murdered in Auschwitz, his brother Paul managed to settle down in London, where he was joined after the War by their mother. This sense of deep loss permeated all aspects of Taboriís life and writing. Yet, instead of falling victim to his trauma, he embraced the wounds actively in his own way, always following Freudian dialectics: "Only a few of us have succeeded in remembering what we wish to forget, and we can only forget what we have truly remembered." (*Unterammgergau oder die guten Deutschen*, 1981: 201)

While English became Tabori's new language of identity, he lived in various and varied places over a period of seven decades. During World War II, he spent time in the Middle East, partly as a correspondent and partly for the propaganda department of the BBC, before moving to London where he published his first three novels, *Beneath the Stone the Scorpion* (1945), *Companions of the Left Hand* (1946), and *Original Sin* (1947). In 1947 he received his British passport shortly before accepting an offer from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) and moving to Los Angeles the same year. He never fully adapted to the commercial demands of Hollywood – e.g. he worked on a movie adaptation of Thomas Mann's *Zauberberg* which was rejected because of its morbid content – and hence soon shifted his various artistic projects from California to the East Coast. He lived and worked from 1953-1970 in New York City and married the Swedish actress Viveca Lindfors, his second wife.

With varying success, he worked on theater projects, both on and off Broadway, including a winning production entitled *Brecht on Brecht* (1961-1963). But as irony would have it, his first play on the Holocaust, *The Cannibals*

(1968), became a breakthrough for his career. The play that shows concentration camp inmates being forced to choose between surviving by eating bits of flesh of their dead mates or dying themselves was a shock to audiences when it premiered in New York in 1968 because it left no room for any sentimental and morally superior position. Soon thereafter, the German literary agent Maria Sommer discovered the play via a newspaper review and managed to have it staged in Berlin at the Schiller Theater in December 1969. Ever since, Tabori remained in German-speaking cities, first Berlin (1970-1978), then Munich (1978-1987), followed by Vienna (1987-1999), before calling Berlin one last time his home.

While in retrospect it might seem all too fitting for the unconventional Tabori to have his artistic breakthrough no earlier than at age fifty-six, it is nevertheless also puzzling to review his creative and flourishing theater career since 1969, spanning more than three decades. It seems equally representative of Tabori's atypical life that his career in the German-speaking theater world would thrive despite the fact that he continued writing his essays and plays in English only to have them translated and published in German. Thus, it was a first to have the most prestigious literary award for German literature, the Büchner Prize, go to Tabori in 1992. His third wife, Ursula Grützmacher, deserves very special mention in this regard for her congenial translations of Tabori's writings into German, continued even after they divorced in 1984 and he married the actress Ursula Höpfner.

There is not enough space within the confines of an obituary to do justice to the last decades of Tabori's theatrical career with its stage productions of Shakespeare, Beckett, Lessing, and adaptations of Kafka; nor to his several attempts of realizing a modified Stanislavskian ensemble play (by modifying Stanislavski's method of empathy for the role and shifting the emphasis to each actor's potential) as tested first at the *Bremer Theaterlabor* and later at the *Wiener Kreis*.

However, it is worth mentioning at least four characteristics when thinking of Tabori's approach to the stage, be it his own plays like *The Cannibals*, *Pinkville*, *Jubilee*, *Mein Kampf. A Farce*, *Goldberg Variations*, *Wiseman and Copperface*, or his staging of *Die Hungerkünstler*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Shylock Improvisations*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Nathan der Weise*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Moses und Aaron*, or *Die Juden*. What made these performances so stylistically typical of Tabori was, first and foremost, his gift to mix opposites and to create scenarios that, like in a good joke, are not supposed to happen. He had the capacity to make the sacred seem profane and the profane to emerge as sacred, or to mix high and low culture in a way that remains in German-speaking circles all but a taboo. Along those lines, was Tabori's interest in questioning stereotypes and assigned group identities that negated the right to experience the dignity of an individual.

This belief held even true when the boundaries of perpetrator and victim were made porous, as in *Mein Kampf. A Farce* where Shlomo, a Jew, tries to come to terms with Hitler. In a sense, Tabori's theater was always a political one, but only to the point that politics is relevant where and when society threatens to impede the individual's body and space. Last but not least, Tabori had an absolute quest for making the stage a space where our concepts of reality can

be tested and where the fleeting moments of life are encapsulated so that we experience the possibility for rearranging diluted perceptions and commonly held notions. Tabori more than once achieved his desire to suspend daily life on the stage only to experience it more intensely with all its contradictions.

In order to pay homage to George Tabori, however, one faces a dangerously large collection of embracing clichés that have been circulated in the German media in the past years. He was assigned the role of a charming gentleman, and took on the role of a photogenic elder statesman, becoming a *Zeitzeuge*, even a *Zeuge unseres Jahrhunderts* (a ZDF documentary by and with Peter von Becker), a benevolent father figure within theater circles, played the role of a good Jew, a wandering Jew, a critical but conciliatory Jew and, above all, time and again, a master of provocative, black humor for which the following quote is a fitting example: "I wouldn't be a Jew if the Germans hadn't reminded me." Quite typically this quote along with other well-meant phrases gained valuable currency over the years and not surprisingly found their way into the headlines for Tabori's obituaries such as this one by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of July 24: "Ein Wanderer zwischen Schmerz und Scherz."

As with most clichés, they are neither wrong nor do they afford full justice to the subject matter. Instead, they prevent one's own original thinking. Thus, one encounters a real dilemma if not a Catch-22: while George Tabori's theater work aims at breaking taboos and challenging neatly pre-packaged concepts of theater, the roles that are imposed upon us, and of coping with the catastrophic destruction of the Jews on stage, one is simultaneously surrounded by ready-made phrases to describe his theatrical transgressions. How then is one able to do justice to him and his work? To make matters worse, if Tabori himself showed us more than once not to fall into the traps of comfortable lies, isn't one obliged to admit that not all of his thirty plays and many more stage productions were of equal quality?

Furthermore, Anat Feinberg, to date Tabori's best-known biographer, asked these and similar questions at the end of her study *Embodied Memory. The Theatre of George Tabori* (1999): "Does he [Tabori] as a Jew exploit a kind of *Narrenfreiheit* or jester's license, that he enjoys in Germany and Austria, which inhibits criticism and guarantees success?" (267) Last but not least, she points to another thread in all of the writings about Tabori: "from the very beginning of his artistic career in Germany and Austria [i.e., from 1969 on], people failed to discriminate between the man and the work. Voices were often heard seeking to legitimate Tabori's provocative work, especially his treatment of the Holocaust, by recalling his private and familial biography." (267)

And yet, it is the conventions of an obituary that once again cannot circumvent a life to follow the all too familiar route to his work. Only this time we have to say good-bye. May George Tabori's legacy live on through some of his plays, by encouraging us to think unconventionally, to make the stage a place where truth can reveal its wicked twists, and where hope and love can prevail despite cruelties.

Peter Höyng
Emory University

In Memoriam

Der Spiel-Macher George Tabori ist gestorben

Der *playmaker* Tabori hat der Theaterpädagogik bedeutsame Impulse gegeben: Theaterspielen mit Amateuren als Möglichkeit zu sehen, sich von biographisch erworbenen Einschränkungen, Hemmungen, Deformationen „frei zu spielen", wobei nicht das Theaterspielen eine gezielte Therapie ersetzen kann und soll. Vielmehr stellt Spielen durch seine spezifischen theatralen Methoden eine neue Erfahrungswelt und neue Sichtweisen bereit. Der Schutzraum Bühne erlaubt, die Normierungen der Alltagswelt zu verlassen und andere Möglichkeiten menschlichen Verhaltens - im Möglichkeitsraum Theater - auszuprobieren, zu gestalten und öffentlich zu machen, so dass man sagen kann: Das Gesamtkonzept einer solchen Theaterpädagogik kombiniert das Handeln im häuslich-intimen (Bühnen-Proben-)Kontext des *oikos* (Haus) mit dem öffentlich-diskursiven Kontext der *agora* (Publikumsorte wie Markt, Platz oder Zuschauerraum) - wir nehmen damit Gedanken von Hannah Arendt zum Verständnis des Politischen und Öffentlichen auf: Handlungsfelder müssen immer wieder bearbeitet werden durch eine *vita activa* (durch tätiges Leben), so dass das Repertoire von ästhetischen und sozial-kulturellen Dispositionen, Mentalitäten und Verhaltensweisen umgruppiert, umgebaut und verändert werden kann.

In einem Gespräch mit Herta-Elisabeth Renk hat Tabori seinen behutsamen Umgang mit den darstellenden Menschen betont: „Das Sein bestimmt für mich das Spielen, nicht umgekehrt. Jeder Schauspieler hat alles in sich, was er für eine Rolle braucht, er muss es nur zutage fördern. Jede Rolle ist immer etwas weniger als der Mensch, der sie spielt, ist begrenzt, während der Mensch unendliche Farben und Möglichkeiten in sich hat. Zwingt man ihn, sich für eine Rolle zu reduzieren, so macht man im Namen der Kunst aus ihm eine Marionette, und das führt zu jener Verarmung, die man so oft auf unseren Bühnen sieht. Natürlich ist auch mir der Autor wichtig. Aber letztlich ist es eine Frage der ästhetischen und politischen Überzeugung, ob man ein Theater will, das die abstrakte Idee, die Konzeption der Kunst über den einzelnen Menschen und seine Individualität stellt."

Zwei auch für die Theaterpädagogik sinnvolle Motive seiner Theaterarbeit werden deutlich: Zum einen der respektvolle Umgang mit den vielen - auch verborgenen - Seiten der Subjekte, die nicht auf technisch-schauspielerische Akteure reduziert werden; zum anderen das wichtige Motiv des Verhältnisses zwischen Prozess und Produkt des Theaterspielens: „Wenn ich in ganz naiven Worten meine Arbeit … zusammenfassen sollte, würde ich sagen, daß der Schauspieler interessanter ist als seine Rolle, das Produzieren produktiver als das Produkt, die private Geschichte einer Produktion beredter als die Literatur, mit der sie sich befaßt„ Das bedeutet auch, dass für Tabori die Premiere keinen Endpunkt des Suchens gebildet hat: „Wenn man zu besseren Einsichten gelangt, ist jede Vorstellung dafür (für eine Veränderung) gut genug." Tabori hat tatsächlich ernst mit seinem Satz gemacht, der Schauspieler/die Schauspielerin sei das Konzept: „Meine Pleiten rühren daher, daß für mich der Schauspieler wichtiger ist als der Erfolg oder die Drama-

turgie." Dass der Prozess nicht abgeschlossen ist, ist die logische Konsequenz des Theateransatzes: Es werden keine endgültigen Lösungen angeboten, die Aufführungen bleiben offen, haben den Mut, Unfertiges zu zeigen.

Tabori: „Durch intensives Körperbewußtsein kann auch eine programmierte Szene immer wieder neu sein. Der körperliche Zustand des Schauspielers ist jeden Abend anders, man kann sich an die Struktur einer Szene halten, aber sie doch jedesmal anders erfahren, wenn man körperbewußt ist." Und es ist bei Tabori hinzugekommen, dass er sein weiteres Verständnis von Theater durch Witz, Komik, (schwarzen) Humor und auch Frivolität und Grauen fundiert hat- was körperliche und zugleich kognitive Haltungen sind.

Mehr zu Tabori schrieben Koch und Zulechner in dem Aufsatz „Von Tabori lernen", in: Gerd Koch, Gabriela Naumann, Florian Vaßen (Hrsg.): Ohne Körper geht nichts. Lernen in neuen Kontexten. Berlin, Milow 1999, S. 128 - 145.

Beherzigt man dies alles zusammen mit dem Prozesshaften, Experimentellen und prinzipiell Unabschließbaren des taborischen Theaters, dann kann keine Orthodoxie des Theater-Machens entstehen. In Taboris Worten: Ein „Anfänger" zu sein: „Was für ein Kompliment! Wenn es doch wahr wäre: Wenn ich fähig wäre, jeden Tag, jedes Wort, jede Probe zu beginnen, als sei es das erste Mal, ohne Schielen auf das Ende, das auch der Anfang ist."

Ein Wort an uns Nachgeborene! Tabori hat Vorschläge gemacht. *Let's try it!*

GERD KOCH

PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

STREET SCENES

MARXISM FESTIVAL / WHAT IS YOUR NAME, MR BRECHT? / ANNA ZAPPAROLI / MARIO BORCIANI. LONDON / UK. 6 July 2007

The Socialist Workers` Party "Marxism Festival" was the ideal place to stage – and see – a show dedicated to celebrating and introducing Brecht`s legacy. Presented as part of a whole weekend of political discussion and debate, slotted after a panel on theatre in revolt with David Edgar and Tom Stoppard, Zapparolli`s show offered the rare opportunity to experience Brecht`s music in the kind of directly political, partisan and not-so-cooly detached atmosphere of the party- and activist-audience he wrote for.

Zapparoli`s show was a lively introduction to the familiar outlines of Brecht`s life and social context through his songs and some songs of his contemporaries. The performers used his interrogation by HUAC as an opening into a suitably manic crash through the wars, Weimar Germany, various revolutions, Stalinism and, of course, the much-mythologised lead-up to the *Dreigroschenoper*`s opening night. So far, so familiar, but Zapparoli and her band managed to make demands of the material in exciting and ambitious ways.

How? For starters, Zapparoli had the guts to be a genuinely malicious and

downright *nasty* performer when the material dictated; if Frank Sinatra long ago robbed the Brecht-Weill songbook of any possible V-effects it might once have had, Zapparoli restored our sense that these were truly shocking pieces about the most unpleasant of topics. The selection of material helped here, too; where most everyone in the audience recognized the Weill pieces, I noticed a different sort of attentiveness when some of Eisler`s less familiar tunes started up. The show`s narrative structure was exciting, too; where for so much of the 90s identity politics and the Fuegi controversy encouraged work on Brecht which robbed him – and his female collaborators – of any sense of political purpose or engagement, Zapparoli`s interpretations of the songs stressed their polemical intent. If ever there was an audience for whom a Brecht evening would be familiar, if was the one at the Marxism Festival: "What is Your Name, Mr Brecht?" insistently, and imaginatively, defamiliarised.

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The great stimulation of Marxism as a festival is also its frustrating feature: to see Zapparoli I had to miss out on hearing Alistair Hulett and Jimmy Ross sing and discuss the songs of Ewan McColl and the politics of the British folk song revival in the 1950s. But other opportunities for turning learning into a "real, sensual delight" appeared later in the weekend. On Sunday night Tony Benn and singer Roy Bailey performed their "The Writing on the Wall," a tour through speech and song extracts through British history 'from below' all the way from the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 through to the Poll Tax riots of a decade ago. Neither Bailey nor Benn, unsurprisingly, made any direct reference to Brecht or things Brechtian, but the exuberance and energy of their set once again disproved the old lie that pedagogy and musical or theatrical delight can't sit together. The joy of "The Writing on the Wall" was that it was an evening of *learning* - Benn displayed a truly encyclopedic knowledge of British labour history, as well as having been an active participant in quite a bit of it himself - and this learning opportunity was one the audience clearly relished.

I'm not involved with the Socialist Workers' Party, who host the festival each year, and so don't know the logic behind its organization, but this year's Marxism Festival had a greater emphasis on cultural and artistic questions than most comparable left-wing conferences and events. As well as readings from poets Adrian Mitchell, Michael Rosen, Lemn Sissay and - unexpectedly - Amiri Baraka, there were numerous debates and sessions scheduled of great interest for Brechtians. Marcel Martinet and poetry of the First World War, Beethoven and revolution, Tom Behan on Pontecorvo,

Mike Gonzalez on Pablo Neruda, a session on Charlie Chaplin, John Molyneux on the centenary of Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon*: I could attend only a fraction of the talks but at all of them found the same seriousness and subdued excitement.

Of course, the bulk of the Festival focused on areas demanding more immediate attention: Venezuela, Iraq, the streets of Britain itself. This mixture of topics brought with it a wide range of activists and thinkers as Festival participants, with stimulating results. Michel Lowy spoke movingly, and urgently, on the importance of Benjamin's legacy and Esther Leslie introduced an illustrated session on Rebel Art "from Dada to Banksy." At both sessions young activists challenged the relevance of theory and of modernist or 'difficult' art eloquently and assertively. I think their arguments were wrong, but in having to engage with and attempt to rebut them, those of us who spend so much time *assuming* the centrality of theatre, visual culture or whatever were forced to try and connect these passions to a wider movement's priorities. This was the most exciting aspect of the event: in bringing such (apparently) disparate concerns into the same space, the Festival provided opportunities for the sort of tensions, frank exchanges, and newfound common concerns activists and committed scholars need but so rarely get.

At the end of each night, naturally, the various bars around ULU provided yet another space for debating Brecht. Next year, I hope, the organizers might even give Brecht a session of his own. If Leslie`s packed session (well over two hundred, early on a Monday morning) is anything to go by, the anti-war movement has not only produced a new generation of young activists, it has produced a sufficiently alienated and challenging environment to provoke a new generation of Brechtians. That, a night of great tunes and five days worth of debate, is something to celebrate.

DOUGAL MCNEILL

BERLINER ENSEMBLE KANTINE BERLIN / GERMANY 30 JULY 2007

"Die Weigels Kinderzimmer"?

Legions of first-class actors, directors and choreographers have worked with the Berliner Ensemble and enjoyed a beer and food at the Berliner Ensemble Kantine. Anyone can walk a few steps around the north side past the glass windows of the security office and the picnic tables on the right to see the door to the Kantine. It's a 'souterrain', down a few steps, a place for quiet relaxation or official celebration; for example, the reception for the national "Kleist-Preis" awarded in November 2004 was held there.

As long as Helene Weigel was managing director of the Berliner Ensemble, until 1971, the Kantine was also a place for her to hold court and entertain writers, directors and government officials, conduct business, enjoy friends and family. In a 2004 interview, director/actress Katharina Thalbach fondly remembered days of dark wood paneling and described the Kantine as Weigel's domain, where she discussed the plays, listened, cajoled, and planned performances:

> *Hier war alles mit dunklbraunen Holzpaneelen getäfelt. Und Helli, die Weigel, hatte wunderschöne alte Eichentische reingestellt. Ich verstehe nicht, wie hier solche Geschmacklosigkeit einziehen konnte. Dieses Schickeriazeugs. Das sieht ja aus wie in jeder mittelmäßigen Bar in Mitte. ... Die hat in ihrem Zimmer*

oben gesessen und aufgepasst, dass über die Kellertreppe kein Schnaps zur Bühne hoch geschmuggelt wurde. Die Kantine war für sie so etwas wie ein Kinderzimmer.

(*Berliner Zeitung* 17.01.2004)

Thalbach's memories and critique notwithstanding, the more modern Kantine is still a place that cast members, audience members and tourist enjoy. This summer after the Berliner Ensemble's performance of Peter Handke's *Spuren der Verirrten*, a few of us went down to the Kantine. The ambience is casual, a large room with small tables, a longer table for larger groups and a tall, heavy wooden counter reminiscent of the 1940's where we ordered drinks. A large selection of cold food is available in the extension of the dining room as well as freshly made hot food, each item for 4 - 5 Euros (less for the members of the company).

Instead of taking our drinks out to the picnic tables under the trees between the *Probebühne* and the main theater, we sat inside with other audience members. "It's one of the only theater canteens where one can speak with the actors after the show; in the Deutsches Theater the actors are physically separated from the public by a wall," said one of the guests close to our table. He spends time in the Kantine after every performance he sees with his wife, a gallery owner, and was glad to share his thoughts, like: "Did you see that gentleman? That was Gerd Koch, the critic from the 'FAZ. "

Soon the actors filed in and sat around the largest table close to the door and passed around the leftovers from a birthday party for their director, Claus Peymann, "Kassler" and "Sauerkraut," even sharing with some of the guests and chatting for a few minutes about the play. We moved out to the Biergarten to enjoy the cool evening and raise a glass to Weigel's memory.

Paula Hanssen
Webster University

Film

With the exception of perhaps Bertolt Brecht, a strong case can be made for claiming Robert Wilson as the most significant theatre director of the twentieth century. At the very least, he can be acknowledged as a world-class theatre artist whose image-dominated form employs lighting, scene design, dance and performative movement, music, space, and time to mesmerizing effect. While his aesthetic departs from narrative action, it imbues child-like imagination orchestrated under his singular brilliance. Indeed, as often exemplified in Katharina Otto-Bernstein's recently released, and excellently rendered documentary *Absolute Wilson*, Robert Wilson is a true auteur harnessing the creative input of his collaborators: Phillip Glass, William Burroughs, Tom Waits, among numerous others. Although his work defies convention, and has occasionally been therefore classified as "experimental," both his aesthetic and life transcend such labeling. As *Absolute Wilson* demonstrates, Wilson's artistic trajectory is as personal as it is individual.

Absolute Wilson
A Film by Katharina Otto-Bernstein
Film Manufacturers Inc. / Alba Film Productions. Running Time: 105 min.
Released: 12 October 2006 (Germany) 21 November 2006

Otto-Bernstein offers a moving por-

trait of her subject's personal life in conjunction with his aesthetic. From Wilson's painful and oppressive Texas upbringing, to his education at the Pratt Institute and the formation of his artistic collective the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds (named for a childhood ballet teacher who inspired him to "speak out"), *Absolute Wilson* combines a seamless montage of photographs, film footage, and interviews in depicting the story of a reclusive, shy, and stuttering boy's personal and artistic journey to becoming one of the foremost figures of twentieth century theatre. In doing so, it reveals Wilson as caring, conscientious, and particularly drawn to children with disabilities. Two such accounts are tastefully and tenderly documented in his generosity towards Raymond Andrews and Christopher Knowles. While the latter provided the inspiration for Wilson's *A Letter to Queen Victoria* (1974), which was celebrated nearly everywhere it played except for Broadway, the former was the basis for *Deafman Glance* (1971). Moreover, Wilson - casually clad in jeans, a pullover shirt, and loafers - describes the extraordinary experience of finding Raymond on a New York City street one afternoon being harassed by a policeman. As it turned out, neither the policeman nor Raymond's guardians at the time realized that he was deaf, mute, and in need of special care. Wilson, who, as the film succinctly informs us, also suffered from a childhood learning disability and therefore identified with Raymond's sense of isolation. Consequently, he adopted the boy, made him the centerpiece of *Deafman Glance,* and most importantly, provided the youngster with a shot at life. In the film's postscript, it is duly noted that both Raymond and Christopher are doing well today.

Otto-Bernstein effectively merges Wilson's personal life with his artistic and professional development. Though *Absolute Wilson* does address its subject's later period, particularly citing Wilson's most recent offering of *The Black Rider* (2004), the film mostly consists of his earlier work. Following an overview of his childhood and adolescence, Wilson is located within New York City's avant-garde of the 1960's and 70's, before extensive documentation is given to his landmark piece, *Einstein on the Beach* (1976). In the latter case, a rich pastiche of performance footage, production photographs, and personal interviews is underscored with Phillip Glass's music from the opera itself. From Susan Sontag's unbridled endorsement - she claims to have seen it forty times - to the piece's signature image of a classic steam engine, this segment proves to be both informative and engaging, while reifying *Einstein on the Beach's* seminal place in the Wilsonian repertoire.

If *Einstein* is depicted as a triumph, the ill-fated *Civil Wars* is seen as a failure. Indeed, Wilson describes it as an "artistic murder." Borrowing footage from Howard Brookner's 1987 documentary *Robert Wilson and 'The Civil Wars,'* Otto-Bernstein contextualizes Wilson's multi-national/cultural endeavor as a well-intended project that had enormous potential, but was undone by the bureaucracy of the Los Angeles Olympic Arts Council. Replete with images and commentary from both 1984 and today, she presents the production's untimely cancellation - one month before opening after years of preparation- from Wilson's point of view. Despite *Civil Wars's* sprawling breadth and corresponding cost, Otto-Bernstein makes no effort to hold him accountable for its demise. However,

if Wilson is rendered sympathetically in comparison to the likes of Olympic Art's Council President Robert Fitzpatrick, he is shown as an authoritarian, and arguably, abusive director to his performers. Live footage of the *Civil Wars* rehearsal and production process captures him in moments of pique, outrage, and condescension. Moreover, Wilson's tireless commitment to perfection places unreasonable demands on his cast and crew, as is likewise exemplified by the documentary's treatment of *Seven-Day Play*. Having literally transpired over seven restless days in the Iranian desert, Otto Bernstein graphically demonstrates how the project resulted in the hospitalization of over half the performing company, including Wilson himself, because of dehydration and exhaustion. Interviews with actors coupled with live footage that spans from the performance site to hospital beds leave the viewer to ponder *Seven-Day Play* as entirely foolhardy, or the plight of an artistic visionary.

Wilson's parting remark within Otto-Bernstein's film is rather telling: "think what is the wrong thing to do....and then do it." This comment functions as a fitting coda for the documentary's coupling of the personal and the artistic. In addition to *Absolute Wilson's* remarkable assortment of archival material, its most salient feature is its treatment of Wilson himself in relationship to his artistry. One can readily associate Wilson's character, as defined by the life experiences the film chooses to cite, with the demands, innovativeness, iconoclasm, multiculturalism, and child-like imagination of his aesthetic. *Absolute Wilson* therefore strikes an understated irony by functioning as the narrative of a figure whose artistry defies the literal and favors the imagistic. Consequently, it provides worthy entertainment and enlightenment for Wilsonian scholars and curious spectators alike.

PETER ZAZZALI
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DAS LEBEN DER ANDEREN / THE LIVES OF OTHERS. DIRECTED BY: FLORIAN HENCKEL VON DONNERSMARCK. 137 MIN. RELEASED: 23 MARCH 2006 (GERMANY) 15 SEPTEMBER 2006

The Lives of Others, Or Why Forgettable German Films Win Oscars and Film Critics for The New Yorker Don't Always Know What They Are Talking About

Is everyone afraid to say it? Or are we so taken in with the story of an artist and a *Stasi* spy, that we won't admit it? As a film, *The Lives of Others* was mediocre at best. Visually, technically, formally nothing stands out. Anthony Lane of *The New Yorker* remarks that it is in color but washed out with lots of drab gray to reflect life in East Germany. Isn't this a cliché? Isn't this exactly what we expect in a movie about life behind the iron curtain? Does this make it Oscar worthy? I hope not.

The film tells the straightforward story of the East German surveillance state through the eyes of a *Stasi* captain, Gerd Wiesler (Ulrich Mühe), and the artists he spies on, director Georg Reyman (Sebastian Koch) and actress

Christa-Maria Sieland (Martina Gedeck). It employs the conventions of Hollywood-style continuity editing throughout, complete with a dramatic car accident to kill off the female lead. Isn't this, like the "drab gray," just another cliché? Killing off the woman to make reconciliation among men possible?

Had this been one of Hollywood's own films, independent or not, it would not have garnered any nominations for Oscars of any type. So how can Anthony Lane claim that "if there is any justice, this year's Academy Award for best foreign-language film will go to *The Lives of Others*?" Have our expectations of foreign films dropped so low that a German film that doesn't put us to sleep or bore us can win? Or is the prize now used as a means to recognize directors soon to be brought into the Hollywood fold? Don't be surprised if you see Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (minus the aristocratic surname that might smack too obviously of elitism for American tastes) take the same path as so many other successful German directors since the 1980s - straight to Hollywood - where they become indistinguishable from their American peers. There was a time when Germans brought technical innovations, creative ideas, and artistic merit to the sunny hills of southern California. Now they seem to bring little more than a Zelig-like ability to look just like those around them - *Mitläufer* - as so many German citizens of the both the Nazi and GDR regime have been called.

It's not that this is a bad film *per se*, it's not. If you like semi-sappy almost self-righteous melodramas that suck you in with the appeal of eavesdropping on your neighbor, you could do much worse. But is this the type of film for which the German film industry wants to be recognized in the Twenty-First Century? Is this what the German film industry does now, produce inexpensive Hollywood look-a-likes about German history? Maybe it is. Maybe we should just resign ourselves to it.

Should we be surprised that an up-and-coming captain for the *Stasi* eventually finds the lives of the artists on which he spies more compelling, and less lonely, than his own? Especially given the fact that the artists lived what would have to be seen as extravagant lives by the standards of the GDR.

The stark contrast between the empty lives of *Stasi* agents and glamorous artists is driven home by the three types of sex depicted in the film: mechanical sex with a prostitute (all Gerd the agent ever gets), consensual rape (Christa-Maria and a party boss using his political power to get into her pants), and the sort-of romantic insecure sex had by the Christa-Maria and Georg as they are spied upon by the agents in the attic (as good as it got in the Communist East, or so we are led to believe).

Yet this *is* what the film does best. It depicts how the internal surveillance of its citizens by the government of the GDR corroded social relationships all the way into the bedroom, the most intimate space of people's lives. But it could have done it better. Distrust was everywhere in the GDR and people made concessions on a daily basis; yet in this film it still feels like something that takes place among the social and political elite.

If the film has a message for Germany today, it is either, *Stasi* spies were people too and even had feelings; or heavy-handed police states that rely on surveillance and intimidation for loyalty are, in the end, corrupt. But even these lines are too clearly drawn and depicted almost as black and white. All

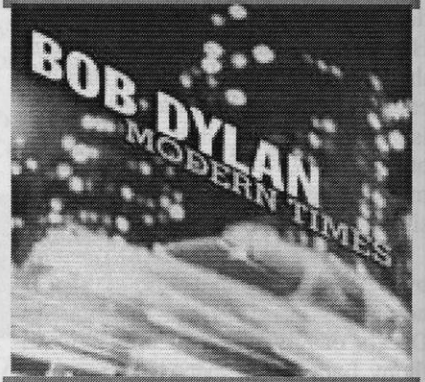
of Geisler's superiors are clearly of the evil, villainous type, those we might, for example, want to prosecute for war crimes. And everyone below him? Surprise again, somehow more human, redeemable, not to blame, and not fully aware of the consequences of his / her actions. Is this any different from the scapegoating of the Nazi elite so as not to address the roots of authoritarianism in German society in the 1950s?

We have to wonder what Anthony Lane means when he says that "if there is any justice, this year's Academy Award for best foreign-language film will go to *The Lives of Others*." Is he embracing the fact that the Oscars have become so corrupt that they are unable to even recognize innovative, challenging foreign films? Or perhaps that melodrama, in which stereotypical social elites figure prominently, is the best way to address social ills and come to terms with a nation's political past? Let's hope neither, but it does make you wonder.

There are good foreign films that should be recognized. Germans can even make good films. But *The Life of Others* is neither an Oscar-worthy foreign film, nor a good representation of what the German film industry should strive to be. I'm holding out for the next Lang, Murnau, Fassbinder or Wenders. Directors who made films that either opened up new worlds, or opened up new windows onto our world, and taught Hollywood a thing or two in the process.

Nels Jeff Rogers
University of Kentucky

Music



Modern Times. Bob Dylan. Columbia Records. Released: 29 August 2006

Bob Dylan's most recent album, *Modern Times*, is the first album that Dylan has released since *Love and Theft* in 2001 (that album happened to come into stores on September 11 of that year), and so Dylan fans have been waiting for five years. *Modern Times* features Dylan going back to his roots in the blues, particularly in hard-driving tracks like "Thunder on the Mountain," which opens the album, and "Rollin' and Tumblin'," the album's third track. Interspersed with these songs are softer and lighter tunes, such as "Spirit on the Water," the album's second track, and "When the Deal Goes Down," the album's fourth track, which is actually a waltz.

The album's themes run the gamut

from apocalyptic end times through the pains of love to social criticism. "Workingman's Blues #2" is particularly rich in the latter. It begins with an idyllic invocation of dusk - "There's an evenin' haze settlin' over town/Starlight by the edge of the creek" - only to proceed to the contemporary situation of the American working class: "The buyin' power of the proletariat's gone down / Money's getting' shallow and weak."

This is one of the few best-selling albums in recent memory that actually feature the word "proletariat." The lyrical voice of this song seems to be a worn-out American worker who has fought all his life and is now down on his luck: "I can't save a dime/ I got to be careful, I don't want to be forced/ Into a life of continual crime." In this desperate situation he looks back on his life and takes stock of his situation, hoping for an improvement: "I got a brand new suit and a brand new wife/ I can live on rice and beans." At the same time, he takes a realistic look at the world around him: "Some people never worked a day in their life/ Don't know what work even means." This working class voice seems to believe however, that the fight he has fought is worthwhile: "You can hang back or fight your best on the frontline," he proclaims, with the implication that he has fought his best and does not regret it.

Modern Times has some beautiful lyrical interludes. "Beyond the Horizon" recalls the famous Judy Garland hit "Over the Rainbow" (1939-40, music by Harold Arlen, lyrics by E. Y. Harburg, written in the midst of the Great Depression, when Americans longed for a better world), and both songs are invocations of a utopian world that is better than the world we all live in. Dylan's take on this theme begins with the words "Beyond the horizon, behind the sun/At the end of the rainbow life has only begun." In this utopian world people are willing to pray for one's soul, love becomes easy, and death is not a reality. The song reminds me of Brecht's "Lied vom Sankt Nimmerleinstag" from *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, although it is not as explicit in its social criticism. Just as the basic message of "Lied vom Sankt Nimmerleinstag" is that utopia will never come, so too the message of "Beyond the Horizon" is that the lyrical voice will never reach this place; he can happily imagine it and sing about it, but he will never actually experience it.

Coming only a year after the collapse of the levee in New Orleans in August of 2005, "The Levee's Gonna Break" seems to refer, at least partially, to that catastrophe: "Some people on the road carryin' everything they own/Some people got barely enough skin to cover their bones." And yet this song is also deeply rooted in the southern and black blues tradition, and the levee can also be thought of symbolically: it could refer to social frustration that could ultimately lead to revolution - "Few more years of hard work, then there'll be a 1,000 years of happiness" or "Some people still sleepin', some people are wide awake" - but it could also refer to the psychic pressures on the lyrical voice, who says, "I tried to get you to love me, but I won't repeat that mistake" and "I ain't got enough room to even raise my head." In this song, as in many of the songs on the album, the social and the personal combine with the apocalyptic and the eschatological.

This is particularly true in the album's final song, "Ain't Talkin," which begins and ends with a description of a kind of paradisiacal garden, but this is a Garden of Eden whose creator is absent - "There's no one here, the gardener is

gone" - and from which, at any rate, the lyrical voice is banned: "I was passing by yon cool crystal fountain/ Someone hit me from behind." What is left to the lyrical voice is the quasi-Biblical expulsion from paradise and a seemingly never-ending journey "through the cities of the plague," full of endless suffering and unhappiness. The unhappiness is caused both by social conditions - "They will crush you with wealth and power" - and also by unhappy love: "Got to get you out of my miserable brain." Of particular importance to the lyrical voice seems to be peace and quiet, which appears to be in exceedingly short supply in the "modern times" that give the album its name: "They will tear your mind away from contemplation." This is a theme that comes up in several other tracks, for instance in "Workingman's Blues #2," whose lyrical voice complains that "they worry and they hurry and they fuss and they fret/ They waste your nights and days," and in the love song "Nettie Moore," whose lyrical voice announces that "the world of research has gone berserk/Too much paperwork," and that he has to "get away from all these demagogues."

This is the album of an old man who can contemplate the possibility of apocalypse with reasonable calmness; he has already lived a full and difficult life, and he is not afraid of the moment "when the deal goes down," i.e. the moment of death or the end of the world: "In this earthly domain, full of disappointment and pain/You'll never see me frown." It is typical of the album that this song about the end of life, or of the world, is a mellow waltz. The modern times that give the album its name are somehow timeless and ever-repeating, just like the circular pattern of this waltz or Brecht's water wheel of history from the "Ballade vom Wasserrad." As in many other Dylan albums and songs, water plays a crucial role here, too, from "Spirit on the Water" to "The Levee's Gonna Break." Dylan, at least, does not seem to be afraid of the water.

Stephen Brockmann
Carnegie Mellon University

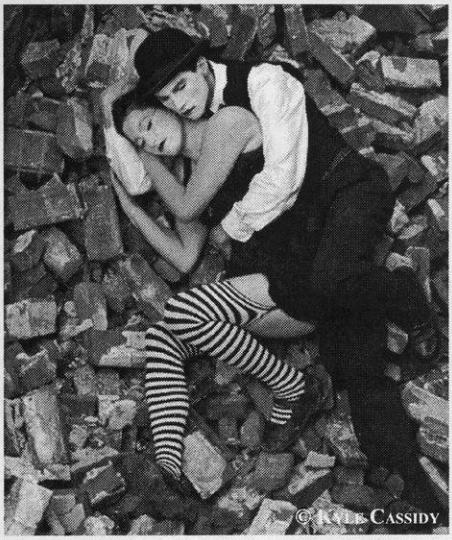
And Now For The Cover Story ...

Aber widerstand Leisten!

THE DRESDEN DOLLS' BRECHTIAN PUNK CABARET

coin-operated boy
sitting on the shelf
he is just a toy
but I turn him on
and he comes to life
automatic joy
that is why I want a
coin-operated boy. . .

(from "Coin Operated Boy")



THE DRESDEN DOLLS. THE DRESDEN DOLLS. 8 FOOT RECORDS. RELEASED: 27 APRIL 2004; YES, VIRGINIA. ROADRUNNER RECORDS. RELEASED: 18 APRIL 2006

Amanda Palmer, who writes and composes all the songs for The Dresden Dolls, has always had a do-it-yourself approach to art; that is, you invite everybody to your backyard and say *Let's put on a play!* "And," she confided in a recent conversation, "I had a big backyard."

So, what exactly does this two-person rock and roll band have in common with Bertolt Brecht? American Repertory Theater artistic director Robert Woodruff believes they "have extended Brecht's ideas of performance into this century." They characterize their music as "Brechtian Punk Cabaret" partly as a way of saying they are difficult to pigeonhole, but also because Brecht and Weill were big influences on Palmer. As a young teen she had albums of both men's works, and it thrilled her to discover musical theater that really had something to say. Furthermore, Brecht and Weill crafted their work without recourse to the sappy or cornball standards of American theater at that time, which might have required "washing a man right out of one's hair," say, or enumerating all the things that a "dame ain't nothin' like."

Listen to Andrew Periale deliver his review as an Audio Review, including clips from the Dresden Dolls' songs as well as photos, video clips, youtube links, and more, go to www.ecibs.org

Also, Palmer had the good fortune of attending high school in Lexington, Massachusetts, which had an excellent drama program. Her education there began with a production of ***The Good Woman of Setzuan*** and ended, thanks to the encouragement of mentor/teacher Steve Bogart, with her creating an original piece called ***The Last Show On Earth*** based on the album ***Asylum*** by The Legendary Pink Dots. This piece so broke with convention that officials at the State Drama Competition felt it couldn't meaningfully be judged alongside "normal" theater. "It was good, in a way," said Palmer, "because the next year they created a category for physical theatre."

Palmer interned at *Horizontteater* in Cologne, where she saw firsthand how a professional theater works (and honed her German language skills). Back in Boston, she did both street performing and experimental theatre pieces, directing the collectively created ***Hotel Blanc*** (and others) with The Shadowbox Theatre.

She formed the Dresden Dolls in 2000 with drummer (and sometime guitarist) Brian Viglione. They've spent much of the last six years touring, both here abroad, signing with the Roadrunner label in 2004.

I first heard their initial, eponymous album while out on tour with Boston's Underground Railway Theater. I was immediately struck with the theatricality of the music. The combination of keyboard and percussion is just right for a cabaret stage. They also perform in pantomime white-face and costumes evocative of a Modernist-era Berlin night club. The influence of Brecht and Weill - even if subliminal - are not hard to spot.

Seeing them in concert around the release of their second album - ***Yes, Virginia*** did nothing to diminish that impression. Certainly the influences of Rock-and-Roll, and Punk are there, but the energy on stage is modern theater at its most basic, and songs like "Missed Me" might have come directly out of ***The Threepenny Opera*** had Polly Peacham been a tad less stable:

Missed me
Missed me
Now you've gone and done it
Hope you're happy
in the county penitentiary
it serves you right
for kissing little girls
but I'll visit
if you miss me

Say you miss me
(How's the food they feed you?)
Do you miss me?
(Will you kiss me through the window?)
Do YOU MISS ME?
MISS ME?
Will they ever let you go?
I miss my mister so . . .

And Brian beats on his drums with a

fervor that belies his tuxedo and black derby, while Amanda alternately stands or sits behind a Kurtzweill electric keyboard from which the "z" has been artfully removed. She might just as well be asking for directions to the next whiskey bar:

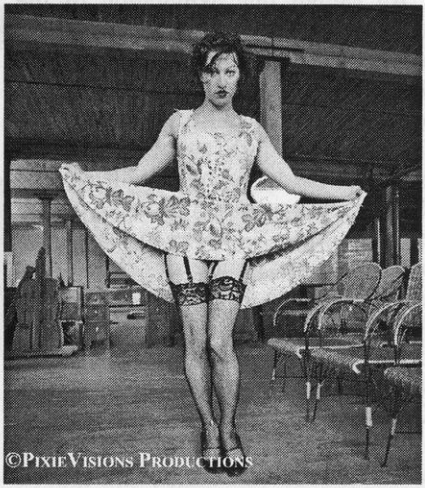
I'm trying hard
not to be ashamed
not to know the name
of who is waking up beside me
or the date, the season, or the city
but at least the ceiling's very pretty
and if you are holding it against me

I'll be on my best behavior
taking shots for mother nature
once my fist is in the cupboard
love is never falling over

Should I choose a noble occupation
if I did I'd only show up late and
sick and they would stare at me with
hatred
plus my only natural talent's wasted on
my alcoholic friends
my alcoholic friends...

Within the signature Dresden Dolls-style there is a great deal of variety in the music, and the writing is very smart. Palmer creates characters to populate the dark corners of her universe, and in telling their stories she skewers many institutions and human frailties -hypocrisy, vanity, and the ramifications of bad character - as in "Mandy Goes to Med School":

I've been feeling dull as a coat hanger
pretty as a picture of a patient on a
fresh IV
giddy as a gangbanger with a set of
sutures
where his magic johnson ought to be.



It's such a bouncy little number that I didn't realize for several listenings just what it was that Mandy was perpetrating. Palmer often uses humor to achieve a kind of distancing effect. The import of her lyrics about back alley abortions, battered brides, broken hearts and drinking to excess sinks in well after our feet are tapping and we're smiling at the energetic music or a particularly delicious turn of phrase:

she's been trying with limited success
to get him to turn out the lights and
dance
cause like any girl all she really wants
that fickle little bitch romance (2x)

and that is why a girl is called a tease
and that is why a guy is called a sleaze
and that's why god made escort
agencies
one life to live and mace and GHB

and that's the way it is in minnesota
that's the way it is in oklahoma –homa
that's the way since the animals and
noah
first climbed onto the shores of
california

By setting this exploration of the tension between XX and XY in a sort of mythical heartland, Palmer exploits the quality of alterity. She allows us to see ourselves and our relationships (in which the "girls are crying and the boys are masturbating") with enough distance that we do not reflexively recoil and close ourselves to the impact of her modern "prairietale." And if that isn't at the core of *Verfremdungseffekt*, then why the heck were those plays Brecht wrote for the Berliner Ensemble set in China, the Caucasus, London, Chicago?

All this begs the question: Why aren't these songs the musical setting for a stage play? As of this past winter, they are. The Dresden Dolls developed a new work (***The Onion Cellar***) in collaboration with the American Repertory Theater (Cambridge, MA). The process of creating this piece was not so much Brechtian as it was a Nestroy-style "Jux" that played itself out over the course of a year. It is tale that needs its own article.

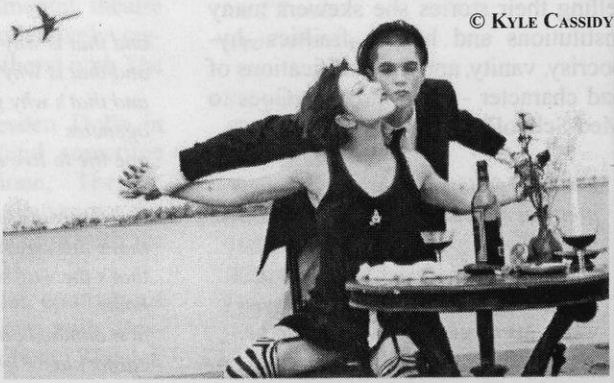
Read Andrew Periale's review of the Onion Cellar later in this volume.

Palmer is not only a writer/composer: she directs, does performance art, drawing, and collage. The first CD booklet is full of her artwork. (The booklet for the second CD, ***Yes, Virginia***, is stunning; each page is a work by a different artist embodying the essence of one of the songs on the album, and each work was created on the crumbling architecture of a theater in the process of being demolished.) She is modest about her training and technical ability as a keyboard player, but there is no doubt she is an original and has a lot to say.

Viglione is the heartbeat. A great drummer, he has the charm of a young David Bowie with a ***Clockwork Orange*** edge. He also has range. At the end of the concert we saw, he stepped out from behind the drum kit for a curtain call. When he picked up an acoustic guitar, the entire mood of the concert hall changed. Palmer began singing Jaques Brel's "In the Port of Amsterdam." As the song built in intensity, the audience (the vast majority teenagers) grew still. We were all caught up in the moment. I felt the presence of the Masters - Brecht, Weill and Brel, certainly, but Valentin, Chaplin - all of them tapping ghostly toes and smiling that there should be such candles as these in the darkness.

life is no cabaret
I don't care what you say
we're inviting you anyway . . .

ANDREW PERIALE
PERFORMER, PLAYWRIGHT AND EDITOR OF *PUPPETRY INTERNATIONAL* MAGAZINE

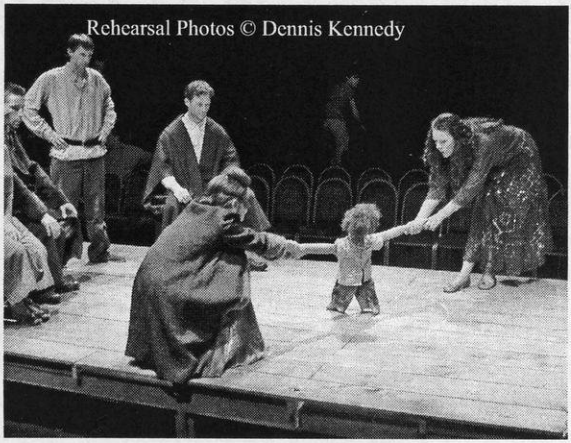


© KYLE CASSIDY

THEATER - BRECHT PRODUCTIONS

THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE. ADAPTATION: FRANK MCGUINNESS. DIRECTION / DESIGN: DENNIS KENNEDY. SAMUEL BECKETT THEATRE, TRINITY COLLEGE (UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN), IRELAND. 1 JUNE 2006

Interpreting classic texts, always an opportunity and a problem, is no less a challenge when performing Brecht today. The old argument about Brecht having achieved the ineffectuality of a classic always seemed to me a lazy *non sequitur*. It is fruitless to judge a production in terms of fidelity to an 'original' text or 'recoverable' intention, should they even be uncontentiously ascertainable. What matters is its own intentionality, and the measure of an inevitable rereading. We can, and should, now simply recognize that Brecht *is* a 'classic' author, and that his works, therefore, must be reinterpreted.


Rehearsal Photos © Dennis Kennedy

The set for *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, performed by the Trinity College Dublin School of Drama's students of Acting Studies in the black box experimental Beckett Theatre, unencumbered by proscenium or other furniture, was as visually dramatic as any I have seen, let alone in Brechtian theatre. A reinvented three-dimensional acting space, starting from a traverse stage, focussed the mind and freed the imagination: a long, narrow rectangle of wooden boards about two feet above the floor, stretching back into this space, with steps at the front end for most 'entrances,' and at the other end vertical boards another three feet high, creating an indented elevated ledge, space enough for Azdak's chair and Jussup's bed, behind which the same width of golden wooden planks rose straight up into the light bars & gridiron walkway 25 feet above (see rehearsal shot photograph). At the walkway, a narrow horizontal gap cut across these planks. Above it, the wood reached up another five feet into the darkness. Strategically placed small holes broke up the smoothness of this soaring wooden wall.

From this height two equally wide semi-transparent cloths, dipping slightly in the middle, stretched over the elongated platform stage below, like clouds in the sky. Light was projected though them: red for blood, battle, and chaos, green for coolness, mountain slopes, and white for glaciers and sunshine. Never has the story been so poetically located, showing how it unfolds in the mountains of the Caucasus, when so much happens in the open air. The audience faced either side of the elongated platform: a rectangular the-

atre in the round.

The musicians at one end of this narrow performance space sometimes came forward to sit on the boards: drums to underscore tension, knocking on invisible doors, the water drops of melting snow; saxophone and guitar to accompany the female singer. Caught up in the story, the narrator (Maeve Fitzgerald) moved among the actors, except when she sat on the ledge beneath the wooden cliff at the other end.

The elongated but narrow acting space gave an urgency to the potentially unwieldy story-play, moving it rapidly, keeping it under control, sustaining its interrupted tensions. The pace slowed appropriately for some moments though not enough for others. There were extensive cuts: the caravansery episode in scene two, some of Azdak's judgments in scene four, a few songs.

Grusche's (Aoife O'Donnell) crossing the rickety bridge to escape the soldiers happened high up on the walkway. With the child (rag dolls that grew in size) on her back under a cloak, she swung out, off the iron grating, into that gap between the boards, now a ledge for her feet, creating a hand-in-the-mouth circus gasp (Brecht says it's a 'two thousand foot drop'), holding onto the top of the extended boards above, a foot suddenly slipping as if she would really plunge to her death: a dramatic, even alarming representation. She wore a wire harness, of course, but it was invisible. At the end, Azdak climbs straight up this wooden precipice, using those spaces, now revealed as hand- and toe-holds, like a practised mountaineer or social escape artist (rather than climber) he had to be, in a truly astonishing disappearance over the mountains and into the dark.

But it also brought parts of the play closer to Irish historical experience, at least as we have learned to see it: an ingrained culture of subservience and deference among the dispossessed, interspersed by occasional, wild and unsuccessful rebellions, together with the knowledge that individual justice, if ever attainable, can only come about through connections that the majority do not have or by that massive circumvention of normality, which we call fantasy. The repression in Irish history was real enough and the solutions, apart from acquiescence, were imposed: execution, transportation, and emigration.

This rectangular platform stage sometimes made it difficult to follow a rapidly spoken dialogue when the actors faced the other side of the audience space, or spoke down the stage, if you were sitting behind them. They played to a historically familiar Irish experience, peasant people caught up in disastrous events, hence slipping

effortlessly into a 'native' tradition of speech patterns and behaviour which, however, runs the danger of reaching for the easy comic effect that is sustained by local accent comedy. I doubt they were aware of any problem here, or that other acting styles are possible, so familiar is this cultural model to their audience. This risks adjusting the play to a more comfortable psychological space, where the audience will not feel compelled to question themselves.

But it also brought parts of the play closer to Irish historical experience, at least as we have learned to see it: an ingrained culture of subservience and deference among the dispossessed, interspersed by occasional, wild and unsuccessful rebellions, together with the knowledge that individual justice, if ever attainable, can only come about through connections that the majority do not have or by that massive circumvention of normality, which we call fantasy. The repression in Irish history was real enough and the solutions, apart from acquiescence, were imposed: execution, transportation, and emigration.

In the everyday of such cultures, something as well understood in Ireland as in China where the 'plot' of this play originated, you cannot speak directly, saying what you think. Telling the truth is a bad idea, everything must go by indirection. You cannot trust the police, and morality is therefore situational, depending on what attains greatest benefit. The church both railed against this and went along with it. Thus the devious 'Irish' character was formed. The best left in frustration over the impossibility of changing anything. Now we are modernizing what is still in many ways, at a deeper emotional level, a mistrustful peasant culture: first you look after yourself; others, let alone outsiders, cannot be trusted. The public sphere is still an abstract concept and this explains the widespread corruption in Irish politics. There is no really alternative politics in Ireland. The wider parallel can only be taken so far, but I think it is discernible, at least in folk memory, and perhaps still influential in the 'national' psyche. I imagine that some of this makes the play available to Irish minds in a way that more developed juridicial and political cultures find difficult to accept.

However, when the text impedes such acting out of national reflexes, also because it does not follow conversational speech patterns, operating on another level that can also include the comic, performance was differently shaped. Experienced actors would have made more of these opportunities. You could see some of this in the pursuing soldiers, slowing down the gestures and letting the scene speak for itself. The narrator is anyway not tempted to fall into a popular demotic since the discourse inhibits it. Then the panic that drives the participants, their fear and anguish, is placed within another tempo, and bracketed by silences that leave space for thought.

To avoid highlighting particular moments must have been a deliberate choice, perhaps out of an understandable desire not to appear too 'Brechtian': that mixture of misplaced reverence and unsuitable political correctness, which has not grasped that Brecht's theatre is best served by rethinking a purpose, not by imitating a style. But that necessarily poses the question of what replaces it. Moving

a purpose, not by imitating a style.

into the characters, instead of the supposedly Brechtian method of standing outside them, offers both an opportunity and constitutes a danger. It does not help if the figures are then adjusted to extraneous expectations, but if this enables a real rereading of the 'text' by exploring what has not always been recognized and realized, namely how Brecht often focussed an always individually expressed social unconscious that is both politically and psychologically penetrating, the result can really illuminate.

Telling passages in Brecht's text, reproduced in this version, were diminished because the relation between their meaning and the moment within which they occur and against which they are 'spoken,' was not clearly demarcated by their presentation. When Grusche watches over the child in the palace, the narrator speaks for her as she is about to decide, culminating in the sentence that Auden said he could not translate because he did not understand it: 'Terrible is the temptation to do good.' It is crucial to the play but was almost mumbled as a throwaway remark. The comic marriage worked well enough, though when the priest offers to administer the last rites as well, nobody laughed. He had not claimed the space to establish himself as the cheap, drunken monk, another sacrifice to the tempo. One short scene too many was sacrificed, one of the most powerful, and politically astute, moments in the play, part of a strategy whereby the voice of the social unconscious speaks both directly and indirectly, when Azdak puts 'Mother Grusinia' on the throne of justice, sits on the steps below and says to her: 'be merciful to us, the damned.' The thinking audience is then caught, complicit with Azdak's recognition of his own shortcomings and why he cannot overcome them.

But there were more gains than losses in this adventurous production. One such gain was the addition of the last words from the 1944 'Epilogue,' not carried, because politically unperformable, into the 1949 text, and now treated as textual paralipomena. The Old Man replies to the Agronomist, who tells him in respect of the ceded land, 'You will see a garden,' in what then become the play's last words, 'God help you if it isn't one.' This was, however, spoken more as an aside, instead of standing out as a warning of a possible history, and the thought, whose implications may not have been present to the audience, seemed to be shoved aside by a stamping dance, part end-of-comedy, but partly intended to suggest the political difficulties and violence that lay ahead. Afterwards, the Director said the dance should have come before that sentence, which would then have had the last word.

It sounds like an echo of Marx's observation in *The Communist Manifesto* that the class struggle's outcome is uncertain and might well end with the ruin of the contending forces. Since Brecht strategically placed the names of Mayakovsky and, more challenging still, Rosa Luxemburg, in the 'Prologue,' he would surely have agreed with the appositeness of this conclusion, which constitutes part of that re-reading of the whole text. Not to re-read Brecht, something noticed long ago by Heiner Müller, among others, is to betray him.

ANTONY TATLOW
UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

MOTHER COURAGE. TRANS. DAVID HARE. BERKELEY REPERTORY THEATRE (CO-PRODUCTION WITH LA JOLLA THEATRE). DIRECTOR: LISA PETERSON. ORIGINAL MUSIC: GINA LEISHMAN. BERKELEY, CA / USA. 13 OCTOBER 2006

Mother Courage at the Berkeley Repertory Theatre (a co-production with the La Jolla Playhouse) was one of many revivals of Brecht's great anti-war play, both in the US and abroad, in 2006. Obie Award-winner Lisa Peterson, the director, used a new translation by David Hare, with a new score from composer Gina Leishman. The first act lasted 90 minutes, the second 50 minutes, with one brief intermission. Additionally, I stayed on for the lively post-performance discussion in which both audience and critics alike were struck by the timeliness of Brecht's play; lending credence to Edward Albee's famous comment about Brecht: "Bertolt Brecht is one of only four playwrights from the 20th century that we could not have done without."

Lisa Peterson's production used text, scenery, and props to help the audience discover similarities between wars, whether they were fought in 17th or 20th century Europe or in 21st century Iraq. The dialogue between the two recruiters in the opening scene, supposedly takes place in 1624, yet the problems they discuss, their difficulties of finding soldiers through deliberate misrepresentation of the war, seem very current. The audience caught on immediately and responded with laughter and sneering remarks. I do not recall any other performance of a Brechtian play where the viewers so readily identified with Brecht's provocative views.

The bare stage, with a string of lights hanging from above and black walls with a growing array of graffiti, was truly Brechtian. Each of the twelve scenes, episodes from Mother Courage's journey through war-ravaged Europe, were introduced by an actor who scribbled the titles (e.g. "Sweden, 1624" / "Poland, 1629") on a black wall. The cast stepped in and out of its roles, presenting a song, putting the on-stage action temporarily on hold. Most actors, including the three musicians doubled and tripled as soldiers, farmers and other minor roles. The musical instruments included a tuba, an accordion, an out-of-tune piano, and a drum. The twelve songs forcefully presented

by the actors, who turned toward the audience, provided a cabaret-like atmosphere, transforming the play into an entertaining version of political drama.

Mother Courage (Ivonne Coll) moved on stage in a World War II-modified jeep with spoked front wheels and a yoke, towed by her two sons. Eventually staves and a canvas were added, making it look more like Helene Weigel's wagon, now on display in the Brecht-Weigel Museum, in Buckow / Germany. Coll portrayed the main character as a tough business woman - shrewd, fearless, pragmatic, and doggedly determined to survive. However, as a mother Coll was less convincing as, for example, Helene Weigel had been. Although committed to her children she seemed to recover all too quickly as she loses her children one by one. Business comes first, her children second - that is the impression one gets. In the first scene we see her haggling while her son Eilif (Justin Leath) is being whisked away. She moves on. She haggles too long about the ransom for Swiss Cheese (Drew Hirschfield). After he has been shot and his corpse has been taken away she is shown grieving for a brief moment, but then she eagerly moves on. In the final scene we see her cradling her dead daughter (Katie Huard), singing a lullaby, but when it comes to covering the funeral expenses she counts her coins, and then takes one back. It is shocking to see her pulling off Kattrin's shoes to sell them before she turns over the corpse to the peasants. This highly effective gestus was added by Coll.

But Coll also was able to make Courage appear in a more favorable light; for example, when she turned down the Cook's offer because she would not abandon her daughter, at least, as long as she was alive. In the post-performance discussion, Coll explained that, what she admired most about Mother Courage was her determination to survive, her anti-sentimental stance which is needed to cope during rough times. In that sense Coll's view of the title character was more positive than that of Brecht.

Katie Barrett, played Yvette, the camp trollop, with brassy pathos and impressed the audience with her strong singing voice. She was excellent as Mother Courage's shrewd and wily counterpart. Equally impressive were Katie Huard as mute Kattrin, Patrick Kerr as the mousey, defrocked Chaplin, and Jarion Monroe as the philandering Cook.

What certainly was different from the many other productions I have seen was the fast pace, the frenetic energy with which transitions between scenes were made, the mix of comedy, melodrama, music, and tragedy. One critic observed that the overall impression he got was that "war is just one big, devastating circus."

GUDRUN TABBERT-JONES
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

NOTES FROM THE POST-PERFORMANCE DISCUSSION

CAST: HOW DID THE SHOW AFFECT YOU?

AUDIENCE: IT LED ME TO A DEEPLY DISTURBING INVESTIGATION OF MY OWN ENGAGEMENT IN THE IRAQ WAR. IN THAT CONTEXT, THE BLINDNESS OF MOTHER COURAGE IS DEPRESSING. BY COMPARISON TO THOSE SERIOUS ISSUES THE MUSIC IS LIGHT. IT LIFTS THE PRESSURE. IT STRONGLY REMINDED ME OF ITS USE IN CABARET. MOTHER COURAGE IS TRAPPED JUST LIKE WE ARE TRAPPED IN A WAR-LIKE SOCIETY.

CAST: DID YOU ALIGN WITH MOTHER COURAGE?

AUDIENCE: TO A CERTAIN EXTENT, YES! EVEN THOUGH THE STORY PLAYS IN 16TH CENTURY GERMANY IT IS ABOUT SURVIVAL - AN ISSUE WE CAN RELATE TO. IN THAT SENSE, WE CAN EMPATHIZE WITH HER.

AUDIENCE: WHY DID YOU USE THIS PARTICULAR MUSIC? WHY DID YOU NOT USE THE SCORE THAT WAS WRITTEN BY PAUL DESSAU?

CAST: WE ARE USING A NEW TRANSLATION WITH LYRICS SET TO MUSIC IN THE 1930S STYLE TO GAIN A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF OLD MATERIAL. DESSAU'S MUSIC FITS THE ORIGINAL GERMAN TEXT. THIS IS NOT NEW. TO MAKE THE SHOW CONTEMPORARY, MUSIC WAS USED THAT HELPED TO UPDATE THE PLAY.

AUDIENCE: WHAT DOES ALIENATION MEAN TO YOU?

CAST: THE PLAY FORCES ALIENATION ON YOU: YOU HAVE TO SWITCH ROLES, STEP IN AND OUT OF A ROLE - A TECHNIQUE WHICH PREVENTS YOU FROM REFLECTING ON EMOTIONS. YOU ARE FORCED TO INTELLECTUALIZE. INTERRUPTIONS ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH ALIENATION IS ACHIEVED. EXAMPLES ARE COMIC SCENES IN A TRAGIC CONTEXT. THEY PROVIDE COMIC RELIEF AND PREVENT YOU FROM BECOMING SENTIMENTAL AND EMPATHIZING WITH THE CHARACTER YOU PLAY. MOTHER COURAGE IS ABOVE ALL A SURVIVOR HARDENED BY HARSH CONDITIONS. IN THE CURRENT PRODUCTION WE ADDED SOME FEATURES WHICH ARE NOT IN THE ORIGINAL SCRIPT. FOR EXAMPLE: MOTHER COURAGE RETRIEVES THE SHOES FROM HER DAUGHTER'S FEET IN ORDER TO SELL THEM. ON THE OTHER HAND, SHE IS CAPABLE OF SPONTANEOUS GESTURES, OFFERING BRANDY TO THE PEASANT WOMAN WHO FAINTED.

AUDIENCE: MISS COLL, HAS THIS PLAY AFFECTED YOU IN ANY WAY?

COLL: YES, INDEED, IT HAS INFLUENCED MY WAY OF LOOKING AT AND PLAYING A ROLE, THE UNSENTIMENTAL ATTITUDE FOR EXAMPLE. I AM PUERTO RICAN AND WOULD DESCRIBE MYSELF AS SENTIMENTAL AND EMOTIONAL. IN THIS PLAY, I LEARNED TO REFLECT ON THE HUMAN CONDITIONS IN TIMES OF WAR, RATHER THAN GIVE WAY TO MY FEELINGS. SURVIVAL RATHER THAN ETHICAL CONCERNS ARE THE MAIN ISSUE. THOSE WHO ARE CAUGHT IN A WAR CANNOT AFFORD TO BE COMPASSIONATE. MOTHER COURAGE HAS LOST ALL HER PEOPLE – THE ONLY THING LEFT IS HER CART. AT THE END, SHE TALKS TO HER CART – ALONE. SHE DOES NOT KNOW YET THAT EILIF IS DEAD. UNKNOWINGLY SHE ROLLS HER CART OVER EILIF'S GRAVE, A DETAIL THAT WAS ADDED IN THIS PRODUCTION.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

"THE PLAY OFFERS A GREAT WAY TO LOOK AT WAR IN OUR TIME, THE ROLE RELIGION PLAYS, THAT YOU CANNOT SEPARATE THE TWO."

"SURVIVAL AND WHAT IT INVOLVES."

"THE PLAY AFFECTS THE WAY PEOPLE LOOK AT THE IRAQ WAR. IT SHOWS THAT HISTORY CAN AND SHOULD BE A GREAT TEACHER."

CONCLUDING REMARKS:

THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSION WITH THE ACTORS ONE THEME DOMINATED: THE TIMELINESS OF THE PLAY, THE PARALLELS BETWEEN THE THIRTY YEARS WAR AND THE CURRENT WAR IN IRAQ. IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT BRECHT HAD WRITTEN THE PLAY IN SWEDEN. WITH HIS CAUTIONARY TALE HE WANTED TO WARN THE SWEDES AGAINST BECOMING ENTANGLED WITH THE NAZIS TRYING TO PROFIT FROM THE WAR. WAR, BRECHT TOLD THEM, BENEFITS ONLY THOSE BEHIND THE SCENES NOT THOSE WHO ARE CAUGHT IN IT. A NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE AUDIENCE SAID THAT THIS PLAY CONFIRMED THEIR BELIEF THAT WARS NEVER LED TO ANYTHING GOOD. NOT THOSE WHO ARE CAUGHT IN WAR PROFIT, ONLY THOSE WHO PLAY POLITICS BEHIND THE SCENES.

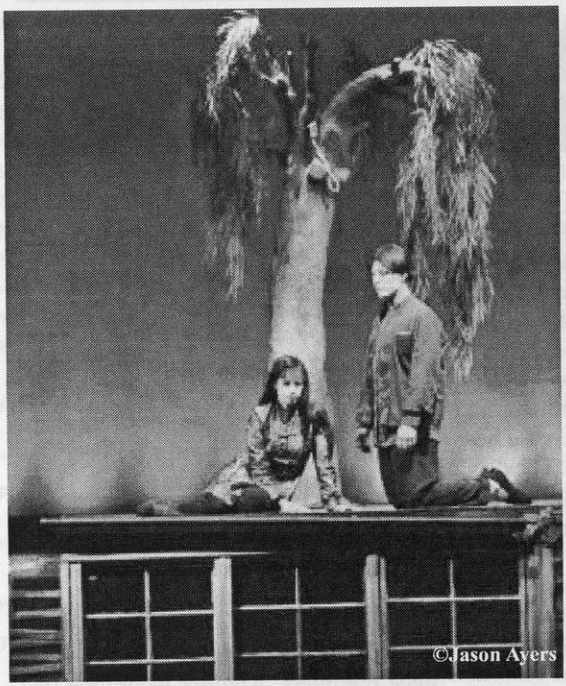
THE GOOD WOMAN OF SZECHUAN. ADAPTATION: TONY KUSHNER / WENDY ARONS. DIRECTOR: BEATRICE RANCEA. LONGSTREET THEATRE, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, COLUMBIA, SC / USA. 10 NOVEMBER 2006

As the largest degree granting program in the state, University of South Carolina-Columbia has a wealth of resources, both in the areas of theatre spaces as well as personnel. Featuring the graduate MFA acting company, many of whom were already Equity actors, *The Good Woman of Szechuan* was presented during Fall 2006 in the Department of Theatre's impressive Longstreet Theatre, an arena seating approximately 400. Directed by guest artist Beatrice Rancea, general manager of the National Theatre of Constanta, Romania, the cast of *Good Woman of Szechuan* was comprised of a mixture of graduate and undergraduate actors as well as a number of faculty and guest artists. Rancea used the Tony Kushner / Wendy Aarons version of *Good Woman of Szechuan*, which featured a straightforward, abbreviated text (the production ran less than two hours).

The design team chose to use one of the four sides of Longstreet as a staging area, leaving the theatre with what was basically a thrust configuration. This staging area was used for Shen Te / Shui Ta's tobacco shop, which included an area above that was used in a number of different ways; for example it was equipped with a tree to be used in Yang Sun's "attempted suicide" scene and was also used to define Wang's sleeping place. Stage mechanics were either exposed or it was apparent that the audience was "shown" the inner workings of the theater during the numerous scenic changes – one example was a series of banners that were manually raised and lowered from the grid above the stage to imply a change of place.

The directorial approach was apparent from the outset as an elaborately staged procession took place with numerous entrances exits, stylized movement, and bits of action. Following the procession, the characters stood on stage together and simultaneously took off their masks and placed them ceremoniously on the stage. They then took out light colored makeup "crème sticks" and applied to their faces in ritual silence. As each cast member left the stage (having completed the makeup process) they stated their names (not character, but *actor* names) to the audience. Rancea's staging was highly physical, cartoon-like and included a great deal of direct contact (*i.e.* dialogue) with audience members. Another technique that was utilized was company developed rhythmic and sound underscoring. For example "The Song of the Smoke" was accompanied by company members tapping chop sticks on the floor of the theater. Throughout the production, scene changes were carefully coordinated using both the actors as well as the tremendous technical capabilities of Longstreet Theatre.

A cast breakdown was not included in the program, so it is not possible in every case to acknowledge particular actors. As is generally the case with Brecht's works, there were some very good smaller and supernumerary roles for the ensemble, many of whom played a number of different parts. The Gods were portrayed as annoying American tourists whose power as "consumers" allowed them to reign supreme. A later scene found two of them dressed as USC cheerleaders while the third wore a USC football suit and



played catch with audience members. Several ensemble members filled in as the freeloading patrons of the tobacco shop, a mass that continued to grow until they were finally ousted by Shui Ta. Eric Bultman gave a great performance as Wang the Water Seller, who was responsible for the necessary direct narration and storytelling that kept the action moving forward. He was adept at stepping in and out of the story and found ways to do so with ease and naturalness. As Yang Sun, Daryl A. Ball was intense and conniving and maintained the qualities to still make him a likeable "bad guy." He was a yuppie "heartbreaker" who used Shin Te and then dropped her as in a scene from a soap opera. Felicia Bertch's Shin Te/ Shui Ta was very Chaplinesque, both in with regard to her movement style, physical choices and in the costume choices for the two characters. A first year MFA student, Bertch did a good job differentiating the two characters while revealing just enough of herself through the roles to maintain the director's vision of showing both the actors and the characters. The company was not unlike many other university companies in its shortcomings – mostly in the areas of diction and physicality. The challenges of the space coupled with the highly physical movement style and depth of text and ideas proved difficult for the actors to embody at times, and several words and physical bits were lost to at least part of the audience.

Brecht's works provide numerous challenges to any professional, semi-professional or amateur company that chooses to stage them. USC's production solidly embraced the same Eastern European performance style that Brecht so profoundly influenced in the mid-twentieth century. The Department's mission to bring an international profile to their graduate actor training program is commendable and was strongly realized in this production of the *Good Woman of Szechuan*.

STEVE EARNEST
Coastal Carolina University

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CITY OF MAHAGONNY. BERTOLT BRECHT / KURT WEILL. TRANSLATION: MICHAEL FEINGOLD. LOS ANGELES OPERA. DIRECTION: JOHN DOYLE. 10 FEBRUARY 2007

Any American opera house that ventures to stage ***The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*** is taking quite a gamble, but to put it on in Los Angeles amounts to double jeopardy. By and large American opera audiences have a distinct preference for the "culinary" in opera and prefer works in which the escapist factor is a substantial quotient, but Mahagonny, for all its "culinary" qualities, should not provide this pleasure. And then, after Las Vegas, Los Angeles is the American city most given to the production of instant gratification, the ultimate target of Brecht and Weill's satire.

One factor might mitigate LA audiences' potential unease with the content of Mahagonny: the city served as a home for Brecht and many other German exiles in the early 1940s. There is, at least, the possibility that the opera's musical and theatrical idiom could speak to Southern Californian audiences. But that is doubtful. Memories of the German Diaspora seem no longer to touch the hearts of local audiences, as was demonstrated by the surprising failure of Robert Wilson's Black Rider at the Ahmanson Theatre last summer. Even though Wilson is a favorite at the LA Opera, when he staged a work in the mode of German Cabaret, audiences stayed away in droves.

Nevertheless, the Los Angeles Opera is seeking to revive the city's memories of its German past as it is planning an extended series of revivals of operas, suppressed by the Nazis as "entartete Musik." The production of ***Mahagonny*** is the first of this series. It was therefore important that the production met with some measure of success, so compromises might have to be made that complimented rather than affronted audience tastes. Because of this, ***Mahagonny*** was marketed more as a musical than satirical music theatre, while the current golden boy of Broadway, John Doyle, who has won critical accolades for his productions of ***Sweeney Todd*** and ***Company***, was hired as stage director. Doyle, however, owes his recent success in musicals to a spare style of staging that audiences find unusually engrossing, and it is difficult to create conditions of similar intimacy on the open spaces of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. It is even questionable, whether, in the case of ***Mahagonny***, one should attempt do so. Consequently, Doyle had recourse to a staging that embraced the culinary aspects of the musical rather than alienated them. This resulted in a production that was visually striking, but also surprisingly polite and restrained; the rough stringency and forthrightness of Brecht and Weill's satire was rarely in evidence. Each time the chorus entered, they did so in long lines of carefully poised singers, indulging in elegant, even fastidious steps.

This overt concern with style led to a production that was strangely lacking in political resonance, so that when, occasionally, a political gesture was made, such as the entire cast giving Nazi salute when the hurricane was about to hit Mahagonny, it seemed forced and lacking in conviction. The staging adhered largely to a post-dramatic aesthetic in that there were few attempts at literal representation. Even the trial in Act III was staged with all the principals sitting on chairs, staring out into the auditorium, with only a minimal attempt to suggest the ambience of a court.

Mark Bailey's sets effectively suggested three different eras in American history: Act I recalled the dustbowl era and the advent of heavy industry; Act II was set against the garish neon signs of Las Vegas in the 50s and 60s; while Act III was unmistakably of our own time as the cast sported laptops and witnesses at the trial were projected onto a huge screen. These shifts in time did have a compelling impact, because through them it became clear that our own age is far more aware of the evils of instant gratification than Brecht and Weill could possibly have been. ***Mahagonny*** might be more a work of the 21st century than the 20th.

Casting also reflected a compromise between opera and the musical. At the musical center of things stood Audra McDonald, the queen of the cross-over divas, who sang Jenny with flamboyance and flair, a figure full of wonderfully louche desire when she seduced Jimmy and bitterly hardboiled in her rejection of him. McDonald is unusually thrilling in the top range of her voice, because it is still filled with the earthiness that usually associated exclusively with the lower range. Anthony Dean Griffey sang a bright and ringing Jimmy, full of optimism and naiveté, with few of the darker, more tragic touches that have so marked many of his other operatic roles. Patti Lupone was fussy and ineffective as Leocadia Begbick; she amused us because she was odd and eccentric, but she did not fill us with apprehension in her role as the founder of Mahagonny. Donny Ray Albert was particularly effective and intimidating as Trinity Moses. James Conlon conducted a precise and well-regulated band, though it was oddly difficult to hear them, which is not usually a problem in fairly good acoustics of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Nevertheless, at times one had to remind oneself to listen to the orchestra as well as the singers, never a desirable circumstance in the performance of opera.

In the end, this ***Mahagonny*** turned out to be a rather half-hearted affair. Michael Feingold's translation was awkward and lacked bite. The production offered neither the sensuous delights of grand opera, nor the harsh pleasure of hearing Brecht's satire and Weill's music delivered in their fullest force. Consequently, the whole event struck one as being quaintly moralistic, as if it were politely asking for the audience's acquiescence rather than confronting it with a hideous image of its own injustices and vicious shortcomings. At the end, therefore, we all clapped politely and then went home to our own private Mahagonnies.

SIMON WILLIAMS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SANTA BARBARA

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN. TRANSLATION: RALPH MANHEIM. DIRECTION: JOHN SHEPHERD. PITTSBURGH PLAYHOUSE REPERTORY COMPANY. 30 MARCH 2007

"I'm coming around to the belief that maybe the work of Brecht is no longer producible."

With these ominous words begins a recent review of *Mother Courage* in the *Pittsburgh City Paper.* The production in question was that of the Pittsburgh Playhouse Repertory Company in the spring of 2007, but the reviewer also had in mind the summer 2006 production on Broadway starring Meryl Streep and Kevin Kline, which he says met with "limited success."The reviewer was not quite sure whether to blame today's audiences or the fact that no other theater group is quite like Brecht's own Berliner Ensemble.

In the company of four Carnegie Mellon undergraduates and Brecht *Jahrbuch* editor Stephen Brockmann, I set out one fine Friday evening in March to find out for myself whether or not Brecht is still producible today.

As this performance opened, we were greeted, appropriately, with smoke and gun fire and actors dressed in 20th century military garb. Somewhat less conventional was director John Shepherd's use of a dilapidated amusement park carousel that served as a kind of *Drehbühne.* Army boots appeared on the turning carousel to mark the marching of the soldiers. It also portrayed the procession of Mother Courage's wagon from one field of battle to the next. And what better way than a carousel to show continual travel without really getting anywhere? A nice touch, I thought.

A mysterious figure veiled in black entered to announce the scenes, but the actors themselves made no attempt to perform according to the dictates of *Verfremdungseffekt.* A change of flags marked the changing fortunes of war.

Director John Shepherd's choice of the Manheim translation of *Mother Courage* was duly credited in the program notes, which also offered a substantial bio of Brecht (adapted from wikipedia) but lamentably no notes on the play itself or on the Thirty Years War. If Brecht is foreign to today's American audiences, how much more so 17th century European history?

The highlight of this production was clearly Douglas Levine's original rock music score, played by lead and bass guitarists, a percussionist and with the composer himself at the keyboard. Especially gripping was Levine's minimalist rendition of "Lullaby Baby," which Mother Courage sings upon the death of Kattrin. I was quite happy to see this fruitful collaboration between local musicians and a regional theater company and I certainly hope that Levine's score finds new life in future productions of *Mother Courage* elsewhere.

Laurie Klatscher did an admirable job of acting in the title role, but her singing (and that of the other cast members as well) left much to be desired. One certainly doesn't have to be a good singer to sing Brecht (In fact, it may even help if one *can't* sing well). But one must at least be able to sing persuasively and confidently.

The youngest actor in this troop of fifteen, Mikelle Johnson, a recent M. F. A. graduate from Yale, gave perhaps the most arresting performance of the evening as "die stumme Kattrin." An actor's face, as well as a picture, can indeed be worth a thousand words.

So, is Brecht still producible today? I think this performance proved that the concerns of the *City Paper's* reviewer

were basically unfounded, though not completely off base. What I missed most in this production was a connection to our own situation today. Despite the fact that the Iraq War is certainly not without its economic dimensions, this production of *Mother Courage* could not shed any light on our current dilemma. But that may be a problem of a different sort.

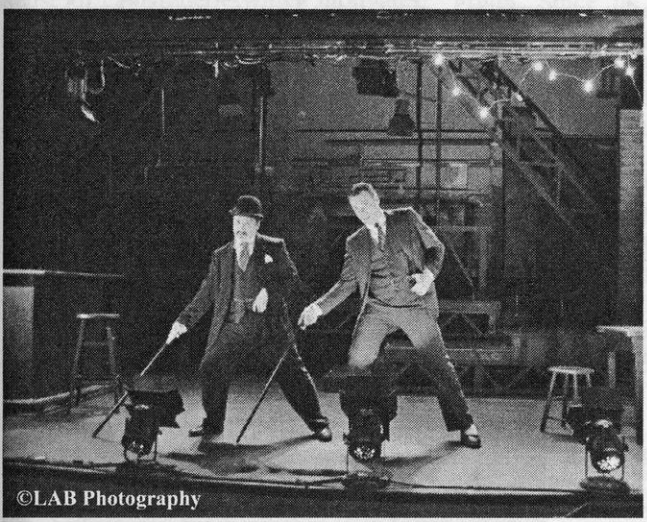
Christian W. Hallstein
Carnegie Mellon University

Happy End. Book and lyrics: Elisabeth Hauptmann (& Bertolt Brecht); Music: Kurt Weill Translation: Michael Feingold Direction: David Fuller. Theatre Ten Ten. New York, NY / USA. 25 May 2007

Brecht's remarkable collaboration with Kurt Weill began with the operatic cantata *Mahogonny Songspiel* in 1927 at the Baden-Baden festival of modern music. Subsequently, they produced two full-length operas (*Threepenny* and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*), a "school opera" (*The Yes-Sayer*), a pair of radio cantatas (*The Berlin Requiem*, *The Lindbergh Flight*), a musical ballet (*The Seven Deadly Sins*), and a musical play (*Happy End*). While the operas remain the most salient part of their repertoire, *Happy End*, which was originally deemed a critical failure, is nonetheless a meritorious work. Like *Threepenny* and *Mahagonny, Happy End* exemplifies a retreat from the "culinary" neo-romantic tradition of German opera, and instead demonstrates the Hauptmann / Brecht / Weill aesthetic: a disintegrated theatrical form as defined by an epic plot in which the music functions independently towards establishing the attitudes and themes communicated by a straightforward narrative. As such, *Happy End* utilizes numerous Brechtian techniques - *Gestus, Verfremdung* - while exposing the hypocrisy of bourgeois society within a construction that is critical yet ironic, didactic rather than sentimental, and most significantly, it aims to be both instructional and fun.

The final act of Theater Ten Ten's recent off-off-Broadway production of *Happy End* captures the musical play's spirit by taking on an energetic level of playing that, oddly enough, was absent from the first two thirds of the performance. Set in Chicago in 1919, the story is arranged in a binary manner that goes back and forth between an underworld of gangsters and the pious confines of the Salvation Army. While one cannot help but note the narrative similarities to Damon Runyan's *Guys and Dolls*, *Happy End*, though equally as lively, is a work of considerable musical and theatrical irony. Weill's score complement the Hauptmann / Brecht book and lyrics towards constructing a story that depicts the dialectic relationship of these two worlds, most specifically located within a romantic connection between one of the gang members, Bill Cracker, and the Salvation Army's missionary Lillian Holiday, a.k.a. "Hallelujah Lil." As their romance builds, both Bill and Lillian compromise the philosophies of their respective organizations - she helps him escape from prison - and therein they build the dramatic and conceptual counterpoise that serves as the piece's underlying theme. Who and what are Hauptmann / Brecht / Weill criticizing? - the criminal underworld, organized religion, or both? Perhaps Bill's parting comments after a

Deux ex Machina device is implemented, thereby insuring a "happy ending," provides an answer of sorts: "Our two worlds must stay together…Robbing a bank is no crime compared to owning one." Thus, not surprisingly, capitalism seems to be the unmentioned villain causing such undesirable socialized behavior as the thievery and murder associated with gangland coupled with the self-righteousness hypocrisy of organized religion. Both sects are driven by monetary objectives resulting in crooked and coercive behavior that is implied to be a byproduct of modern society. Whereas the Salvation Army's leader Major Stone is perfectly "happy" to accept stolen money to fund her organization, the gang's authority figure, "The Fly," who ironically enough is also a woman (indeed, the gender politics of this work would invite an interesting study in itself) continuously orders her men to steal at all costs. Despite the social deviance of either group, however, Hauptmann / Brecht / Weill imbue them with an ironic charm that is constant throughout *Happy End*, if not Theatre Ten Ten's rendition of it.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The first two acts of Theatre Ten Ten's production had a decidedly amateur feel to it. The theatre space was a dingy church basement with a shallow auditorium stage, while the seating consisted of folding chairs on a flat floor, thereby compromising sight lines. However, the most distressing aspect of the evening was the lackluster performances, at least for the first two parts. Admittedly, because an off-off-Broadway production of this sort is a nonpaying assignment, director David Fuller presumably could not assemble the most talented of casts. As a result, one can understand the unevenness among the players. For example, while Theatre Ten Ten's artistic director Judith Jarosz was splendid as the mysterious leader (The Fly) of the underworld, many of her cohorts resorted to amateurish mugging, overacting, and disconnected playing. They appeared uncomfortable and physically tight, as opposed to having fun within the ironic framework of Brecht's appealing characters and Weill's eclectic songs. This was particularly evident in the supporting roles of both the gang and the Salvation Army. Characters with names like "Baby Face," "The Governor," and "The Professor," as well as "Brother Ben Owens" and "Sister Jane," invite exuberant performances that should

define the juxtaposing attitudes of their respective worlds. Unfortunately, the supporting cast's listlessness resulted in spiritless performances that precluded any such socio/cultural delineation. Thus, the song lyrics were often incomprehensible, the character actions undefined, and the playing generally uncommitted.

The lack of liberated playing also extended to the leading actors. Joey Piscopo's Billy Cracker and Lorinda Lisitza's Hallelujah Lil were equally as dull until their splashy exchange in Act Three in which they shared a pair of songs that were as distinct as their characters. Alone onstage at Bill's Beerhalla, a site presumably of unmitigated fun and shenanigans, Lisitza's rendering of "Surabaya-Johnny" was a rich counterpoise to Piscapo's successful reprise of "Big Shot." In both instances the actors captured the stylistic difference of Weill's two numbers, the former having a bluesy sense of longing while the latter relied on classical jazz motifs, towards clearly defining their respective roles and the cultures they represented: organized religion and the underworld. The scene's culminating moment came in the form of a *Gestic* kiss, stylistically constructed and appropriated timed at the end of Piscapo's number. As a result, the story began to make sense, character attitudes were identified with great flair, and theatrical energy at last began to fill the performance space.

After returning from the second intermission the evening came to life, therefore suggesting the sort of fun, energy, and irony inherent to the Hauptmann /Brecht / Weill aesthetic. In addition to the tandem of "Surabaya-Johnny" and "Big Shot," Jarosz's character returned and injected some life into her lackluster colleagues, most specifically exemplified by the vocal variety, commitment to action, and clear depiction of her "lady gangster" within Weill's "Tomorrow Song." While the number functions to signify "The Fly's" quest for revenge against her former underworld companion Bill Cracker, who went off and fell in love with a Salvation Army missionary, because of Jarosz's obvious gifts as a performer the entire evening got a much needed lift. Thereafter, the spirited playing was best exemplified within the Brechtian treatment of the Manufacturer's Bank heist, which Fuller staged as a dumb show in conjunction with a silent black and white movie. In true Brechtian fashion he temporarily raised the houselights to foreground a film projector that was rolled into the center aisle, and then the cast assimilated the bank robbery through both pantomime and what they had previously filmed. Michael Harren's piano accompaniment effectively underscored this comical montage. Moreover, the irony of the story was communicated: a lovable band of thieves and murderers were carrying out their unsavory mission and the audience was having a ball, finally.

PETER ZAZZALI
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

THE RESISTIBLE RISE OF ARTURO UI
ADAPTATION: GEORGE TABORI. DIRECTED BY JONATHAN BERRY. STEEP THEATRE COMPANY
CHICAGO, IL / USA
PREMIERE & REVIEW: 31 MAY 2007

Chicago, the site of the Steppenwolf Theater Ensemble's legendary ascent from humble beginnings to sustainability and national acclaim seems to encourage "the let's-get-together-and-put-on-a-show" sense of camaraderie which motivates young and inexperienced theater practitioners to start their own companies. Literally hundreds of companies have been founded in the greater Chicago area. Most of these produce one or two shows and are never heard from again. Many struggle for a few years before ultimately failing to carve out a comfortable, self-sustaining niche for themselves in the community. Some members may leave for greener pastures; others just grow tired of their particular working environment. If, by some twist of fate, the collaboration proves to actually be fruitful - the company members inspire each other artistically and the quality of their work matures with each new production - then they will become one of the groups that manage to garner acclaim and build a loyal audience.

Steep Theatre Company is one such group. Since its debut in March of 2001, this now eleven-member troupe has produced 27 plays, guided by their simple mission: "We bring out the truth in the stories we tell through ensemble work." Their 28th production, ***The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui***, marked the first time they approached one of Brecht's dramas and they considered it their "most challenging project to date." The play is about Hitler's rise to power, as presented in the tale of Arturo Ui, a gangster whose violent schemes enable him to take control of the cauliflower industry in 1930's Chicago and neighboring Cicero. Frequent guest director, Jonathan Berry, worked with a cast comprised almost equally of company members and guest artists.


©Lee Miller

The space in which Steep resides is, as the saying goes, both small and intimate. Seating capacity falls just short of 40. The stage was only slightly larger than the house and the cast was never more than about 20 feet from the audience. Before the show, a number of small lamps dangled from the ceiling, dimly illuminating a stage filled with assorted proper-

ties. The play began in total darkness. A carnival-like barker entered by flashlight, shining it on his own face as he explained the story about to be presented, then on his fellow cast - scattered throughout the shadows - as he introduced the main characters. This ended with a sudden burst of gunfire and the quick flash of bright light from behind the plastic curtain that defined the rear wall of the stage. With this opening sequence the bar was set high, and an intense, exciting evening was promised.

As they launched into their tale, the cast - dressed in convincing period costumes by designer Alison Siple - used the clutter surrounding them to form their environments. Small crates became chairs. An unhinged door was propped up as a table and later as a casket. A pair of unsuspecting suitcases opened up to reveal a florist's colorful wares. These little adjustments made for rather clever solutions on the part of set designer Brandon Wardell to the practical constraints of the space. Each scene change began with the actors turning to face the back corner of the stage where Brecht's titles detailing the corresponding events in the rise of National Socialism were blasted as if by radio broadcast. Once the bulletin ended, the changes were underscored by the haunting and catchy dissonant jazz melodies of Josh Horvath. During the scenes, the illumination of the dim lamps was augmented with softly colored theatrical instruments, courtesy of lighting designers Heather Gilbert and Jessica Harpenau.

The acting was, by and large, superb. A few members of the cast did seem to struggle a bit with the language, alternately over-accentuating the verse, thereby making it stilted and awkward, or brushing over it outright. This led to some weaker moments of performance and a somewhat striking incongruity of styles in dialogue between the actors who "got" it and those who didn't quite get it. But the performances that worked, *really* worked. The most striking performance was that of Yosh Hayashi as Arturo Ui. Finding a perfect balance between determination and madness, Hayashi crafted a pathetic yet powerful character that simultaneously evoked sympathy, pity, and fear from the audience. He elicited laughter with his social ineptitude, cartoonish attempts to master pedigree, and ridiculously grandiose turns of phrase, making his sudden and vicious ferocity all the more terrifying.

The production itself succeeded wonderfully in this mixture of comical absurdity and ruthless violence. The idea was clear: this tale of Ui *was* the tale of Hitler. Comical and unassuming, we watched this less-than-threatening man rise to a position of terrifying, indisputable power. We were the passive observers, knowing how horribly the story ends, but amused nonetheless. In one scene a bleeding woman ran onto stage amid a cacophony of carnage – crying for help, directly imploring the audience to stop Ui. In the last scene, a group of workers concluded their only hope to be that "someone, someday would stand up to the bastard," yet failed to take any action themselves. The play ended with the actor playing Ui stepping forward and reminding us that what we've seen was just a show and that these events have already taken place, yet also warning us to be vigilant. We need to resist the rise of any and all Ui's. We need to be involved in the story.

This was ultimately Steep Theatre Company's greatest success. This powerful show totally immersed the audience in its urgency: We could not

ignore what we experienced, nor what we were a part of. Steep's *Ui* resonated so profoundly, not because it was the most innovative or eloquent production ever staged, but because it was unabashedly honest. The company wasn't the richest or the biggest or the most experienced; but they were really good at creating remarkable Theater.

BRADLEY J. GUNTER

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE CITY OF MAHAGONNY BERTOLT BRECHT / KURT WEILL. DIRECTION: MOSHE LEISER AND PATRICE CAURIER SOTTILE THEATRE / SPOLETO FESTIVAL. CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA / USA. 9 JUNE 2007

The 31st season of the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina featured a number of world and American premieres, as well as innovative productions of several classic operatic and theatrical works and other events. The festival has witnessed a high level of attendance during the past decade (1997-2007), with many productions either completely or nearly sold out. One of the most anticipated productions of the 2007 season was the Brecht/Weill opera *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, a work that has been given several recent American stagings – most notably by the Los Angeles Opera and by the Chicago Lyric Opera. The Spoleto *Mahagonny* was produced by the Arthur and Holly Magill Foundation with additional support given by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music. *Mahagonny* premiered at the Sottile Theatre on May 25, 2007 and played for six performances at the 2007 Spoleto Festival.

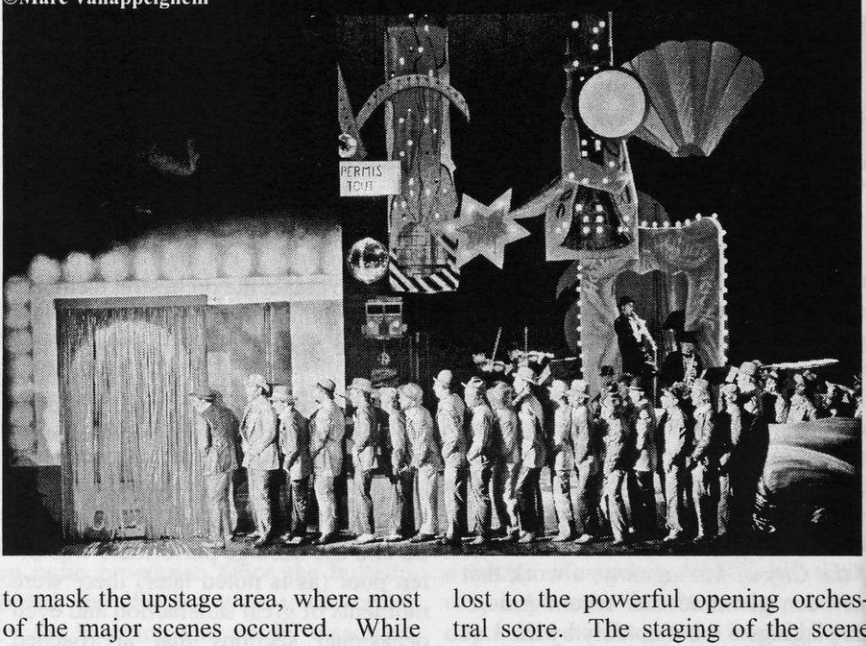
The Spoleto Festival has recognized – as stated by Chairman of the Spoleto Board of Directors Eric Friberg – that the heart of the festival exists in Charleston's many venues for performance in the historic downtown district. While that is true and Friberg's program letter pays lip service to that concept, the fact remains that the majority of Charleston's theatrical venues are old, outfitted with poor theatrical lighting and rigging systems, and ill-equipped to present the level of programming that they aspire to present. This was the case with *Mahagonny* at the Sottile; it was apparent that the production had been scaled down to fit the poor technical capabilities of the theatre and the entire evening of theatre suffered accordingly.

At the very least, it is generally entertaining to hear the score of *Mahagonny* played by a competent orchestra. From the outset the orchestral elements of the production were adequate. Despite the Sottile's poor acoustics, the orchestra, conducted by Emmanuel Villaume, sounded very good throughout. The score for *Mahagonny* is often thrilling, dark and frightening, but also quite funny, sexy, and tender at times. While the balance between the orchestra and the onstage performers was often poor (as is noted later) there were moments of great satisfaction and even occasional sections that approached the norm of smaller American Opera companies. However, at no time did this production reach the level of larger American companies like the LA Opera or Chicago Lyric, or even good southeast regional companies like the Atlanta Opera.

The opening scene, the arrival of the three vagabonds from justice (Begbick, Moses and Fatty), capitulated to the theatre's weak technical capabilities, and simply presented the three peering though a large round peephole in

a downstage right portion of one of the two rectangular flats. This scenic arrangement - characterized by two approximately ten foot high industrial aluminum flats that stretched across almost the entire stage (about 10' by 25' wide) – consisted of parallel flats, one about eight feet upstage of the curtain line and another that was eight feet further upstage. This arrangement allowed two downstage levels of action a level lower than desired.

Following the brief dialogue scene, Karen Huffstoldt, as Widow Begbick, opened the work with her brief, yet important, recitative. This section, as was the case with several vocal sections, was overpowered by the orchestra and lost due to Huffstodlts' inability to project above the orchestra in the acoustically bereft Sottile. Bottom line – the vocals in the opening section were weak and



to mask the upstage area, where most of the major scenes occurred. While this is an acceptable scenic arrangement in American community theatre, it seemed inappropriate for a festival that aspires to present internationally significant operatic works. Most of the scenes, both downstage and upstage, were represented by rolling flats from stage right and left, ground rows, drops, and other typical 19th century theatrical devices. Most of the scenic elements were basically adequate (and at times, Brechtian to a certain degree) but seemed to reduce the production to lost to the powerful opening orchestral score. The staging of the scene was also minimized given the fact that the director chose to display Begbick, Moses and Fatty in a portal downstage right. The flat was later raised to reveal the entrance of Jenny and the other prostitutes into Mahagonny to sing the "Alabama Song," a recognizable number to audiences unfamiliar with the work but dreadfully under tempo in this production. This pattern of alternating between downstage areas defined by flats and portals and upstage sets that were more fully realized be-

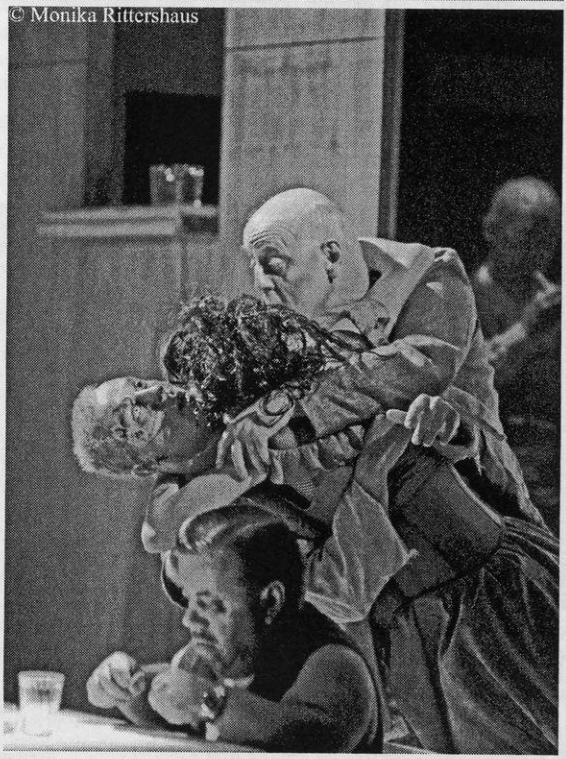
came the basic scenic approach for the rest of the evening. Unfortunately, the roughness of the scenery and the primitive nature of the rigging system made this seem like a community theatre or smaller professional theatre production as opposed to a work of major significance. Having attended and reviewed numerous Brecht productions at venues ranging from the Berliner Ensemble to Broadway to amateur German and American productions, I can state with confidence that the "Brechtian" choices, in particular the choices regarding scenic elements, used in this production were weak and not well conceived. Having stated that, I did find it successful and quite funny that the Act II beginning revealed the hurricane heading across the southeast to "Mahagonny" (geographically placed at the location of Charleston), crossing the mythical location of Atsena, which was placed at the location of Atlanta. The bar scene did manage to consolidate all of the bad scenic choices into a cohesive "grotesque" whole for much of the latter portion of Act II.

As Jenny, Tammy Hensrud was very solid throughout. Stylistically she was able to capture the rough *Sprechgesang* delivery style that is so vital to works by Brecht and Weill. Hensrud was particularly engaging during her Act II aria "Meine Herren, meine Mutter prägte„„" as she told Jimmy goodbye before he was led away. As Jimmy, Richard Brunner was also quite strong, though neither he nor Hensrud were able to reach their true potential due to the previously mentioned acoustical problems. Brunner particularly shined during "Sieben Jahre" (Deep in Alaska) and especially during the "Hinrichtung und Tod des Jimmy Mahoney" (execution) section, which featured Brunner and the entire chorus in one of Weill's most powerful compositions. To their credit, the Spoleto production team chose to include the controversial "When God Came to Mahagonny" section, which is sometimes omitted from performances.

If this production of *Mahagonny* was any indication of the level of sophistication of the average Charleston audience then something must be done. Due to latecomers and problems at the ticket office, the production began almost fifteen minutes late, was riddled with cellular phones ringing during the production (I counted four!), and marred by noisy audience members chatting during the performance, often about events outside the scope of the play. It is unfortunate that this performance of *Mahagonny* was not comparable to numerous regional, national and international operatic (or theatrical) experiences of recent note. Hopefully, Charleston and Spoleto USA will make efforts in the future to raise the level of technical sophistication of the various stages in Charleston (the Dock Street Theatre undergoes renovation in 2007/2008) as well as doing more to educate audience members about appropriate theatre etiquette.

STEVE EARNEST
COASTAL CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

TROMMELN IN DER NACHT.
DIRECTION: PHILIP TIEDEMANN
BERLINER ENSEMBLE. BERLIN, GERMANY.
PREMIERE & REVIEW: 30 AUGUST 2007



Die Zeiten sind verflucht unsicher („Times are damned uncertain"). These words from the early Brecht play ***Trommeln in der Nacht*** begin the Berliner Ensemble's 2007/08 theatre season in a production directed by the young Philip Tiedemann. With its premiere on August 30, this is Tiedemann's second Brecht staging at the BE. In a contemporary production referencing the theatrical techniques of the early 20th-century German theatre, Tiedemann stages the aftermath of war on the home front, when returning soldiers find that there is no place for them in peacetime.

Tiedemann's production acknowledges the place of *Trommeln in der Nacht* as a work written at the decline of Expressionism. The *mise en scène* draws heavily on this aesthetic. Exaggerated shadows and distorted reflections populate the stage as literal shades from the past and forerunners of the looming Spartacist uprising; while the tilting and folding walls reflect the instability of the play world. Brecht's red moon hangs over the action as a projection, waxing and waning. In fog, leaves blowing in the wind become falling sheets of newspaper. The characters, with their pallid faces, move about the stage fluctuating between the natural, the stylized, and the grotesque. The metaphors of the play world are made physical on the stage and on the actors' bodies.

Although this production is loyal to Brecht's text, with few alterations, Tiedemann's approach to staging this work, written at the accession of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, is one critical of the Expressionism being used. In fact, the Expressionist techniques are taken to a limit in this production that is no longer palatable for contemporary audiences. So that when the soldier Andreas Kragler (Thomas Niehaus) enters, his face covered in scars, and his body engulfed in a cloud of smoke, his approach first announced by his encroaching shadow, the audience cannot help but chuckle. This production uses the comic to its advantage, disrupting the tragedy of

Kragler's story, true to Brecht's notion that "I laugh when they weep, I weep when they laugh."

Perhaps the most interesting aspect in this staging is the use of music and sound. Certain movements and gestures are accented by musical accompaniment: e.g. percussion when Karl Balicke (Manfred Karge) knocks on the table as a symbol of his authority, whimsical sounds as Amalia Balicke (Claudia Burckhardt) wipes off the tablecloth trying to smooth out the problem of her stubborn daughter Anna (Charlotte Müller), and Anna's new fiancé Friedrich Murk (Steffen Schroeder) in an exaggerated walk literally smelling out the Balicke house to a musical beat. Along with this use of sound as an accent to movement, the entire performance is scored with jazz music by Jörg Gollasch that emphasizes the tone of each given scene. A crank on the downstage left wall, the entire stage becomes a giant music box. Sadly, the use of sounds to accent gestures sometimes seems inconsistent and arbitrary: at times used to excess while sometimes totally abandoned. The excellent musical scoring, however, remains constant throughout.

Of the strong cast of *Trommeln in der Nacht*, the performance of Niehaus as Kragler is of particular note. A physically strenuous performance of the role, Kragler's desperation at the world changing around him sets the tone for the performance. He is a dancing tin soldier slowly wearing down. Niehaus's voice work is incredible. Taking Brecht's line to heart, "*Das Afrika wächst mir zum Halse heraus*," Niehaus speaks in a hoarse rasp for much of the performance, as if desert sand fills his vocal chords. The fact that Niehaus has not permanently damaged his ability to speak is a wonder.

Also of interest is the interpretation of the journalist and critic Babusch by Uli Pleßmann. Often present, standing to the side, chewing on and puffing away at his cigar, Babusch becomes the personification of Bert Brecht onstage. Standing at a critical distance, observing, he comments, only entering the action of the play as if a referee in the boxing ring.

Trommeln in der Nacht's fourth act is masterfully staged with a new interpretation. At the end of the third act with actors running about before and behind the upstage wall, precariously hanging at an angle from the flies, in a cinematic chase scene, actor Alexander Ebeert steps forward and physically transforms himself from one waiter Manke into his brother Manke. The orchestra pit rises and reveals a seedy schnapps *Kneipe*. Here, where Brecht has written that the proprietor Glubb (Ferdinand Dörfler) sings the "*Ballade vom toten Soldaten*," in Tiedemann's production a chorus of drunks, first making grunts in an attempt to form words, create a musical interlude that captures the roughness outside of bourgeois society, with the accompaniment of a piano, a trumpet, and the percussion of schnapps glasses slamming against a table. Through drink, Kragler learns this language of sounds himself, leaving his soldierly rasp behind, and leading the chorus of drunkards to the storming of the newspaper offices by the Spartacists.

The threat of *Spartakus* underlines the tension between Kragler and the Balicke family. This is a threat that is constantly staged in Tiedemann's production, whether as the drums in the night, the shadows of gathering workers, or the wasteland of newspaper that covers the stage in the play's final act. This *Trommeln in der Nacht* ends with

Kragler and Anna standing side-by-side in the focus of a spotlight, wrapped in a sheet as if lying in bed. Behind them, Brecht's moon has become a projection of the Earth. Surrounded by discarded paper, partially hidden by a scrim, stands the production's cast, those lost in the Spartacist uprising.

In Tiedemann's staging, the revolutionary setting that acts as the background to the young Brecht's critique of his own middle-class origins literally pierces the setting of the performance. Offering resistance to a work that Brecht would later criticize for its poetic stance towards the social uprisings of 1918/1919, the choices made to live a political life or to retreat into a private sphere are questioned. The Berliner Ensemble has begun their new season with a performance that is entertaining and dynamic in its staging, while remaining politically engaged, the backbone of a well conceived and performed Brecht production.

José Enrique Macián
Brown University

Theater - Beyond Brecht Productions

Woyzeck. Georg Büchner. Trans. Daniel Kremer. The Gate Theatre of London. St. Ann's Warehouse Theater. Brooklyn, NY / USA. 15 November 2006

Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* is a seminal work in the western canon of dramatic literature. While it anticipated the modernist movement in theatre and drama, as identified by its confluence of absurdist, naturalist, and expressionist motifs, it also posited itself as a work of cultural criticism that addressed the timeless trope of the dehumanization of the individual trapped within an oppressive socio/political system. Based on the true story of Johan Christian Woyzeck, the play functions as an expressionist narrative in which its title character - "Franz" Woyzeck - psychologically unravels to the point of murdering his wife (Marie) out of jealous rage. Büchner's Woyzeck is the victim of an inhuman society that has left him woefully dispossessed. As a result, the brutally climactic moment of stabbing Marie is somewhat understandable to the spectator. Büchner's antihero has been the object of sordid medical experiments, dehumanized by his boss (The Captain), ridiculed by his wife and her lover (The Drum Major), and subjugated in accordance with his impoverished social position. While placing its focus on Woyzeck, the play demonstrates the debilitating effects such systems of order and governance have on the general population. In a certain sense we are all capable of committing murder within such a context. It is precisely this theme that exemplifies the prescience of Büchner's text. Although it was written in 1836 - and not performed until 1913 - *Woyzeck* presages the futility of Man in modern society. In doing so, it renders a moving portrait of its title character, whose tragic fall is unmistakably cathartic.

The Gate Theatre's production of *Woyzeck* that recently closed at Brooklyn's St. Ann's Warehouse, unfortunately, did not fully take advantage of Büchner's narrative and its socio/polit-

ical underpinnings. Directed by Daniel Kramer, The Gate offering relied too heavily on creative gimmickry rather than the play itself. This point was best identified in Kramer's overwrought use of musical underscoring that included Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Dolly Parton's "Nine to Five," and various songs from Elvis Presley's repertoire, all functioning as an indicator of how clever the director was instead of complementing and illuminating the text in any meaningful way. One such example was the choice to stage the Drum Major's (David Harewood) physical beating of Woyzeck (the very capable Edward Hogg) while having the former lip sync Presley's "Trouble." As Harewood clumsily pantomimed the thrashing of Woyzeck (choreographed by Ann Yee) he had a sort of Milli Vanilli moment, thereby reducing one of the narrative's pivotal scenes into a half-baked music video. Indeed, the scene was so dominated by Presley's blaring music coupled with Harewood's over-the-top dance break that the spectator lost his / her perspective of the play and the scene's central figure: Woyzeck. Kramer chose such musical interjections throughout the performance at the expense of subtlety and nuance, which given the austere complexity of Büchner's text, seemed at best a missed opportunity.

While its direction may have been heavy-handed, the overall production was not without merit. Although the majority of the Gate performers offered a host of generalized attitudes, as opposed to three-dimensional renderings of character, thankfully the two central figures, Woyzeck and Marie, were portrayed with an admirable degree of intricacy. Whereas Myriam Acharki's depiction of Woyzeck's common-law wife was consistently fleshed out with credible moments of poignancy, most notably evidenced by the psychological struggle surrounding her sexual affair with the Drum Major, Edward Hogg's presentation of the title character was as arresting as it was intriguing. Hogg's virtuosic balancing of the role's physical, emotional, and mental demands created a Woyzeck that was explosive, compelling, and entirely sympathetic. In spite of having to compete with an overwrought directorial concept, Hogg managed to anchor the evening within the anguished trajectory of Büchner's antihero. This fact coupled with Kramer's occasionally effective use of visual imagery, as complemented by Neil Irish's apocalyptic setting and costume designs and David Howe's illustrative lighting, served in illuminating the text's pervasive emptiness. Perhaps

this was best exemplified in the play's ultimate moment when the physically dexterous Hogg hanged himself center stage as the lights dimmed and a seemingly unending stock of "peas" - the staple of Woyzeck's diet and symbolic of his degradation - rained down upon the stage. Unfortunately, at this point in the evening we had been inundated with so many directorial distractions that the moment lost its potential impact.

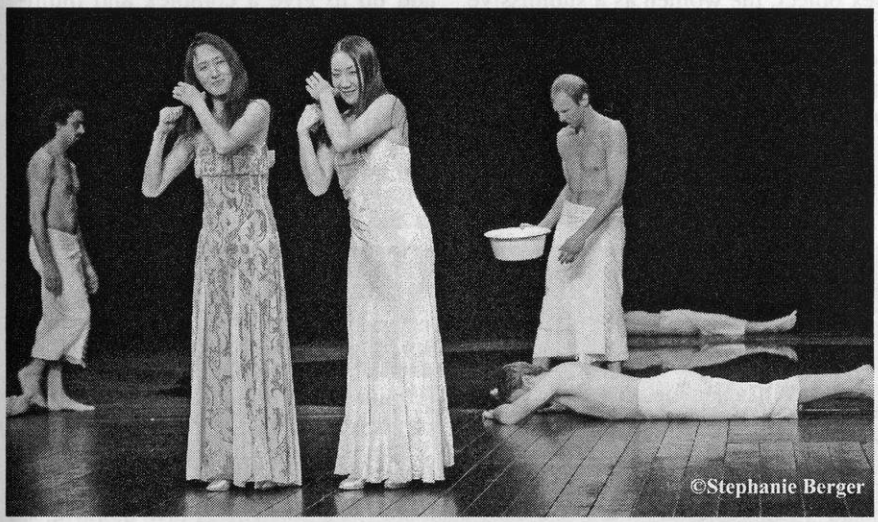
PETER ZAZZALI / CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

NEFES. CONCEPTION, DIRECTION, CHOREOGRAPHY: PINA BAUSCH. SET / VIDEO DESIGN: PETER PABST. COSTUME DESIGN: MARIO CITO. MUSICAL DIRECTION: MATTHIAS BURKERT / ANDREAS EISENSCHNEIDER. CO-PRODUCTION OF WUPPERTAL TANZTHEATER & INTERNATIONAL ISTANBUL THEATRE FESTIVAL). BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC (BAM). HOWARD GILMAN OPERA HOUSE. 8-16 DECEMBER 2006. 15 DECEMBER 2006.

Where East Meets West and West Meets East: Looking at Life in 2002 Istanbul

Pina Bausch's latest presentation in the United States, *Nefes*, meaning "breath" in the Turkish and the Indo-Aryan languages, brought to the stage the two meanings of the word: *Nefes* as the literal and biological "breath" but also as a metaphor and synonym for "life." Without the biological breath of inhaling and exhaling a living organism cannot sustain itself; and life, seen in the world cultural and otherwise, is a manifestation and proof of the breath at work. Addressing both life-affirming levels, the title *Nefes* showed, on the one hand, the abstract and invisible entity, "breath," being made visible through the dancer/actors and their bodies, their presence, movements and actions. On the other hand, beyond the literal and biological definition, Bausch's piece focused on the cultural level of life, where using the breathing bodies of dancer/actors, the piece represented and recreated life in Istanbul with all its paradoxes, charms and intrinsic subtleties and complications.

Created in 2002, during a visit to Istanbul with her Wuppertal Tanztheater ensemble, Bausch chose a popular cultural site for the opening and closing scenes. The site, known to the general population around the world, is none other than the famous Turkish *hamam* or Turkish bath. While one dancer/actor entered the stage, with a

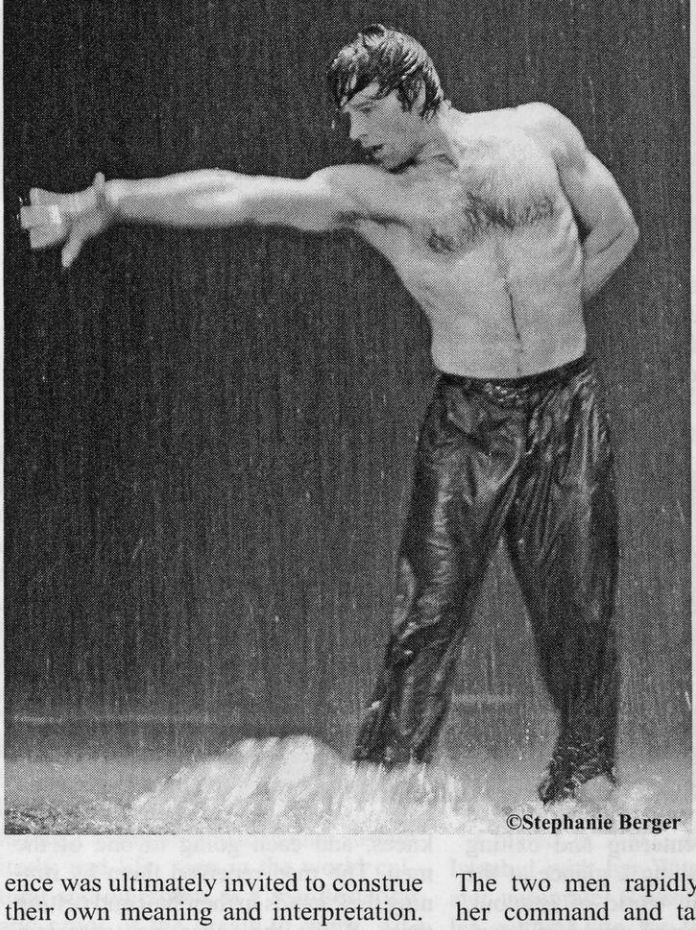


towel wrapped around his waist and lay down on his chest, another dancer/actor followed him shortly thereafter. The second dancer/actor stood next to the first, pointed to him and chuckled in a stage-whisper (a stage whisper is a whisper which is loud enough that the audience can hear it) telling the audience: "This is me! Me at the *hamam*!" Using his own towel he hit the relaxing body, representing the wash at the Turkish bath. He chuckled and repeated the phrase and motion a few more times. The two exited and a woman entered the stage. She combed her long hair in a systematic and rhythmic manner rendering the motion with the music into a choreographed dance all its own. The choreography repeated with different dancer/actresses entering and exiting the stage, establishing a glance at the segregated Islamic world of Istanbul. While this segregated world of Istanbul was established, Bausch brought back all the actor/dancers and actress/dancers one at a time, to fill the stage. The result was a well composed stage filled with the dancer/actors all laying on their backs and the dancer/actresses standing and combing their hair. Seen in conjunction with the earlier moments, the tableau created a unified space for both men and women, suggesting a possible hope - an alternative to the segregation.

While segregation was portrayed in a humorous manner in the introductory scene at the *hamam*, Bausch's *Nefes* did not remain uncritical of the male-dominated culture so prevalent and domineering in Turkey. Several Tableaux down the line, the stage cleared, the music changed and the dancer/actors each entered the stage holding a chair. They placed the chairs down and comfortably sat on them. Following the entrance of the men, the women entered, crawling on their hands and knees, and each going to one of the men. The men received them by running their hands in their hair and petting them. While the scene was stunning, both visually as well as musically, the not-so-neutral composition and blocking quickly became a disturbing commentary on the relations between men and women which can still be found in contemporary Turkey: the women as a

sex object, the women as a submissive entity to men, the women as an equivalent to animal, a pet who walks on her hands and knees and can be petted, the women of the Turkish harem, and so forth. As with many of her tableaux, Bausch suggested a moment of human interaction and dynamic, but the audience was ultimately invited to construe their own meaning and interpretation. Given her epic scale and look at the world, Bausch's stage presents and represents, but rarely does it give its audience a "solution" to human problems, conflicts and predicaments. The summation and totality of the tableaux add up to give a complex and multi-dimensional perspective on individuals and their societies.

Nefes would be incomplete if Bausch portrayed only stereotypes and common images of Turkey and Turkish culture. While often developed within a specific culture and cultural setting, her Tanztheater pieces focus on portraying the human condition, thus transcending the particular context to a more universal one. The scenes can be about Turkey and Turkish culture, but they can also equally be about the American, European or Asian man, woman, and his or her culture. Having seen scenes where segregation exists or where men dominate women, we now see a dancer/actress enter the stage and loudly call out the names of two men. The two men rapidly enter, obeying her command and taking their positions, one on each side of the woman. The woman, now smiling and content, walked downstage proudly with the men escorting her. In a loud and confident voice the woman tells the audience: "Oh they cook so well! So well!"



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stressing and accentuating "So well." They exited the stage together and the audience was baffled at the unexpected role reversal they just witnessed. Recognizing the scene as a possibility within our Western culture, the audience now wondered if within Turkish society, there can also be found women who rule and men who serve. Again, Bausch did not provide an answer, but rather gave a moment and tableau on her stage.

The stage choreography and direction of *Nefes*, took place on an empty stage - well, not quite empty: natural elements were included which acted as theatrical surprises. Peter Pabst (who has worked with Bausch since 1980) created a pool of water which appeared and disappeared very subtly and which could have represented a pond, a lake, the Bosporus Straits, or the Turkish bath. Around this pool of water theatrical dance scenes were staged including: two friends sharing a picnic lunch, a man and a woman go for a walk around the pool of water (In the middle of the walk, the man, as if wanting to impress the woman, suddenly drinks from the water while performing and holding an extraordinary handstand. The woman turns around and looks at him. He resumes his normal posture and joins the woman. Suddenly (again) he spits out the water as if to amuse or entertain her). The climax around this set design occurred when the focus, rather than being on the water on the ground, shifted to a downpour of water from the stage ceiling. A dancer/actor walked up to the torrent of water and stood underneath it and danced a solo. The audience, stunned and surprised at the pouring water, wondered as they watched the scene: What was the pouring water underneath which the dancer/actor was standing and dancing? Was it rain? Was it the *hamam*? Or was it simply a sudden spring shower?

Such visual *coup de theatre* with the set design are a signature element of her Tanztheater. In another production, *Palermo,* a massive wall collapses and crumbles on stage to create rubble and a ruin for the dancer-actors to dance on and around, trashing it with more garbage as the piece evolves. Or, in *Carnations* the piece finishes with red carnations, a flower representing friendship and solidarity, covering the stage. Bausch's Tanztheater is staged and carved out with actor-dancer bodies, along with their movements, small theatrical scenes and natural set elements, presented in bold and always surprising, if not astonishing, manner.

Utilizing film projections in some of her theatrical *mise-en-scenes*, Bausch projected two independent loops onto two of her choreographed and staged moments. The first was a loop of Istanbul traffic projected across the stage while a dancer/actress ran from stage-left to stage-right screaming and avoiding the nightmare of the speeding cars and poor driving. The scene conveyed the traffic and its danger in modern day Istanbul in a hyperreal way - the audience watching the dancer-actress run for her life in tension and excitement. While the film projection of the traffic loop served to create the cinematic theatre for the woman running in traffic for safety, Bausch also used a slow, peaceful loop of waves to create an ocean-side wedding and restaurant within her look at life in Istanbul.

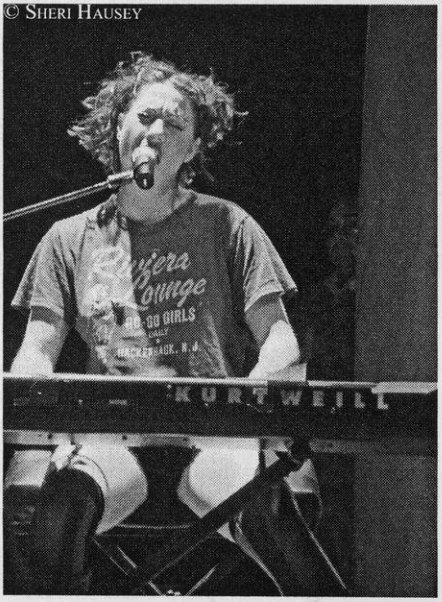
As with all her pieces, Bausch's *Nefes* was punctuated with extraordinary and mesmerizing theatre vignettes and dance pieces – both solo and ensemble – and as with all her stage worlds, the costumes, designed by Mario Cito, were designed to perfection to cre-

ate the elegance required for the Pina Bausch "look" and aesthetics. The visuals aside, the Bausch soundtrack - which despite the fact that they cannot be found or purchased anywhere now have by now become as popular demand by her audiences - held-up to its well-deserved reputation. Leaving her space of performance, the audience of *Nefes* was once again treated to a grand feast for the eyes and ears, through a personal and epic journey in 2002, Istanbul, by Pina Bausch and her Wuppertal Tanzetheater.

Babak Ebrahimian

The Onion Cellar. Co-Created: American Repertory Theater & The Dresden Dolls. Direction: Marcus Stern. American Repertory Theater: Zero Arrow Street Cabaret. Boston, MA /USA. 7 January 2007

My wife and I attended *The Onion Cellar,* a work created jointly by the American Repertory Theater and The Dresden Dolls - a "Brechtian Punk Cabaret" rock duo (Amanda Palmer and Brian Viglione) with a burgeoning international fan base. We were already fans of the Dolls' music, and the show - an exploration of both the vulnerability and triumph of the human heart - while not yet fully developed dramaturgically, was a wonderful display of The Dresden Dolls' talents expanding into a new medium. Later, interviewing Amanda Palmer, I discovered that my carefully prepared questions probing the development and meaning of *The Onion Cellar* were largely beside the point; the gap between the show envisioned and proposed by Palmer and the show that we saw at the ART was, for her, unbridgeably vast. Learning about the show we didn't see made it clear that Palmer is even more Brecht's heir than I'd imagined.

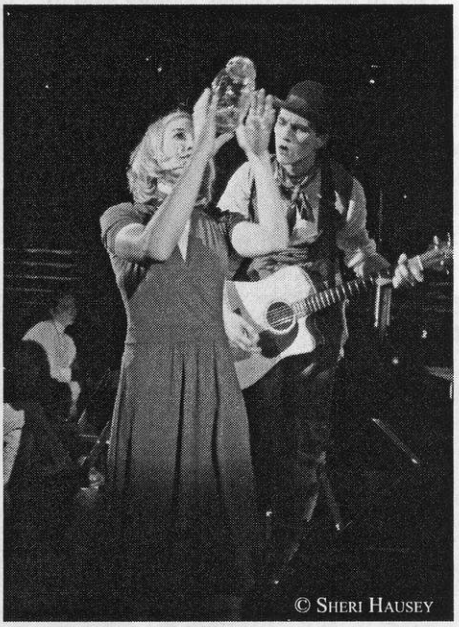


The Play We Saw

The ART's alternate theater space - Zero Arrow Street – was turned into a cabaret. There were lots of tiny round tables and a long bar on one wall. The stage was a rounded thrust accessible from both the house and from two staircases (one ascending from the stage to a small office, the other to a catwalk and egress. Other features created additional playing spaces and access to a large bulletin-board / collage of contributions from the public-at-large to the Onion Cellar Project - personal recollections of deep sorrow. Center stage were Viglione's drum kit and Palmer's Kurt(z)weill electronic keyboard. It was spare, but very stylish and beautiful.

At the outset, Palmer entered and

descended the staircase vamping an introduction to the show. Accompanied by Viglione on guitar, she presented to us the various characters positioned around the stage - including two actors playing doubles of Palmer and Viglione (Claire Elizabeth Davies and Brian Farish). Palmer was riveting: intense, funny, and spontaneous. At this point the audience was ready to follow her anywhere. The play - a patchwork of confessional stories – then unfolded, as we got to know the characters who for a variety of reasons inhabited this nightclub. There was the nightclub owner, drinking alone in the "office" for most of the play (Jeremy Geidt), and his daughter - a sensitive girl who collected tears in a jar (Kristen Frazier). There was a Midwestern couple who might have been raised in Lake Wobegon (Thomas Derrah and Karen McDonald). There was the painfully difficult relationship between "Mute Girl" and "Onion Boy," (Merritt Jansen and Neil P. Stewart), and there was a musical emcee with serious "daddy issues" (Remo Airaldi). These characters (and others, thanks to double casting) created the overlapping subplots developed in workshop with the company and later hammered into shape by Palmer (and still later by director Marcus Stern) with additional input by writers Jonathon Mark Stern and Dr. Anthony Martignetti. Not all the storylines were equally convincing, certain relationships were unclear and the doubles for Palmer and Viglione were talented but underutilized. What these redemptive tales accomplished, though, was to create a theatrical setting for the Dresden Dolls' songs, which for content, raw emotion, skilled writing and performance were absolutely dazzling. Because of this (as well as the very good work of ART actors, Christine Jones's *gorgeous* set, and the fully stocked bar), *The Onion Cellar* provided an excellent theatre experience.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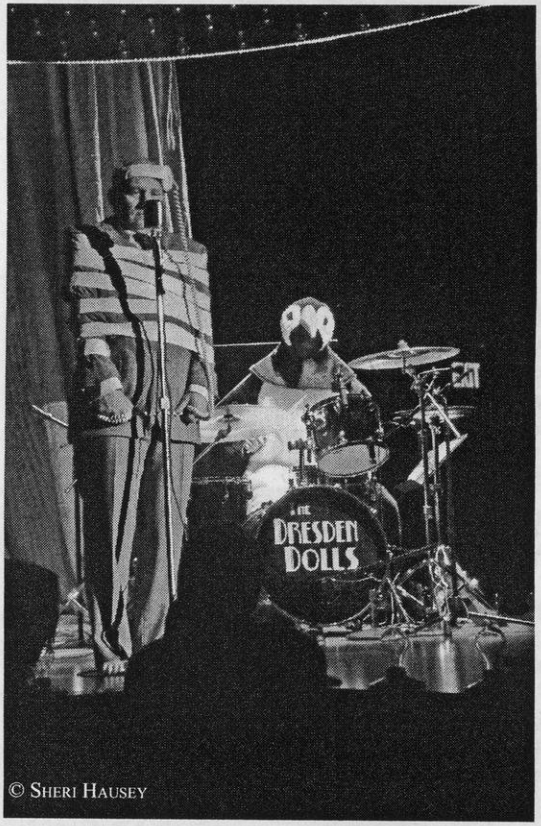
The Show We Didn't See

Over the course of my interview with her, it became clear that her aesthetic arc - a path that meandered from an early role in *Der Gute Mensch Von Setzuan* to an internship at Koeln's Horizonttheater to Boston's alternative theatre scene - has had a distinctively and purposefully DIY ("Do It Yourself") attitude. Nels Jeff Rogers, in his article "The Untimeliness of Brecht" (*CIBS* 35 2006), found a similar "do it yourself" attitude toward affecting social change in Brecht, and when I quoted her a line from Rogers' article: "It is the pleasure of fixing a bike on the side of the road without the right tools (making do)…" she immediately countered: "Yeah, or saying 'fuck it' and walking."

One of the first things Palmer said to me about *The Onion Cellar* was: "I had never lost so much control of a project." She chalked this up, in part, to her own naivete. After all, the ART invited her to create a piece, and she had a great idea, so it was reasonable to assume that having the ART's great resources behind her great idea (not to mention



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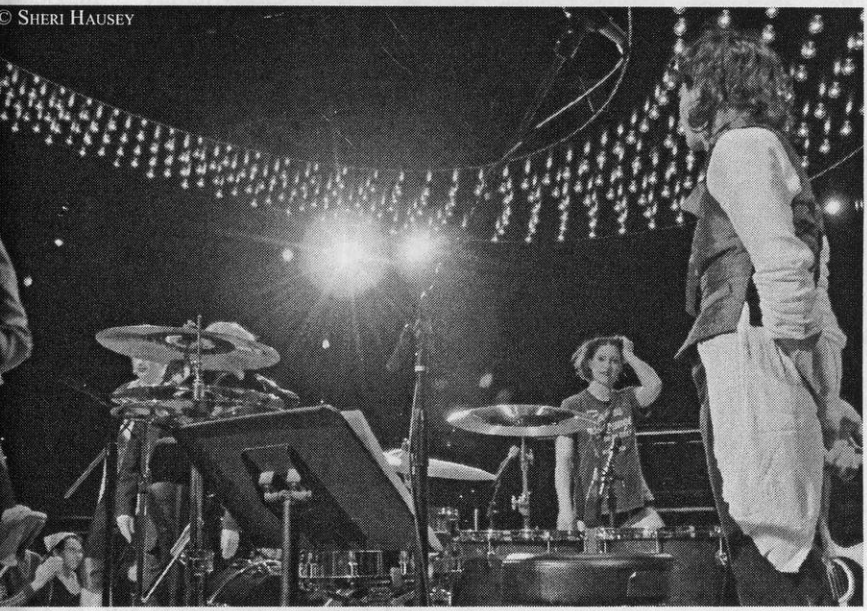
The Dresden Dolls' great talent) would result in a great show. The naivete was in failing to realize that ART was more than just a fine theatre company: it was also a brand. For a brand to be valuable, its integrity must be protected. The brand's success requires the allegiance of a variety of donors as well as those willing to plop down cold hard cash for tickets.

Palmer's concept was "messy" in certain crucial aspects. For instance, *The Onion Cellar* was based on a nightclub scene in Günter Grass's *Der Blechtrommel* (1959). The only item on its menu was "onions." As the club's band played, patrons would cut into the onions, unleashing a flood of repressed emotions. This was part of Amanda's vision, and it was not a stretch to imagine ART staff pondering the economic and liability issues associated with the nightly distribution of hundreds of knives to theatre patrons, never mind the tens of thousands of raw onion rings crushed underfoot over the course of the five-week run.

Other messiness was less tangible but perhaps more daunting. Around the time Palmer began to flesh out her idea, certain facts about Günter Grass came to light, namely that he had for over sixty years concealed the truth of his WWII military service in the *Waffen SS*. She felt as if a great treasure had been dropped in her lap - that she was the right person in the right place and time to explore deeply - and to allow audiences to weep over - Nazism, Holocaust, rape, and all the associated guilt though a "wild, performance-art extravaganza." (Palmer quoted in *The Boston Globe*, "Creative Risks are at Heart of *Onion Cellar*," Joan Anderman, 3 December 2006).

In the end, this proved too messy for



the ART. Instead of onions, audiences were given small pencils and notepads sporting a woodcut of a sliced onion. Presumably we were being invited to scribble down our own Onion Cellar moments, thus turning an emotional catharsis into an intellectual exercise. There were the actors' cathartic memories, of course; but of Grass, Holocaust, and Nazis: GAR NICHTS.

What are we to make of this, and, furthermore, WWBD? (What would Bertolt do?) Even Palmer allows that Stern may have been right; that is, maybe the show turned out *better*. "One thing is for sure, no one who saw the show was offended." she said, wistfully.

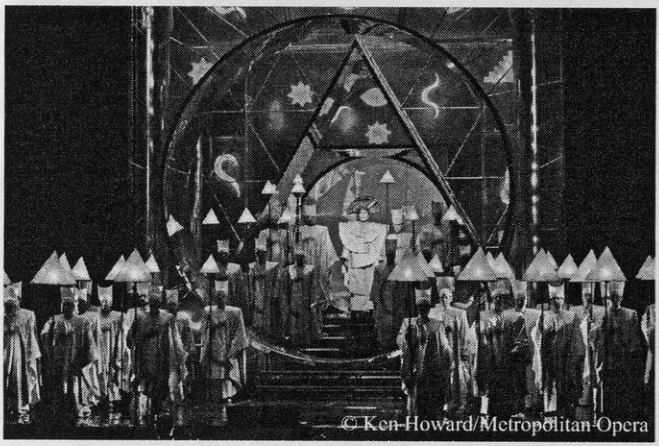
ART's brand was preserved. And let's not forget that the Berliner Ensemble was also a brand: "What Brecht long knew…was that social impotence was the price to be paid for maintaining the illusion of some autonomous (creative) space outside the machinations of the market place." (Nels Jeff Rogers, *CIBS* 35 (2006):109)

Still, the unwillingness of the ART to expand their brand's footprint in order to accommodate the vision of their guest artists shows a disquieting lack of respect for the intelligence and sophistication of their audience. Or perhaps that is my naivete.

As of this writing Palmer and Viglione are back to Rock n' Roll. The Dresden Dolls are touring with Cyndi Lauper as part of the "True Colors" tour. I only hope that a venue can be found - an abandoned factory or a big backyard - where Palmer can do her *Onion Cellar* the way she does things best: "…throw a big party and invite all your friends."

Andrew Periale
Performer, Playwright, and editor of Puppetry International magazine

DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE. WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART. LIBRETTO: EMANUEL SCHIKANEDER. DIRECTION: JULIE TAYMOR. GERMAN WITH ENGLISH TITLES. METROPOLITAN OPERA, NEW YORK CITY. 12 JANUARY 2007.



21st Century Stage: Is There Room for Progress?

When in the late 19th century Richard Wagner came up with the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk* to speak about the opera, he was creating (if not romanticizing) an ideal for his stage and audience. For Wagner, opera was the epitome of the grandness that all art aspired to reach and portray: With *Gesamtkunstwerk*, opera was the collection and unity of all the arts – music, stage design, lighting design, costume design, theatre stories and dramas, acting and grand and epic mythologies. Opera was a step superior to theatre in its ability to *unite* all the stage arts but go a step further in bringing music to the theatre stage and space. *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in short, is an extraordinary notion to entertain: *The Total Work of Art.*

Now, at the start of the 21st century, Julie Taymor comes in, adds and brings with her the art and artistry of masks and puppetry. For some strange (if not purely magical) reason her addition seems to be natural and complementary to the opera stage. *Die Zauberflöte*, or *The Magic Flute*, an opera by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart produced and stage at the New York Metropolitan Opera, fits the description of an opera in almost every way: Like all operas it has music, a variety of singers and choruses, an extremely elaborate set and a story / journey to tell. In fact, chances are, more likely than not, that opera audiences already know the score, the key arias, the story, and have, potentially, seen previous productions. In short, for the most part, the music and the stage together create and adhere to the Wagnerian notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Here is where Taymor takes off, and where traditional opera leaves off.

Puppetry is not defined as an opera-stage art form. In fact, as long as the opera stage has existed, the artistry of puppets and puppetry has never been seen along with, and in, an opera. Opera is considered to be a "high art" and puppets and puppetry, a form of theatre, has long been confined to the theatre stage and the outdoors not in and for the opera. Taymor now challenges and defies this tradition. In her program note she writes: "The challenge of staging this archetypical journey/quest is to bring to light the dimensions and layers of the characters and events so that it is

not a generic 'fairytale,' distanced and petrified, but rather a tale that moves us on a visceral and immediate level." And to accomplish and achieve her goal / aspiration she brings in on stage, her puppets and artistry of puppetry, and by doing so asks the audience, if such introduction, such innovation, is permissible and acceptable for opera.

The introduction of the puppets - birds, bears, and masks among others - quickly created the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffect* or the A-effect (short for "Alienation effect") as the audience would immediately recognize the puppetry as a foreign and alien element for the opera stage: "What are these creatures doing on the stage? It is unheard of and simply not seen." To bring a new layer to the "totality" of the "total work of art" for the opera, Taymor shows us, how prior to her production *Gesamtkunstwerk* has been incomplete or partial. As an artist, Taymor is a well-established puppeteer, costume designer, mask maker and stage director. She has traveled extensively in Asia including Japan, Sri Lanka and India and studied Indonesian *topeng* masked dance-drama and *wayang kulit* shadow puppetry, and pre-*Bunraku* puppetry in Japan, and she graduated from Oberlin College with a major in mythology and folklore. Her most acclaimed productions include: *Juan Darien: A Carnaval Mass* (1996), *The Lion King* (1997), *The Green Bird* (2000), the opera *Grendel* for the Los Angeles Opera (2006), and two films: *Titus* (an adaptation of Shakespeare's play *Titus Andronicus* in 1999 and *Frida* (based on the life of artist Frida Kahlo) in 2002. More recently, in 2006, she finished her third film, a musical set in the 60's with Bono and Evan Rachel Wood, entitled *Across the Universe*. In addition to her stage and film accomplishments, Taymor is also the recipient of the 1991 MacArthur Award, a Guggenheim Fellowship and two Obie Awards. Where Taymor completes Wagner's "total" (in "total work of art") is that she brings with her and introduces to the opera stage the world of puppets, shadow puppets and exquisite masks—at once creating a surprising and gentle A-effect, but also quickly thereafter, a magical sense of awe and amazement in the audience.

When the bird-puppets flew across the stage, or in a circle, the audience was transposed to an outdoor environment, which nothing short of films and cinema could create for the theatre and opera stage. What made it magnificent and breathtaking was when one, no two, no three, four, five giant bears stepped up onto the stage and interacted with the singers. On an immediate level, the tale is about a *magic flute* capable of calling and enchanting animals, so the puppets and puppetry beautifully fit in with the magic and enchanted world that Mozart had created and meant to have in his opera. Going beyond the stage and the character-singers being enchanted was the audience: If they were momentarily stunned and alienated by the puppets and the new form introduced on the opera stage, within minutes they were enchanted by Taymor's magic. After Taymor's production, it begs a new question: why are puppets, masks and puppetry not used more often on the opera stage and its *Gesamtkunstwerk*. If walking and dancing bears and flying birds can coexist with the singers, music, and the set, why are they not welcomed more often onto their stages? (One answer, of course, is that there are few puppeteers and mask makers as talented and gifted as Taymor who are also comfortable with the music-theatre and opera

stages (*Juan Darien* and *Grendel* are two such other examples of Taymor's work with music, puppetry and the stage).

To complete the magical world of the stage, George Tsypin a Russian-born imaginative theatre and opera

fragments defragmented and then rearranged themselves. And I sensed the possibility of different elements being used for different scenes. I had a feeling of Masonic architecture and I used a bit of that. And I thought that maybe the whole universe would be

set designer had designed an equally magical, playful and brilliant set design. For his design, he had relied on a world of geometrical shapes which entered and exited the stage as the revolving turntable made its 90 or 180 degree turns. Pyramids - a symbol of Freemasonry in Mozart's score and life - dominated the stage as lanterns and or as backdrops. Colors would change accordingly to suite or create the atmosphere in the different scenes. Recalling his inspiration behind the design for *The Magic Flute*, Tsypin describes it as part of a dream: "On *The Magic Flute*, I went to sleep and while I was sleeping - or not, I'm not sure - I had the image of a magic crystal temple that was breaking at different parts and then reassembling itself like a kaleidoscope. The constrained in that temple, in a vague vision of a temple." (Ebrahimian, *Sculpting Space in the Theater*, 2006: 144)

The Magic Flute of Taymor / Tsypin is no doubt a production for the 21st century. If either Wagner, Mozart or Brecht were alive to see it, they most probably would have approved of it, each in his own way: Wagner would have welcomed the new layer or addition of puppetry to the opera; Mozart would have embraced the visual counterpoint to and rendition of his music; and Brecht - barring the fact that they would not let him smoke his cigar in the theatre - would have smiled away, smiling at the "Opera - With Innovations!" "Opera - With Innovations!" is the title of the first section of Brecht's essay "The Modern

Theatre is the Epic Theatre" where he outlines his theory and principles for his Epic Theatre and maps out and charts the differences between "Dramatic Theatre" vs "Epic Theatre" and "Dramatic Opera" vs "Epic Opera." As a next-to-last section to the essay, entitled "Effect of the Innovations: A Threat to the Opera?" he asks: "What is the audience's attitude during an opera; and is there any chance that it will change?" In short, the Taymor production set a new milestone in the history of opera. If, from here the opera stages could loosen up their reigns on tradition, make room for innovators - such as puppetry artists like Taymor - to bring their visions, skills and crafts, to the opera stage, the 21st century opera could begin to see a renaissance: one in which an embracing motion towards innovation and change would bring about a greater, perhaps a more universal, acceptance and appeal from its viewers, ranging from young to the old and from the Eastern to the Western audiences.

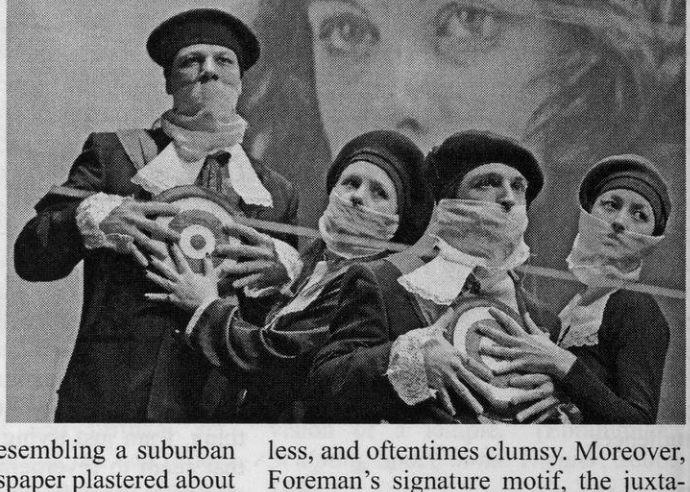
Babak Ebrahimian

Wake up Mr. Sleepy! Your Unconscious Mind is Dead
Written & Directed: Richard Foreman. Ontological-Hysteric Theatre, New York City, NY / USA
19 January 2007

Throughout the past three decades Richard Foreman has been an iconic figure within the American theatre's avant-garde movement. Similar to Brecht insofar as Foreman's theatre is self reflexive, departs from a mimetic form, and foregrounds theatrical elements, he also often writes and directs his own material. Indeed, Foreman's prowess as a directorial auteur has been exemplified by landmark productions such as *Symphony of Rats* (1988), *My Head Was a Sledgehammer* (1994), and *Pearls for Pigs* (1997). While his texts often explore the realms of the unconscious mind, or depict the inability of human beings to communicate, his theatrical aesthetic is marked by a series of disjointed surrealistic images bearing little narrative effect. Most recently, Foreman has taken a multidisciplinary approach by including film and video as a counterpoise and complement to the live performance. Following the inaugural attempt of his newfound aesthetic, *Zomboid* (2006), Foreman employs a balance of cinematic and theatrical devices to frame his current offering *Wake Up Mr. Sleepy! Your Unconscious Mind Is Dead!* currently playing at his signature venue: The Ontalogical-Hysteric Theater.

In an interview documented on the *Wake Up Mr. Sleepy* blog Foreman states, "You have to understand that when I am making things, I am not thinking intellectually about anything. I am just trying different things that seem to reverberate in some way that seems interesting." It would seem Foreman's aim is to use his creative intuition as the muse for enabling his audience the experience of accessing the depths of their unconscious mind. There is no concrete story to be told, no characters to follow, and no moral message to consider. The theatrical experience can be defined as the staging of disparate impulses generated from the collective unconsciousness of one "Mr. Sleepy", who perhaps is Foreman himself. Indeed, while the live actors remain mute nearly throughout the entire presentation, Foreman's voice functions as the primary narrator, underscoring

the discombobulated imagery unfolding on both the stage and video screen. Moreover, Foreman admits that the production's use of an iconic airplane piloted by several baby dolls was in fact an image taken from a childhood dream. In addition to the aviator motif, Foreman's stage is cluttered with such bric-a-brac as period furniture, female busts - positioned either atop pedestals or on the floor - a wooden trolley cart, various flower pots, a miniature boxing ring of sorts - positioned center stage and never used - and diminutive music stands fortified with sheet music. Flanking this scenic arrangement, which pejoratively speaking, is random to the point of resembling a suburban yard sale, is newspaper plastered about the walls, as well as two movie screens located stage center and left. Furthermore, taut lines of twine, a common Foremanesque gesture, define narrow pathways for the five performers to traverse the suffocating space. Combined with an eclectic use of acoustic and narrative underscoring, the sixty-five minute performance attempts to provide the spectator a bold and intriguing journey into his/her subconscious mind.



Unfortunately, *Wake Up Mr. Sleepy* does more to lull one into boredom than anything else. Foreman claims to seek a form that "forces the perceiving mind to 'jump' like a spark from one level of 'potential content' (film) to another (on-stage performance)." Though this notion in theory sounds intriguing, its actual manifestation (at least insofar as it applies to *Wake Up Mr. Sleepy*) is as static as it is ineffective. Indeed, there is little "spark" to this theatre experience. While the staging is lackluster, which is a given when considering how the scenic clutter severely limits possibilities for moving bodies in space, the performers are disengaging, lifeless, and oftentimes clumsy. Moreover, Foreman's signature motif, the juxtaposition of cinematic images and live performance, is more distracting than "dynamic" or "psychological." Very rarely do the film and on-stage images complement each other or function as a contrapuntal force, both of which the auteur declares as the device's purpose. Instead, they largely exist as two separate entities that cause the audience to lose sight of where to focus its attention. Furthermore, both the stage and onscreen images are rather unimaginative and static, thereby further dulling our interest, and ironically, rendering us sleepy, or worse yet, downright disaffected. To further confuse matters, the underscored narration consists of a series of disparate phrases, the most

consistent of which is the repeated mantra: "Tick Tock, Tick Tock, it's broken and cannot be fixed." Although this consistent commentary is referencing the unconscious mind, it cannot help but also be associated with the production's obvious lack of theatricality and dynamism.

PETER ZAZZALI
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

SPRING AWAKENING. FRANK WEDEKIND. BOOK / LYRICS: STEVEN SATER. MUSIC: DUNCAN SHEIK. DIRECTION: MICHAEL MAYER. CHOREOGRAPHY: BILL T. JONES. SCENIC DESIGN: CHRISTINE JONES. LIGHTING DESIGN: KEVIN ADAMS. THE EUGENE O'NEILL THEATRE. NEW YORK, NY / USA. 12 FEBRUARY 2007

©Joan Marcus

The nineteenth-century German dramatist, Franz Wedekind, was known for producing plays that were exciting, shocking, and controversial. Although the form of his texts was generally naturalistic, he also employed elements of symbolism and expressionism towards a complex rendering of humanity and society. While his characters unapologetically express their visceral drives - an iconoclastic gesture when considered within its historical context - they do so in conjunction with psychological nuance and social awareness. In his seminal work *Frühlings Erwachen* (*Spring's Awakening*), for example, Wedekind depicts the tragedy of two teenage lovers, who despite the oppression of their provincial late nineteenth-century German village, awaken their mutual sexual and emotional attraction and fully engage in a carnal relationship. As a result, the tension between the desires of youth, which exists on levels of cultural identity as much as it pertains to sexuality, becomes counterpoised against the adult induced moral codes of bourgeois society. This conflict tragically concludes with Wedekind's heroine (Wendla) dying from a botched abortion - she is forced by her parents to

undergo the procedure - and her lover (Melchior) prevented from committing suicide by a masked man. In spite of its straightforward plot structure, *Spring's Awakening* is a rich work that employs a mosaic of dramatic techniques: variance of style (naturalism, expressionism, symbolism), psychological treatment of character (human sexuality), addressing socio/cultural themes (generational tensions and corresponding moral codes), expressive use of language (a complement to creating character and infusing dramatic tension), and the resistant reception of its open portrayal of sexuality (both for extant audiences as well as contemporary ones). In short, if one considers mounting a production of Wedekind's play, much less adapting it into a musical, it would seem the subtle layers of the original ought to be taken into account.

The heavily modernized musical version of Wedekind's play, entitled *Spring Awakening*, ran last year at The Atlantic Theatre Company before moving to its current home on Broadway at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre. Although the production reduces the nuance of the original, it is successful insofar as functioning as a vigorous, engaging, and somewhat original theatrical experience. From the evening's outset director Michael Mayer has laid out a pseudo-Brechtian context, as theatrical elements such as the orchestra, backstage area, and players are foregrounded. Indeed, in the latter case, the actors unceremoniously enter through the back door of the theater and join an onstage audience, which is seated in turn-of-the-century styled desk chairs that are ubiquitous to schoolhouses of the period. With the stage and houselights fully illuminated, Brechtian motifs become further evidenced as the adolescent members of the ensemble appear in school uniforms akin to the socio-historical context, yet sport modern hair cuts that range from the defiant "buzz-cut" to the iconoclastic "Mohawk." Such contradictions between the play / libretto's setting and our current moment prove to be a running theme throughout the evening.

In the work's first group number, "All That's Known," the male school chums pull wireless microphones out from their jacket pockets and begin filling the space with the pop rock sounds of Duncan Sheik's all too catchy score, and Steven Sater's rebellious lyrics. Simultaneously, Stephen Spinella's overbearing school instructor interstitially attempts to conduct a Latin lesson, and so the ongoing tension between the older and younger generations is readily established. Successively, an epic assortment of scenes, seemingly built around Sheik's score, which, at the expense of plot and character dominates the first act, further contributes to the piece's attempt to expound on the work's inherent generational conflict. "The Bitch of Living" features the adolescent males defiantly bellowing Sheik's punk rock cadence, while "My Junk" includes their female counterparts in an anthem of modern teenage rebellion: "I go to my room and turn the stereo on!" In a poignant musical alteration, "Touch Me," also features the entire youth ensemble in a fugue centered on the discovery of masturbation. Repeatedly, the talented group tenderly sings, "When I go there…" into their hand held microphones, thereby expressing the pangs of their sexual awakening. Sheik's

music, Sater's text, and Mayer's staging coalesce for the first time. Moreover, Kevin Adams's blend of pink and red illumination - the lighting design consistently complements the dramatic action - serves as an effective metaphor to the wonder surrounding each youth's timid, yet palpable carnal confession. It is among the production's most successful confluences of its own theatrical components, while making tangible use of Wedekind's original text.

Unfortunately such artistic unity is short lived, as the initial encounter between the narrative's two central figures, Melchior (Jonathan Groff) and Wendla (Lea Michele), races by without any sense of sexuality, lure, or charm. Ostensibly, the audience should be rooting for the younger generation in general, and these two protagonists specifically. Therefore, this scene should set up what effectively is a tragic, yet wondrous partnership: they overcome the rigid taboos of their culture, celebrate their lust for one another, become emotionally attached, and share in an unintended pregnancy. In the latter case, Wendla, in keeping with the content of the original, is humiliated by her parents and cruelly forced to abort her fetus, which results in her untimely death. However, from their initial scene onward the spoken text between these two talented, yet misdirected, actors is glossed over without any awareness of the psychological, visceral, and cultural underpinnings of the given circumstances. We can barely wait for the music to start up again so we can listen to their gifted voices do justice to Sheik's catchy numbers. Although their carnal attraction is exhilaratingly theatricalized in the act's finale, "I Believe," one questions how these two inviting characters managed to reach such a climactic, no pun intended, moment.

If the first act exudes an imbalance of form in which the music dominates the other modes of theatrical expression, most notably the story itself, *Spring Awakening's* second part exemplifies a more compelling blend of its varied components. After replicating the musical's initial motif of foregrounding the entrance of the players amidst a wash of white light, the interval is solidly closed by an abrupt change in illumination, the orchestra striking an effectively unsettling chord, and the very capable Steven Spinella launching into a diatribe citing the rectitude of Martin Luther. Juxtaposing Spinella's schoolteacher is the entire adolescent ensemble, led by Wendla and Melchior, engaging in the cutting, rebellious, and sexually rapturous choreography of Bill T. Jones as they simultaneously execute Sheik's next offering: "The Guilty Ones." This dramatic movement is among the evening's finest. In addition to the score, libretto, spoken text, and staging synchronizing to powerful effect, the "gest" is completed with howls of approval pouring forth from the largely adolescent audience (To the credit of the producers, they have marketed *Spring Awakening* to younger theatergoers). One could not help note the Brechtian dichotomy of having the stage world collide with the spectatorial one. The result is an artful expression of adolescence in the face of an oppressive social system within the play's context that becomes dialogically exemplified by an unusually younger American audience cheering their iconic representatives. For all of us, it was a magical moment of live theatre.

Except for the dramaturgically unsubstantiated suicide of Moritz (John Gallagher, Jr.) - this abrupt plot devel-

opment is as forced as Gallagher's performance - *Spring Awakening's* second act is theatrically captivating, while the music, lyrics, and text all generate from a joint impulse. After Melchior is expelled from school and blamed as the scapegoat for Moritz's death, the electric guitar led rock and roll number "Totally Fucked" causes the adolescent ensemble to turn the stage upside down - it's as if it were their very playground - with a defiant blast of amplified song, jagged physical movements, and repeated shouts of "You're Fucked!" The square platform stage within the stage, which has been designated the prime acting area from the outset, functions as a zone of youthful rebellion as desks are artfully turned over and used as objects woven into the choreography. The number ends triumphantly, before revealing the banished hero, Melchior, defiantly sitting at a ubiquitous desk chair that has been perpendicularly fastened to the theatre's back wall, some twelve feet off the ground. The rigid social construction of the stage world has been thrown into momentary chaos, and alas, the audience can cheer, shout, and ultimately lament with its brave young representatives.

Peter Zazzali takes another crack at Spring Awakening through the long-form essay later in this volume.

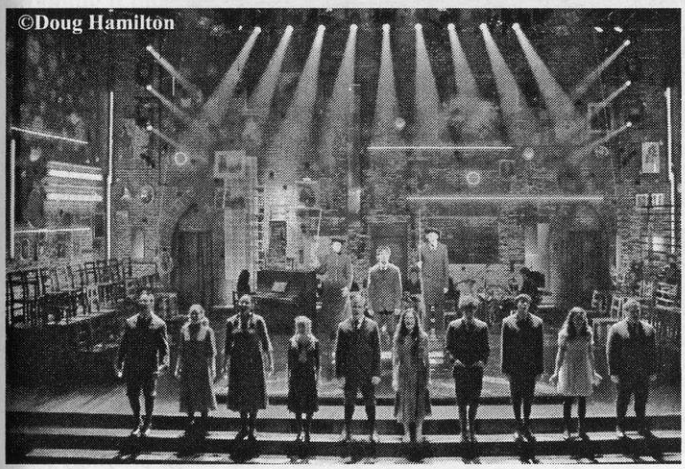
In spite of the fact it reduces Wedekind's text to a loosely connected series of scenes predominantly expressed musically, Sater and Sheik's rendition proves to be an exciting theatrical event, if not a nuanced one. While its modern motifs most often work to define the play's central tension (the generational struggle), subtleties of character and their corresponding situations are insufficiently explored. During the course of the story we encounter two teenage deaths, an expulsion from school, parents disowning their children, an unwanted pregnancy, and the sexual awakening of numerous teenagers - both gay and straight ones. However, nearly all these events are dealt with superficially. Perhaps it is expecting too much to criticize a pop songwriter as gifted as Duncan Sheik and a librettist as crafty as Steven Sater for failing to fully express the complexity of Wedekind's original text. Nonetheless, their version of a play that has been consistently regarded as exciting, shocking, and controversial most certainly captures the former sentiment, which is more than can be said for most Broadway offerings.

PETER ZAZZALI
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Written in 1891, Frank Wedekind's world of *Spring Awakening* is first and foremost about youth and their world: the strict governance of their parents, the various politics and restrictions of their school, and the redundant sermons of their pastor echoing and affirming the other institutions. Combined these elements create an oppressive world and a dysfunctional system with distant parents being violent and incapable of communicating to their children, school authorities functioning as mechanized and militant autocrats, and a church and its pastor enabling and legitimizing both method and ideology. In short, the world of Wedekind's young characters is depicted as a realm run by a dominant voice, constantly playing with their fears and dictating a constant rebuke of their discovery of a sexual

life.

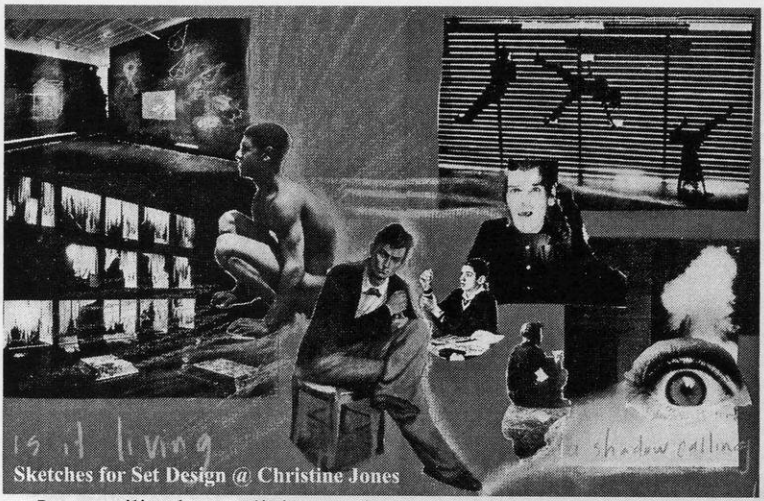
With this as the basic gestus of the play, Wedekind's 19th century play on Broadway may at first cause skepticism



and disbelief: "What does Wedekind have to do with Broadway?" one may ask, but such questions and skepticism are answered within the first minutes of the production. Sater's lyrics capture the situation and spirit of the scenes, while Sheik's music supplies an ample range of music and atmosphere, ranging from violent and angry, to soft and tender, to sad and melancholic. While the music throughout remains contemporary, the production visuals are a cross between the 19th and the 21st centuries; whereas Susan Hilferty's costume design evokes the 19th century, Christine Jones' set design and Kevin Adam's lighting design (neon lights on the brick walls and color light bulbs hanging from the ceiling) represents a 21st sensibility.

Beyond the carefully conceived contemporarization, a second point which made the production successful was that it avoided the traps caused by gimmickry and sensationalization. Instead of panning to the audiences' preconditioned and expectant minds, Michael Mayer chose to clearly focus on and (re)present (i.e."make present again") Wedekind's 19th century world and imagination. In his staging, for example, Mayers chose a theatrically honest staging rarely seen in the American Theater: when time came for the actors to sing, they very naturally and in a Brechtian manner, would pull out a microphone from their side pocket, sing the song, put it back in their pocket and move on. Neither Mayer, nor the actors, nor the audience were at any point concerned with the appearance of sound equipment in the scene, ultimately signaling: "It is, after all, theatre that we are doing."

In the spirit of the production's modernization and contemporary choices, Christina Jones used the multiple settings of the play - classroom, different homes with different parents, church, graveyard, meadows - to design the space as a single unit with different parts and functions. The set design started before the start of the play, where some audience members were seated on rows of chairs on the stage, next to the band and the carefully arranged artwork on the brick walls. All other audience members could watch and see how the space transformed itself into a classroom. In collaboration with lighting designer Kevin Adams,



Sketches for Set Design @ Christine Jones

Jones utilized neon lights on the walls of the stage as well as the theatre, thereby extending the classroom space into the theatre space, at once embracing and inviting the audience to be part of the reality of the play. With this spatial and set configuration, the center stage held a multi-layered platform which, depending on the scene, was used either plainly or with minimal furniture, e.g. a table and a chair, a single chair, or two rows of chairs as in a classroom.

While the center stage with its center platform constituted the main part of the play's action - the classroom - to accentuate the classroom's central presence and activity, both sides of the stage were blocked off with bleachers and chairs. Created as part of the set, as well as audience seating, the bleachers held both audience members as well as the moving, running, singing and dancing cast members. In addition, two upstage doors for entrances and exits, and a central door for the surprise moments, were created. Using the construed and limited parameter marked by the platform, the 19th century desk-chairs and the two audience-filled bleachers, Jones quite remarkably and logically created Wedekind's classroom space. To add interior details, various paintings and frames were hung on the back and adjacent brick walls, including a large painting of a white horse with writing across it, a painting of a white rose, several portraits and, to complete the classroom reality, a blackboard with chalk writing, and crossed-out words hung on the stage-left back wall.

With such a controlled physical space mirroring the tight and suffocating psychological space and reality of the children, the central platform was used in a theatrical and unexpected manner for the scene in which Wendla and Melchoir come together and make love to one another. Attached to four ropes on the four corners, the platform was hoisted up, while the two young lovers kissed one another and made love. With the platform hung in mid-air, the other students gathered around the platform, holding it by its edges and gently pushing it to and fro, almost as in support of the action. The result of this lovemaking scene was that Wendla becomes pregnant, and forced by her parents' intervention, undergoes a clandestine abortion.

Wendela's tragic death is not the only one in the play. Under pressure and fear of being a failure, Moritz commits suicide. After Moritz commits suicide, his

father appears onstage, carrying with him a bunch of flowers. Looking into the grave (created by the stage trapdoor) he breaks down, falls and cries, after which he leaves, leaving behind the flowers on the ground. The other classmates replace his position on stage, one at a time, each picking up a single stem of a flower and dropping it into Moritz's grave and rushing off stage.

A rare production, where tragedy, comedy, material for reflection or entertainment come together, the Broadway production of *Spring Awakening* had it all. Combined with the music, the energetic and committed acting of the cast, directing, the set, costume and light design, the production was a great success in bringing Wedekind to a contemporary audience.

Babak Ebrahimian

Lulu. Frank Wedekind. Translation: Carl Mueller. Directed & Adapted: Mark Lamos. Yale Repertory Theatre. New Haven, CT / USA. 6 April 2007

Perhaps no work of Frank Wedekind's is more shocking than his *Lulu* story, which is comprised from a pair of play-texts: *Earth Spirit* (1895) formerly known as *A Monster Tragedy*, and *Pandora's Box* (1903). A chilling narrative that centers around a siren whose sexuality lures various men (and a single woman) to a tragic demise, Wedekind's *Lulu* unabashedly appeals to our most carnal desires and guttural impulses. Similar to his earlier play, *Spring Awakening*, *Lulu* uses a pastiche of dramaturgical styles that range from the expressionistic, to the realistic, to the grotesque. Moreover, also like *Spring Awakening*, the sexual openness of *Lulu's* characters can be read as an affront to the cultural mores of the late nineteenth-century German bourgeoisie. However, this is where the similarities between Wedekind's two best-known works end. *Lulu's* level of controversy and iconoclasm goes beyond that of *Spring Awakening's*; indeed, it was the target of censorship and nearly landed Wedekind in prison.While providing scintillating scenes of sexual desire, which are graphically rendered onstage, and oftentimes in large numbers of people, *Lulu* also possesses moments of utter violence, grotesqueness, and imagination. Although this rich work is rarely produced nowadays, The Yale Repertory Theatre produced a resourceful, if not entirely effective, version of the play in New Haven, CT.

In the production's opening moments Lulu's male victims are seated facing the audience down center in various stages of undress, as the Animal Trainer, played by the creepily capable Michael Braun, regales us while the "beautiful and diabolical" Lulu, bedecked in the costume of the Commedia Dell' Arte figure Pierot, stands and rocks atop a swing. This sultry sight / site serves as a telling prologue to the narrative's recurring theme: Lulu's mesmerizing and fatal command over the men, boys, and

women of this fictional world. With Wedekind's text under the auspices of Mark Lamos's steady direction and cogent adaptation, and an accomplished cast of actors and team of designers, one could expect that this would be a special evening of theatre. Unfortunately, the one missing ingredient was Brienin Bryant's Lulu, which proved to be the difference between an extraordinary theatre-going experience, and a mere refreshing look at a rarely produced gem. The latter proved to be the case.

In fairness to Ms. Bryant, the title role of Wedekind's play is not an easy one. In addition to serving as the central figure, and therefore having to carry the narrative, because of Lulu's objectified status the text's dramatic construction is such that she is constantly reacting to the actions of others instead of taking the initiative; a much harder position for an actor to be in. Everything is revolving around her, or quite literally, upon her. She is the object of sexual desire for ten men of varying backgrounds and social classes - one of who is her very father - and a single female character (The Countess). Although Ms. Bryant, a stunningly beautiful woman, brings a physical appeal to the role, her performance fails to capture Lulu's powerful allure. This shortcoming was readily apparent during Lulu's initial scene with Walter Schwartz (Louis Cancelmi), a painter who is using her as his model. The exchanges between the two of them in Schwartz's studio range from the sexually playful to the scintillatingly erotic. Above all, it seems logical for these foundational moments to establish Lulu's siren-like command over the men of this world, which starts with the helpless Schwartz. Although Rumiko Ishii's tastefully minimalist design has provided both actors with numerous opportunities to use set pieces (a ladder, a chez lounge, a pedestal, a love seat) within a relatively open playing space for enacting an erotic game of cat and mouse, Bryant and Schwartz do little more than aimlessly race about the stage feigning attraction for one another. As a result, the scene seems forced thereby causing us to discount the fatal heart attack subsequently suffered by Lulu's husband, the elderly Professor Goll, who enters and witnesses his beautiful young wife in the arms of another man.

Unfortunately, this lack of connection to the text's visceral impulses occurs throughout the evening. In addition to Lulu's scene with Schwartz, Bryant's exchanges with the other lustful men also fall short. Presumably a prevailing sense of desire should pervade the

piece to the point of being vicariously felt among the audience. At the very least, we should credibly regard these carnal drives such as they are comprised in the fictional world of the play. However, Bryant's Lulu, in conjunction with Lamos's direction, chooses to focus on a surreal and detached, one might attempt to argue a Brechtian, treatment of the play's eroticism. For example, in Scene Four Lulu and three men (Alwa, Roderigo, and the School boy / Bob) instigate an orgy that is replete with blindfolds, whipped cream, champagne, playing atop and beneath a table, lingerie, and various stages of undress. Lines such as, "You're driving me insane!" and "This is the most beautiful moment of my life!" fill out this bacchanalian spectacle. Nonetheless, there is barely a sense of genuinely erotic energy. Indeed, the scene unfolds as if the actors had been directed to behave like school children engaging in a food fight. It is silly and contrived, rather than sexually alluringly and potentially dangerous. As such, the jealously enraged entrance of John Bedford Lloyd's Dr. Schon, otherwise an admirably smarmy performance, which prompts his physically mounting Lulu, putting a revolver to her chest, and demanding that she pull the trigger, loses its shock value.

Whether or not these detached performances, especially Bryant's, were part of Lamos's scheme could only be answered by those directly involved with the project. However, it is perplexing as to how such a gifted director and his cast could leave us so viscerally unsatisfied. Perhaps that is the very point to the play, much less Lamos's vision; maybe we are supposed to want more. Regardless, Lamos is clearly a deft and imaginative director. The production's interstitial moments were a brilliant amalgam of seriolist music, haunting lighting, and at one instant, an appropriately grotesque cabaret number in which the players were bare-chested and wore gas masks. Moreover, Lamos's adaptation seemed to be a faithful and cogent condensation of the three original sources (*Earth's Spirit*, *A Monster Tragedy*, and *Pandora's Box*) into an hour and forty minute presentation. I found myself wanting to appreciate the experience, however, more than the production would allow. I wanted to be shaken up, disgusted, frightened, and

yes, scintillated. Ironically, the evening's final scene, in which the character of Jack the Ripper violently rapes and murders Lulu, before dismembering her clitoris, was played with truth and fullness. As a result, the audience was left stunned into a prolonged silence. In spite of the horror that we felt for the title character, one can only imagine how much more devastating the payoff could have been had the entire production been performed with such commitment.

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ORESTEIA. AESCHYLUS. FREE ADAPTATION: DAVID JOHNSTON. DIRECTION: STEPHEN SPEIGHTS. 9 MARCH 2007. & PROMETHEUS BOUND. AESCHYLUS TRANSLATION & DIRECTION: JAMES KERR. 12 APRIL 2007

In Greek myth, the House of Atreus has a history that makes Oedipus' family look like choir boys: Tantalus, the first in the royal line, chopped up his son, baked him into a pie and attempted to feed him to the gods. The line became cursed with cold-blooded murderers such as King Agamemnon, who sacrificed his daughter to get a favorable wind for the Greek expedition to Troy. Aeschylus' tragic trilogy the *Oresteia*, written in 458 BCE, picks up the story with Agamemnon's arrival home to Argos after the Trojan War. The triumphal return quickly inaugurates fresh horrors. In revenge for killing Iphigenia, Clytemnestra murders Agamemnon in his bath. Years later, her son Orestes returns to Argos to kill his mother in revenge. In retaliation for this matricide, the vampire-like Furies drive Orestes mad. Finally, Orestes seeks refuge in Athens, where Athena halts the Furies' rampage by forcing both parties to submit the family's cumulative atrocities for arbitration in a court of justice.

The trilogy treats themes as big as civilization: the conflict between revenge and justice, tyranny and democracy, male and female, and familial and political duty. Great directors like Max Reinhardt, Peter Stein, or Ariane Mnouchkine have produced monumental productions. The Blue Coyote Group's *Oresteia*, produced in collaboration with Access Theatre in New York, is an entirely different species of tragedy. This trilogy, adapted by David Johnston, is an often irreverent version of Aeschylus, replete with anachronism, humor, and even oral sex. Despite its renegade attitude, this *Oresteia* does not shy away from asking the difficult questions that the original poses.

SPECIAL: DOUBLE REVIEW

The intimate set by Robert Monaco was part modern black box and part ancient amphitheatre. As the audience entered the theatre, many passed a sleeping watchman (one of the first working class characters in extant tragedy) to get to their seats. When the watchman woke, he droned on about the agonies of waiting for a signal that Troy had fallen. Meanwhile, the palace doors opened to reveal Clytemnestra (Kathy Lichter) frolicking with

her lover, the hunky Aegisthus (Bryce Gill). Next, we were shown a flashback of Agamemnon preparing to sacrifice his daughter, Iphigenia. All three scenes hit a crescendo at the same moment: Clytemnestra has an orgasm, Agamemnon slits Iphigenia's throat, and the Watchman sees the signal, linking the sacrifice of Iphigenia, which sailed the fleet to Troy, with Agamemnon's return.

Johnston did more than play with time or add humor to the original. He streamlined three plays into a workable, two hour production. In doing so, the individual tragedies grew a great deal more familiar. *Agamemnon* played like a political thriller. Underneath a veneer of calculated public speeches, mystery and prophecy drove private feuds forward until the final, inevitable murders. Despite a littering of anachronism, the play's conclusion, when Clytemnestra gloated over the slain bodies of Agamemnon and his concubine Cassandra, resonates with true tragic horror. Here Johnston shows that he can listen to his source as well as invent. Rather than end with the climactic murders, the play follows Aeschylus almost speech for speech. A rhetorical duel between Clytemnestra, publicly defending her actions, and a Curator (Gary Shrader), attacking her on behalf of the people, took the action into the public sphere. As Clytemnestra and Aegisthus silenced the opposition regicide became a violent coup.

The Libation Bearers, by contrast, played like a gothic family drama. Returning from exile, Orestes (Brenden Bradley) was reunited with his sister Electra (played with brilliant sarcasm by Sarah Schoenberg) who had been driven mad by years of living under Clytemnestra's roof. The two youths formed a passionate, incestuous soli-

darity as they vowed to avenge their beloved father. Orestes acted as an iconic Greek hero who might have stepped out of the frame of Disney's *Hercules*. When asked if he was ready to kill his mother, his refrain was "It will be an adventure!" Predictably, and tragically, his first line as he emerged from the palace covered in his mother's blood: "That was *not* an adventure!"

An old story has it that when the chorus of Furies entered in the first production of the *Oresteia*, their masks were so frightening that women in the audience miscarried on the spot. Speights and mask maker Michelle Ross, who based her masks in part on "archetypal subconscious fear, personal nightmare imagery, and modern horror films" played up this terror. In the Furies' first appearance after Orestes' matricide, one of the black-clad trio emerged from Agamemnon's grave to dig her teeth into Orestes' neck in a haunting tableau.

Compared to the fast pace and well-integrated humor of the first two plays, *The Eumenides* fell flat. It stumbled between comedy, courtroom drama, and supernatural horror without the irony of what's come before. As the trilogy neared its conclusion, you felt the creative team straining to deliver important messages, which is exactly what they had been doing so effortlessly since the opening montage.

While the *Oresteia* seems to enjoy an enduring popularity, Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* is a rarity in the theatre. Notoriously difficult to stage, its more challenging requirements include a protagonist who spends the play chained to a rock, a cow for a secondary lead, monologues of dizzying length, and a wealth of obscure mythological allusions. Approaching this static, episodic piece requires a great deal of interpretive purpose and theatrical invention, qualities that the British 2005 Sound Theatre production, presented by Aquila Theatre in association with Company Classic Stage Company, only takes by halves.

The character of Prometheus, punished for giving fire to humanity, is often resurrected to question political authority. Since the late eighteenth century, *Prometheus Bound* has been a fixture of progressive movements from anti-monarchism to women's liberation to pacifism. Prometheus, who endures Zeus' unjust torments with stoic defiance, is a revolutionary *par excellence*. In Aeschylus' version, stealing fire is only a part of his subversive activities. Complicit in a coup against his fellow Titans, Prometheus begins the play already implicated in Zeus' new regime. Attempting to act upon his conscience, he has taken action to check the new king (who intended to "blast" humanity) by teaching men and women a range of technological crafts, including agriculture, medicine, and metallurgy. Prometheus' most treasonous act, however, is withholding a prophecy naming the son of Zeus destined to depose his father. Turning to torture as a method to expedite Prometheus' confession, Zeus has Prometheus chained to a rock in the Caucasus Mountains for thousands of years.

The *Prometheus Bound* company grappled with the idea of authority without finding a concrete point of view. The prologue opened with Prometheus, played with dignity and passion by Nigerian actor David Oyelowo, yoked and chained to a crucifix-like array of chains center stage. The sight of a black man herded across the stage evoked images of slavery, a rich top-

ic that was not revisited. Instead, key choices indicated that James Kerr, who both translated and directed, was more preoccupied with questioning the agency of the artist in a time of crisis. "Art," Prometheus says at one point, "stands in the shadow of necessity." This intriguing approach to a play about revolution lacked depth. There was little notion of what grade of complicity "necessity" might entail; rather, the word was spat out as the equivalent of "oppression." Zeus, never seen on stage but represented by two boyish but gestapoesque goons, was merely a stand-in for "tyrant," a move that not even a king-hater like Shelley would make (nor did he in his *Prometheus Unbound*). Kerr shaped the narrative as a contest between Zeus' power to torture and Prometheus' will to resist. A duel between the two male gods is good drama, but it left little room for the host of secondary characters whose position-takings are the heart of the play.

Fearful of Zeus' wrath, most characters recognize Prometheus' punishment as unjust, but are too cautious to lend a helping hand. It was precisely this balance that was missing from the production. The play opened with Hephaestus, the god of the forge, putting Prometheus in chains. Hephaestus, the closest thing to a divine proletariat, delivered a monologue brimming with a deep inner conflict between his solidarity with another god and allegiance to the chief deity. Instead of inviting the audience to recognize his dilemma, George Bartenieff delivered his opening lines as Hephaestus as a sonorous keening that robbed the speech of its rich texture. The production itself was marred by a similar self-awareness. From the first moments, a cloud of dread hung over every line and action. The staging constantly reminded the audience to feel sad about what they were watching, a maneuver that foregrounded the tragedy's emotional pain but downplayed its content. The result was a production that invited empathy without working to evoke a sense of justice.

Since Prometheus as prophet can only exert his agency by telling stories from the past and future, the responses from his onstage audience must fulfill the audience's need for action. Like many ancient choruses, the Daughter of the Ocean provided beautiful lyric odes, but in *Prometheus Bound* they were also actors. Even though Prometheus was chastised by the chorus at the opening, he repeatedly attempted to enlist their sympathy. As Prometheus spoke, the chorus deliberated, eventually aligning itself with the fallen Titan. At the conclusion, the chorus defied a direct order from Zeus to quit the stage, choosing to face danger by remaining at Prometheus' side. In Kerr's staging, the chorus was almost a non-entity: they were largely used to compliment the minimalist design by creating pretty stage pictures.

Rather than attempt to recreate a romantic landscape at the edge of the world, designer Paul Wills rightly chose to strip away detail. The set consisted of a blank, black platform, adorned only by luminescent chains suspended from the ceiling like a great claw. Myth, the design suggested, is in the lack of details. Yet, the director did not share this insight. Several times, the action stopped for prosaic events like the passage of time or extraneous emoting. After Prometheus was chained, the audience watched for upwards of five minutes while the Titan twisted and pulled against his shackles. For a play about suffering, Prometheus's struggle was oddly beautiful, a ballet of bond-

age.

Prometheus Bound repeatedly missed the point. Rather than encouraging the spectator to discern the basic power relationships being discussed, it prompted the audience to wallow in the general misery of the central character. For a tragedy covering the events following a mythic regime change, its politics were incongruously personal.

The Blue Coyote Group's *Oresteia* suggests that one need not be faithful to the letter of the original. What the *Oresteia* got right and *Prometheus Bound* got wrong is that, above all, one needs to be sensitive to the dynamics of the source material. A production team ignores them at its peril.

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Oedipus Complex. Adapted and Directed by Frank Galati (From Material by Sophocles and Sigmund Freud). Goodman Theatre. Chicago, IL / USA. 29 May 2007

The Goodman Theatre is one of the leaders of the Chicago artistic community and a nationally respected powerhouse among the major regional theatre companies. Their *Oedipus Complex*, adapted and directed by associate director Frank Galati, is an interpretation of perhaps the most well-known of all dramas, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Galati, an accomplished adapter with successes like *A Flea in Her Ear* and *The Grapes of Wrath* on his resume, has fused the classic Greek tragedy with the writings of the Austrian father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. The adaptation's title comes from one of the highly-controversial Freud's most controversial theories: namely, that each of us has the hidden desire to kill one parent and marry the other. Freud appears as a character, leading his audience through the action. As Galati explains in a promotional interview, the audience experiences the play, "as dissected/interpreted/viewed/dreamt - in a kind of fever state - by Sigmund Freud himself."

The presentation was very polished, with a simple but eloquent stylistic approach. The costumes of Mara Blumenfeld, almost exclusively in black, came directly from the late 19th century. James Schuette's similarly dated set consisted of a series of grand doorways and raised gallery seating, evoking a university lecture hall. Nick Sandys, as Freud, led an experienced cast of Chicago actors thriving within the thickness of the verse-enriched text. Of particular note were Susan Hart as mother / wife Jocasta, who was horrifyingly convincing as she processed the truth of her sin, and Roderick Peeples as her brother Kreon, who was the commanding voice of normalcy in the insanity that was Thebes.

Like all ancient Greek drama, *Oedipus* incorporates a chorus into the action of the play. This chorus provided the societal context to the personal conflict of the main characters. This highly theatrical element drew exceptional parallels to the theories of Brecht, in that thes chorus, made up of the citizens of Thebes, called attention to the manufactured nature of the play and commented, as a "collective society,"

on the central plot.

Galati's chorus, however, was comprised of a bunch of Freuds (or at least very Freud-like men), and illustrated the core problem with this adaptation. While the singing, chanting, well-choreographed chorus (helped by vocal and choral coach Linda Gates as well as choreographer/ movement consultant Christina Ernst) succeeded both in analyzing Oedipus' story and divorcing the audience from its urgency, it actually took it too far. Freud served not merely as a guide or commentator to the tale of Oedipus, but as the filter through which the audience experienced the tale. This was no longer a play about the king's tragedy and society's reaction to it, but the very personal, internalized journey of a specific man's obsession with the play. The complicated relationship between Oedipus' grand, cathartic tragedy of fate and society's simultaneous role as participant and observer was completely reduced to the subjective analysis of an individual, personified in both narrator and chorus. The entire play was therefore the intellectual journey of Freud.

While this created an interesting and rather unique approach to the millennia-old material, the lingering question I found myself wrestling with is what exactly did this adaptation say about the original, other than pointing out the deep connection Freud had to the play? Rarely in this reserved, highly controlled production, did the play provoke any great emotional or intellectual reaction from the audience. Although the technical achievements were significant and the work of the individual artists often excellent, this awkward approach greatly muted the power of Sophocles' play. Indeed, the richness of *Oedipus Rex*, the many complex themes present in the story, and the power it maintains throughout the world and ages were all reduced to Freud's personal belief that the sole importance of the play was in its illustration of this universal Oedipus Complex he described.

In the aforementioned interview, Galati stated that he hoped the audience had a cathartic reaction, realizing: "Oh my God, that's me," much like Freud did. Given that this production focused on just one theme, the only audience member who would have made such a comment would have been the one on the verge of a Freudian breakthrough in realizing their own desire to kill one parent and sleep with the other. For the rest of us, I found the more likely response, "Oh my God, that's Freud." Ultimately, *Oedipus Complex* felt like Frank Galati's academic exploration of Freud's relationship to the tragedy of Oedipus: a theatrical 'paper' written about a specific session of the psychologist's own personal psychotherapy.

BRADLEY J. GUNTER

SPUREN DER VERIRRTEN. PETER HANDKE. DIRECTION: CLAUS PEYMANN. BERLINER ENSEMBLE. BERLIN / GERMANY. 6 JUNE 2007

Spuren der Verirrten opened at the Berliner Ensemble on February 17, 2007. The production represented the return of a playwright considered a prodigal son of sorts, after Handke's public opposition to the division of the former Yugoslavia and his controversial comparison of NATO actions there to Nazi aggression. The production was also a resumption of the collaboration between Handke and director Claus Peymann, who worked with Handke in 1999 at the Burgtheater in Vienna, directing the play *Die Fahrt im Einbaum oder Das Stück zum Film vom Krieg*, which dealt with the Yugo-

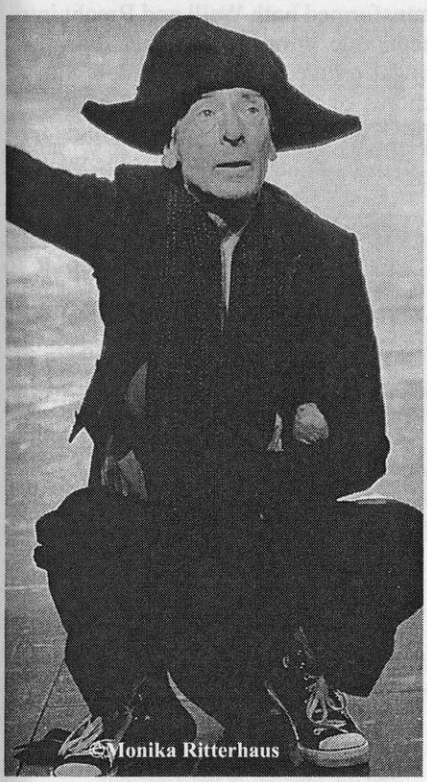
slav war.

However, the Brechtian elements in *Spuren der Verirrten*, as well as in Peymann's direction of the play, hearkened back more to earlier collaborations between them, such as *Publikumsbeschimpfung*. Central to the play was the opposition between direct involvement and purposefully passive observation. The inclined minimalist stage was observed not just by the audience but also by a *Souffleur* who eventually turned his face rather than his back to the onlookers. The initial function of the *Souffleur* as a porous boundary between audience and actors was eliminated as his character transformed from dramatic to epic effect.

Like the *Souffleur*, spectators were reminded of their agency in the unfolding of events. The lost people of this production made their way across the stage in pairs or small groups, costumed to suggest either political refugees or postwar consumers of the last century (clearly not discrete populations), or as anachronistic veterans of Mother Courage's Thirty Years' War. Their interactions vacillated between acrimony tending toward violence, and an uneasy co-existence between fellow wanderers or time travelers who have lost their way, thus demonstrating the fragile membrane between war and peace, between awareness of history and ignorant repetition of history. Rather than merely transmitting rumors of war, they and the audience were participants constantly determining the advent or avoidance of war.

Despite Brechtian emphasis on engagement and allusions to politics, Handke's abtract theatrical environment had limited overlap with terrain that Brecht asked us to traverse en route toward new benchmarks of progress. While being lost was never used as an excuse for unfulfilled potential, Handke's play did present it as the existential norm. Some of Handke's lost figures left bread crumbs along their paths in order to trace their route, though the starting point was as unclear as the destination. Where would the trail of crumbs return them if it were followed in reverse direction? Visibly traced lines thus became the focus of attention instead of origin and end points.

When designing Berlin's Jewish Museum, the architect Daniel Liebeskind is said to have cut out Jewish names from the pages of 1930s Berlin telephone directories in order to create templates for the building's facades. The absent spaces on those pages, and the deported and absent citizens they represented, became the locations of windows in a structural design intended to lead us into a more complete understanding of history. Unlike the traces left on the stage of the Berliner Ensemble by wanderers in *Spuren der Verirrten*, sightlines that might connect the windows of the Jewish Museum were less important than the windows themselves: the origins, intersections, and termini of those lines. This analogy illustrates a central problem with the Berliner Ensemble production of Handke's play, the dialogue of which laments at one point, "Die Zeit, sie zeitigt nichts mehr." *Spuren der Verirrten* provocatively challenged audiences to consider the difference between time in general and the particular times in which we live. However, it failed to utilize absence productively. The postmodern traces its characters left did not encourage us to locate our own windows of understanding, so that we might look specifically outward upon time in general or introspectively to whatever finite bit of chronology we



ourselves can shape. Ultimately, the cast's collective absence of bearings was less compelling than certain individual figures themselves, with the result that by default the audience's attention was earned and redeemed less by the *Völkerwanderung* on stage than by the orientation points provided by certain performances. Carmen-Maja Antoni and Axel Werner, for example, brightened the set each time they randomly appeared.

These elements of the production were wonderful crumbs, yet the sustenance promised by the absent loaf, the hope of "eine andere Zeit, (...) eine grundlegend neue," remained elusive.

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LOVEMUSIK. MUSIC: KURT WEILL / BOOK: ALFRED UHRY. DIRECTION: HAROLD PRINCE. MANHATTAN THEATRE CLUB AT THE BILTMORE THEATRE. 14 JUNE 2007

One does not go to a Broadway musical these days expecting to hear original music. In fact, hearing familiar favorites has now become the principal attraction, and the "new" musical *LoveMusik* is full of them. Waiting in line at the box office, I realized that the people around me were welcoming Weill back to Broadway as an old friend. While some of them had seen original productions of Weill works on Broadway in the 1940s, almost all of them had seen *The Threepenny Opera* in its triumphant Off-Broadway "premiere." What was most striking about *LoveMusik*, however, was not the age (or the resilience) of its score but the even greater antiquity of its story. Librettist Alfred Uhry and director Harold Prince chose to structure their Kurt Weill biopic in the manner of a Christian morality play, disguised as the equally timeless American success story. While the musical was ostensibly "suggested by the letters of Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya,", Uhry and Prince relied on the economy of the allegorical model to reduce their unwieldy material to some form of dramatic coherence.

Uhry chose to structure his libretto according to the well-established tradition of Weill biography which divides the composer's career neatly in two halves. Act One: Berlin, avant-garde, experimentation, the innocent distractions of youth. Act Two: Broadway, maturity, commercial success, middle-class respectability and the American dream. This narrative was sustained by Uhry's complete disregard for Weill's

German works, with the sole exception of *Dreigroschenoper*. Prince and Uhry combined theatrical economy with allegorical moralizing by reducing the long and distinguished list of Weill's collaborators and associates to two: Bertolt Brecht representing the German avant-garde, and George Davies representing the glitter of Broadway. Davies was the inevitable choice because he later married the widowed Lenya (it was also appropriate that Uhry chose a publicist rather than a playwright to embody American success). To further the comparison, the first meeting between Weill and Brecht took place during the latter's boxing-practice, while Weill, Lenya, and Davies met during a photo-shoot. The only other eponymous characters were Lenya's two lovers, one German, one American, played by the same actor, making the allegory even more transparent.

In Prince's allegorical universe, commercial success took the place of spiritual salvation. Loyal, hard-working, immigrants (like Weill) arrives almost instantly to fame and fortune, while those who failed (as Brecht did) are punished because they are lazy and treacherous. With shocking disregard for history, Prince and Uhry transformed both Weill and Brecht into economic immigrants rather than political refugees. Act One ended with a chorus of German emigrants boarding a ship singing: "Oh show us the way to the next little dollar"! Uhry set this up with a scene in which Lenya revealed to Weill that she had lost all their *Dreigroschen* earnings. Weill responded with another song that was stripped of its irony by being put in the composer's own mouth. In *Street Scene* this was the song of a deceitful sexual predator – here it was Weill's promise to provide for his wife like a good American husband should:

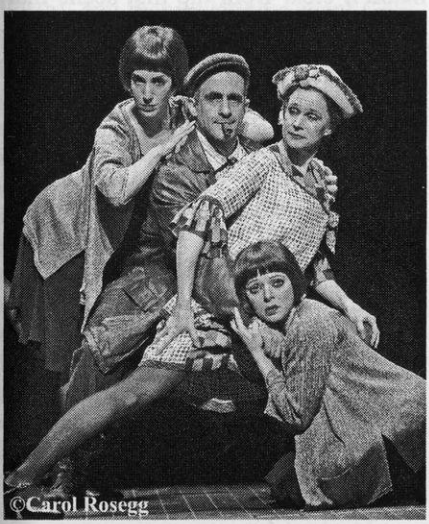
> *Wouldn't you like to be on Broadway,*
> *And go dancing at the Zanzibar*
> *And have yourself an up-and-coming boyfriend*
> *Who can make any course in par?*

According to the narrative presented here, Weill and Brecht fled poverty, not Hitler.

Immigration was not presented as a response to a historical situation, but as a force of destiny. The characters were treated as immigrants from the very beginning, speaking in exaggerated German accents even when they are supposed to be conversing in their native German. When they used American expressions they did it self-consciously, and often incorrectly. Even *Dreigroschenoper* appeared to be a pre-destined American hit. In a gala party given by the Weills in Berlin, Brecht sang

the "Moritat" in the original German but in a style that combined an accurate impression of Brecht's Augsburger accent with the euphoric energy and sexuality of Bobby Darin's 1959 rendition. Lenya interrupted him to offer (26 years before it was written) Blitzstein's American translation. The process of translation was so naturalized that Blitzstein was not only absent from the stage, but also from the program which credits none of the translators.

The four main actors had a seemingly impossible task: they had to reconcile historical authenticity with the allegorical charge of their characters. Consequently, Michael Ceveris' Weill became shy, reserved, almost puritanical. He was a compulsive workaholic: during the aforementioned party, Weill continued to work in his study while his guests were enjoying Brecht's clownish performance. David Pittu, on the other hand, played Brecht in a maniacal yet charismatic style that marked him as the quintessential allegorical villain: Brecht was wicked *because* rather than *despite* of his charm, which was most obvious when he was singing songs like Weill's sensual tangos. Demonic figures like King Herode or Satan himself were the charmers of medieval drama – Brecht played that role in this 20th century mystery play, surrounded by a chorus of "vices" identified as "Brecht's women." In the second act, designer Beowulf Boritt helped with the characterization: Brecht's California residence was a detailed study of life in an American trailer-park, while Weill's suburban New York home was represented only iconically by some shelves heavily loaded with a porcelain collection proving his good taste.



Donna Murphy as Lotte Lenya was faced with the biggest challenge, since she represented the most readily recognizably character. Murphy has become an expert in playing reserved and understated heroines with moments of unlikely passion. Her Lenya was aloof, almost cruel. In her conversations with Weill, she never confessed her true feelings for him. The true nature of their relationship was not revealed until his death, when she recognized her loss in "September Song". Unfortunately, Murphy compromised her characterization by her commitment to portraying all of Lenya's personal quirks. Lenya's voice changed dramatically over the thirty year period depicted in the musical, not only because of her excessive smoking but also because she rarely had a chance to use her voice in her first twenty years in the US. Murphy played the Lenya New York theatergoers recognized from the 1954 *Threepenny* and from *Cabaret*, instead of the Lenya that Kurt Weill wrote music for. Murphy ended up compromising a lot of the music that she was perfectly capable of singing by her excessive emphasis on impersonation. Her most successful performance was "Surabaya Johnny", which she performed

on a small platform representing the stage of a New York nightclub. The forced confinement resulted in a minimal, disciplined performance that complimented the song's reserved emotion. Murphy's mimicry, however, seemed calculated to please the Manhattan Theatre Club's base of subscribers, New Yorkers nostalgic for the time when Lenya herself was performing in Greenwich Village. Recognizing that the non-commercial New York theatre is dependent on the city's oldest residents, the MTC chose to turn that into a commercial asset.

The musical ended as the curtain goes up for the Off-Broadway *Threepenny Opera*. Presumably, the audience did not need to be told of what the outcome was. Though Kurt Weill died four years earlier, he is rewarded with eternal life through the agency of his good angel. Through his music, Weill is reunited with Lenya after death, proving that the two of them had the perfect partnership – in love but also in business. Finally, like all good allegories, *LoveMusik* revealed its moral: Good Americans are successful Americans, and success is ultimately measured at the box office. Or as Brecht and Weill put it: "Hosannah Rockefeller".

George Panaghi
City University of New York

Casebook: The Life of Galileo

The Life of Galileo. Bertolt Brecht with Margarete Steffin. Music: Hanns Eisler. Translation: John Willett. Professional Theatre Training Program (PTTP). University of Delaware, Delaware / USA. Director: Heinz-Uwe Haus. Scenic Designer: William Browning. Music Director: Linda Henderson. 3 March 2007

GLOTZEN IST NICHT SEHEN is the key dialectical phrase in Brecht's *Galileo*, if not the entire scientific revolution. It refers to a new way of seeing (in order to understand and to change / transform the world) what has always been there, e.g. the heliocentric universe, but which tradition, culture, and ideology have conditioned us to passively stare at and accept. Ironically, Brecht's *Galileo*, although one of his most popular plays, especially on the American Stage, is both in its playscript variations and its production history, often guilty of committing on a performance level the same crime. *Galileo* is one of Brecht's most conventional plays with its realist aesthetic, focus on the central character, and history / science-lesson discourse, and one often times finds oneself staring at the stage, passively viewing a static, monumentalized lecture. Director Heinz-Uwe Haus and his PTTP actors made it clear from the first scene that they were not content to indulge traditional practices, but rather were intent to engage in an *Auseinandersetzung* with both the American Stage and Brecht's playscript, in order to explore the play as a model of dialectical theater. The PTTP responded to Brecht's challenge with the elegant design (something that both Galileo and Brecht would have appreciated) of stage design and ensemble work, which successfully liberated the play from its centripetal tendencies, and compelled the spectator to see and not stare.

A traverse stage (a catwalk with audience seating on each of the long rectangular sides), with actor entranceways

from behind and through the audience, and two large platform staircases on wheels which moved back and forth on the stage, simultaneously framing and collapsing the traverse stage, proved to be the key element in PTTP's production of Brecht's *Life of Galileo* at the University of Delaware. This environmental stage design, conceptualized by Director Heinz-Uwe Haus and Scenic / Lighting Designer William Browning, compelled the spectator to constantly shift his/her visual and auditory attention, creating multiple and diverse ways of seeing, hearing, and engaging Brecht's play.

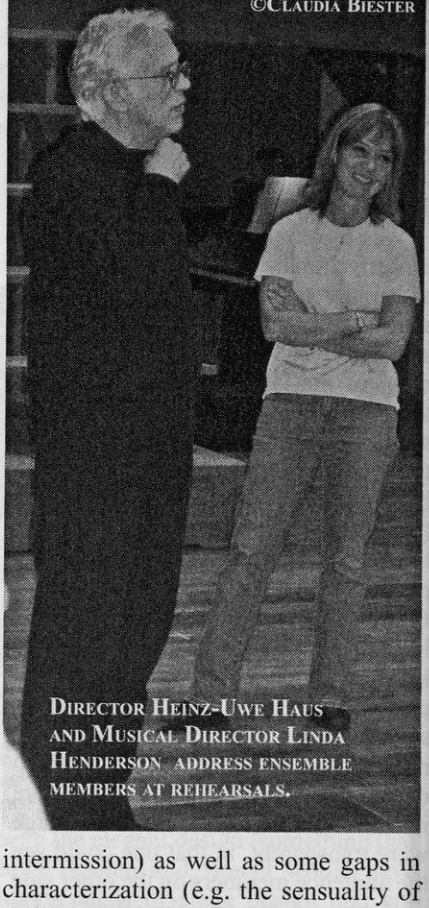
Wasting no time, the PTTP delivered this effect in the opening scene. Instead of beginning with the playscript's first scene of Galileo and Andrea in the study, Director Haus inserted a fragment of the later carnival scene. Entering from all sides of the traverse stage (including the audience seating), the entire ensemble – juggling pins or balls, walking on stilts, carrying signs ("Truth is the child of time, not authority," "The earth is on the move"), playing with giant balls (signifying the Earth), and manipulating a giant Galileo puppet as well as various smaller hand and finger puppets – engaged all parts of the stage and theater house, stretching the audience's visual imagination. The audience not only had to decide what to look at, but also take into account that the actions on stage were transparent, in that one could see the audience members on the other side of the house, creating the effect of not only looking through, but also of being looked at. Moreover, the visual cacophony was accompanied by an auditory one, as drums, chanting, singing, and carnival barking all intertwined with the visual elements. Just as one began to absorb the carnivalesque scene, the Hanns Eisler music, delivered by music director Linda Henderson (piano) and musicians Jarcy Zee (flute), Elizabeth Mayforth (clarinet) positioned onstage under one of the raised platforms, and voiced by the ballad singer (Mark D. Hines) and his wife (Heidi-Marie Ferren) punctured the spectacle, adding an ever so slight note of dissonance.

The ensemble theatricality of the prologue scene came to full expression in the scenes leading up to the intermission – Galileo awaiting the decision of the Collegium Romanum, the Masked Ball, the Carnival Scene – as well as the recantation scene at the end of the play. The carnival scene is always great theater, but the PTTP nailed it on both an aesthetic and intellectual level. With expert choreography, the ensemble first circled around the globe representing the earth, allowing us to stare at the geocentric universe and its order of human hierarchy. Then as the ballad singer spoke of the revolutionary ideas of the scientific revolution, a giant Galileo puppet displaced the earth at the center of the actor's circle: the new heliocentric universe, but also a hint of commodified celebrity at the heart of protocapitalist practices. For the recantation scene, Haus had several actors appear from different parts of the theater house and announce the recantation in several different languages. These announcements eventually overlapped with each other creating a cacophonous effect that surrounded the spectator; the scene culminated with the banners, laden with Galileo's quotes, being torn down from the theater house walls. This effect was extended to the final scene, like the prologue another emendation from Director Haus, in which the entire ensemble assembled on stage in two columns facing each other. In a performance moment which easily could have come

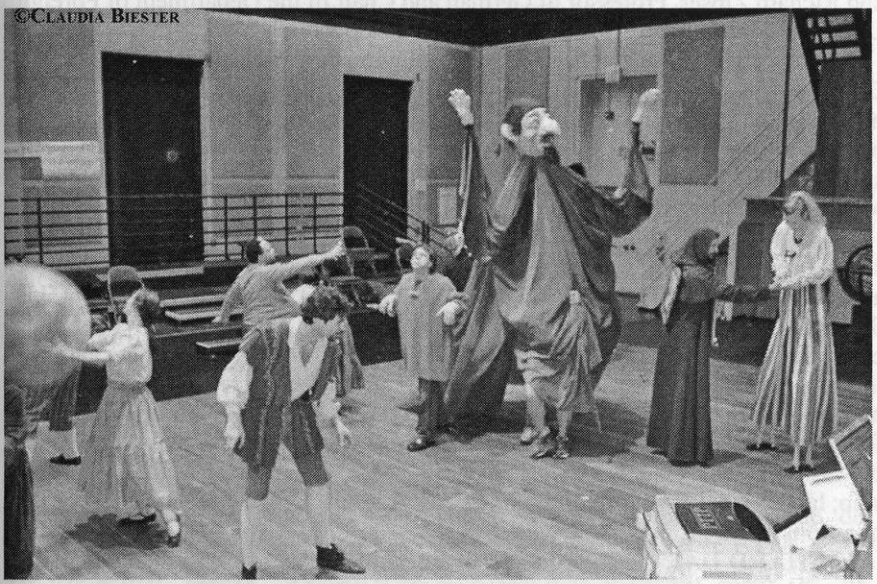
from the *Oresteia* (and which no doubt arose from Haus' training in Classical Greek Theater), the actors proceeded to speak, sing, chant (individually and in unison) an excerpted text from Galileo's *Discourse*, which had been printed on a banner and displayed during the carnival scene. The effect was at once intellectual, ritualistic, and disconcerting.

This theatricality animated the entire production. Each scene incorporated an environmental aspect, in which actors would enter from various sides of the stage or through the audience, props would be moved and re-positioned on stage, and musical excerpts would serve as epic introductions. So, even the slowest and most cerebral of scenes, e.g. discussing scientific method or philosophical world views while sitting at a telescope or conducting an experiment of floating bodies on water, were delivered with the wit and sting of epic theater practices. The technical theater elements which accompanied these scenes – the lighting, props, costumes, and choreography – were nothing short of phenomenal. The various telescopes, globes, and puppets used throughout the production, and the lighting design and choreography that accompanied the use of these props (not to mention the dialogue and musical elements that went along with them) were examples of high craftsmanship.

Because the production was such a great example of ensemble work, it was hard to distinguish individual performances. Luis Galindo, as Galileo, delivered a solid reading of the character. In most productions, the Galileo character represents the chance for a "star turn" (consider Ernst Busch in the 1958 Berliner Ensemble production, Brian Dennehy in the 1986 Goodman Theater Production, and Simon Russell Beale in the 2006 National Theater in London production), but because the PTTP production emphasized the environmental and ensemble aspects so much, some of the performance space for Galindo was taken away. At times, this did lead to a bit of stagnation (e.g. the scene between Galileo and the Little Monk after intermission) as well as some gaps in characterization (e.g. the sensuality of Galileo), but these weaknesses were easily recovered with the ensemble performance. As with any ensemble production, it was the performance of multiple roles which deserved the most attention, and John Knauss (Very Old Cardinal, Theologian, and University



Director Heinz-Uwe Haus and Musical Director Linda Henderson address ensemble members at rehearsals.



Rector), Sara Valentine (Mrs. Sarti, Singing Lady), and William Elsman (*Ansager* and Pope Urban VIII) are but three examples of the stellar ensemble work.

Director Haus decided to use the Willet translation, based on the 1955 Berlin version, instead of the 1947 Laughton version, or newer translations by Howard Brenton, David Hare, and David Edgar. The Laughton translation would have provided a quicker, more Americanized version, and the other translations would have provided a more contemporary tone, but in the end, Haus went for the "edgier" Willett translation, which he was able to suitably adapt for the stage. In the end, the translation, staging, and production all successfully delivered a healthy dose of Brechtian Theater desperately needed by the American Stage.

A.Q. Torby

Brecht Symposium. University of Delaware Dover, DE / USA . 3 March 2007

Brecht and Galileo in Delaware

Richard A. Zipser
University of Delaware

The essays collected in this special section of *Communications* were, with two exceptions, presented as papers at a University of Delaware (UD) symposium focusing on production of *Galileo*. The Heinz-Uwe Haus's symposium, which was held on the Brecht's *The Life of* afternoon of March 3, preceded the premiere of *Galileo* that evening by the UD's Professional Theatre Training Program (PTTP). The event was organized by UD faculty members Uwe Haus, Professor of Theatre,

and Richard Zipser, Professor of German and Chair of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, who also served as moderator.

The objective of the symposium was to illuminate various aspects of Brecht's *Galileo*, with special attention to Uwe Haus's interpretation of the play as witnessed in the PTTP production, and thereby prepare theatergoers for the performances taking place that evening and throughout the following week. All the speakers had attended one or more rehearsals of the play and therefore were able to offer their perspectives on the PTTP production.

Eminent scholar and Brecht specialist **GUY STERN**, Distinguished Professor of German Emeritus at Wayne State University gave a wide-ranging keynote address that provided the audience with a marvelous introduction to Brecht, his dramatic theory and methods, and his powerful *Galileo* play. He draws parallels between the lives and times of Brecht and Galileo, their conflict with the authorities and persecution, and he forges intriguing links between their worlds and the one we live in today. In the Brechtian tradition, Guy raises important questions for us to ponder as we watch *Galileo* - with regard to scientific inquiry, religious beliefs, and ideology; human weakness and suffering; censorship and self-censorship; hierarchical societies; immigration, and more; and like Brecht, he leaves the questions open, provoking thought.

RICHARD DAVISON, Professor of English Emeritus at UD, attended many rehearsals of *Galileo* and watched the production evolve. We were all fortunate to have him share with us his observations on that process and on the unique Hausian style of directing. His essay takes us behind the scenes and gives us glimpes of the Galileo production as work in progress, from a theater aficionado and critic's perspective. Richard's passion for the theatre was evident throughout the talk he delivered with such exuberance.

The third speaker was **WILLIAM BROWNING**, Professor of Theatre and head of the PTTP's technical production area. Bill has worked with Uwe Haus on seven Brecht productions since 1992, including one in Germany. In his essay, Bill notes that he is "a practitioner of Brecht," not a Brecht scholar, and discusses his on-the-job training as a stage designer of epic theatre. From a stage design point of view, he tells us, "there is the space and the story being told." He and Uwe first try to invent a space they think is appropriate to the story, then they contemplate how that space might be staged to narrate the story. For *Galileo* they decided to use a large traverse stage with an intentionally sparse set, the design of which was incredibly inventive, testimony to both the creativity and teamwork of Bill and Uwe.

MARK HARMAN, Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Elizabethtown College, was the next speaker. In 1998, Mark won the Modern Language Association's first Lois Roth Award for his translation of Kafka's novel, *The Castle*, so we asked him to focus on the challenging process of adapting or translating *Galileo* to the American stage. As he points out in his essay, this "involves a kind of retranslation since the text Brecht created for his famous final *Berliner Ensemble* production [1956] is actually an adapted translation into German of an English language version that Brecht wrote . . . in American exile." Mark also underscores Uwe's passionate desire to bring a Brechtian perspective to the American stage, his "questioning mode that is the hallmark of Brecht's

method as a director," and his keen awareness of history.

The Life of Galileo is the third Brecht play for which **LINDA HENDERSON** has served as music director for the PTTP and worked with Uwe Haus. She is a faculty member at the School of Theater Arts at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. While she was not one of our symposium speakers, we are pleased to include her essay in this collection. Linda explains how they adapted the music written by Hanns Eisler, vocal as well as instrumental, and incorporated it into this production. "We adapted to the musical colors at our disposal," she asserts, "always with an awareness of the described in celestial bodies music not the play." The only performed a variety of dramatic functions, it complemented and enhanced the Hausian production.

ANDREA BARRIER, Associate Professor of Theatre and costume designer for the PTTP also did not participate in the symposium. However, she too was invited to write an essay on the lavish costumes she chose and designed for the actors in *Galileo.* Andrea and her students have designed magnificent costumes for all of Uwe's Brecht productions with the PTTP, carefully and creatively interpreting his vision of the play as it evolves in the rehearsals. In designing costumes for this historical play, she took care to create "a look which both evoked the feel of the Renaissance when Galileo lived and hinted at a non-specific time period," and she succeeded.

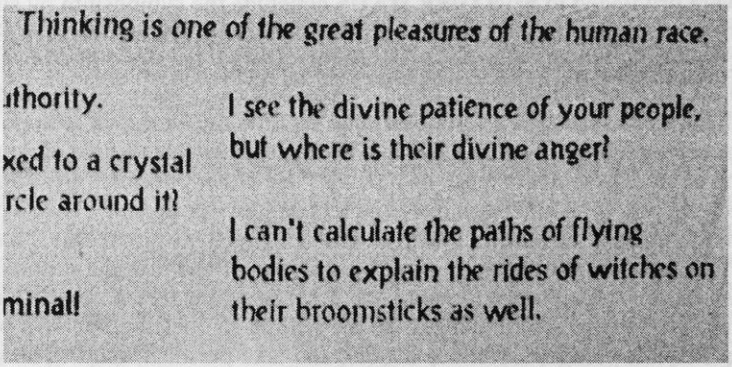
We were privileged to have **UWE HAUS** conclude the symposium by sharing some of his thoughts on the Galileo play and the PTTP production of it. In his essay, Uwe dismisses the historical case and contends that "one should remove *Galileo* totally from the historical play." For he wishes to show "this Copernican reversal, the Renaissance as a certain attitude *vis à vis* the world, an attitude of no longer accepting things the way they have been presented, an attitude of doubting them and of taking them into one's own hands." He rather optimistically contends that "those in power should learn that doubters are not destroyers." Uwe's objective is not to present the audience with "a self-contained historical case;" instead, his Galileo play should "present a very open case of the diverse attitudes that power and knowledge evince toward each other or against each other." Knowledge will stagnate, he asserts, unless we are willing to question our own beliefs and acquired knowledge, assert our doubts, and take personal risks. "The whole production strives for open discourse," he observes, and members of the audience "should arrive at conclusions by their own thought processes." The play does not think for us, nor does it present answers and solutions to the problems it presents;

it makes us think.

Following the March 3 premiere of *Galileo*, the audience was treated to a reception on the stage and a post-performance discussion with the cast. This informal session was co-chaired by **NORMAN ROESSLER,** Editor of *Communications from the International Brecht Society*, Temple University, and **KLAUS SCHMIDT**, Professor Emeritus of German, Bowling Green State University and University of Salzburg, who commented on aspects of the performance. It was interesting to hear the student actors' responses to questions from the audience, also their comments on what they were trying to achieve in their respective roles and what they had learned from Uwe about Brechtian theatre during rehearsals. Many of them had attended the symposium that afternoon, which they said helped them better understand Brecht and the play they were performing.

This was the third Brecht symposium held at UD and in connection with a PTTP performance of a play directed by Uwe Haus. The first one was in February 1992, a four-day event with Brecht scholars and participants from around the world that featured a PTTP performance of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. The papers from this conference were published in a volume entitled *Brecht Unbound*, edited by Hans Peter Breuer and James Lyon (University of Delaware Press, 1995). In February 1995, we had our second Brecht symposium, a one-day event that culminated in a PTTP performance of *Mother Courage and Her Children*. The keynote speaker was Guy Stern, who has given talks at all three of our Brecht symposia.

Over the years, the PTTP has performed six Brecht plays, all under the direction of Heinz-Uwe Haus. In addition to the three mentioned above, they performed *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* in 1998, in celebration of Brecht's 100th birthday, *TheThreepenny Opera* (1999), and *The Good Person of Szechwan* (2003). Thanks to Uwe Haus, the talented PTTP student actors and PTTP faculty, fortunate audiences at the University of Delaware have been exposed to these very engaging, completely original and authentic performances of Brechtian drama. We look forward to the next production!



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And Brecht Moved us (Deeply) After All

Guy Stern
Wayne State University

Ladies and Gentlemen, a rare experience awaits you today: the joint efforts of one of the most original playwrights of our times who died in 1956, and of a theater director who worked together with him and is carrying forth his legacy. What makes this joining of efforts such a singular event: Bertolt Brecht turned traditional theater on its head. No longer could audiences give in to the illusion that they were in the world of reality; on the contrary, you - tonight's audience - are to be conscious of the fact, at all times, that you are in a theater. Brecht called this dramatic theory of his the alienation effect. So if tonight you see placards telling you of the time and place in which the play is embedded, their very presence will tear you out of any complacent illusion that you have been transported back into the age of the Renaissance.

There was purpose to Brecht's method, not simply a joy of experimentation. By being wrested from our illusions, we, his audiences, are challenged to use our minds together with our emotions - not that he wanted us to suspend our emotional reactions. In writing *Galileo* he once more pursued his goal of making his audience think rather than merely emote. In his theoretical musings he pleads that the theater ought to show or foretell the changeability of social conditions. Through his alienation effect he makes us look at existing circumstances with a questioning eye. No place more forcibly, I would maintain, than in *Galileo*. After all, the drama takes place at a time when Man's entire perception of the universe is tottering - and with it our preconception of the social order.

To this end he used all his theatrical skills, convinced that *his* time, like that of Galileo, was out of joint and he wanted to have his contemporaries reflect on how to put it right, he himself not excepted. For he had a personal stake in all this: he was being persecuted and driven out of his country by zealots as unforgiving as the Grand Inquisitor, one of the characters in his play. Brecht subtly points out the parallel. Note, for example, that the date "33", displayed on a placard, can refer both to 1633, a year almost fatal to Galileo, and to 1933 when Brecht had to flee from Nazi Germany. Similarly, Galileo's warning to his student Andreas to be careful when crossing Germany with contraband writings applied to Galileo's as well as to Brecht's times. But Brecht had an agenda beyond his own travails. In fact, he had a multiplicity of agendas. When Brecht first wrote his play in 1938 in Denmark, the danger of an aggressive Germany was still very much on his mind. Even then Brecht could intuit the results of atomic experiments with heavy water, carried out by German scientists. The two themes ran parallel. The suborning of science and the suppression of artistic expression were then uppermost in Brecht's mind.

When he revised his play for an American audience right after the war, he realized that after Hiroshima Galileo's inventions had become an analogue as well for the advances in atomic research and for all the attendant dangers that they harbored. The final version was produced in Berlin in 1956. As Heinz-Uwe Haus has

stated: "In the light of the threat of hydrogen and cobalt bombs, Galileo's conflict with the authorities, his social deficiency and his self-condemnation had to be underscored." It is this focus which you will see in tonight's performance.

Brecht, the playwright, once instructed himself to: "Raise the curtain and leave all questions open!" He certainly followed that instruction in *Galileo*. There will be dozens of questions roiling in our minds, as we leave the theater. I can think of some, others will preoccupy you of your own accord. For good reason: the questions Brecht raises apply not only to the times of Galileo or to the "dark times" of the playwright, but also to our own time. A powerful play, Heinz-Uwe Haus has stated, has relevance for our and future times, and I expect the play and its Hausian interpretation to raise some universal questions.

At any rate I shall enumerate the questions that have occupied me when I taught or witnessed this magnificent drama:

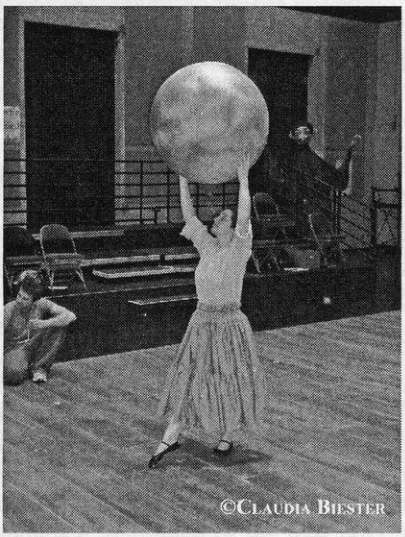
1. Why did Brecht present us with such a flawed protagonist rather than with a pioneer of science in shining armor? A fellow exile of Brecht's, Frank Zwillinger, drew precisely such a hero in his Galileo drama. Of course, it was in Brecht's nature to find heroes with feet of clay. And some of these contradictory characteristics were indeed present in the historic figure. A contemporary of Brecht and also a fellow exile, Arthur Koestler, concluded that the character of the protagonist depends on the historic sources that are being consulted. As he put it: "In theologically inspired accounts he appears as a troublemaker, while rationalistic methodologies depict him as the Saint Joan of the natural sciences or a Saint George who slew the dragon of the Inquisition." It was precisely this type of ambivalent character, one that carried his own dialectics within himself, which fascinated Brecht. There is one dialogue in the play, often quoted, which will certainly preoccupy us for a long time: "Woe to the country that has no heroes!" says a student of the scientist. To which Galileo answers: "Woe to the country that needs heroes." And Galileo surely isn't one. Galileo will unabashedly suspend his vaunted experiments for a good meal and exquisite wine. He will praise original work in science and shamelessly give out somebody else's invention as his own. He will indulge in lofty philosophical dicta, but will also make an obscene reference to his daughter's backside. He will sacrifice his eyesight in the service of his science, yet upon another occasion will unconscionably betray it. Please look for other contradictions as you make your own trip of discovery into the drama.

2. Many of the historical facts and persons that Brecht brings to the fore, including the overpowering protagonist, become at times merely the purveyor of timeless troublespots in the history of the human race. Let us take one of the central ones from the life and the times of Galileo, which has surfaced again and again. The conflict is, of course, between science on the one hand, and religion and ideology on the other. The Catholic Church felt that Galileo's theories would undermine traditional faith. Consequentially, the Inquisition put his works on the index and prosecuted him. To be sure, in 1979, during a different age, Pope John Paul II apologized for past actions by saying that Galileo had to suffer greatly through the men and agencies of the church; still more recently the Church completely exonerated him. But that reversal does not mean that the conflict between religion and science has disappeared. I am sure you can extract examples from current events, taking place in this country and abroad which demonstrate the

continuation of the conflict. The disputes between believers in intelligent design versus believers in evolution or the Koran's prohibition against autopsies versus the demands of medical science can serve as starters of a long list.

3. Brecht fought at many stages of his life against censorship. During the Weimar Republic some city theaters were compelled to cancel performances of his more erotic plays, such as *Baal*. Even before they came to power the Nazis closed the opening performance of *Mahagonny* by their raucous behavior. A few years later the Nazis banned all of his dramas. During his stay in the United States he was hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) for his leftist didactic plays and during his stay in the GDR he was accused of revisionist tendencies after the showing of his play *The Trial of Lucullus*. No wonder that Brecht utilized the censoring and indexing of the works of Galileo as an analogue for censorship throughout the ages.

Science was suborned by the rulers of the GDR and before that by Stalin in the Soviet Union, who dictatorially backed the pseudoscience of Lysenko. Brecht had the courage to point all that out via his *Galileo*-drama. In his foreword to an East-German edition of his play he wrote: "One must not perceive Galileo's fight for the freedom of scientific research as a fight against religion, for by so doing, our attention would be diverted in a most unfortunate manner from authorities which are not in any manner, shape or form, of a clerical nature." He was right, of course, because when *Galileo*, for example, had its Brazilian premier in 1969, the audience perceived the clerics in the play as standins for the military dictatorship of Brazil.



4. On a more subtle level, Brecht raises the specter of self-censorship in times of poisoned public discourse. Of course, Galileo, in holding back his scientific insights, was protecting himself, in fact, for a full eight years. I was thinking of the plight of Galileo when it was broadcast this year that in the Mexican city of Tijuana reporters are afraid of filing stories dealing with local corruption and gangsterism, because they have to fear for their lives. How far, Brecht asks in parallel fashion, does the responsibility of a scientist or, for that matter of a reporter or an editor, extend when his or her pursuit of truth endangers him or her? Again, Brecht lifts the curtain but leaves the question open.

5. At the core of the play Brecht opens up a question that will probably not cease in the history of human striving. While it is, of course, the prerogative of the scientist to advance his disciplines, who is to determine the application of them? Brecht lays down, for once, a principle. In the play, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*,

Brecht proclaims his conviction in an epilogue: "A valley should belong to those who will benefit from it." New knowledge is there to lead to the betterment and not to the destruction of human life. In *Galileo* as well, Brecht gives a hint as to the efficacious management of inventions. Galileo leaves the Republic of Padua for the dukedom of Florence in the main for financial advantages. Later in the play he is reproached for his surrender to comfort. Brecht clearly implies that the citizens of a republic are best able to decide the efficacy of an invention, whereas in a hierarchical society too much power is vested in the dominant authorities. Such an interpretation dovetails with Brecht's own humane and humanistic attitude, even when he did not, just as his hero, always act on it. As proof I should like to quote one of Brecht's famous anti-totalitarian aphorisms, protesting a declaration of the East German government: "Our government has just declared that it is dissatisfied with the people. Why doesn't it dissolve, therefore, the people and elect a new one?"

6. Brecht was also concerned about the sometimes exorbitant price in human suffering that scientific progress exacts. From today's perspective the threat of the atomic and hydrogen bomb hovers of course over the drama. But Galileo's devotion to science and his findings benefit and damage his contemporaries as well. For example, they cause the permanent rift between his daughter, Virginia and her fiancé.

7. Of course, Brecht was also not unaware of the shortcomings of a republic. He had come to realize that the privilege of living in a republic can also exact a price. During his years of asylum in Scandinavia, he found that the enjoyment of freedom in a democracy is often paid for by the exploitation of citizens, particularly of immigrants. In both *Galileo* and in his *Conversations Between Exiles* he alludes to these abuses. But haven't we heard similar concerns in the present debates about the treatment of illegal immigrants?

So much for my catalogue of questions that Brecht has bundled into the saga of this Renaissance scientist. Answers are frequently not given, sometimes hinted at, and ultimately left to you, the audience. Since we have tonight with us one of the foremost interpreters of Brecht in the person of the Director Heinz-Uwe Haus, I should like to add further questions that arise from his interpretation of the drama.

Will Dr. Haus bring technical innovations to the stagecraft of this play here at the University of Delaware? I suspect so. I have seen at least half a dozen examples of Uwe's directing plays by Brecht. I would like to give you an example: Uwe had introduced a technical innovation in the performance of Brecht's play *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. The end of each aisle of the spectators' seats sported a TV camera. While the action was going on upon the stage - Brecht reducing the vainglorious Nazi conquest of Europe to a gangster war in Chicago and Cicero, Illinois - the TV screens showed documentary clips of the models for the analogue: Hitler conquering Austria, while on-stage his gangster look-a-like was conquering the vegetable markets of the Midwest. And then Uwe staged a second surprise. The opening night performance was followed by an alternative interpretation via a different cast and a different conception. The first production moved the drama close to Charlie Chaplin's masterful tragic comedy, *The Great Dictator*; the other to Francis Ford Coppola's more hardboiled *The Godfather*. They were

so different, the two versions – and both brought the house down.

Does tonight's performance push us closer towards applying Brecht's concerns to our own times? Even before I saw parts of the rehearsal, I answered that question myself with a resounding "yes." I was mindful of Uwe's triumphant 1995 performance of *Mother Courage* here on campus – and beyond. Let me recall that theater event for you. It was again an interpretation with a Janus-like exposure. It has become unforgettable for me. It marked the beginning of Uwe's guest professorship on this campus. The opening scenes featured him at his most original. With the memories of the Cold War still vivid, the whole cast, standing front stage as the curtain rose, marched in place to martial music. If ever a performance received a ringing endorsement, this one got one with international embellishments. Shortly after that success in Delaware, Uwe and his cast received an irresistible invitation. The Cultural Minister of the Rhineland – Palatinate, impressed by the echoes of the Delaware performance, invited the entire cast for an encore in her *Bundesstaat*. Uwe posed one condition before accepting: he would pick the site for the performance. His selection made not only theatrical but also political history. He picked a remote village, Hasselbach, in the Hunsrück Mountains. Just three years before and all through the Cold War the small town had been the potential launching pad for atomic missiles of the NATO forces. The population of the region had been fairly evenly divided between welcoming a deterrent against a Soviet attack and dreading the nearby site as a potential primary Soviet target.

Uwe used the now largely vacated site for the staging of *Mother Courage*, a drama depicting one of the most devastating wars in Western history, the same one that raged in the time of Galileo. And to stimulate the audience's reflections on wars, then and now, he had recourse to yet another innovation. He did not provide seats for the audience, but made them follow the soldateska, as it wound its way along the paths Brecht had laid out for them. Brecht's prodding his audience towards reflection - his declared intent - became intensified through Uwe's staging. Right after my curtain-raising speech, this time in German, the audience was chivvied and cajoled to fall in and stay in line with the peripatetic soldiers. Even at intermission Uwe did not loosen his grip on the audience. Refreshments were not served at conventional stands, but from an army field kitchen. As the tragedy ended, the audience, reminded of the past possibility of atomic warfare and chastened by the experience of being briefly "drafted" into military service, had become a pensive group. Could any interpretation have been more timely or topical? He challenged the audience to reflect upon a lesson brought home by a dead playwright and his vastly original interpreter.

Ladies and Gentlemen, together with you I expect no less tonight.

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In a staged play the words and actions need to be painstakingly integrated. Selection of the proper cast can be crucial. In rehearsal great attention must be paid to the actor's physical appearance, vocal intonations, physical positioning, movements, gestures, along with the set, lighting, sound, props, costumes. Attention must be paid to detail. Directors (and actors) can learn a lot from skilled writers. In his new book *Notes on Directing*, Heinz-Uwe Haus writes: "The actor must develop his faculties in the art of observing human relationships in everyday life, as well as investigating what may lie behind the society in which the relations occur" (8). The results of these observations must be expressed on stage in specific, concrete terms. Without specifics, theories remain impotent.

Notes on Heinz-Uwe Haus Rehearsing Brecht's Galileo

Richard A. Davison
University of Delaware

Much has been said about Brecht's theories. I would like to focus on the engine that drives them - on the skills of the director who brings to life the words on the page. Here are some illustrations of the stagecraft I observed at the rehearsals of *Galileo*.

First, Professor Haus worked with a well-cast group of actors who, under his guidance, became a harmonious ensemble (I recall the 2002 star-studded New York production of *Arturo Ui*, headed by Al Pacino, which failed not for lack of talent but for want of ensemble unity). The PTTP actors learned how to work together within the story of Galileo from the past and at the same time establish a rapport with the audience in the present.

Second, Professor Haus worked closely with the set and lighting designer (William Browning), costume designer (Andrea Barrier), choreographer (Joann Browning), music director (Linda Henderson), voice coach (Deena Burke), stage manager (Brian Vincent Griffith), carpenters, prop people, et al., and with each actor in regard to even the smallest details that served the whole. Throughout the month or so of rehearsals that I frequently attended, he welcomed suggestions from all. He always recognized what would work best on stage, starting with the simple set: a large stationary platform on each end of the stage and two large moveable staircases that back-to-back formed a third narrow platform. Haus and William Browning agreed that, in Browning's words: "If any scenic element is not essential it is probably in the way." On opening night (and, of course, in subsequent performances) Haus's attention to detail - from the small stone to the huge banner - was realized in a coherent and powerful production.

Third, Let me now focus on Professor Haus's running comments to the actors, calculated to engage the audience in Brecht's world. First, a scattering of his comments, then those regarding the scene featuring the Pope.

1. Always with that eye for detail and balance and impact, Haus would adjust a chair or a prop ("always FIVE books on the table, one in Latin"); he would point or gesture regarding the location and spacing of the actors and the furniture, the timing of the vocal and physical movement.

2. To Galileo, in reference to the Little Monk's struggle with his commitment to the old faith or the new science: "You have the fish - tell him he is a mathematician not a priest."

3. To the Little Monk (when Galileo puts the scientific papers on the stair): "The hungry bird snaps them up and reads them." Reason wins.

4. To the whole cast regarding the choral chanting of a key passage:

"To make it clearer, clap between key phrases, clap with the cups of the hands."
"Don't be too loud. Keep the dogs on the leash."
"Bite the words: Oak Tree, not oaktree."
"It is not about scholarly achievement or progress. It's about social implications."
"The Church is responsible to the people of the country, the Campagna."

5. The very old reactionary cardinal "should move like a 595-year-old tree, no blood, the only thing that works is the brain; ice-cold, old, and smart."

6. To the betrayer: "You walk out with five tails between your legs."

7. To Andrea in his last scene with Galileo: "That was very nice, the walk, that arrogant walk - that sailor walk before you stand with your hand on the top side of the platform. You give your answer in your walking. You go from a nod at the beginning of the scene to a bow at the end. The audience will get it."

8. Regarding preserving the peasants' faith in the Ptolemaic view of the universe: "What destroys faith is evoking men's faith. It's a kind of wisdom. If you don't touch a vase it won't break. If you touch it, it might break. Leave well enough alone."

9. In the recantation scene Galileo's three assistants have been told that when the bells of St. Mark's ring at five, Galileo will have recanted. As five o'clock approaches they wait, hoping against hope that he has not recanted. In counterpoint Galileo's daughter Virginia is on top of the platform behind and above them, praying that he has saved his soul by recanting. Silence, then a brief respite of their joyous relief before the bells toll.

10. To the assistant Federzoni: "You have to find the right moment when YOU think it's five, and the audience goes with you. This time it was 3/10 of a second early. 'NO!' must go through the body first. Wait for your body to react before 'NO!' In those six seconds before the bells, time seems to stretch forever. When you feel it, you believe it is five o'clock and the bells have not rung because Galileo has not recanted. Then the bells ring."

11. Before the first complete run-through: "The proof of the pudding is tonight. OK, guys, let's do it. Concentration. And GO!"

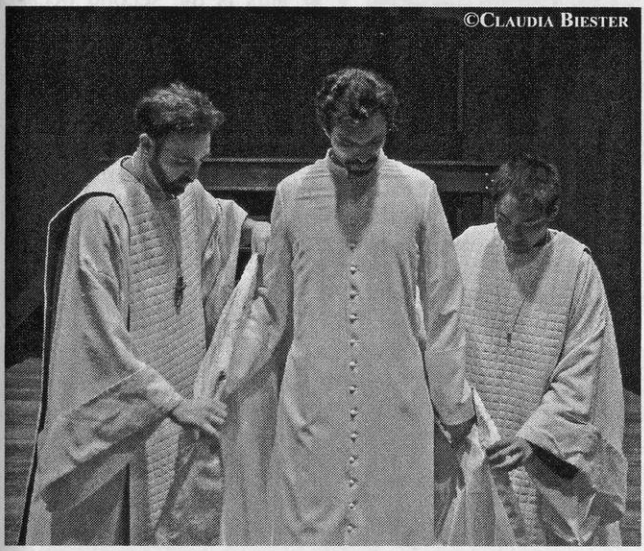
12. Brecht's succinct stage directions set up the scene "The Pope": "Room in the Vatican. Pope Urban VIII (formerly Cardinal Barberini) has received the Grand Inquisitor. In the course of the audience he is robed. Outside is the shuffling of many feet." Galileo's scientific theories have challenged the authority of the Bible and the Church. The Grand Inquisitor's purpose is to convince the Pope that Galileo must be coerced to recant. The Pope's opening response is "No! No! No!"

Professor Haus had the Pope (Galileo's fellow scientist and friend) stand in profile in a simple white undergarment, on a carpet in the middle of the long stage. He faced the four dressers (in simple white robes) and the Grand Inquisitor (in a red gown with touches of white and a red cap) with his back to the staired platform at the edge of the stage. Faintly audible sound effects signify the shuffling of the Pope's uneasy flock which depends on him for guidance. As the dressers (through most of the scene) methodically, ritualistically put on the Pope's religious accoutrements, the man, the human being, the fellow scientist and friend of Galileo became, ever so gradually, item by item, the Defender of the Faith. As the man became the Office, the person became the Personage, and Galileo's fate was unalterably sealed. While the Grand Inquisitor made his case, the four dressers, two by two, brought to the Pope, one by one, the symbols of his office: his shoes, cossack, cape, capelet, stole, necklace (papal crucifix), papal ring, hat and staff (crozier), until the Pope stood tall in the grandeur of his miter and layers of rich white brocade.

The Grand Inquisitor does most of the talking, although in this staging virtually no words were needed to dramatize the shift in the balance of power. It had occurred before the tall, elect, fully costumed Pope turned and strode to and up the stairs to the platform, turned again to face the Grand Inquisitor, now far below him, and intoned, "At the very most, he can be shown the instruments!" The Grand Inquisitor deferentially replied, "That will be enough, Your Holiness. Instruments are Mr. Galileo's specialty." With his assent that Galileo must be made to recant (albeit without physical torture), the Pope moved 180 degrees from his initial refusal: "No! No! No!"

The scene was brilliantly conceived and executed. Much painstaking preparationwent into the powerful tension, the conflict beneath the apparent simplicity of this brief scene. Just the right set and costumes and props and lighting reinforced the Pope's inner struggle, with more than just Galileo's fate in the balance. Just the right sound effects suggested the persistent "shuffling of feet," the outside pressures on the Pope.

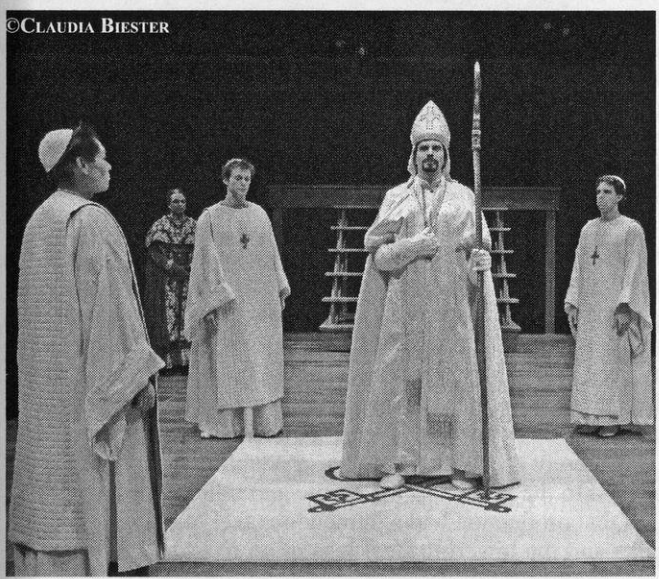
During many rehearsals Haus worked with the four dressers on demeanor, carriage, and movement as they slowly adorned the Pope. They worked on timing and precision, keyed to the speech of the Grand Inquisitor and the silence of the Pope. They practiced deferential bowing, hands at sides, and taking off their shoes before stepping on then carpet and putting them on before leaving to gather the next symbolic article. They practiced putting on each item: "Better when you put the cape and cap on from the back;" "The end is nice when you come to each corner of the carpet." Haus urged the Grand Inquisitor to "not bully or be loud or menacing." Just speak "calmly and reasonably and relentlessly;" "You are not Mephistopheles or the devil;" "With the office of the Pope come certain obligations. Don't get into a fight."



Regarding showing Galileo the instruments: "Don't take the extra step by putting it under [the Pope's] nose;" "Show as little emotionalizing as possible - what must be done must be done;" "Just give the facts: don't pressure the Pope. The logic of your argument will win him over."

The above comments just scratch the surface of all that went into the Heinz-Uwe Haus / PTTP production of Galileo to create a productive tension between the actor and the audience. I have not talked about the management of drum and mime, posters and banners, clowns and jugglers, ballad singers and stilt-walkers (who handed out cards with lines from the play such as "Truth is the child of time not authority") or the giant Galileo puppet.

As Professor Haus said to his actors and crew, "The proof of the pudding is tonight." Galileo proved no exception to my happy experiences with his nourishing productions of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Mother Courage and Her Children, The Good Person of Szechwan, The Three Penny Opera, and Arturo Ui.*



I dined well at the opening night of *Galileo.*

Defining Dialectics between Space and Storytelling

William Browning
University of Delaware

This is the second occasion on which I have had the opportunity to address a symposium on Brecht. The first occasion came in conjunction with our production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* which was the very first Brecht play produced at the University of Delaware by the Professional Theatre Training Program otherwise known as the PTTP. At that time I objected to my participation in the event due to my complete inexperience with that sort of proceeding. I had never presented a paper at a scholarly conference nor had I spoken at a symposium of any kind. "I am a maker of theatre," I protested, "not a well-read research scholar." As it turned out I fit quite nicely into that earlier Brecht Symposium as I provided the proceedings with an appropriate level of estrangement and alienation effect.

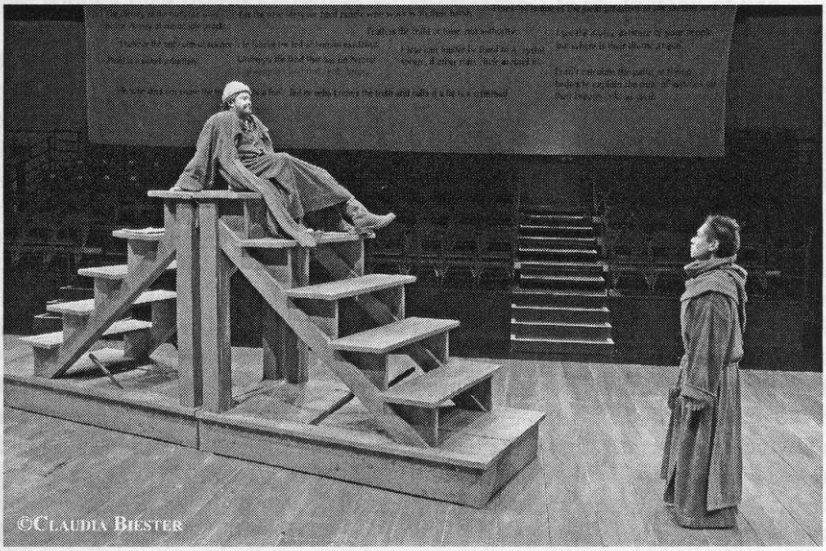
Today I can no longer claim the "inexperience defense" because since that first Brecht Symposium I have presented papers at international conferences on the topics of "Stage Design for Ancient Greek Drama," "Wolfgang Borchert' Expressionism," and "Stage Design for Epic Theatre." However, each of those papers was born out of my experiences designing and staging plays related to those topics rather than from any extensive scholarly research. And such is the case as I make this presentation today. I come not as a scholar of Brecht so much as a practitioner of Brecht.

This past summer at the ISSEI (International Society for the Study of European Ideas) conference in Malta I presented a paper in which I recounted the process of my training as a stage designer of epic theatre. That training resulted from the lessons I learned from the body of work on which Professor Heinz-Uwe Haus and I have collaborated. That body of work now consists of six productions of Brecht plays and one production of Borchert's *Draussen vor der Tür*. Actually, it is really seven productions of Brecht plays as our restaging of *Mother Courage* on an abandoned American missile base in Germany was vastly different from the Delaware staging of the play. Over the course of that work Uwe and I have developed our own style with some rather distinctive staging vocabulary. Working with him on an epic theatre staging now seems almost effortless as we move through the discussion-invention-planning-and rehearsal phases. **Such was not always the case!**

First, I confess that prior to any experience with Professor Haus, my view of epic theatre was that they were just very long plays! Furthermore, my previous design training and production experience was of little help and very often an impediment to effective stage design for epic theatre. To illustrate the problem I will use the example of my very first experience with a Brecht production directed by Professor Haus. We had secured permission from the then East German government to allow Uwe to come to Milwaukee to stage *The Good Person of Szechwan* as a guest director. I was merely an observer on that production as my colleague Rick Graham was assigned to the project as the scenic and lighting designer. His first model of the set for that production had a tremendous feel of a Chicago back alley with steel catwalks and the towering steel legs of an overhead railway, all

of which was surrounded by a series of dilapidated and crumbling old buildings. I recall thinking that the building facades gave the environment a distinct location within some large inner city, and furthermore I believed with every ounce of my design training and experience that Mr. Graham was on the right track. I was shocked when I learned that the director immediately cut all of the painted building facades, electing instead to keep the steel structures which now, without the decorative facades, created an interesting performing space with lots of staging potential but few, if any, suggestions of a particular location. The performance of that play was breathtaking. The alienation effect of this strange world of metal constructions left the audience puzzled and yet riveted to the events of the play.

The lesson I should have learned from that experience was that the details and



specifics of location seldom matter and often work contrary to the non-emotional approach of epic theatre staging. If any scenic element is not essential to the narration of the story, it is probably in the way. For epic theatre staging, most locations need only to be hinted at by some props or costume pieces. However, as I said, that is the lesson I should have learned.

My first opportunity to design for Professor Haus came in 1992 on our production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Instantly I came crashing into my previous experience and training as a designer when during the earliest discussions all of my suggestions for scenic treatments were immediately rejected. Those discussions only began to move forward once I abandoned my "thoughts on design" and just committed to Uwe's brainstorming approach. For much of those early brainstorming sessions I was completely off balance, seldom seeing any connection between a way of staging the production and what we were discussing. Uwe would talk about an empty space and large silk clothes that could be gathered into a "sausage roll." Even though this was certainly an interesting image, all I could

think about was, "What about the mountains, and the river, and the army encampment, and the city, and so on?" Uwe simply replied, "Ve vill make zem with our cloth."

"Bing!" At that moment the light came on! We began discussing ways of using the cloth to create our various locations, many of which we knew would have to be discovered with the actors in rehearsal. The ultimate fruit of those discussions was an enormously successful and artistically satisfying production. Since then, productions of *Mother Courage and her Children*, *The Three Penny Opera, The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, The Good Person of Szechwan*, and now *The Life of Galileo* have greatly expanded both my understanding of epic theatre design concerns and my design vocabulary for addressing those concerns. As a designer I had to acquire new ways of thinking about staging plays for epic theatre. Indeed, I also had to unlearn, or at least learn to ignore, some firmly held beliefs about theatrical design.

Fundamentally, from a stage design point of view, there is the space and the story being told. Each play's story has a unique energy and the organization and composition of the space must embrace that energy. This may be accomplished through the choice of materials and / or the nature and arrangement of the various elements which define the space. While providing the potential for startling contradictions throughout the play, the space must allow for the effective narration of each scene and it must possess its own Gestus - as Brecht might say. Uwe and I have adopted the practice of first inventing a space we feel is appropriate to the play, and whose nature is at once sufficiently neutral so as not to conflict with any scene in the play and sufficiently flexible to allow for a unique and interesting staging of each of the scenes. Often we invent features which force the actors to move, enter and exit in strange or expected ways. Once we have defined the space for the play to our satisfaction, we then go back through each scene to speculate on how it might be staged to narrate the story. While we endeavor to have this plan worked out prior to the beginning of rehearsals, it is also not unusual for us to go into the rehearsal process without a clear idea of how to stage some scenes, but we go in with the certainty and trust in each other that we will be able to invent the staging of those scenes with the actors in rehearsal. When it comes to inventiveness at staging scenes, Uwe has no peer. To him there are few, if any, sacred cows when it comes to choosing what may or may not be used to narrate a scene. In fact, I have often cautioned stage managers and props technicians to be very careful about what they bring into the rehearsal room - as it is very likely to end up in the show! A case in point are the large exercise balls which are stored in the pool room - the room where ***Galileo*** was initially rehearsed while another show was performing in the theatre. One of those balls ended up in the show and the props crew had paint it to resemble the earth. There are numerous other examples, but I will let you discover those for yourselves tonight.

It seems to me that some theatres lend themselves to epic theatre staging more so than others. Such is the case with our Hartshorn Theatre. All of the Brecht plays on which Uwe and I have collaborated were performed in the Hartshorn Theatre, at least initially. That space has been both a blessing and a curse. The blessing: its unusual architecture. The curse: until recently it was the only space the PTTP had in which to perform, and since we always produce two or more shows simultane-

ously in rotating repertory fashion our stage designs were always constrained by the needs of the more "Aristotelian" productions which performed opposite them. This production of ***Galileo*** marks the first time one of our Brecht productions has not had to share the space with another production. For the first time we were able to design the space completely to our liking without concern for the seating and masking requirements of another production or for the storage of scenery of the other production. Unfettered by another production's needs and having exclusive use of the space has provided ***Galileo*** considerable advantages for its rehearsal and preparation. Fear not, we do continue to produce in repertory, and you may see our other production, *Tuesday* a play created by Jewel Walker which performs opposite *Galileo*, but it performs in the Studio Theatre in the new Center for the Arts building across campus.

In closing I wish to welcome you to this evening's performance of *The Life of Galileo*. I have for the most part avoided speaking about this production so as not to constrain your experience of tonight's performance. But let me give you a little sneak preview. The costumes of this production will just knock your socks off! I am awed by the creative work of my colleague Andrea Barrier and the amazing artists in the costume shop. Incidentally, Andrea has designed the costumes for all of Uwe's productions with the PTTP including that initial Milwaukee production. Even though the space that Uwe and I have created is quite large, it took the tremendous choreographic skill of Joann Browning to keep the actors from stepping on each other while supplanting that problem with grace and style and perhaps even some alienation effects at times. Were you to read the script for this play you would find no indication of the musical interludes between the scenes. Music, both vocal and instrumental, is infused into this production by our incredible musical director Linda Henderson. I am particularly proud of the work of my technical production graduate students on this production. The artistry and cleverness with which they have created the scenic elements, props, and lighting effects has been an inspiration to me. Every bit as masterful is the work of our graduate stage managers who send a myriad of props, costumes, scenic effects, and actors flying on and off stage with amazing precision. And finally, this group of graduate actors raises the bar on ensemble acting as they effortlessly move from one role to another at one moment and stand shoulder to shoulder in an ensemble recitation in the next. This extraordinarily talented group of graduate students has responded with tremendous creativity to every request that Uwe and I have made of them as we crafted this epic theatre piece. Whether it is seasoned to your liking remains for you to judge.

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If Brecht is in danger of becoming a museum piece, it is partly because we have a tendency to turn our conceptions of great artists, and, for that matter, great scientists into clichés - think of the pervasive images of Brecht in his leather coat or toting one of his famous cigars not to speak of the far more ubiquitous icon of the grinning, wild-haired Einstein. What we tend to forget is that, unlike the earth in the old Ptolemaic model of the universe, Brecht is not an immobile planet but rather spins on his own axle and is constantly in motion. His *Life of Galileo* reflects this constant state of flux, both in Brecht himself and in the changing world that he sought to chart, just as his Galileo keeps his new-fangled telescopes fixed on the equally mobile stars - it's worth noting in passing that Galileo's effort to claim as his own invention the telescopes with which he observes the heavens bears more than an incidental resemblance to Brecht's own creative use of the intellectual property of others.

In Brecht's oeuvre, *Galileo* is in some ways comparable to Goethe's *Faust*. Like Goethe, who worked on *Faust* throughout his life, Brecht kept returning to the play and revising it in the light of - or, more appropriately - darkness of what was happening in Europe and the world at large. His identification with - and revulsion from - Galileo intensified in light of his own experiences as a political exile and as a witness to the show trials of Stalin, the genocidal frenzy of the Nazis, the dropping of US atom bombs in Japan, the anti-Communist witch-hunting set in motion by Senator Joe McCarthy, as well as by his own uneasy but ultimately accommodating post-war relationship with the dictatorial East German regime. Moreover, like Goethe and like his Faust, Brecht had many souls lurking within his breast, and there is a lot to be said for Eric Bentley's early argument that this Galileo is also Brecht's self-portrait as an artist and as a man (Bentley xxvii). If Brecht saw analogies between Galileo's attempt to take on the scientific and ecclesiastical authorities of Renaissance Italy and his own attempted revolution in twentieth century drama, as an intensely self-aware artist he could also detect parallels between his own accommodations with power and those made by Galileo, whose intense self-criticism in his final encounter with Andrea may reflect Brecht's ambivalence about his own wily evasions. One way of preventing Brecht from degenerating into a museum piece is by tapping into that remarkably strong element of self-criticism in his work. Like other great artists, Brecht was often his own best critic, hence the surely justifiable claim of Heiner Müller, made in 1981 - in other words, long before open season was declared on Brecht after the fall of the Berlin wall and the publication of John Fuegi's controversial biography in 1994 - that "to use Brecht without criticizing him is a betrayal." (Müller, 149)

Brecht in Motion: Translating Galileo to the American Stage

Mark Harman
Elizabethtown College

Translating Brecht's *Galileo* to the American stage involves a kind of retranslation since the text Brecht created for his famous final *Berliner Ensemble* produc-

tion is actually an adapted translation into German of an English language version that Brecht wrote, collaboratively as usual, in American exile. Brecht's plays have always represented a challenge to the American theatre, which, whether directly commercial or not, lacks the subsidies that permit the large casts required by many of Brecht's plays, including *Galileo*. According to Carl Weber, who worked at the *Berliner Ensemble*, Brecht used to spend half a year preparing a play for a production before going into rehearsals for three to four months, during which time he would block the play (Weber, 103). What American theatre could possibly allow itself anything approximating such luxury?

Of course, in recent years some well-known American actors and directors have been rediscovering what great roles Brecht created: e.g. Al Pacino's rendering of Brecht's Hitler-like character Arturo Ui in 2002, and Meryl Streep's incarnation of *Mother Courage* in a production in New York in 2006, and then two productions of *The Life of Galileo* in 2007, tonight at the University of Delaware and next month at the Wilma Theatre in Philadelphia. There may also be a political reason for this revival of interest in Brecht: Given that in recent years the so-called free press in the U.S. has been widely perceived to have failed in its obligation to scrutinize the actions and motives of those in power, it is surely time for the theatre to revisit the work of a playwright who, for all the cool rationality of his theoretical writings, was passionate in his advocacy of a form of theatre that would bring about political and social change, even if he, like his fallible Galileo, did not always practice what he preached.

So it will hardly come as a surprise that anybody who comes to Brecht's *Life of Galileo* tonight expecting to find out about the Renaissance scientist may well be disappointed. Brecht pointedly fails to draw on the famous anecdotes about, say,

Galileo supposedly dropping various objects from the leaning tower of Pisa or measuring the oscillation of a chandelier at the university in the same Italian city, from which incidentally the historical Galileo departed without a degree but with a firm sense of his own brilliance and an ambition to thwart authority whenever it interfered with the unveiling of truth, as he saw it. If you wanted a historically accurate portrayal of Galileo's life, you would be better off seeing *Lamp at Midnight* by the American playwright Barrie Stavis, which coincidentally ran on Broadway at the same time as the first New York production of Brecht's *Galileo* and is occasionally still produced today.

Like much great historical drama, however, Brecht's *Galileo* isn't primarily about the past. Brecht himself stressed that he was concerned with man's contemporary situation rather than with the historical accuracy of his portrayal of the life of Galileo in Renaissance Italy. What lends the play inexhaustible richness and depth is the complex layering of external and internal layers of meaning, which are partly attributable to the way in which the play evolved over the course of almost two decades.

Brecht's initially positive image of Galileo, the pioneering scientist, became increasingly tarnished by the pact that modern science seemed to have struck with a modern devil. Brecht wrote the first version in Denmark in 1938-39 as the show trials orchestrated by Stalin were occurring in the Soviet Union and as the Nazis were completing the *Anschluss* with Austria and incorporating the Sudetenland. As Guy Stern showed a number of years ago, Brecht's own experience of exile found its way into the play (Stern 110-116). If the first version of the play followed the narrative of the heroic scientist struggling to make truth prevail against the resistance of his benighted contemporaries, this seemed to have happened somewhat against Brecht's own will. In February 1939 he is already complaining in his journals about the first version, on formal grounds, claiming that it is his mind, "technically…a great step backwards." It would need to be completely rewritten, he suggests, "made more direct, without the interiors, the "atmosphere," the empathy" (Hecht 35-37). He had initially attempted to follow the historical record, he later claimed, and had been "slightly disturbed" by the moral implicit in the tale about Galileo that he had actually told. Over time he did rewrite the play, if not altogether as drastically as he had hoped. The second version, written in American exile in 1944-47 was a rather comic and also - to use his own word - "opportunistic" collaborative effort at translation / adaptation with the English actor Charles Laughton. Comic, because Laughton knew no German and Brecht's English was only passable; opportunistic because Brecht, who had difficulty establishing a foothold in Hollywood, was eager to achieve a breakthrough in the English-speaking world and believed that the famous Laughton, who disagreed with Brecht's interpretation of Galileo's character, could help him achieve this goal. Among the notes from those working sessions in the Brecht Archive in Berlin is a notation in Brecht's idiosyncratic English which reveals Brecht's awareness of the symmetrical structure of the play and the way in which the scenes echo one another:

> Similia in 1) and 12), there is a morning in 1), and an evening in 12) there is a gift of an astronomical model in 1), of a goose in 12)

> There ist (sic) a lecture for Andrea, the boy in 1), and a lecture for Andrea, the man in 12), there is a woman going around watching (sic) in 1, and a woman going around watching in 12) (Schumacher 284).

In the course of this collaboration a new text evolved which included a decisive change in the portrayal of Galileo. Horrified by the detonation of the Atomic bombs in Japan and by the abdication of moral responsibility by those scientists who had made it possible, he writes in 1946 that these events calls for a drastic reinterpretation of the life of Galileo whose behavior he subsequently calls a "crime" and the "'original sin' of modern natural sciences" (Hecht, 56). The politically uninterested Laughton, on the other hand, merely saw the explosion of the atom bomb as bad news for a play about the founder of modern physics: "the wrong kind of publicity, old man" (39). Brecht emphasized the topical importance of his subject matter in a "Prologue to the American Production," which begins with an ironic address to the Broadway audience and ends with the pointed words:

> We hope you'll lend a charitable ear
> To what we say, since otherwise we fear
> If you won't learn from Galileo's experience
> The Bomb might make a personal appearance
> (Brecht, *Collected Plays, 127*).

That Broadway production was directed by Joseph Losey, who went on to make a 1974 film version of Brecht's *Galileo* (which is well worth seeing and readily available). In an interview on the 2003 CD version, the Israeli actor Topol, who plays an admirably energetic Galileo, remarks that Losey remained haunted throughout his life by the experience of being blackballed by Hollywood as a result of the proceedings of the HUAC, which he refused to testify before for fear of incriminating himself and others. As a result, he went into exile in England - hence the mostly English, and stellar, cast. Losey's principled stance during the McCarthy campaign contrasts with that of Brecht himself who was a wily and at times surprisingly co-operative witness before the HUAC committee even though there was less at stake for him than there was for Americans such as Losey. Indeed, there are some intriguing analogies between Brecht's performance before the committee and Galileo's recantation before the Inquisition of his previous public endorsement of the Copernican hypothesis that the earth is not the fixed center of the universe but merely one planet revolving around the sun (Lyon 314-337).

After returning to Germany Brecht sought to emphasize the negative qualities of Galileo. However, as John Fuegi has shown in *The Essential Brecht* - a much more meticulous book than his controversial Brecht biography - in revising the play for his famous Berliner Ensemble production he did not incorporate this negative vision of Galileo by making structural changes as he retranslated and re-adapted the Laughton / Brecht English language version back into German. However, in shaping the 1956 Berliner Ensemble production that he unfortunately did not live to see on the stage, he sought to bring out the negative element in Galileo

through his role as a director. Yet even there, contrary to his reputation as a formidable and-at times, dogmatic theoretician of drama he did not browbeat his actors. And, as his collaborator Käthe Rülicke asserted, "there was never any theorizing at Brecht's rehearsals" (Fuegi, *Essential Brecht* 273). Nor did he seek to impose unilaterally his negative view of Galileo as an "intellectual prostitute." In any case there may well have been an element of self-disgust in this harsh condemnation of Galileo, since Brecht himself was no stranger to unsavory compromises, not only before the HUAC but also in East Germany, where he made tactical compromises with the authorities that ensured him a theater of his own and an easy life - with, as is often pointed out, an Austrian passport and a Swiss bank account - but at the cost of the moral rigor that he demanded from Galileo and others. Like his Galileo, Brecht did not always disclose his own occasionally abrasive self-criticism to his contemporaries, as, for instance, as in the following lines from a poem which was not published until after his death in 1956:

> Last night in a dream I saw fingers pointing at me
> As at a leper. They were gnarled and
> They were broken.
> "Ignorant ones," I cried,
> Guilt-ridden."
>
> Heut nacht im Traum sah ich Finger, auf mich deutend
> Wie auf einen Aussätzigen. Sie waren zerarbeitet und
> Sie waren gebrochen.
> Unwissende! Schrie ich
> Schuldbewusst. (Brecht, *GBA* 12, 310-311)

From what I saw of Heinz-Uwe Haus's directorial style and from conversations with him, I know that he is passionate about bringing a Brechtian perspective to the American stage. He does so by means of productions such as this one at the University of Delaware, and, arguably even more importantly, by inculcating in his students in Delaware's theatre training program a socially committed theory of acting and of theatre that is very different from the introspective Stanislavski method so dominant on the American stage - even though Brecht himself was not so completely averse to Stanislavski methods as is often maintained. Haus relishes the questioning mode that is the hallmark of Brecht's method as a director. As a theorist Brecht could be dogmatic, but as a practical man of the theatre he was also, like his Galileo, open to the evidence of his senses. At the rehearsal I attended in Delaware I could hear from the interactions between the East German director and his young American cast that they were thinking and acting in the Brechtian spirit. For instance, Haus complimented the actor playing Andrea for quoting in the swaggering way he walked the gait of Galileo in an earlier scene. This self consciousness about gestures is, of course, a central ingredient in Brechtian acting, in which the actor is supposed to retain a separate identity as actor in addition to playing the part of the character whose story he is recounting. Instead of giving his actors answers, Uwe Haus encourages them, and I quote, "to go on chewing," advice which is very much in the spirit of Brecht.

To such productions Haus, who a number of years ago crafted a Seattle production of *Galileo* featuring an Afro-American Galileo, brings an awareness of history - and specifically of East German history - that is not only obviously germane to Brecht but also to an America that occasionally seems to consider itself beyond the reach of history. Recent events in Iraq and elsewhere have surely taught us the folly of such views. At one point I overheard Haus suggesting to an actor that he should wear a bag similar to that carried by the infamous Stasi in Eastern Germany. Whatever political stance Brecht might have adopted towards the use of such an allusion, he would surely have recognized Haus's intent.

Just as Brecht is in motion, so too is his play, and, what's more, any production in America, Germany, or elsewhere that seeks to do justice to his *Galileo*.

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MUSIC OF THE SPHERES: SINGING ACTORS IN THE LIFE OF GALILEO

LINDA HENDERSON
UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

The Professional Theater Training Program, a three year graduate program at the University of Delaware, presents a play by Bertolt Brecht every three or four years, directed by Dr. Heinz-Uwe Haus. I have had the privilege of working with Uwe as music director of *Mother Courage, Threepenny Opera,* and most recently, *The Life of Galileo.* The actors of PTTP are not trained singers, but because of their fine sense of vocal communication, we were able to incorporate the music written by Hanns Eisler into our production. The musical score arrived last summer, and so began the puzzle of translation and matching songs to scenes. Since the text of the score is all in German, I used a combination of the verses in the script, which is translated by John Willet, and word-by-word

translation. The score calls for the voices of women and children, as well as a ballad singer. Three actresses sang the soprano, mezzo, and alto lines for most of the production, and a tenor took the role of the ballad singer.

Hanns Eisler scored the play for flute, clarinet, and cembalo. We adapted to the musical colors at our disposal, always with an awareness of the celestial bodies described in the play. First, not having access to a harpsichord (cembalo), I experimented with various kinds of thumbtacks, finally deciding on metal tacks stuck into the hammers of an upright piano. The result was brilliance when I played forte, and a delicacy when the notes were played lightly, like a harpsichord or clavichord. The general sound of the ensemble was glittery, an appropriate reflection of the stars. We positioned the instruments at one end of the stage area, visible to the audience and sometimes part of the action. Since there was no amplification, the balance between the instruments and voices was a constant consideration, but the orchestration was such that the instruments never overpowered the singers.

Three women were chosen to sing the introductions to each scene, and we drew upon their abilities to color vocal production between head and chest voice, as well as their exceptionally good sense of pitch and intonation. They sometimes mimicked the sound of a boys' choir, sometimes brayed like fishwives, sometimes sounded like angels. An unusual aspect of our production was the inclusion of a narrator who played djembe, an African drum similar to a conga. This actor punctuated the beginning of each scene with either a single stroke or a roll followed by the announcement or banner which precedes each scene.

Our production opened with an ensemble prologue, an exposition of "the Earth 'round the Sun business" involving the entire cast. This ensemble invited the audience in to the story rather than merely letting them observe. The cast members handed out small pieces of paper with slogans on them, some of Galileo's words. During this section, we encouraged the actors to use a "second talent" beyond acting, such as juggling, gymnastics, walking on stilts, and playing the harmonica. The point was to have them play an attitude, which was separate

from the characters they would later play. Led by a rhythmic cadence supplied by the narrator, the cast cartwheeled, somersaulted, and juggled onto the stage. The narrator set up a rock and roll rhythm to the chant, "The Sun stands still, the Earth is on the move." The first singing began during the prologue, with a female actor who would become the ballad singer's wife. Dressed as a gypsy, she belted out an unaccompanied bawdy tune comparing her marriage and fidelity to the old ideas concerning the Earth's prominence in the universe. We drew the lyrics and melody from scene ten, the carnival scene, as well as the next part, an actor exhorting the giant puppet of Galileo to stop putting ideas of self-worth into peoples' heads. The ballad singer then took over, presenting the opening lines to song number one, "In the year sixteen hundred and nine, science's light began to shine."

The three women, using their "angelic" voices, sang song number one. The audience is reminded of the crystal spheres that Galileo would soon shatter. The first soprano holds high F as she sings, "The Sun stands still,"while the mezzo and alto answer with "the Earth is on the move." The song was presented with beautiful tone but in a dispassionate way, merely announcing the sphere-shattering event. The beauty of the harmonies played against this serious announcement.

All the songs functioned as scene change music. Sometimes the women moved set pieces as they sang, or stood still in different places around the set. We performed the play in a long, relatively narrow space, with audience in bleacher seats on two sides. The actors therefore had more choice of physical placement than if we had used a proscenium stage. Song number two opens with a flute cadenza over an Ab major chord, a calm that lasts only four measures before tumbling into a rhythmic allegretto section. The trio sings in unison, in a lower tessitura, conversationally explaining to the audience "Even a great man must practice some deceit."

Many of the songs mention the date of the action to come in the following scene, keeping the quality of the songs as lessons. Song number three describes Galileo's realization that "there is no Heaven," a phrase sung beautifully by the trio, followed by another brief flute cadenza, but ending this time with a crashing d minor chord from the piano. It sounds as though things are starting to fall apart in the universe. This d minor chord has a little dissonance, a Bb clashes with the DFA of the chord, making it more jarring. I find Eisler's harmonic vocabulary to be fairly predictable, not nearly as dissonant as Paul Dessau's setting of *Mother Courage*, for example, but there are edgy sections which make a statement, like this one. That extra Bb hints at ominous things to come.

We did not use song number four, "Quaedam miracula," until the end of the play as a musical finale, and used song number four variante instead to precede scene four. Again, the women sing in unison, a melodic line based on sol mi la, a quote of the childhood taunting tune, and an alienation effect. These words are, "The old way says, as it now is, it ever shall be. The new way says, if it's no good, goodbye!" The word "goodbye" is a tri-tone, and dissonant chords accompany the song. The scene that follows reflects the frustration set up by this music, when the Grand Duke of Florence and his advisors refuse to look through the telescope. Song number five is similar musically to song number two, but the words are not snide comments about Galileo this time. The women report that the chief astronomer, Clavius, has upheld Galileo's findings, and the listeners feel relief hearing

this, especially with familiar music.

At this point in the play, Uwe made some changes. In our production, song number five preceded the scene labeled six in the script, and we cut the scene labeled five, the one concerning the plague. Likewise, the scene labeled seven became our scene six. This scene contained more music than any other. It opens with the women, in harmony and with much melisma, singing of Galileo as a guest in Cardinal Bellarmin's palace. The florid lines nearly obscure the bite of the lyrics, which tell that the Inquisition has begun to stifle Galileo.

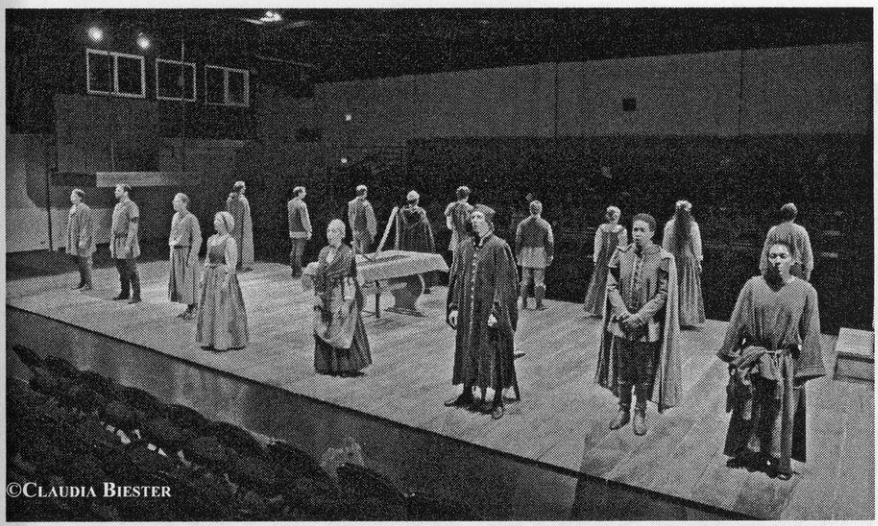
We gave this scene some background music, an idea taken from the Berliner Ensemble's 1979 production. The delicately played tack piano became the sound of a harpsichord at the party, and I improvised a G major minuet in early Baroque style, followed by a rigaudon as the party progressed. However, as the two cardinals began to threaten Galileo, a darker g minor minuet accompanied the action. Interspersed with this music was a G major diatonic harmonica, played by one of our actors portraying a musician at the party. There is also an offstage madrigal sung by the women's trio, telling that "this lovely springtime cannot last." As in the 1979 production, I used music from the original finale by Eisler.

The final scene of Act I was originally scene ten, the carnival scene. It, like the prologue, involves the ensemble, where the only recognizable characters are the balladsinger and his wife. He tells the audience about the dangers of an educated public, giving several examples of lower classes rising to challenge authority. The song is by far the longest in the play, and we added the ballad singer's wife for several of the examples. The whole ensemble sang the chorale at the end of the song, encouraging people to "kick out the bosses and fire the pastors." The action of the play is stopped here as the actors once again engage the audience directly. At this point in the play, the ideas of Galileo are part of the public consciousness, and so must be illustrated by the common folk.

Act II opens with song number seven preceding scene eight, the scene with Galileo and the little monk. The three women sing in unison, a brisk, business-like announcement of the scene. We chose song number eight variante to open scene nine, an elegant waltz sung in three-part harmony, another example of the music playing against the threat described in the action.

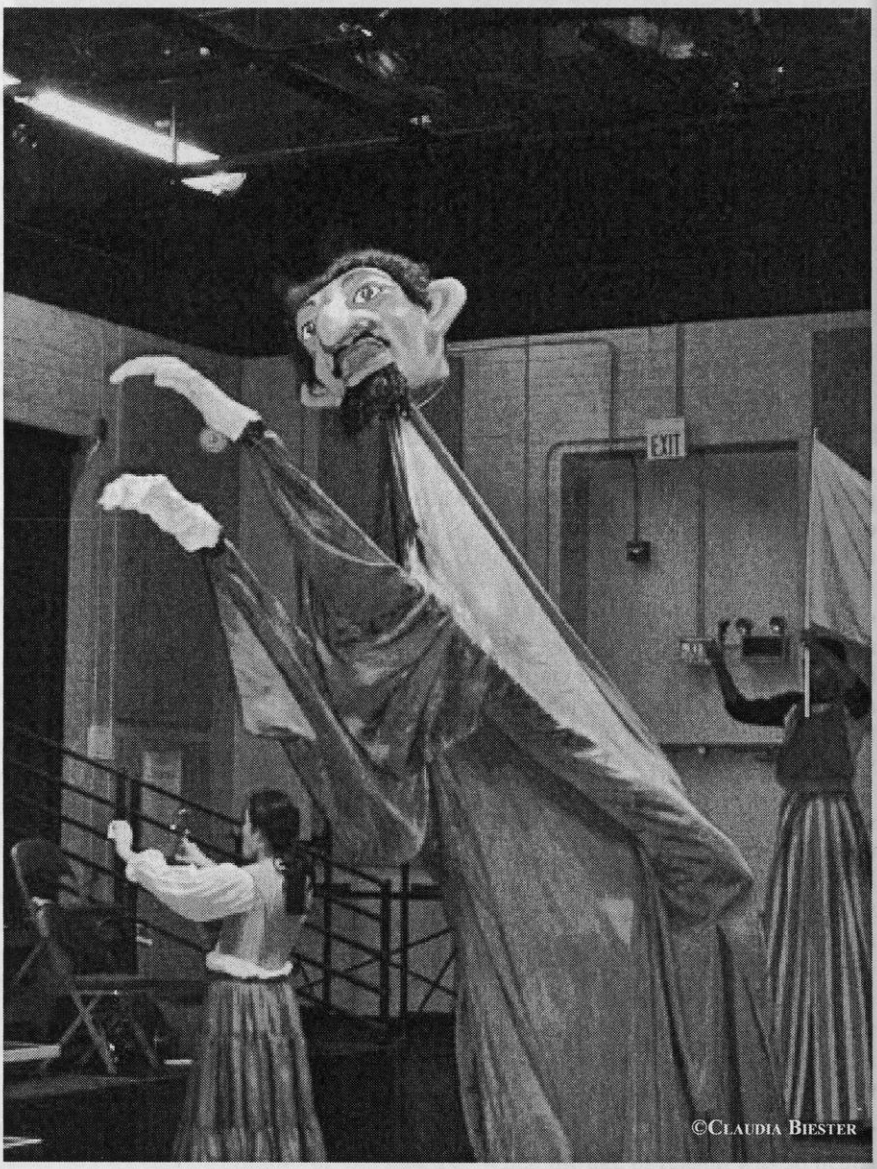
The scene with the Pope opens with clangorous chords and a wild descending scale from the piano, followed by a gruff melody presented fugally by the flute and clarinet, leading up to the women's exclamation of "The Pope!" During this scene, our cast imitated the sound of shuffling humanity that was irritating Barberini as he became Pope. We used breath sounds and soft striking and rubbing of the railings behind the audience to achieve this background noise. It was appropriately irritating to both the Pope and the audience.

Scene eleven is preceded musically by a steady allegretto, rhythmically relentless, as though what is about to come is inevitable. It is the scene during which Galileo recants, sung cheerfully by the women. The lyrics are, "It was a day in June, 1633, a day of infamy for you and me. When the age of reason was so near, for one whole day science had no fear." As the scene progressed, the women stood in the audience and sang out the part of the bells of St. Mary's, tolling out the news of Galileo's recantation. As Galileo entered, they sang to a tune heard earlier, "the Earth is on the move!" I chose the tune of song number four variante, the one built



on a diminished triad. As the women sang this wrenching melody, two very large pieces of fabric were ripped from the walls behind the audience. The fabric had quotes from the play on them, Galileo's new ideas, and the ripping sound punctuated the song. Immediately, though, the action stopped, the lights changed, and the ensemble assembled to recite the entire discorsi. The attitude was one of reassurance, that even though Galileo recanted, the truth was out and could not be put back. The entire cast was involved, even the actors playing the Pope, the Cardinal Inquisitor, and Galileo. By alternating between specific characters and anonymous chorus, the actors told the story in two different ways. Much of the discorsi was recited in unison, but some lines were recited solo, some words were elongated, pulsed in a soulful way, and some lines were sung.

We finished our production with the scene at Galileo's house in the country, where the church imprisoned him until he died. The melody before the scene is the loveliest in the play, with the potential to elicit sympathy from the audience. It ends, however, with the words, "'til the day he died," as a repeated rising perfect fourth, reminiscent of another childhood taunt, and another example of the alienation effect. The women sang it without emotion, simply stating that this was where Galileo spent his final days. Since we cut the final scene, we decided not to use the finale from the score, which includes references to the scene at the border. Instead, we used an earlier cut piece, song number four, "Quaedam miracula." The ensemble sang in two parts, a rousing canon in G major, leaving the audience with a hint of optimism.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DESIGNING GALILEO

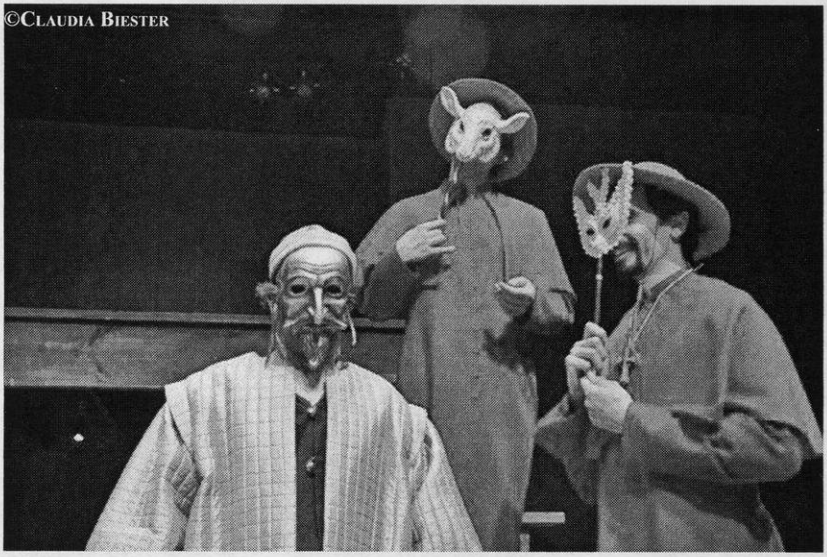
ANDREA BARRIER
UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE

The costume designer's job is to interpret the director's vision of the play; to take the suggestions which evolve out of rehearsal with the actors and incorporate them into a cohesive look onstage. In the recent production of *The Life of Galileo* directed by Dr. Heinz-Uwe Haus at the University of Delaware I have attempted to do this. Designing a show around a historical figure required a delicate balance between the contemporary historical period and the struggles of the present day. Brecht chose Galileo as a symbol of intellectual conflict in the repressive years surrounding WWII; decades later the conflict of religion, state, and science are still apparent.

In designing this play I needed to take many things into consideration. I have worked with Uwe on several plays in the past including a production of *Mother Courage* which was performed on a closed military base in Germany where each scene took place in a different bunker and the audience walked from site to site. I have become accustomed to being prepared for anything knowing that much of the play would come from the actors. Uwe's directing style is very physical so the costumes must meet the demand for much movement in the blocking of the actors. Our production of *Galileo* utilized stilt walkers and jugglers in the prologue. Also Uwe is drawn sculptural silhouettes and likes to use nontraditional materials. The Doge costume was made from a woven plastic industrial fabric. Since this play required nearly 80 costumes it was necessary to combine the use of costumes from our existing stock with the creation of new ones. This meant that care had to be taken when creating a look which both evoked the feel of the Renaissance when Galileo lived and hinted at a non-specific time period. Each actor played several parts which required that they change quickly with no time for wigs or makeup. This meant that the costumes needed to be designed in layers to go over or under, creating a seamless transition between characters.

Since the set was intentionally sparse, I tried to use color to denote location. The play opens with the prologue which is largely repeated in the Carnival. The actors portrayed acrobats, jugglers, jesters, stilt walkers. In this scene I used a lot of subdued primary color. The challenge was to suggest the sixteenth century and still allow the women to do cartwheels. We had a number of traditional Renaissance costumes in our stock so I tried to utilize them to our advantage without being too literal. For the prologue I combined parti-colored jerkins, hats, and leggings with trousers and vests made of quilted fabric and modern ethnic shirts. The women wore leggings under tiered bellydancer skirts. Uwe suggested the use of samurai pants for the stilt walkers, so I reinterpreted the silhouette in brightly striped fabrics of red and yellow. The scene called for an effigy of Galileo to be carried. This evolved in rehearsal to a piece of fabric on two sticks with a puppet head from *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Since the actors were accustomed to

using this arrangement we decided to repaint the existing head and replace the fabric with brown silk to match the brown robe Galileo wore in the play as velvet would have been too heavy in such a size. I then sculpted hands which were added to the ends of the sticks. The added weight needed to be adjusted to by the actors. Since the actors were covered by the fabric they also needed to be aware of what direction the head faced at all times and to pivot it for the audience which was configured on both sides of the stage stadium style.



As we moved into the domestic scenes with Galileo I used hues of brown and green which set them apart but would then segue into other scenes of the play. The senators who come to view the telescope are caricatures of themselves and dressed in various textures and combinations of black. This contrasted with the stark white makeup - a device to alienate the audience typical of Brechtian theatre. Uwe has insisted on this type of makeup for all the plays I have designed for him.]In this play I have tried to strike a balance with it being less extreme so that it did not take the audience member out of the play but was designed to enhance each character.]This was difficult in some instances because of their doubling.]The inspiration was taken largely from the paintings of Velasquez and Brueghel with the strong use of shadow in their portraiture.]It can be difficult with a group of young attractive actors to get the breadth of character ,study which Brecht obviously intended with names such as "the Little Monk" or the "tall thin monk" or "a very old Cardinal." The makeup helps to overcome this. Because it was unfamiliar it required a lot of practice and experimentation for the actors to master the look.

In both scenes at the Vatican I used either entirely white or white with beige and brown to set them off - Galileo being the only one in dark brown. The out-

ermost layer of the monks' outfit was constructed of quilted white silk to add a stylized element, which took the scene to a surreal level thus enhancing Uwe's blocking which exaggerated the reaction to Galileo's theories by the monks to a highly physical response. In contrast when we move into the ball scene at the home of Cardinal Bellarmin, I used predominantly red and gold. The audience is transported from a scene in white and beige to the festivity of a court ball with little change to the scenery except the addition of candled sconces and festive banners since by necessity the actors fill the stage in both scenes. The strong use of color in this scene along with extensive use of masks styled after the period quickly move us into this change of setting. Virginia's dress was designed so that with the simple addition of richly patterned velvet sleeves and an overskirt her peasant dress is transformed into a ball gown. Galileo had added a gold quilted silk robe to his earlier costume. The scene shifts from the gala dance with the appearance of the two Cardinals in red cossacks with broad brimmed hats in symmetrical silhouette at the top of a ten-foot platform before they descend the stairs on either side of the platform. This image forces the focus of the audience to the confrontation between Galileo and Bellarmin. The use of a white dove and a lamb mask against the gold philosopher mask worn by Galileo serves to reinforce this.

After Galileo sends Lodovico away we see a quick decline as Virginia ages and Galileo faces the Inquisition. During this time Virginia dons a dark blue dress and grey shawl and we see Galileo become more encased with layers of heavy fabric. By the final scenes the costumes have become visually dark and distressed as has the mood of the play with the judgment on Galileo.

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I believe the historical case has been taken care of. The question of the responsibility of the scientist has been clarified in theory, but not at all in practice. The case of a great man, who in spite of his greatness has fallen short, is not unique; it is also said about Brecht that he did not take a heroic stance when confronting the House Un-American Activities Committee. (Actually he was like the then President of the Actor's Union, the Democrat Ronald Reagan, one of McCarthy's "friendly witnesses"). "Unhappy the country that needs a hero."

What Can a Galileo Production Reveal?

Heinz-Uwe Haus
University of Delaware

So, what really remains? One should remove *Galileo* totally from the historical play. From the Renaissance one should not select the external, the gold or the colors, Venice or Florence. Instead one should dwell on the great transformation that occurred in the thinking: a radical change took place in the social life, which caused a breakthrough in the narrow confines of the scholastic, the medieval approach to life. It made people doubt dogmas overnight and really everything else, too. In today's terms we experience upbeat thinking, realizing that anything is possible, and that our actions can resolve issues constructively.

What is to be shown, is this Copernican reversal, the Renaissance as a certain attitude *vis à vis* the world, an attitude of no longer accepting things the way they have been presented, an attitude of doubting them and of taking them into one's own hands. Hence, the activities of the Renaissance, the freshness, the cheerfulness, the quarrelsomeness (Galileo, e.g., was nicknamed "the Wrangler"). He was a wrangling, quarrelsome man. Projecting Galileo's actions Brecht argues, that we are, "unduly passive about our future," but are able to learn to think differently.

Today's so-called "positive psychology" is winning an ever-wider audience because of this dialectic. In Brecht's view, the contemporary theatergoer watches a play the same way he sees a planetarium show, as a critical observer eager to know how our world is put together. By extending the Carnival scene over the prologue, the present production attempts to draw the audience into such a community in motion.

Galileo acquires his truly contradictory profile in the last scenes, right after he recants and during the last visit of his student Andrea. When, after the recantation, his students receive him with reproaches, a broad smile lights up Galileo's distraught face. Rather than cynicism this expresses satisfaction with the way they receive him: He has disappointed them, but they have not disappointed him.

Brecht's storytelling method reminds me of one of the toughest challenges to our mindset, issued by the psychiatrist and holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl, who wrote: "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response."

Several other points interest us today. On the one hand, knowledge does not protect us against foolishness. Galileo's genius and his insights do not automatically provide him with experiences and awareness, necessary to deal with those in

power; that the specialized expert without social influence, without social insight - never mind whether Galileo be a physicist, a medical doctor or an artist - will come to grief as a consequence of his specialism; that at some point he will have to give it up, to recant.

On the other hand, those in power should learn that doubters are not destroyers. Hence this play should not present the audience with a self-contained historical case, but rather present a very open case of the diverse attitudes that power and knowledge evince toward each other or against each other, depending on whether they cooperate or fight one another. Where are the dangers, where the possibilities? It all figures under the heading: "Truth can only be asserted to the extent that we assert it." We will offer the audience a Galileo, whose behavior is not as fully damnable as Brecht had to make it in his time in order to come to grips with the cases of Galileo, Einstein, and Oppenheimer.

We will show attitudes and ways of acting which each of us can also discover within him or herself, whether student, employee, or businessman. Each of us has to discover Galileo's case within him or herself. We each have a choice to assert our doubts, our discoveries, our acquired knowledge against all resistance in order to convince those in power that they, too, would benefit and be enriched by such an attitude - lest we destroy ourselves by recanting.

We will also have to show that in order to bring about new laws personal risk taking, courage, and dedication are essential, because otherwise knowledge will stagnate, will revert to scholastic knowledge, even in our day.

How easily can knowledge lead to scholasticism? How easily can insights turn into wrong intentions?—by keeping such questions open, it should be possible to place the whole endeavor into an arena for discourse, with figures who, assume historical names and ways of behaving, but are not necessarily presented in familiar ways.—

What is necessary, as the designer and director understood from the beginning, is to play close to the audience and to initiate this audience into the characters' problems. Hence, the Pope on the stage should not be utterly remote and withdrawn, out of reach for everyone, as was the case in the classical Brecht-Engel production of the Berliner Ensemble in 1956, but rather he should be presented in such a way that he, too, would be understandable for the audience, so they can identify with his point of view, reflect about it and proceed to discover the truth. What has been said for the play also holds true for members of the audience: One can only find as much truth as one discovers for oneself.

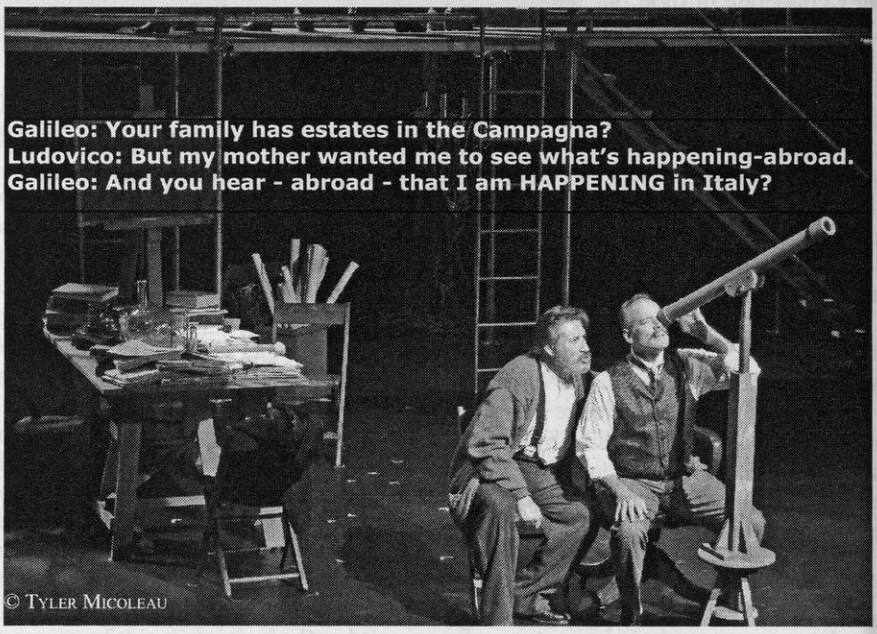
The whole production strives for an open discourse. This can be brought about with great vitality, by modes of behavior which provide the spectator with the pleasure of deciding to what extent these modes are right or wrong, and by a production that refuses to damn one figure, to evaluate another and to criminalize a third. Audience members should arrive at conclusions by their own thought processes. But that call for sober realism will also always be an echo of Antonio Gramsci's prescription: "pessimism of the intellect" but with "optimism of the will." It reveals the theatre's enormous and proper social significance.

Let's face it, nobody does optimism like Americans. Theirs is still a young country with a "manifest destiny" to grow and prosper. The American dream is not just wishful thinking. It has meaning, even now, after 9/11 and Hurricane

Katrina and Baghdad. Each time a US president is elected it is, as Ronald Reagan observed, "morning in America" once again.

So much for the conceptual perspectives and what they might help to reveal in our production.

LIFE OF GALILEO. TRANSLATION: DAVID EDGAR. DIRECTION: BLANKZ ZIZKA. SCENIC DESIGN: MIMI LIEN. WILMA THEATER. PHILADELPHIA, PA / USA. 9 APRIL 2007



The Life of Galileo was *happening* at the Wilma Theater in Philadelphia. Happening was indeed the word, since this beautiful theatrical production was embedded in a variety of intellectual, cultural, and civic activities dedicated to science occurring throughout the city. Most notable was *The Galileo Project*, a weekly series of four panel discussions on science on the subjects "Science and Culture from Galileo to the 21st Century," "Science, Ethics, and Politics," "Dangerous Ideas," and "Science and Religion in the 21st Century." Although independent, a large scale exhibit on Charles Darwin at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute of Science had preceded the theatrical performance and already animated lively discussions on the role of science in society.

Directed by Blanka Zizka, *Galileo* ran at the Wilma from April 11 until May 19, 2007, a week longer than planned due to its popularity. The Wilma Theater on the Avenue of the Arts in central Philadelphia was a perfect location for this socially critical and conscious play. Founded in 1973 as the Wilma Project, the theater began as a feminist collective which took its name after an invented sister of William Shakespeare, the fantastical Wilma. Virginia Woolf had created such a charac-

To hear the interview with Scenic Designer Mimi Lien (left) and Dramaturg Walter Bilderback go to www.ecibs.org

ter in *A Room of One's Own* - Judith, just as brilliant as her brother, but beaten into silence by her time. In 1973 the Wilma Project set out to prove that women too can be great playwrights. Blanka Zizka and Jiri Zizka joined the Wilma as Artistic Directors in 1979 after leaving their native Czechoslovakia when the Soviets crushed the Prague Spring in 1968. Since then they have created many memorable productions in Philadelphia. According to the dramaturg Walter Bilderback, five of the Wilma's productions in the last 25 years concentrated on plays by Brecht, which approaches the national average for a major theater.

The Life of Galileo represented the American premiere of a new translation by David Edgar, a contemporary British playwright who is best known for his stage adaptation of Charles Dickens's *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*. Edgar's translation was colloquial and colorful yet elegant, and like all prior translations of Brecht's *Galileo*, it was in British English. Although predominantly based on the last of Brecht's three versions of *Galileo*, Edgar's translation also included elements of prior versions. One of his modifications concerned Galileo's religious daughter Virginia who ends up as Galileo's "jailer," as Edgar stated in an interview. Edgar's translation drew on Brecht's first version and on Dava Sobel's recent biography *Galileo's Daughter* to show Virginia in a more sympathetic and complex light. While Brecht's first version was more faithful to historical truth, his later changes were never intended to approach biographical facts but rather provide a vehicle for interpreting political reality.

The set designer Mimi Lien created a simple, flexible, and sparse design that she herself described as a "non-set." In an interview with Norman Roessler , she explained how she was looking at construction sites and at pictures in China in preparation for her set. The result was a half-finished scaffolding construction, a metaphor for the plight of the working class. Galileo's association with the proletariat was visible in his support for the lens-grinder Federzoni who does not speak Latin and in his engagement with

the Little Monk. Galileo's conflict with the Church and the Inquisition could also be interpreted as the struggle of intellectuals against authorities. Brecht had to flee the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s and later compromise with the East German regime; and Mimi Lien reminded us that in China the communist society became the oppressor. Brecht called Hitler a whitewasher; and during the Cultural Revolution in China they were whitewashing the Forbidden City. This may also explain the deep red background to the scaffolding during the scene with the Inquisition, which could refer to communist China. Mimi Lien's scaffolding in the backdrop of the scene provided for a creative way to employ the chorus: Workers observed the stage, moved about the construction, and spoke, sang, or chanted their commentaries. Opposing the real audience watching the play, they become a second level audience.

Costume designer Janus Stefanowicz created outfits that were more reminiscent of the 1940s than the 1620s, because director Blanka Zizka re-imagined *Galileo* as taking place in the early twentieth century. Situating the play in Brecht's time endowed it with a renewed sense of "urgency and immediacy," according to Blanka Zizka. The audience can recognize the rise of fascism in Brecht's era, and maybe even see allusions to our time in which we need to balance our individual freedoms and rights in light of a global war on terror. Sound designer and composer Troy Herion created his own music and acoustic effects that alluded to the original stage music by Hanns Eisler.

Among the actors, John Campion shined in the role of the protagonist Galileo. He played his huge epic part with vigor, versatility, and charisma. Campion dominated the stage in many scenes and was a pleasure to watch. Sarah Sanford as Galileo's daughter Virginia also stood out, playing with great sensitivity the role of the faithful daughter who has to sacrifice her private life to become her father's provider and ultimately oppressor. In the scene preceding Galileo's recantation she played a particularly dramatic part: While Federzoni, Andrea, and the Little Monk anxiously wish for Galileo to remain steadfast, Virginia prays for him to recant. The juxtaposition of the men's dialogues and Sanford's (Virginia's) prayers that swell and recede in tone and loudness was highly musical and dramatic, resolved only by Galileo's shaken appearance and his renunciation.

Grace Gonglewski played a very convincing Mrs. Sarti, torn between her loyalty to Galileo and her maternal responsibilities for her son Andrea. All other actors performed multiple characters and inhabited their diverse roles impressively and skillfully: Scott Barrow played Ludovico, Clavius, the adult Cosimo de Medici, and a scribe; Greg Wood could be seen as Sagredo, Bellarmin, individual, and monk; Anthony Lawton appeared as Federzoni, a monk, secretary, and singer; and David Howey performed the Doge, a mathematician, and the Cardinal Inquisitor. Scott Greer, John Zak, Ross Manson, and Peter Pryor all performed at least four roles each. The show also included two child actors in two roles each: Zac Chew played the intelligent young Andrea and Dante Mignucci the even younger Cosimo de Medici. Both boys came together as boy 1 and boy 2 in the final scene, when an adult Andrea carries Galileo's *Discorsi* across the border and enlightens two inquisitive children about the nature of weight and flying. The performance also contained two delightful Venetian carnival and mask scenes that were

staged with beautiful visual appeal.

When the online magazine *Edge* (www.edge.org) asked people to respond to the question: "What is your dangerous idea?", references to Galileo arose at the very beginning, Walter Bilderback pointed out in his interview with Norman Roessler. The insights Galileo gained from looking through his telescope still provoke us today. Edgar translated Brecht's "Teleskop," "Fernrohr" or "Rohr" colloquially and humorously as "tube," and once Galileo even pointed his "tube" directly at the audience – a form of Brechtian alienation. We were examined and asked to think about the many debates and controversies surrounding science today: evolution, cloning and stem cell research, artificial intelligence, scholastic freedom, or global warming. It was the great achievement of this excellent production to keep Brecht's play alive and participate in the timeless search for a responsible and free scientific inquiry.

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LONG FORM: ESSAYS, REVIEWS, INTERVIEWS

LOST AND FOUND IN ADAPTATION: REINVENTING FRANK WEDEKIND'S SPRING AWAKENING AS A ROCK MUSICAL

PETER ZAZZALI

Based on Frank Wedekind's banned 1891 play Spring Awakening - of all unexpected choices - the major achievement of everyone involved in the musical version is to have found the modern within Wedekind's stifling, repressive world (New York Observer).[1]

The German playwright Frank Wedekind (1864-1918) was known for producing plays that were controversial, shocking and dramaturgically complex. Although very much a product of their historical moment, his plays incorporated a variety of aesthetic styles that anticipated future developments in expressionism and the theatre of the absurd. In his seminal work, *Spring Awakening* (1891) for example, Wedekind employs a pastiche of motifs that include the grotesque, black comedy, and tragedy. Two teenage lovers defy the oppressiveness of their provincial late-nineteenth-century German village, awaken their mutual sexual attraction, and engage in a carnal relationship. A generational conflict ensues, as the desires of youth are counterpoised against the adult-induced moral codes of bourgeois society. Thus, Wedekind's *Spring Awakening*, particularly when considered within its cultural and historical context, functioned as a subversive work that challenged the hypocrisy, taboos, and conservatism of the German establishment.

The composer and librettist / lyricist team of Duncan Sheik and Steven Sater have created a rock musical rendition of Wedekind's play that ran during the spring of 2006 at the Atlantic Theatre Company, before moving to Broadway later that December at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre. As the above quote suggests, they have reconfigured Wedekind's modern classic into a form that is accessible

for contemporary audiences, most specifically Broadway, while also appealing to young adults. Sater and Sheik's endeavor raises questions about authorship and efficacy in adapting a canonical work such as *Spring Awakening* into a context that is linguistically, culturally, and structurally remote. To what extent does the rock musical reconstitute the form and content of the original? Conversely, in what ways does the cultural, historical, and social milieu of the source text correspond with contemporary society? Ultimately, what is gained and lost from such an exchange? My aim critically is to demonstrate the functionality of adapting a modern classical play into a rock musical. By comparing the original *Spring Awakening* with Sater and Sheik's version, I will analyze each work within its historical and cultural moment, before looking at the ways that they either coincide or remain remote from each other. I hope to ascertain the ways in which the rock musical bases itself in the form and content of the original. Therefore, topics such as spectatorship, artistic form, and dramatic structure will be addressed in conjunction with locating either work in context, beginning with Wedekind's Germany and then moving to the current social climate informing the Sater / Sheik rendition. Finally, I will depict the rock musical as a functional adaptation that, for the most part, maintains the "spirit" of the original.

Spring Awakening was written in 1891, at a time when Germany had been recently unified under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck, and the country was defined by unprecedented nationalism, imperialism, and social conservatism. It is the latter trait that most disagreed with the twenty-six year old Wedekind, as he sought a bohemian lifestyle of sexual openness, drunkenness, and adventure. Like his spiritual mentor, Friedrich Nietzsche, he continually rejected the cultural oppressiveness of German society, seeking a world given to sensuality instead of rationalism, nihilism rather than order; one that responded to the visceral drives of being alive, not the socially indoctrinated mores identified by the church, government, and bourgeois. By attacking such institutions in his poems and journal articles, which landed him in prison, Wedekind established himself as an iconoclast, as indicated by his biographer Sol Gittleman: "The full force of civilized morality was mobilized against Wedekind and against the taboos which it refused to confront."[2] It is through this worldview that Wedekind wrote *Spring Awakening*

Wedekind's play is a remarkably complex achievement that stylistically can be traced to early-nineteenth-century dramatists such as Georg Büchner and Christian Dietrich Grabbe. Like his predecessors, Wedekind departed from the conventional dramaturgical techniques of his time, while embracing a multifaceted aesthetic that included elements of symbolism and expressionism. Although it was not his first work, *Spring Awakening* is considered to be the play that established Wedekind as a serious dramatist.[3] In it he employs a fragmented dramatic structure that functions as a montage of contrapuntal motifs ranging from the poetic to the grotesque, the realistic to the fantastic, and the sentimental to the bizarre. Moreover, it can also be read as a melodrama, tragicomedy, or a morality play, insofar as it makes a clear moral statement by establishing a narrative comprised of good and evil forces that includes elements of humor and tragedy. In short, *Spring Awakening* is a rich dramaturgical feat that conjoins both form and content to address the oppressiveness of contemporaneous German society.

The themes addressed in Wedekind's play are still relevant today, particularly

in an American context. While American society may not be as overtly puritanical as late-nineteenth-century Germany, issues like sexual repression, sex education - or lack thereof - adolescent violence, and generational conflict persist, as exemplified most recently by the Duke University lacrosse team fiasco and the Virginia Tech massacre.[4] Indeed, it was in the wake of the Columbine tragedy that Sater had the impulse to create the rock musical, as indicated by his remarks shared with me in a recent interview:

> *I knew the play a long time and loved the play. It captured the anguish and cries of young people. Its themes could be well served through a contemporary rock musical that appeals to young people, especially after the shootings of Columbine. We wanted to touch the troubled heart of young people around the world with this show.*[5]

As Sater indicates, *Spring Awakening* has the capability to connect with younger audiences by speaking to their personal experiences, particularly as it pertains to their struggle for a reassuring identity and place in society. Perhaps this is best demonstrated by the play's homosexual relationship (Hänschen and Ernst) and the obvious correlation we could make to adolescence, sexual orientation, and peer acceptance in a contemporary context.

Moreover, our current moment also aligns with the play's socio-political tropes. As Edward Bond states in the introduction to his translation of the work:

> *The play isn't out of date. It becomes more relevant as our armies get stronger, our schools, prisons and bombs bigger, our means imposing discipline more veiled, and our self-knowledge not much greater.*[6]

Indeed, in our age of globalization and mass production we are simultaneously encountering a degradation of individualism that echoes Wedekind's historical moment. Just as Germany exhibited unprecedented nationalism, imperialism, and conservatism, which ultimately resulted in the rise of Nazism during the 1930s--the hiccup of the Weimar Republic notwithstanding - today in America we can likewise identify a culture governed by strict moral codes. Although ours might be more subtly organized, from the way we educate our children, to the politicians we elect and the churches that populate our communities, America's cultural conservatism is pervasive, and can be likened to the soulless milieu of Wedekind's late-nineteenth-century Germany. Therefore, one can assume that a rock musical rendition of *Spring Awakening* would be a creative, sensible, and illuminating way of capturing the text's rebellious content.

In *The Theatre Will Rock*, Elizabeth Wollman identifies the rock musical as a "subgenre" of the American musical that functions as a social history. Rock 'n' roll's association with rebelliousness lends to a theatrical style and dramatic narrative that caters to a countercultural impulse. This was very much the case with *Hair* (1967), for example, which was a product of its time both in form and content, as it used rock' n' roll as the basis for constructing a thematically oriented

plotline that addressed its historical moment. Issues such as resisting the Vietnam War, experimenting with hallucinogenic drugs, and the sexual revolution were foregrounded through a range of loosely connected vignettes set to rock music. In addition to being an artistic and commercial success, *Hair* has since served as the prototype for numerous rock musicals that have likewise used the form to intersect with themes akin to a given time period. For instance, whereas *Godspell and Jesus Christ Superstar* reflected the revival of American Christianity in the early 1970s, Jonathon Larson's *Rent* and *Tick Tick Boom* both captured the struggles and plights of young adults living in New York City during the late 1980s and early 1990s.[7]

Although Sater and Shiek's *Spring Awakening* differs from *Hair*,[8] we can also see similarities in the two works. In addition to possessing diverse scores that consist of rock 'n' roll motifs ranging from pop to punk, their content hinges on a generational struggle that depicts youthful rebellion against cultural systems identified by established institutions: religion, education, and government. Moreover, they both forego scenic spectacle in favor of a minimalist setting, break the convention of the fourth wall and use direct address - thereby suggesting a style reminiscent of a "rock concert" - and provide rousing finales that signify youth's triumph over a tragic loss. Most significantly, they use the sounds of rock 'n' roll to define characters while evoking a transgressive impulse. *Spring Awakening* establishes this technique at its outset when Melchior's "All That's Known" sardonically defies the rigidity of the educational system:

> *All that's known in history, in science, overthrown at school, at home, by blind men. You doubt them, and soon they bark and hound you till everything you say is just another bad about you.*[9]

While "All That's Known" possesses a soft rock motif, much in the spirit of the late Kurt Cobain, it is immediately followed by the rebellious punk sounds of Moritz and the boys bellowing "The Bitch of Living." In both cases, Melchior and Moritz join their peers to represent their rebelliousness through the lyrics and its defiant cadence, while exhibiting the essence of Wedekind's original. Indeed, the songs are the most effective part of the Sater / Sheik adaptation, as they conflate form and content to offer an insightful view of the narrative's younger generation. Whereas "The Bitch of Living" features the oppressive educational environment of the adolescent males, "My Junk" includes their female counterparts in an anthem that reaffirms teenage identity with an anachronistic touch: "I go to my room and turn the stereo on!"[10] In a poignant musical alteration, "Touch Me" depicts the entire youth ensemble in a rock fugue centered on the discovery of masturbation. Repeatedly, the group implicitly sings, "when I go there…" into their handheld microphones while expressing the joy, confusion, and pangs of their sexual awakening.[11] Perhaps the most compelling reconfiguration of the original into song comes at the end of the rock musical's first act, during Melchior and Wendla's consummation scene. Whereas the play uses a brief scene to depict this significant plot event, Sater and Sheik incorporate it within a combination of spoken dialogue and delicately sung chords, thereby expanding temporally and dramatically beyond the source text. Michael Mayer's staging in the Broadway

production complements this effective elaboration, as the youth ensemble also appears onstage to underscore the singing of the principals with punctuated vocal and physical interjections. As a result, the youthful eroticism of Wedekind's text becomes aesthetically reconstituted by the music and choreography, and thus, echoes the spirit of the original within the context of a contemporary spectatorship.

If Sater and Sheik's adaptation effectively assimilates Wedekind's younger characters, it fails to account for the dramaturgical function of the older ones. The play's central conflict is constructed along generational planes. As previously mentioned, *Spring Awakening* was a product of Wedekind's rebellion against the authority figures and institutions of his time. As a result, his play's dramatic tension juxtaposes the evil machinations of its older figures against its younger victims, with the former representing the repressive mores of nineteenth-century Germany and the latter serving as examples of the system's social conditioning. Melchior functions as the primary challenge to the establishment, but is ultimately silenced; Moritz and Wendla are tragic casualties in a society in which parents are more concerned with their reputations than with the very existence of their children.[12] Wedekind exemplifies this struggle through a wholly unsympathetic rendering of twenty adult characters that collectively foil their younger counterparts. With fingerpost names like Headmaster Sunstroke and Professor Bonebreaker, Wedekind creates a symbolic and expressionistic depiction of modern Germany, most notably exhibited in Melchior's makeshift trial scene. An unseemly group of schoolmasters publicly condemns Melchior for allegedly causing Mortiz's suicide by compromising his moral sensibilities; a "degenerate" letter is the evidence they use against him.[13] In addition to upholding the play's dramatic conflict, Wedekind's grotesque treatment of the establishment metatextually functions to criticize the hierarchy of nineteenth-century Germany. In the rock musical, however, Sater and Sheik cut the adults out of this scene, and instead offer a "rock-a-billy" number entitled "Totally Fucked." Sung by the entire youth ensemble, this catchy song is interesting yet fails to illuminate the text, or capture the nuance, absurdity, and dramaturgical function of the scenic event. In fact, Sater and Sheik assign two actors to represent the entire adult world throughout their adaptation, which, along with the numerous omissions of individual characters, creates an unbalanced narrative that dissipates the tension underscoring the original.

The rock musical's treatment of the final scene marks its greatest departure from the source text. Whereas the play's culminating moment is replete with stylistic nuance, the adaptation is no more than a formulaic rendering of a conventional musical: the dramatic tension is resolved, a "happy ending" installed, and a triumphant finale rings down the curtain. The difference between the two versions is most clearly identified by Sater and Sheik's omission of Wedekind's mysterious Masked Man figure.[14] While Moritz is resurrected from the dead as originally scripted, Wendla also reappears and thus replaces the Masked Man, and both of them successfully convince Melchior not to kill himself. Once again the lack of an adult character deprives the narrative dramatic tension, as the hopeful ending is never in doubt. Indeed, with little effort, they inspire their friend to quit his suicidal impulse and inspire him "through love" to continue living.[15] Whereas Wedekind's Masked Man functions as a multifaceted dramaturgical device ex-

hibiting elements of symbolism within a scene that is as grotesque and austere as it is prophetic and comedic, Sater and Sheik omit the character and romanticize the play's ending. Wendla and Moritz rescue Melchior from himself, a hopeful message prevails, and the entire cast - the youth ensemble as well as the two adult actors--two, not three share in a resounding anthem of love: "I believe there is love in heaven, all will be forgiven!"[16] Never mind that this is the very generation whose children, also taught to conform, will give rise to the Nazis in forty years.

Furthermore, Sater and Sheik's treatment of the final scene departs from Wedekind's use of language and replaces it with song. *Spring Awakening* is considered by many scholars to be a forerunner to theatrical expressionism, which is demonstrated by the way its rich prose offers insight to Melchior's psychological turbulence. For example, when he enters the graveyard, Wedekind provides him with a mellifluous monologue that in both form and content express his tormented soul:

> *Melchior: Ich muß drüben unter den letzten suchen! - Der Wind pfeift auf jedem Stein aus einer anderen Tonart - eine beklemmende Symphonie! - Die morschen Kränze reißen entzwei und baumeln an ihren langen Fäden stückweise um die Marmorkreuze - ein Wald von Vogelscheuchen! - Volgelscheuchen auf allen Gräbern, eine greulicher als die andere - haushohe, vor denen die Teufel Reißaus nehmen.*[17]

> *I must look for new ones over there! The wind whistles around each stone in another key [meaning it is atonal] - an oppressive symphony! The wreaths of death [meaning the wreaths of flowers created for funerals] are ripening and dangle their long threads one for one, a single piece at a time in between the marble crosses - a forest of Scarecrows! Scarecrows on all graves, one more horrifying than the other - tall as houses. In front of these the devil would take cover.*[18]

Admittedly, this quite literal translation of the German loses its linguistic nuance, thereby compromising the original's poetry and providing the actor with a text that is barely playable. Although more effective English models exist (see Bond), there is always some degradation of the source text in translating, particularly if the original includes heightened language. As a result, a musical treatment of such a text can perhaps capture its essence every bit as much as a linguistic version. For the most part, Sater's lyrics and Shiek's score justify this point. From "I'm Gonna Wound You" to "The Bitch of Living" the songs, all of which are performed by the youth ensemble, serve to illuminate the younger generation, their struggles, and the oppression they suffer at the hands of the adult community. The music functions to liberate their "subtext," and in Sater's view, "replaces the role of the Masked Man," whose benevolence, he argues, "gets performed by the music." [19] Thus, the music embodies all that is hopeful, good, and empathetic about the young people of this oppressive world.

Sater and Sheik's rock musical version of Wedekind's modern classic is generally effective. While it fails to capture the stylistic nuance and dramatic structure

of the original, it quite artfully expresses its younger characters and connects with contemporary audiences. Its most salient feature is the music, which reinvents Wedekind's play as a rock 'n' roll narrative that caters to its target viewer: a current Broadway spectatorship, while making a conscious appeal to younger people. Indeed, as was true of its predecessor *Rent*, the producers of *Spring Awakening* save a percentage of house seats to be distributed to students the day of the performance. As a result, an unusually young audience can be heard cheering their iconic representatives onstage nearly every night. Just as Sater claims that "adolescent audiences have been going wild over it," [20] Wollman likewise acknowledges the piece: "It has created itself as a rock musical that is bad-ass enough for teenagers and palatable enough for adults."[21] It has achieved remarkable popularity and critical acclaim, as exemplified by it being awarded the Tony for best musical. In short, Sater and Sheik have rendered a modern classical play accessible to a contemporary and foreign audience. By most measures it is an artistic and commercial success that is faithful to the "spirit" of the original.

Sater and Sheik's negotiation of a 116-year-old German play into a definitively American and postmodern context provides us with an interesting opportunity to examine the process of adapting a modern classic for the stage. Whereas the current production has proven to be very popular, one might assess it as having "culinary" appeal; the original *Spring Awakening* was highly controversial and censored. However, as indicated earlier in this paper, many of the themes of late-nineteenth-century Germany can be located in contemporary American society. While their adaptation hardly captures the verisimilitude of Bismarck's Germany and its cultural oppressiveness, Sater and Sheik skillfully use Wedekind's text as a basis for addressing current trends and issues: "We looked at the original play for inspiration, but ultimately told the story we wanted to tell."[22] They use the source text as a framework for facilitating Sater's hopeful lyrics and Sheik's "hip" rock music towards championing youthful rebellion against authority. Wedekind's original has in many respects been creatively relocated in a twenty-first century context with the intention of appealing to a contemporary audience instead of honoring a canonical text. As a result, after Melchior is expelled from school and condemned to a reformatory, the electric guitar led number "Totally Fucked" causes the youth ensemble to chaotically move about the stage within a defiant blast of amplified song to accompany their jagged physical gestures and repeated shouts of "You're Fucked" - it is as if the stage becomes their very playground. The space functions as a zone of rebellion as desks are turned over and used as objects woven into the choreography. The song ends triumphantly, before revealing the banished hero, Melchior, defiantly sitting in one of the ubiquitous desk chairs that have been fastened to the theatre's back wall, some twelve feet above the ground. The rigid social construction of the stage world has been thrown into momentary chaos, and the audience can cheer, shout, and lament with its brave representatives.

ENDNOTES

1. REVIEW OF *SPRING AWAKENING*, BY STEVEN SATER AND DUNCAN SHEIK, BASED ON THE PLAY BY FRANK WEDEKIND, DIRECTED BY MICHAEL MAYER, EUGENE O'NEILL THEATRE, NEW YORK, *NEW YORK OBSERVER*,

December, 18, 2006.

2. Sol Gittleman, *Frank Wedekind* (New York: Ungar Publishing, 1969), 3.

3. Scholars generally associate Wedekind with his two most outstanding texts: *Spring Awakening* and the *Lulu* plays (*Pandora's Box, Earth Spirit*, and *Monster Tragedy*). Indeed, Sol Gittleman refers to *Spring Awakening* as Wedekind's "most poetic and artistically satisfying work." Gittleman, 42.

4. *Spring Awakening* continues to be controversial in certain contexts. For example, as recently as 1991 a planned production for the Idaho Shakespeare Festival was cancelled because it was perceived as a threat to the "moral standards" of the community, which happened to be Boise, the state's largest city. Although the show had been in rehearsal for several weeks, the theatre's board of directors succumbed to the public outcry to shut it down. For more on this story, see Judith Lewis, "But Will It Play In Boise," *American Theatre*, September 1991.

5. Steven Sater, interview with author, April 17, 2007.

6. Edward Bond, introduction to *Spring Awakening*, by Frank Wedekind (London: Methuen, 1980), xxix.

7. Elizabeth Wollman, *The Theatre Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical from Hair to Hedwig* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2006), 42-64.

8. Among the stylistic distinctions between Sater and Sheik's *Spring Awakening* and *Hair* is that the former dramaturgically functions as a narrative derived from a canonical text, whereas *Hair* is comprised of a series of original vignettes that are loosely connected. For more on the influence of *Hair* on the development of the rock musical, see Wollman, "*Hair* and Its Imitators," Chap. 2.

9. Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik, *Spring Awakening* (New York: TCG, 2007) 21.

10. Ibid., 26.

11. Ibid., 31.

12. Wendla and Mortiz's parents inadvertently cause their tragic deaths. While Moritz's father pressures his son into believing that he is a social and scholastic failure, thereby prompting his suicide, Wendla's mother, Frau Bergmann, forces her to have the abortion that leads to her demise. Both parental actions are generated through the fear that their reputations will be compromised by their children's immorality.

13. Wedekind, *Spring Awakening*, trans. Edward Bond, 3.1. References are to act and scene.

14. The figure of the Masked Man has intrigued scholars as much as any aspect of *Spring Awakening*. The central question seems to be, what does this unnamed character represent? Though most scholars agree with Gittleman that he is a positive force that provides a sense of hope for Melchior, Best reasons that such claims are "far from conclusive." Moreover, Mueller asserts that the Masked Man is really an extension of Wedekind—he did after all play the role in Reinhardt's production, and therefore, a metatextual reading of the figure seems plausible. For specific criticism on the Masked Man, see Gittleman, 51-52; Best, 80-82; Mueller, xi-xii; also Bond, xx-xxi.

15. Steven Sater, interview with author, April, 17, 2007.

16. Sater and Sheik, *Spring Awakeing*, 82.

17. Frank Wedekind, *Frühlings Erwachen* (Munchen, Germany: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 1968), 71.

18. I gratefully acknowledge my colleague Ken Nielsen's help in translating the German to English.

19. Steven Sater, interview with author, April 17, 2007.

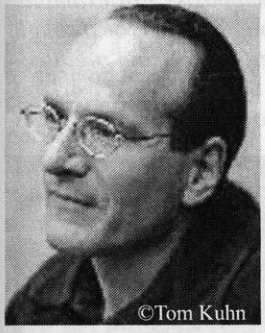
20. Steven Sater, interview with author, April, 17, 2007.

21. Elizabeth Wollman, interview with author, May 15, 2007.

22. Steven Sater, interview with author, April, 17, 2007.

Interview with Tom Kuhn, General Series Editor A.C. Black Brecht Editions & Brecht Translator

In the second part of our interview, Tom talks about translating The Round Head and the Pointed Heads and then seeing a production of his translation at California Polytechnic Institute in San Obispo, CA USA
1-3; 8-10 March 2007



CIBS: *You have done a significant amount of translation over the course of your career, specifically on Brecht, how did you come to be such a prolific translator? Did you train as a translator? Do you follow any theory of translation?*

Tom Kuhn: I am not sure I am so very prolific, but translating is an activity I have come to enjoy enormously. I have a certain amount of training, in that formal literary translation is still an important component of the undergraduate German course at Oxford where I was a student and where I now teach. So I teach translation, I even sometimes teach the theory of translation. But I came into the professional practice of all of this more by accident, and no, I follow no specific theory. Indeed, fascinating as the theory is, it seems almost a separate discipline, concerned with the philosophical relationship between original text and foreign rendering, rather than with the actually nitty-gritty of labouring over a passage in the privacy of your study.

CIBS: *What are the biggest thrills in translating Brecht? What are the biggest difficulties?*

Tom Kuhn: Brecht's literary language is extraordinary. At one and the same time it apes the gestures of naturalistic dialogue and achieves the most exquisite stylizations. It draws on the Luther Bible, on English sources, both literary and colloquial, on Latin authors and inflections, and on especially South German dialect. When you think you have grasped a phrase in your own tongue you so often discover that you have fallen short of the poetry, or of the resonances, or of the direct and forceful appeal. The difficulties are clear! The thrills lie in uncovering all this. There is no better way to get to know the intricacies of someone's writing than by trying to translate. And then sometimes, just sometimes, you feel you may have come close to it in English. That is a rewarding experience.

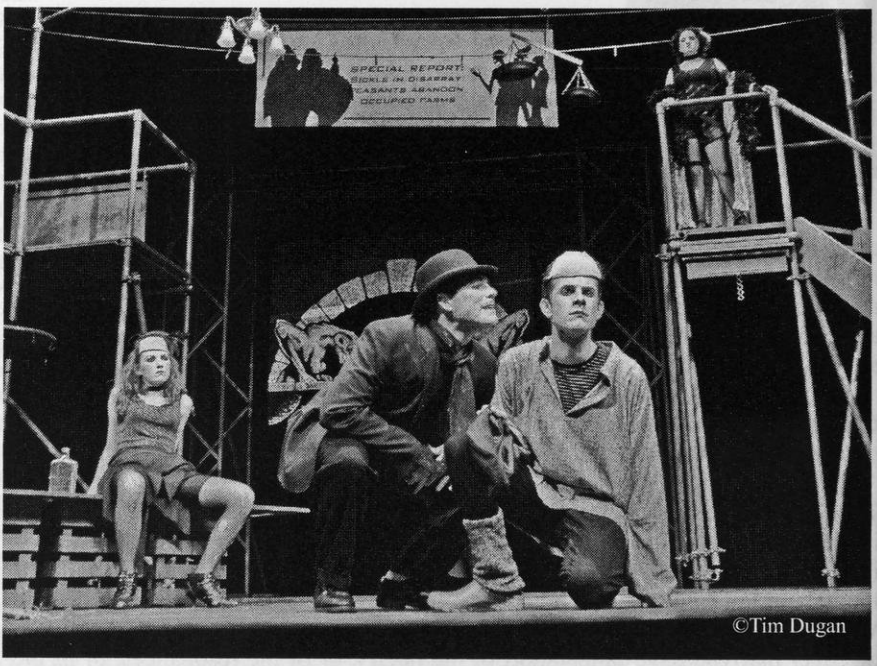
The first part of our interview with Tom concerns his work as General Series Editor of the AC Black Brecht Editions and can be found at www.ecibs.org

CIBS: *How do you assess Brecht as a wordsmith, a language master? Does he belong in the language pantheon of German Culture with Luther and Goethe?*

Tom Kuhn: I guess I've made that clear already. His contri-

bution to the development of the German language as it is used daily and written by all does not of course compare with that of Luther. But his contribution to the *literary* language, especially to the writing of poetry, is very significant. The comparison with Goethe is apt in many ways. They both made themselves masters of all the genres, and both wrote an immense quantity of lyric poetry, right up to their last years. They were both innovators and theorists, as well as skilled exploiters of the tradition.

CIBS: *Do you approach Brecht's work with a particular emphasis? For example, do you approach his work primary through language, through theater, or through scholarship? I ask this question because one can often detect a certain predilection when reading a dramatic translation. Sometimes the translator is a working poet or writer who has no linguistic or historical background to speak of, yet is*



able to deliver a workable text. Sometimes, the theatricality of the translation jumps out at me, and I know immediately that the translator is a playwright, or a person of the theater. And sometimes, I read a translation and it breathes the erudition of history and language knowledge, yet sometimes fails on the level of poetry and theatricality. Care to tackle this issue?

Tom Kuhn: I come to Brecht first as a scholar. When I translate I have to throw some of that off, to speak and sing my own versions and make them 'work' as independent creations. Sometimes I'm sure I fail. I also come to the process of translation, especially of poetry, as a curious (I hope, intelligent) outsider to a puz-

zle. I have had interesting experiences working with David Constantine. He is a very notable poet. When he translates he seems, by some process very foreign to me, to enter the world of the poem, to discover a voice akin to that of the original, and to deliver a poem perhaps equivalent to it, from the inside as it were. When I translate a poem, I look at the form, the metre and the rhymes (I am always quite relieved to have those crutches), I count syllables, I find equivalents for the words, I use dictionaries, a rhyming dictionary and a thesaurus. I work mimetically with the surface of the poem, and then I juggle and tweak and play with it, until it seems to fall into place. Sometimes it's fast, but the process can last weeks for a single couplet. The astonishing thing is that, just occasionally, my colleague David Constantine's and my versions meet in the middle. We have talked of doing a volume of Brecht poems together. I wonder how that would turn out!

I am NOT a man of the theatre, and in some naive way I was unaware of the risks of the translation of dialogue until I experienced my own text in production. Having done so, I am now keen to take on another dramatic text, and I think I would take more risks. I am inclined to think my naivete about translating for the theatre is actually an advantage. In England and in the US there is a semi-naturalistic roughened-up argot which is often taken as a sort of standard in the theatre, so that Chekhov and Lorca and Brecht all end up sounding the same. I have heard versions of Brecht in the theatre, by established playwrights and screenplay writers, which have made him sound like a '70s kitchen-sink dramatist. It is terribly important not to flatten out his writing like this, but to keep the oddities and the poetry, even if they may sometimes make his lines harder to deliver. There is

meant to be a *Verfremdung* in the language too.

CIBS: *Which Brecht plays ones have given you the most difficulty and why?*

Tom Kuhn: I have only translated ***Round Heads and Pointed Heads*** and ***The Congress of Whitewashers***. I'd love to do more. They both have their own difficulties. In the ***Congress*** I spent hours consulting with experts and deciding what to do about all the Chinese names and references. But for the rest, the language in that play is prose, and so there's quite a bit of room for manoeuvre. My dialogue hasn't been tested in the theatre so I'm not sure how well it has worked. ***Round Heads and Pointed Heads***, by contrast, is substantially in verse and with lots of songs. There are irregular rhyming couplets, close rhymed ditties, and lots and lots of blank verse. I tried to use the same verse forms throughout as Brecht. And for the songs, I tried to make them fit the music, paying attention to things like extended syllables, high notes etc., as well as to rhythm and rhyme. (In the published version some of the songs are in John Willett's versions, but I have versions of my own for the whole thing.)

A scathing sideswipe by one of the student audience at the CalPoly production drew my attention forcibly to perhaps the most difficult task of all: translating bad stuff! In the play there is a very silly song sung by the proto-SA supporters of the Fascist dictator Iberin, the "Whitewash Song." It's meant to be embarrassing doggerel. In the German that will be read as Brecht intended, as a reflection of the cultural and linguistic impoverishment of the Fascist supporters, but in English there is a terrible, probably unavoidable risk that it will be read as stupid translation.

CIBS: *Give us an idea of the business of translation: i.e. what copyright permissions are required; what conflicts arise?*

Tom Kuhn: Well, first of all, anything we want to publish has to be approved by the Brecht heirs, normally by way of the German publisher, Suhrkamp. Anyone who tries to publish Brecht without this authority and without having paid for the privilege is likely to be pursued through the courts. The theatre end of things is, however, not really my business. The heirs and their agents have considerable authority. The IBS website and the imprint pages of the relevant volumes give information about who you have to approach. The degree of interest depends on the degree of prominence which the production might have: they are likely to pay much more attention to a production on Broadway than to a student production in a quiet college town. In general, the heirs are unhappy with the idea of 'adaptation', and even cuts may have to be made carefully and quietly. In Berlin Barbara Brecht is said even to have intervened in casting decisions.

CIBS: *What copyright permissions and general permissions do you hold as an English-language translator of Brecht when a theater wants to use your translation? Do you received licensing fees; Do you have authority to reject edits, deletions, additions?*

TOM KUHN: I hold copyright only on the editorial material which I have authored. The publisher has copyright only for the design and lay-out. I can "assert my moral right" to a translation, but the copyright for that is passed to Stefan Brecht. Formally, no one has to ask or tell me anything. In practice, I hope that most theatres, if they were interested in using my translations, would contact me (after all, I'm not hard to find). I wouldn't dream of interfering in their creative processes, but I'd be fascinated to know what they think and how things go, and I'd be glad to help if I could. In the case of the CalPoly production of ***Round Heads and Pointed Heads***, I received a completely unexpected cut of the royalty from the Brechts' New York agent ($141.75). That was very nice, and I hope it may happen again, but I have no contract with them and no formal rights.

CIBS: *Let's turn to your translation of* ***The Round Heads and Pointed Heads*** *(Vol. 4 in the A.C. Black Edition which was produced in March 2007 at the the California Polytechnic Institute in San Obispo, CA. Did you consult any other translations of the text before you started; e.g. The N. Goold-Verschoyle text from 1937? If so, what were your opinions of these other translations? What did they lack?*

TOM KUHN: I did indeed read the Goold-Verschoyle and I looked at a couple of other old translations which I discovered in manuscript. My purpose was to see if there was a usable text which might obviate the need for a new translation. I'm afraid I thought they were all, by turns, completely unreadable and hopelessly inaccurate.

CIBS: *How much did you work with Shakespeare's* ***Measure for Measure****, the original rationale for the play?*

TOM KUHN: I read a lot of Shakespeare, not just ***Measure for Measure***, in order to get myself into the groove of writing blank verse. But Brecht's play has wandered so far from the original intention of an adaptation of the Shakespeare, that I didn't use it much after that – until I came to do the Notes. Then I sought to give a sense of that early draft adaptation by translating a page of Brecht's very first version (from the Archive in Berlin) and slaughtering Shakespeare (as he had done). That was quite fun!

CIBS: *As the editorial apparatus notes,* ***Roundheads*** *occupies a similar space in the Brecht canon as that of* ***Galileo****: namely, a piece that underwent several variations, and which served as a critical Auseinandersetzung for Brecht at a transitional moment in his career. As a result,* ***Galileo*** *and* ***Roundheads*** *both have enormous primary and secondary materials associated with the texts. How did you confront and engage this issue?*

TOM KUHN: Yes, this work holds a rather special place in Brecht's output, especially as it was the only one of his plays which experienced any sort of large-scale professional production (in Copenhagen) between 1933 and 1938. Given how his ideas of acting and the theatre were developing over this period, it comes to

play an important role in his theoretical deliberations, as his only real example. I was aware that I could have let the Notes section swell out of all proportion to the importance of the play in other terms (and in relation to the other plays in the series). I hope we grouped all the most important texts in the Notes to volume 4; others are cross-referenced to ***Brecht on Theatre***.

CIBS: *The California Polytechnic Institute in San Obispo, CA produced your translation of* ***Round Heads and Pointed Heads*** *this past March (1-3; 8-10 March 2007) and you were able to attend at least one production and participate in a seminar discussion on the production. So, start us off here: How did this production come about? How did Cal Poly decide to do this piece and use your translation?*

Tom Kuhn: I honestly never figured quite how the director, Josh Machamer, landed on this particular play. He is a Brecht fan, and was simply casting around for new material. When he discovered my translation he clearly liked it enough! Josh has some experience in political theatre and was clearly moved by the parable of racial divisions. Interestingly, he had already done a show on the subject of 'racial cleansing' in Bosnia; and I did my first draft of the translation while the first Yugoslav war was raging. I remember, the third scene (where the peasants discover their racial differences and drift apart, with the glow of burning cottages in the background) made a shiver run down my spine. It still does.

CIBS: *Were there any edits, deletions, or additions made to the translation for the production?*

Tom Kuhn: Oh yes! It's a messy and long play, with a huge cast, so there were plenty of streamlining cuts. But they were generally content with my text, I'm pleased to say, there weren't many 'corrections' or re-writes.

CIBS: *Were you solicited for any dramaturgical background during the rehearsal phase of the production; i.e. were you asked to provide insight into words, expressions, modes of performance, Brechtian Gestus, etc...*

Tom Kuhn: No, I came to the production too late for that. But Josh is now talking (possibly dreaming?) of doing ***Turandot or the Congress of Whitewashers***, and if he does we have indeed planned a much closer collaboration. I should welcome the opportunity to work with the students, and I should be very open to re-working the text. I find those sorts of processes fascinating, and I hope I wouldn't be "proprietorial" about "my" text.

CIBS: *Describe the production to us. What did you think about the stage design, directorial strategy, performances?*

Tom Kuhn: Well, this is quite a small-scale drama department, so resources are limited. The set was a flexible scaffold frame with stairs and levels. That gave the production some vertical space which was well used, especially in the street

scenes and for Iberin's major interventions. A lot of the rest of the props were very simple or improvised, sometimes with a slightly cartoonish quality to them, which came off very well. For example, the peasants' guns were outlandishly large wooden cut-outs (actually rather like the early settlers' blunderbusses in the Mission museum in town!). That caricatural aspect was also a feature, by the way, of the first production, in 1936 in Copenhagen. For the rest, the "look" of the production was quite conservative, especially in European terms, with plenty of early C20 (slightly 'cabaret') references in the costumes etc. I think the team was aware of the need to win over a potentially Brecht-sceptical audience. After all, this was a daring choice for a production in San Luis Obispo. But it did make pretty full use of Brechtian ideas of theatre and acting. The production was also designed very clearly to maintain a narrative flow (something easily lost in this play, with all its sub-plots) and did not in the least shy away from Brecht's political messages. That was great. And some of the performances, notably Kerry DiMaggio as Madame Cornamontis, were excellent. The greatest loss for me was the very limited use that was made of Eisler's music (and several songs were cut). I can see that, at the outset, Josh may have been nervous about depending too much on musicians and singers, but in fact the production featured a couple of outstanding performers, and the musical numbers that survived were very good. All in all, it was an extremely entertaining and thought-provoking event, just as it should be.

CIBS: *What was the audience reaction to the performance?*

Tom Kuhn: That, I suppose, is the real test. The responses that I encountered, in the theatre, in discussion with students afterwards and in reviews, were exactly as one might hope them to be. The whole team should be congratulated on that. People may have been a little wary of Brecht and of political Germans in general, but they were curious and quite excited to find that they could be entertained and have their political ideas shaken up a bit at the same time. There was lots of laughter during the production (it is a very funny play) but afterwards I found people talking about racial conflict in Iraq and elsewhere, about how governments betray their people (yes, including the Bush government), about the role of the media in politics, about the relationship between economics and morality, and so on. Clearly it had been a thought-provoking experience. I was much heartened by that.

CIBS: *How did it feel to have your translated Brechtian prose produced on-stage?*

Tom Kuhn: This was my first experience of that, and my initial reaction was embarrassment! I had not needed to think of myself as a 'writer' before, and it is indeed a very odd experience to hear your own words coming back at you from the stage. There are definitely some passages which I think I should have tackled differently, but all in all – after I got used to it – it was rather encouraging. I think it has given me confidence to translate more, and to be, when the need arises, a little more daring. It is exciting to be able to contribute to making these texts work again in a new and different world.

Long after reunification, construction and de-construction continues in Berlin. In Spring 2005, the memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe provoked debates about how we remember the past, and Franz Wittenbrink's musical production *Die Farbe Rot. Ein Liederabend über Bertolt Brecht* invited us as theatergoers to reconsider the place Brecht occupies in our memory.[1] A year later, a bilingual sign on the *Palast der Republik* reassured onlookers that the building would be dismantled, not destroyed: "Der Rückbau: Demontage statt Abriss. (Removal: Dismantling, not Demolishing"). Although Wittenbrink offered an admiring *Rückbau* or de-construction of Brecht images, his show could not save itself from demolition after the first year's contract expired, and its final performance took place on May 23, 2006. The production's demise raises questions about reconciling censorship and image with his politics, sexuality, and women who inspired and drew inspiration from him. Fifty years after his death, how are we to remember Brecht? Alternatively, we might ask of the color scheme of *Die Farbe Rot*, what color is memory?

"... WO IST DA NUN DIE WAHRHEIT": SHADES OF GRAY IN FRANZ WITTENBRINK'S DIE FARBE ROT. EIN LIEDERABEND ÜBER BERTOLT BRECHT

MARGARET SETJE-EILERS, VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Wittenbrink's title promises to foreground the color red, from the sphere of sexual politics - passion, love, sacrifice, victimization, blood, and death, to the public sphere - Brecht's socialist commitment, his thoughts on Stalinist Russia, and death. In "Orges Wunschliste" (1956), one of his last poems, red also appears among the favorites: "Von den Farben, die rote."[2] This essay will argue nonetheless that *Die Farbe Rot* commemorates Brecht in neither red, nor black and white, but in tones of gray that recognize his achievements while humanizing him, acknowledging interpersonal and political ambivalence, and refusing to find a single "true" figure.

Want to find out more about *Die Farbe Rot*? Go to www.ecibs.org for interviews with Franz Wittenbrink and Alexander Doering

Wittenbrink's show takes every opportunity to multiply images through music, stage figures, and in the program, a folder that includes seventeen separate photo portraits of various sizes and shapes in black, white, and gray. The simple act of untying two red ribbons to open the red-black program folder initiates a voyeuristic journey into a private and political life that begins with Brecht's self-images at age twenty-one and his "first" sexual encounter as narrated by Paula Banholzer, and proceeds chronologically, finally recreating his fascination with his image, politics, death, epitaphs, and how future generations would remember him.

Wittenbrink, associated with the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg since 1993/94, has long integrated musical and political agendas, having interrupted a career in music that began at the Musikinternat der Regensburger Domspatzen to study sociology and co-found the Kommunistischer Bund Westdeutschland in the politically informed 1960s. In productions that explore the political implications of themes ranging from *Heimat* to Mozart, he simultaneously seeks out new musical forms that scorn definition.[3] His multiperspectival montage in *Die*

Farbe Rot reinterprets Brecht musically in more than seventy texts by Brecht and his colleagues, accompanied by scores by Paul Dessau, Hanns Eisler, and Kurt Weill, songs from works such as *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Maghonny*, tunes by Janis Joplin, Johnny Cash, *Queen*, *Silly*, *Wir sind Helden*, a Mozart aria, some of Wittenbrink's own compositions, and a recipe for *Kaiserschmarren* from Helene Weigel's Viennese cuisine.[4] With this assemblage of music - classical, pop, rock, country, jazz, chansons, hip-hop, and rap - Wittenbrink transgresses the traditional genre of *Liederabend* and echoes Brecht's own daring mix of styles. Hermann Beil, dramaturg at the Berliner Ensemble, comments on the effect: "Also das Genie von Brecht leuchtet durch diesen Abend ja ganz groß."[5]

Wittenbrink's musical acknowledgement of Brecht's early commitment to innovations, not renovation („Für Neuerungen - gegen Erneuerung!"), translates visually into a metaphorically rich stage design.[6] The poem "Vom armen B.B." inspired the two large background projections, a dark forest and a cityscape:

> *Ich, Bertolt Brecht, bin aus den schwarzen Wäldern. / Meine Mutter trug mich in die Städte hinein / Als ich in ihrem Leibe lag. Und die Kälte der Wälder / Wird in mir bis zu meinem Absterben sein.*[7]

According to set and costume designer Maria-Elena Amos, the city skyline suggests the high-rises of US exile during the Alabama-Song; after Brecht's return from exile, the same buildings recreate Berlin.[8] The color of the sky varies, reminiscent of the hues in "Der Choral vom großen Baal," letting no specific color predominate.[9] On the stage, a herringbone-patterned carpet in many shades of gray descends on three steep terraces, and with changes in lighting, the basic gray modulates through the spectrum from red to violet. In a similar mighty sweep, the production brings images of Brecht "down" closer to the audience. Wittenbrink, who arranged the music and directed the show, also accompanies the singers at a piano perched precariously on the highest slope.[10] The sharply slanted carpet-

ing exudes danger and risk, but its pattern, Amos explains, recreates the parquet floors of bourgeois residences, anchors of stability and coherence for Brecht.[11] Carmen-Maja Antoni represents this consistency as Helene Weigel, who responds to complaints of abandonment, exploitation, and pain from other women close to Brecht by insisting that each has also benefited from the relationship, yet with Brechtian gest, she tinges her seemingly self-assured song slightly gray: "Ich hab' keine Angst."[12]

Gray, the color that says neither yes nor no, the base color of the set design slopes, also figures prominently in Brecht's work. Gray is the color of Herr Keuner's favorite animal, the elephant, the animal that Galy Gay so desired that it cost him his identity in *Mann ist Mann*, and the animal represented in figurines that Brecht chose to give Margarete Steffin.[13] The color gray covered the fifteen *Versuche* Hefte, paperback books meant to be used and be internalized, and whose transitory bindings were supposed to change with time, not last, a format that Brecht insisted on preserving after the exile years.[14] Reportedly, gray was also his preferred color for set designs: "Jede Farbe ist mir recht, Hauptsache, sie ist grau."[15]

The shades of gray that hover in the physical stage design between pleasure and pain, and security and danger, emerge figuratively in Brecht's relationships with several women, who as lovers, editors, critics, and collaborators cross and re-cross permeable borders between his private and public life. Their character roles are indistinct, rather than schematic. Joining Therese Affolter, Carmen-Maja Antoni, and Gitte Reppin from the Berliner Ensemble, guest performers Sabrina Ascacibar and Uta Köbernick appear as Ruth Berlau, Helene Weigel, Elisabeth Hauptmann, Paula Banholzer, Margarete Steffin, and Marianne Zoff. Except for the Weigel figure, Wittenbrink avoids one-to-one identification in the list of characters:

> *der Vorrang hat das Theaterstück vor dieser biographischen Genauigkeit und deswegen stehen sie als Figuren auch nicht darin [im Programmheft]. Nur die Texte. Die sind von den Autorinnen gekennzeichnet.*[16]

On stage, the figure of Brecht adds to the ambiguity by being represented as two personae - Alexander Doering (Berliner Ensemble) and Burghart Klaußner (guest), who represent alter egos, not simply the younger and older Brecht:

> *Mal taucht ein Charmanter auf, mal ein Hochideologe, also diese gespaltene Existenz. ... verschiedene Seiten des Bewußtseins.*[17]

In dialogue and song, the women sketch out their contributions and their dependence in relationships that resist stereotyping or reduction to normative moral terms. Much of the tension in the women's relationships with Brecht and each other emerges from the conflict between expectations that arise from his self-proclaimed status of genius, a self-constructed monument, and his personhood. As Doering explains, "Aber wenn ein Genie zum Genie erklärt wird, dann erwartet man natürlich, dass er besser als alle anderen ist."[18] The five women rethink the monument to Brecht, thereby exposing their own fragility and commitment,

as well as his political-personal vulnerabilities and strengths, themes discussed at least since John Fuegi's *Brecht & Co.* and more recently in Hiltrud Häntzschel's *Brechts Frauen*.[19] Yet Antoni warns against concluding that Brecht "stole" from his women colleagues; she acknowledges the strong ideological roots of working in a collective.[20]

While results of Brecht's collaboration at times may have been a combination of appropriation and group effort, the production's emphasis on relationships reminds us that interpersonal communication has been central to Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action since the 1980s. He argues that the interaction between public and private spheres shapes the integration of society, a claim that illuminates the significance of the relationships between Brecht and his colleagues:

> *Communicative action relies on a cooperative process of interpretation in which participants relate simultaneously to something in the objective, the social, and the subjective worlds, even when they thematically stress only one of the three components in their utterances.*[21]

We find all three "worlds" in *Die Farbe Rot*: objective, social, and subjective. Communicative action in public and private spheres, Habermas says, draws from these three interconnected but separate realms within what he calls the lifeworld, the network of presuppositions that underlies communication.[22] The interaction of the Brecht figures with the women shapes identities as well as a political-literary agenda, particularly for the public sphere of the theater. The production suggests that private and public realms are superimposed and permeable, and that writing projects exist simultaneously in both spheres. Gradually, texts and songs scratch at the palimpsest of images in a gesture of *Rückbau* that leaves traces of each layer.

If we recognize the interconnection between the erotic and political, and if we recall Habermas' argument that speakers and listeners use language to make claims, dispute, reach consensus, and take action, we cannot avoid seeing that dialogue in Wittenbrink's show often encounters substantial obstacles presented by ego, authorship, and ownership, and that communication frequently fails.[23] At one point, Brecht's relationships with Banholzer, Steffin, Berlau, Hauptmann, Zoff, and Weigel turn into a dance that leaves the two Brecht figures alone on stage as partners in a statement of self-love that exposes the power play of relationships and predicates the loneliness of "Liebeslied aus einer schlechten Zeit" (1954): "Wir waren miteinander nicht befreundet / Doch haben wir einander beigewohnt. / Als wir einander in den Armen lagen / Warn wir einander fremder als der Mond."[24]

Without actually limiting itself to the private or public sphere, the show seems to highlight Brecht's erotic poetry. Critics unwillingly acknowledged that the provocatively sexual texts, located between eroticism and pornography, are Brecht's own.[25] Many reviews took offense and focused on the graphic sexuality of the songs, for example, the Doering-Brecht's explicit terms in "Komm Mädchen, lass dich stopfen / Das ist für dich gesund," or the duet between Klaußner-Brecht and his alter ego Doering: "Die Anna wäscht sich dort unten zum Beispiel im-

mer mit einer Zahnbürste."[26] Quoting lines sung by the women in chorus, "Am besten fickt man erst und badet dann," Ulrich Seidler (*Berliner Zeitung*) teases the reader, „Nicht aufhören? Na gut, noch ein bisschen..."[27] Brecht's own private life, he says, had to be supplemented by material from the lives of women around him: "Weil dem Abend das Privatleben von Bertolt Brecht zu wenig wäre, interessiert er sich auch für das von Brechts Frauen."[28] According to Irene Bazinger (*FAZ*), the show's ambitions do not rise above sexuality: „[Es] will auch nichts außer mit Zoten und Anekdoten ein bißchen Schenkelklopfen, Quote und Tantiemen."[29] Reinhard Wengierek (*Die Welt*) describes the show as a Brechtian „Hühnerstall."[30]

While the erotic songs led to assumptions that the evening focuses solely on personal-sexual relationships, *Die Farbe Rot* pursues a different agenda in a political subtext that not only reassesses Brecht's image as committed Communist, but also exposes the problematic concept of cultural shrines. Wittenbrink explains that his show questions attempts to portray Brecht as an ideologically transparent writer:

> *[der Mensch, der] im Grunde im Nachhinein zum Staatsdichter erhoben worden ist. ... das Bild eines großartigen kommunistischen Dichters, der einen zweifelsfreien wunderbaren Lebensweg hatte ... Alles dies entspricht überhaupt nicht der Wahrheit, sondern ist ein Versuch ein Denkmal aufzubauen.*[31]

Explaining his Brecht figure in similar terms, Doering remarks that the show positions its critique of image construction "gegen das falsche Idealisieren und das falsche Erinnern" that started in the former GDR: "das wurde von oben alles eingezwungen, wie man zu gedenken hatte."[32] Therefore, in addition to exposing Brecht's own desire to forge a self-image, the production raises a two-pronged question, not only about creating cultural monuments, but also about stipulating modes of remembrance, „de[n] falsche[n] Umgang mit Denkmälern."[33] The decision to perform at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, a venue that has become a shrine to Brecht, was a choreographed political gesture, although Wittenbrink only admits, "ein Abend über Brecht im eigenen Theater hat natürlich einen gewissen Witz."[34]

Despite the significance of playing in the "Brecht" theater and the conceptual implications of the show, Wittenbrink's agenda might have garnered a higher level of critical attention, had the directly political texts been less compressed. The subtitle "Liebe - Utopie - Blut" had promised to topple monuments to Brecht; when it was omitted from the production title, critics passed over the political model encoded in the sexual politics of relationships. Hans-Dieter Schütt (*Neues Deutschland*) writes:

> *Aus dem, was noch vor kurzem als Programm über „Liebe - Utopie - Blut" angekündigt wurde, bleib nur ein anschmeißerischer, zwanghaft geiler Früh-Brecht-Verschnitt über einen Gierigen zwischen landläufig bekannten Frauen.*[35]

Christoph Kaiser (*Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*) likened the show's red not

to the saturated red of politics, but to the pale red of genitals: „Gemeint ist damit ... weniger das satte Rot des politischen Brecht, sondern vielmehr das Blassrot der Geschlechtsorgane des poetischen Theaterepikers bzw. seiner vielen Frauen."[36] Ulrich Seidler (*Berliner Zeitung)* claims the short block of political texts is sandwiched between longer sections that deal with sexuality, without any thematic connection: "Dem anderen Rot wird ein kleiner Block gewidmet ... Und so plumpst der Abend schnell zurück auf die Fleischebene."[37] According to Brecht-figure Doering, however, each of the two reds - political and sexual - contains the other:

> *Es zeigt ein gesellschaftliches Bild ... den Umgang mit allgemein menschlichen Dingen. Und der Kommunismus hat sich auf die Fahnen geschrieben, einen neuen Menschen zu finden, ein neues Menschenbild zu entwickeln ... Dann möchte man natürlich auch sehen, was hat denn der Kommunist Brecht selber vorgelebt. Und das zeigt der Abend. Deswegen ist auch sein Umgang mit den Frauen politisch.*[38]

For those members of the audience, however, who do not identify the political in the personal, the collision of two political texts about three-fourths of the way into the show seems unmotivated. The Doering-Brecht presents a text by Lenin that grounds the success of socialism in necessary acts of terror against what he calls „the rich, the bourgeois intellectuals, the rogues and rowdies" in the population:[39]

> *Die Gewähr für die Erreichung des gemeinsamen einheitlichen Ziels des Sozialismus bietet nur die ständige Säuberung der Partei in den eigenen Reihen, die Säuberung der russischen Erde von allem Ungeziefer, von den Reichen, den bürgerlichen Intellektuellen, den Gaunern, den Rowdys undsoweiter undsofort.*[40]

In response, the women begin to recite a few lines from Brecht's "Einheitsfrontlied": "Und weil der Mensch ein Mensch ist / Hat er Stiefel im Gesicht nicht gern. / Er will unter sich keinen Sklaven sehn / Und über sich keinen Herrn."[41] Reflecting on Lenin's text, they break off, and two women slowly lower their Communist flags in dismay, suggesting what Wittenbrink calls Brecht's „zwiegespaltene[s] Verhältnis zur Utopie des Kommunismus."[42] Wittenbrink locates the attraction of the Communist utopia in the decisive rupture in social structures at the onset of the First World War:

> *Und die Theorie, die sich durchgesetzt hat bei den Intellektuellen, und fast durchgehend, war die kommunistische Ideologie, weil sie gesagt hat, wir wollen eine herrschaftsfreie Gesellschaft. Und es klang erstmal ganz gut. Dann kam dieses erste "ja aber" ... Die Realität hat natürlich gezeigt, dass schon im Kern dieser kommunistischen Utopie der grösste Irrtum liegt, indem man die Menschen nicht so sein lässt, wie sie sind, zwiegespalten, sowohl gut als auch schlecht.*[43]

Perhaps the show needed more such instants of disillusionment in light of the

Communist reality to convey its ideology critique, and to reinforce the connection to some of the lines Brecht wrote shortly before his death, for example, „Die Anbetung Stalins (schmerzlich) übergehen in einen Verzicht auf das Beten."[44]

Despite the shortcomings of an explicitly political section that comes and goes quickly, Wittenbrink emphasizes that his production maps the conflict and doubt suggested in Brecht's last texts: "Brecht hat auch immer wieder seine Zweifel gehabt. ... in den letzten Texten, die er noch 1956 geschrieben hat, hat er diesen Spagat gemacht."[45] Wittenbrink refers to Brecht's thoughts on political and personal responsibility while he was writing the *Buckower Elegien* a few years earlier:

> *Der Witz seiner eigenen Autobiographie ist, dass er später zumindest nach außen hin, der höchste Moralist wurde. ... Also dieser Satz, "Himmel / Und Wasser / Beschuldigten mich, die Opfer / Gekannt zu haben" ist natürlich sehr konkret gemeint.*[46]

Implicit political questions also come up later, for example in „Der Radwechsel."[47]

The production continues to advance its critique of political and interpersonal utopias in monuments to Brecht until the final scene, when the women construct a memorial to him and literally place him on a pedestal riddled with irony. The five women performers dress the Klaußner-Brecht in a coat and hat, and put a cigar in his mouth. The moment he sits down on a large block, it rises with him, creating the familiar image of Fritz Cremer's statue of Brecht, seated on a bench in the center of a mock revolving stage in the park across from the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm.[48] *Die Farbe Rot* not only dismantles images and self-images of Brecht, but also reassembles them into a montage of personae with mixed feelings of guilt, desire, doubt, and hope for atonement. Köbernick sings Wittenbrink's sledgehammer version of "Denkmal," the anti-monument tune from "Wir sind Helden": "Hol den Vorschlaghammer / Sie haben dir ein Denkmal gebaut / und jeder Vollidiot weiß / dass das die Wahrheit versaut." Here, the show asks if memory can avoid creating monuments that become their own truth claim. How can memory remain gray?

Sitting on a pedestal now reconfigured to mock monuments, the Brecht figure contemplates his death and various versions of his epitaphs, preoccupied with image and how he will be remembered. He asks that only his name appear on the stone, then amends his request to no name at all: "Schreibt nichts auf den Stein / Außer den Namen. / Ich vergaß: den Namen / Könnt ihr weglassen."[49] For the figure of Brecht, a stone without a name is not necessarily a gesture of modesty. In a fast-paced encore composed to Robert Gernhardt's poem about Brecht and women, the show defers a single answer to where we might look for „truth" about Brecht:

> *Dann wieder hört man - / wo ist da nun Wahrheit? / Ich meine, das muß sich / doch feststellen lassen! Man hat doch ein Recht / darauf zu erfahren, / womit und wodurch / und weshalb ihm die Frauen / derart. Man soll doch / von den Klassikern lernen!*[50]

The show leaves behind "truths" about Brecht, gray zones that expose and challenge our contradictory desires to understand conceptually in terms of image, monument, and ideology, and to acknowledge space for reinterpretation. A name on the gravestone, or no name at all? As Doering puts it, Brecht's revised epitaphs invite conjecture and hypothesis: "Das macht ihn als Menschen eben interessant und es ist nicht nur eine Wahrheit. Es gibt eben verschiedene Wahrheiten.[51] Similarly, Wittenbrink criticizes acts of categorizing to remember German history:

> *Das ist das Dilemma der deutschen Geschichte ... diese Unfähigkeit zu sagen, im Grunde sind alle Sachen ambivalent und es fliesst immer der Gesichtspunkt des Beobachters selber mit herein. ... [D]ie Absicht dieses Abends ist natürlich auch ein Denken zu entzünden.*[52]

Within the framework of ambivalent public and private spheres, political and personal relationships did not only figure in Wittenbrink's critique of monuments on stage, but also in the political relationships that overshadowed the entire production and ultimately brought it to an end. While the Brecht heirs had already approved many titles, six more were submitted for authorization shortly before the premiere. By opening night, the theater had not received a negative response and these six texts were included in the first performances. The Brecht heirs quickly insisted that these texts be omitted. Since three of the substitutions included texts previously authorized but not used, in these cases Brecht replaced Brecht; the changes did not alter the political critique. Lines from "Der Kommunismus ist das Mittlere," "Lob der Partei," and "Adresse des sterbenden Dichters an die Jugend" replaced excerpts from "Lob des Kommunismus," "Gedanken über die rote Fahne" ("Bericht vom 1. Mai"), and "Wir waren auch groß."[53] Instead of "O du ahnst nicht, was ich leide," "Kin-Jeh und seine Schwester 4," and "Plattkopf" ("Setzen Sie sich"), the show inserted "Oh ich leide solche Qualen" (anonymous/ Volkslied), "Wenn ein Stern" (old Chinese saying), and part of the "Rundfunkreportage (Kegelklub)" (Karl Valentin).[54]

In addition to these legal issues, the content of the musical evening was found to be problematic, and the first year's contract for the production expired on May 23, 2006. Since obtaining copyright permissions for the production meant requesting the rights to present a relaxed image of Brecht precisely from those interested in upholding the claim of original authorship and stable Communist politics, the situation was delicate. Brecht identified this kind of scenario early on, pointing to the problematic nature of judging as acceptable those works of art that support the system of aesthetic production: „Und dies ergibt allgemein den Usus, jedes Kunstwerk auf seine Eignung für den Apparat, niemals aber den Apparat auf seine Eignung für das Kunstwerk hin zu überprüfen."[55] The decision to discontinue the production reminds us of what happens, as Habermas tells us, when institutions exert an increasingly instrumentalizing influence and issue system imperatives that upset the balance between the web of assumptions underlying communication (i.e., the lifeworld) and the guiding systemic institutions.[56] If *Die Farbe Rot* and its own production history inspire us to gaze into the smudged borders between history, memory, and aesthetic representation, we might wonder then, not only what color is memory, but perhaps more importantly, whose memory?

Reinterpretation and reassessment are at the core of literary and cultural scholarship. In the words of Brecht admirer and friend Walter Benjamin, "Er [der historische Materialist] betrachtet es als seine Aufgabe, die Geschichte gegen den Strich zu bürsten."[57] Eminently willing to brush history against the grain, Wittenbrink not only frees memory and history from receding into dichotomies, but also debunks the notion of absolute truth in black and white and red, precisely by means of those qualities Brecht describes in „Fünf Schwierigkeiten beim Schreiben der Wahrheit" (1934): courage, cleverness, skill, judgment, and cunning.[58] While Brecht writes to expose "the truth" behind fascism, Wittenbrink brings out the implicit self-analysis in many of Brecht's texts. He explains that he turns texts in which Brecht criticizes others into self-critical mirrors: "Das heisst, ich erinnere ihn im Grunde an sich selbst."[59] In Brecht's sense, Wittenbrink claims that his show entertains and reflects in the political sphere of a theater that encourages revision and rethinking: "Einerseits unterhalten ... das Theater nicht als Rauschgift pur, sondern im Gegenteil durch interessante Konstellationen und durch Brüche Denken auslösen."[60]

Perhaps more for its entertainment value than its dual agenda, the show attracted audiences, although Wittenbrink admits his political condemnation of *Ostaligie* has been unpopular since reunification. Complaints came from the right and the left, flavored with what he calls "amnesia." In his opinion, people have been willing to confront Fascism, but need to direct attention to Fascist elements that persisted under Communism. His critique has been misinterpreted as right wing, for example by Wengierek (*Berliner Morgenpost*, *Die Welt*), who calls him "ein strammer Antikommunist" and the Brecht evening a "tiefschwarz gerahmt[e] Brecht-Ehrung."[61] Seidler (*Berliner Zeitung*) dismisses Wittenbrink's criticism: „Kommunismus ist gleich Faschismus und also historisch überwunden."[62] Brecht, recipient of the Stalin prize (May 1955), was shaken by Khrushchev's condemnation of Stalinist policy (February 1956) and voiced his own critiques of Stalin, „[d]er verdiente Mörder des Volkes," shortly before his death.[63] Wittenbrink points out gray zones in Brecht's last writings:

> *Brecht hatte am Ende die Befürchtung, dass sein ganzes Engagement für die kommunistische Gesellschaftsordnung möglicherweise ein Fehler war und sich in nichts auflösen wird ... Und das war in Deutschland der grosse Fauxpas, in den Augen der westdeutschen Linken, das zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Denn es gibt einen Unwillen wirklich über Geschichte nachzudenken, und zwar über die eigene Geschichte. Es wird glücklicherweise über den Faschismus viel nachgedacht, aber wenig über diese zweite Katastrophe, nämlich die grosse Blutspur, die dieser Kommunismus auf der Welt hinterlassen hat. ... Ich sehe das als meinen Auftrag als Theatermacher in Deutschland, diese Amnesie gegenüber der Geschichte, diese Verlogenheit aufzubrechen, und dass man ab und zu dafür beschimpft wird, das ist normal. Damit lebe ich.*[64]

Perhaps Wittenbrink's willingness to live with criticism inspired the *Rückbau*, the reverse building process that questions, examines, and disassembles images of Brecht and ideological-cultural memorials in *Die Farbe Rot*. As it turns out, the

musical painting in neither red nor black and white, but instead in large quantities of gray, was too daring for the present.

ENDNOTES

1. FRANZ WITTENBRINK, "DIE FARBE ROT. EIN LIEDERABEND ÜBER BERTOLT BRECHT," (MAY 14, 2005-MAY 23, 2006).
2. BERTOLT BRECHT, "ORGES WUNSCHLISTE," IN *BERTOLT BRECHT WERKE: GROSSE KOMMENTIERTE BERLINER UND FRANKFURTER AUSGABE, BAND 15 (GEDICHTE 5)*, ED. WERNER HECHT, JAN KNOPF, WERNER MITTENZWEI, KLAUS-DETLEF MÜLLER (BERLIN / WEIMAR, FRANKFURT AM MAIN: AUFBAU AND SUHRKAMP, 1988), PP. 297-298, HERE P. 297. CITATIONS INDICATED HEREAFTER BY BFA VOLUME, PAGE NUMBER.
3. WITTENBRINK'S MUSICAL PRODUCTIONS INCLUDE "MOZART WERKE GES.M.B.H." (2004/05), "KEIN SCHÖNER LAND" (2005), "MÜTTER" (2002), "POMPES FUNEBRES" (2000), "MILES & MORE" (2000), "DENN ALLE LUST WILL EWIGKEIT..." (1999), "NACHTSCHICHT" (1998), "MÄNNER" (1997), "ÜBER DIE VERFÜHRUNG VON ENGELN IN HAUSEINGÄNGEN" (1997), "KOMM SÜSSER TOD..." (1996), "SEKRETÄRINNEN" (1995), "MONDSÜCHTIG" (1994), "FREMD BIN ICH EINGEZOGEN, FREMD ZIEH ICH WIEDER AUS" (1993).
4. SONGS INCLUDE "CRY BABY" (JANIS JOPLIN), "WE'LL MEET AGAIN" (JOHNNY CASH), "TOO MUCH LOVE WILL KILL YOU" (QUEEN), "SO 'NE KLEINE FRAU" (SILLY), "DENKMAL" (WIR SIND HELDEN), AND "ICH HAB' KEINE ANGST" (MILVA).
5. HERMANN BEIL, "INTERVIEW," (BERLIN: JULY 2, 2005), PP. 1-19, HERE P. 8.
6. BERTOLT BRECHT, "ANMERKUNGEN ZUR OPER 'AUFSTIEG UND FALL DER STADT MAHAGONNY'," IN *BFA 24*, PP. 74-86, HERE P. 84. BERTOLT BRECHT, „THE MODERN THEATRE IS THE EPIC THEATRE (NOTES TO THE OPERA *AUFSTIEG UND FALL DER STADT MAHAGONNY*)," IN *BRECHT ON THEATRE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AESTHETIC*, ED. JOHN WILLETT (NEW YORK: HILL AND WANG, 1964), PP. 33-42, HERE P. 41.
7. BERTOLT BRECHT, "VOM ARMEN B.B.," IN *BFA 11*, PP. 119-120, HERE P. 119.
8. BERTOLT BRECHT, "ALABAMA SONG," IN *BFA 11*, PP. 104-05.
9. BERTOLT BRECHT, "DER CHORAL VOM GROSSEN BAAL," IN *BFA 13*, PP. 121-23.
10. ALTERNATIVE PIANIST: BURKHARD NIGGEMEIER.
11. MARIA-ELENA AMOS, "INTERVIEW," (BERLIN: MAY 23, 2006), PP. 1-1, HERE P. 1.
12. ORIGINAL RECORDING: 1981 BY MILVA (MUSIC: VANGELIS, LYRICS: THOMAS WOITKEWITSCH).
13. BERTOLT BRECHT, *BFA 28*, P. 505, P. 538, P. 550, P. 763. BERTOLT BRECHT, *BFA 18*, P. 475. BRECHT APPARENTLY ASSOCIATED MARGARETE STEFFIN WITH ELEPHANTS; WHILE WRITING THE POEM "DAS LIEBLINGSTIER DES HERRN KEUNER" (BFA 14, P. 317), HE GAVE HER ELEPHANT FIGURINES, INCLUDING ONE MADE OF IVORY.
14. JOACHIM LUCCHESI, "VERSUCHE," IN *BRECHT HANDBUCH IN FÜNF BÄNDEN. BAND 4: SCHRIFTEN, JOURNALE, BRIEFE*, ED. JAN KNOPF AND JOACHIM LUCCHESI (STUTTGART: J.B. METZLER, 2003), PP. 406-416, HERE P. 408. BERTOLT BRECHT, *BFA 22.2*, P. 1049, BERTOLT BRECHT, *BFA 29*, PP. 470-471, PP. 743-744. BERTOLT BRECHT, *BFA 30*, P. 127, P. 207, P. 222.
15. ANDRÉ MÜLLER AND GERD SEMMER, *GESCHICHTEN VOM HERRN B.: GESAMMELTE BRECHT-ANEKDOTEN* (BERLIN: EULENSPIEGEL VERLAG, 2006), P. 89.
16. FRANZ WITTENBRINK, "INTERVIEW," (BERLIN: JUNE 23, 2005), PP. 1-20, HERE P. 1.
17. IBID., PP. 1-20, HERE P. 11.
18. ALEXANDER DOERING, "INTERVIEW," (BERLIN: JULY 7, 2005), PP. 1-60, HERE P. 40.
19. JOHN FUEGI, *BRECHT & CO.: BIOGRAPHIE* (HAMBURG: EUROPÄISCHE VERLAGSANSTALT, 1997). HILTRUD HÄNTZSCHEL, *BRECHTS FRAUEN* (REINBECK BEI HAMBURG: ROWOHLT TASCHENBUCH VERLAG, 2003).
20. CARMEN-MAJA ANTONI, "INTERVIEW," (BERLIN: JUNE 15, 2006).
21. JÜRGEN HABERMAS, "INTERMEDIATE REFLECTIONS: SYSTEM AND LIFEWORLD," IN *THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION. VOLUME 2: LIFEWORLD AND SYSTEM: A CRITIQUE OF FUNCTIONALIST REASON* (BOSTON: BEACON PRESS, 1987), PP. 113-197, HERE P. 120. HERE, HABERMAS DEFINES THE "OBJECTIVE WORLD" AS "THE TOTALITY OF ENTITIES ABOUT WHICH TRUE STATEMENTS ARE POSSIBLE."
22. HABERMAS, "THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION," PP. 113-197, HERE P. 120, PP. 125-126.
23. IBID., PP. 113-197, HERE P. 126.
24. BERTOLT BRECHT, "LIEBESLIED AUS EINER SCHLECHTEN ZEIT," IN *BFA 15*, P. 286.
25. ULRICH SEIDLER, "DER RAMMELNDE THEATERKOMMUNIST. 'DIE FARBE ROT. EIN ABEND ÜBER BERTOLT BRECHT' VON FRANZ WITTENBRINK IM BERLINER ENSEMBLE," *BERLINER ZEITUNG*, MAY 17, 2005.
26. BERTOLT BRECHT, "KOMM MÄDCHEN, LASS DICH STOPFEN," IN *BFA 13*, P. 228. BERTOLT BRECHT, „ES WIRD VON EINEM VORBILD GESPROCHEN," IN *BFA 13*, P. 277.
27. BERTOLT BRECHT, "SAUNE UND BEISCHLAF," IN *BFA 15*, P. 193.

28. SEIDLER, "THEATERKOMMUNIST."
29. IRENE BAZINGER, "BUNTE STRÜMPFE. FRANZ WITTENBRINKS BERLINER BRECHT-BÊTISE 'DIE FARBE ROT'," *FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINER ZEITUNG*, MAY 17, 2005.
30. REINHARD WENGIEREK, "WITTENBRINK UND BRECHT IM BERLINER ENSEMBLE," *DIE WELT*, MAY 17, 2005.
31. WITTENBRINK, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-20, HERE PP. 1-2.
32. DOERING, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-60, HERE P. 43.
33. IBID., PP. 1-60, HERE P. 44.
34. WITTENBRINK, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-20, HERE P. 20.
35. HANS-DIETER SCHÜTT, "ARMER B.B. IM BE," *NEUES DEUTSCHLAND*, MAY 21/22, 2005.
36. CHRISTOPH KAISER, "HEITERES ÜBERVATERMORDEN. WITTENBRINK-URAUFFÜHRUNG "DIE FARBE ROT" AM BE," *DRESDNER NEUESTE NACHRICHTEN*, MAY 17, 2005.
37. SEIDLER, "THEATERKOMMUNIST."
38. DOERING, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-60, HERE P. 36-37.
39. VLADIMIR LENIN, "HOW TO ORGANIZE COMPETITION? (1917)," IN *V.I. LENIN: COLLECTED WORKS* (MOSCOW: PROGRESS PUBLISHERS, 1972), PP. 404-415, HERE P. 414.
40. LENIN'S WORDS: "GEWÄHR FÜR DIE ERREICHUNG DES GEMEINSAMEN ZIELS: DIE SÄUBERUNG DER RUSSISCHEN ERDE VON ALLEM UNGEZIEFER, VON DEN FLÖHEN - DEN GAUNERN, VON DEN WANZEN - DEN REICHEN USW. USF." W. I. LENIN AND INSTITUT FÜR MARXISMUS-LENINISMUS BEIM ZK DER KPDSU, "WIE SOLL MAN DEN WETTBEWERB ORGANISIEREN?" IN *W.I. LENIN: AUSGEWÄHLTE WERKE IN DREI BÄNDEN* (BERLIN (OST): DIETZ VERLAG BERLIN, 1970), PP. 586-595, HERE P. 594. „VARIETY IS A GUARANTEE OF EFFECTIVENESS HERE, A PLEDGE OF SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING THE SINGLE COMMON AIM—TO CLEAN THE LAND OF RUSSIA OF ALL VERMIN, OF FLEAS—THE ROGUES, OF BUGS—THE RICH, AND SO ON AND SO FORTH." LENIN, "COMPETITION," PP. 404-415, HERE P. 414.
41. BERTOLT BRECHT, "EINHEITSFRONTLIED," IN *BFA 12*, P. 26.
42. WITTENBRINK, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-20, HERE P. 7.
43. IBID., PP. 1-20, HERE P. 7-8.
44. BERTOLT BRECHT, "ÜBER DIE KRITIK AN STALIN," IN *BFA 23*, PP. 417-418, HERE P. 418.
45. WITTENBRINK, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-20, HERE P. 8-9.
46. IBID., PP. 1-20, HERE 3-4. BERTOLT BRECHT, "DANN WIEDER WAR ICH IN BUCKOW," IN *BFA 15*, P. 268.
47. BERTOLT BRECHT, "DER RADWECHSEL," IN *BFA 12*, P. 310.
48. FRITZ CREMER (1906-1993) CREATED THE STATUE IN HONOR OF BRECHT'S NINETIETH BIRTHDAY IN 1988.
49. BERTOLT BRECHT, "DIE VIER VORSCHLÄGE FÜR GRABSCHRIFT, IMMERFORT KORRIGIERT," IN *BFA 14*, P. 40.
50. ROBERT GERNHARDT, "ER NUN WIEDER," IN *GESAMMELTE GEDICHTE 1954-2004* (FRANKFURT: S. FISCHER VERLAG, 2005), P. 252-253, HERE P. 253.
51. DOERING, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-60, HERE P. 34.
52. WITTENBRINK, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-20, HERE P. 6.
53. BERTOLT BRECHT, "DER KOMMUNISMUS IST DAS MITTLERE," IN *BFA 14*, PP. 136-137. BERTOLT BRECHT, „LOB DER PARTEI," IN *BFA 11*, P. 234. BERTOLT BRECHT, „ADRESSE DES STERBENDEN DICHTERS AN DIE JUGEND," IN *BFA 14*, P. 455-456. BERTOLT BRECHT, „LOB DES KOMMUNISMUS," IN *BFA 11*, P. 234. BERTOLT BRECHT, „BERICHT VOM 1. MAI 1905," IN *BFA 3*, P. 283. BERTOLT BRECHT, „WIR WAREN AUCH GROSS," IN *BFA 13*, P. 269.
54. BERTOLT BRECHT, "O DU AHNST NICHT, WAS ICH LEIDE," IN *BFA 13*, P. 109. BERTOLT BRECHT, „KIN-JEH UND SEINE SCHWESTER 4," IN *BFA 18*, P. 167. BERTOLT BRECHT, „SETZEN SIE SICH!" IN *BFA 13*, PP. 369-371. „... DIE WORTE DES SOKRATES ‚FEMINA, FEMIMINA, MONSTRUM VIVAT CONCENBINATUM - O ELEONORIS CAUS VENI VINI VICI.'" (IN *DIE FARBE ROT*: "VENI, VENI, VIZI.") KARL VALENTIN, "RUNDFUNKREPORTAGE (KEGELKLUB)," IN *KARL VALENTIN: SÄMTLICHE WERKE, BAND 7, AUTOBIOGRAPHISCHES UND VERMISCHTES*, ED. STEFAN HENZE, ANDREA HEIZMANN, AND MAX AUER (MUNICH: PIPER, 1996), PP. 198-201, HERE P. 200.
55. BRECHT, "ANMERKUNGEN," BFA 24, PP. 74-86, HERE P. 75. „AND THIS LEADS TO A GENERAL HABIT OF JUDGING WORKS OF ART BY THEIR SUITABILITY FOR THE APPARATUS WITHOUT EVER JUDGING THE APPARATUS BY ITS SUITABILITY FOR THE WORK." BRECHT, „MODERN THEATRE," PP. 33-42, HERE P. 34.
56. HABERMAS, "THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION," PP. 113-197, HERE P. 155.
57. WALTER BENJAMIN, "ÜBER DEN BEGRIFF DER GESCHICHTE," IN *ILLUMINATIONEN. AUSGEWÄHLTE SCHRIFTEN*, ED. SIEGFRIED UNSELD (FRANKFURT AM MAIN: SUHRKAMP, 1977), PP. 251-261, HERE P. 254.
58. BERTOLT BRECHT, "FÜNF SCHWIERIGKEITEN BEIM SCHREIBEN DER WAHRHEIT," IN *BFA 22.1*, PP. 74-89, HERE P. 74. BERTOLT BRECHT, „FIVE DIFFICULTIES IN WRITING THE TRUTH," IN *BRECHT ON ART AND POLITICS*,

ED. TOM KUHN, STEVE GILES, AND LAURA BRADLEY (LONDON: METHUEN, 2003), PP. 141-157, HERE PP. 141-142.
59. WITTENBRINK, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-20, HERE P. 8.
60. IBID., PP. 1-20, HERE P. 6.
61. REINHARD WENGIEREK, "GENIE IM HÜHNERSTALL. KNARZEN UND RAPPEN: FRANZ WITTENBRINKS BRECHT-ABEND "DIE FARBE ROT" IM BE," *BERLINER MORGENPOST*, MAY 15, 2005. WENGIEREK, „WITTENBRINK."
62. SEIDLER, "THEATERKOMMUNIST."
63. BERTOLT BRECHT, "DER ZAR HAT MIT IHNEN GESPROCHEN," IN *BFA 15*, PP. 300-301, HERE P. 300.
64. WITTENBRINK, "INTERVIEW," PP. 1-20, HERE P. 9-10.

INTERVIEW WITH SIMRAN KARIR, DIRECTOR OF MAHAGONNY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, 16-17 MARCH 2007

CIBS: *So, we understand that the German Drama Club of the University of Toronto produced Brecht / Weill's* ***Mahagonny*** *on 16-17 March 2007. It was performed in German and you directed it. Wow, pretty heady stuff! Could you fill in the blanks a bit on your position at the University and how this whole production came about?*

SIMRAN KARIR: This coming year will be my 3rd year in the Ph.D. program. I am working on Indian influences on German literature / culture and U of T is a great place for such a project. Brecht is a parallel passion – I did my MA on Brecht's and Steffin's poetry. I hesitate to combine the two but I'll see. I am discovering that I really enjoy teaching and definitely want to continue doing that in addition to research.

The German Drama Club is a graduate student initiative which was founded in 2006 to promote both the German language and theater for the undergraduate students. Our first production was A Schnitzler's *Reigen* in German. That was a great production – the casting call was open to all levels of German, but for some reason mostly Beginner German students, with maybe two or three more advanced students, came to audition and the cast. The actors did an outstanding job with the text.

The same goes for this year's production. *Mahagonny*'s cast was a mix of levels, but it still is a substantial amount of text in a foreign language (one they might only be speaking for one or two years) to retain and act in, especially for characters like Paul Ackermann or Moses, and I was amazed and extremely proud of them.

Before I go on I want to mention who this "we" is I will keep mentioning throughout: Meaghan Hepburn and Emily Blakelock (stage management & props and Meaghan rehearsed with the actors as well), and Caitlin Aignew (publicity & producer). All did more than their respective jobs.

CIBS: *Why was Brecht chosen, and specifically why* ***Mahagonny****?*

SIMRAN KARIR: Why was ***Mahagonny*** chosen? We were extremely naïve?! No. We had a few suggestions on the table – other Brecht plays as well. I personally was leaning towards Brecht because of my bias but it was a group decision. We chose *Mahagonny* because it allowed us to experiment with a number of factors like the set, the music, props, etc. and we thought this to be an interesting change from last year's production which was staged pretty traditionally – set in the period and all. Further, keeping the students in mind – the text is not very dense and the language is relatively easy.

Also the fact that the music has influenced later remakes, some of which the students might be more aware of than the original, might make the play more accessible to them at first. One of our actors started to learn German because of The Doors' version of "The Alabama Song" (He was bitten by the acting bug last year and found his calling in part because of his role in ***Reigen*** – he switched to the Drama program at U of T).

The play was spoken. We did not have a choir and I cut much of the repetitions / echoing, keeping a few here and there. We did have a few enthusiastic singers in the ensemble, who wanted to sing and thus they were given the responsibility for a few songs. That means they met with Nenad Radakovic, our Musical Director, and came up and rehearsed 2-3 songs which they performed in the play.

CIBS: *Many scholars consider* ***Mahagonny*** *an important gestation moment of epic theater, specifically because the famous theoretical essay, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre" is written in association with* ***Mahagonny****. Do you see* ***Mahagonny*** *as a sort of primer on Brechtian Epic / Dialectical Theater?*

SIMRAN KARIR: Yes. If I were to choose one text to explain epic theatre with, it would be ***Mahagonny*** because the characteristics are so *ausgeprägt* – that is how I learned about epic theatre.

CIBS: *Both the* ***Threepenny Opera*** *and* ***Mahagonny*** *have extensive genealogies in modern pop culture. In terms of* ***Mahagonny****, the "Alabama Song" has a particular cultural currency; e.g. covered by numerous pop musicians – The Doors, Marilyn Manson; the iconic song for that icon – Lotte Lenya, etc...Did this play a role in your interpretation?*

I had no idea about Marilyn Manson because I don't really know his music all that well but it makes sense, especially Lotte Lenya – I have to absolutely look into that. Yes the covers were on my mind, not only the ***Mahagonny*** ones. I really love some of them. I started off with ideas of incorporating them and mixing them with the originals but in the end time was the deciding factor and I just wanted to get something clean and coherent on stage. Music brings in an additional level of difficulty and really is a parallel text here and I realized that I personally just did not have the time to come up with an adequate "text." As I mentioned above, some actors were very enthusiastic about the music and wanted to work on it. I okayed two songs I think. This is definitely one aspect I would pay more attention to if I had to do it again, exactly because of this connection and the great potential behind it, but I would bring in other music as well. Lotte Lenya was channeled by

Begbick in our play.

CIBS: *Describe your approach / method, and subsequent experience, in dealing with undergraduates learning both language and theater.*

SIMRAN KARIR: This was not an extension of a language class, i.e. we did not sit down and dissect the text line by line for vocabulary and grammar – the different language levels and lack of time just didn't allow for that. The students were asked to read an English version so that they would know what the text was about. I gave them an introduction to Brecht, his theatre theories and the time *Mahagonny* was written in. We read through the German text a number of times as a group and then broke it down scene by scene. The students were asked to learn their lines very early on in the process. I met with some students individually for pronunciation and the like. We met weekly at first, then bi-weekly as the performance approached. Students met on their own as well as to rehearse. I can't stress enough how much initiative many of the undergraduate students showed. One of our actors, for example, took it upon himself to take care of the audio, he came up with our logo this year and made the signs (Plakate) which were projected onto the scene without us asking him to do so. Many of them also helped us transport and set up props and costumes before and after each rehearsal and performance – we were performing in a room that doubled as a classroom during the day.

Directing was more of a team effort – I wanted it to be open for all to contribute their ideas on how the scene could be played. I would come in with an idea but if it didn't work out once we tried it and someone had a better suggestion, we would go with that. *Mahagonny* is a difficult play open to much interpretation – but one which in many aspects still holds true today. Part of my job was to point out throughout that the play was not as over the top as it seemed at first, but relevant

to real life.

One of the ideas behind the club is to provide graduates and undergraduates a forum where they can meet and interact in a setting other than a classroom as TA and student. U of T is a huge university and some feedback I have received from undergraduates is that they enjoyed meeting other students like this. Theatre is a great language learning tool / method because it's fun and it builds confidence to get up and speak. Fear of speaking is one of the hurdles many beginners face. Two of the actors were in my beginners' class this past year and I definitely noticed an improvement. The drama club is a great hands-on learning experience for the graduates as well, especially in their role as future teachers. I personally really like to get to know the undergraduates like this. I am also much more conscious to incorporate skits or the like in class in order to get people moving and loosen the mood. Because this is learning experience, I admit that there are things I would do differently next time around.

CIBS: *Could you expand upon how you mediated Brechtian theory to the actors?*

The main message was that Brecht was trying to get his audience to think – break away from the culinary nature of theatre. They got an initial introduction before we started but much of it was hands-on and came as we were going through the play. They were told how important music and the stage were and that they each provided additional commentary as opposed to having them support the text. I reminded them, for example, that this was an opera, then played Lotte Lenya and asked them what they thought about this. Was this what they knew opera music to be? The narrator is another example. I added her - she spoke directly to the audience but then joined the play, thereby breaking the divide between audience and actors. The staging itself – having much of what normally goes on behind the scenes out in the public – was another opportunity to talk about Brechtian theory.

CIBS: *Describe the stage design and how it mediated the choreography.*

Simran Karir: Meaghan and Emily did a wonderful job with the stage and costumes. Stage design was ruled by our limited budget and space. The stage in our small auditorium has no backstage or curtain in front and is open on either side of it. Our set was minimal and multifunctional. Scene changes were done in front of the audience. Props were pretty much on stage throughout the play or else the actors carried in what they needed. The timing and choreography for these were extremely important, again because everything was done out in the open and had to be done quickly. The stage is rather small and not very high, so I wanted the space on either side of the stage to be used, creating two additional stages. In order to not break the flow of the play something would be going on the right hand side, for example, while the left hand side would then be set up for the next scene or actors would be entering on one side while others exited on the other. The centre stage was reserved for the bar and later on the court room. The audience's space was used as well – for example, the man (pared down from the group of people)

from Mahagonny, who runs away in scene 5, is sitting in the audience the whole time and comes running onto the scene from there and then exits out one of side the doors. The actors left the stage, so to say, by leaving the auditorium through doors on either side of the stage.

Lighting helped 'create'/ demarcate space. I had originally wanted a floor lamp on either side, strong enough to provide enough light for the scene, which the actors would then turn on when the scene started and off when it ended. We were not able to find these kind of lamps so we improvised. This idea did work for the narrator though – she sat at a desk on the side and would turn on a desk lamp when it was her turn to speak. Her job was to read the scene descriptions and the like, or take on odd jobs like the referee in the boxing scene or show the lumberjacks the way to Mahagonny.

As for specific scenes…The finale – I cut the last scene completely. Scene 19 – Paul's execution – became our scene 1. I cut the religious references because, to be honest, I did not know what to do with those. The scene reminded me a lot of a number of scenes in which hostages were shown on TV or the internet, pleading for their lives while their captors stood behind them with their arms. Especially the journalist being executed on TV was on my mind when I thought of this scene – I had not actually seen it but heard of it. We filmed a close-up of Paul's face and the rest of the actors were heard from off camera. The scene goes black when the hood is put over his head and the play then begins with the founding of Mahagonny. The play ends with Paul being sentenced to death.

The ensemble and production staff were amazing – there were glitches here and there but it all came together nicely on the day of the performance. We received positive feedback from the audience. Among the scenes that stood out was 14 - Jenny and Paul's 'duet' – it earned whistling and clapping from the audience. I personally really enjoyed the boat scene as well.

Fatzer's Fall: Images of Death in Brecht's Learning Play

Vera Stegmann
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Written between the years 1926 and 1930, *Fatzer* is an early work by Brecht, situated between the expressionism and anarchism of plays like *Baal* or *Trommeln in der Nacht* and the cerebral didacticism of the *Lehrstücke*. Never completed by Brecht, *Fatzer* remained a fragment, and to the degree that the broken, incomplete manuscript tells a story, it is the tale of four men, Fatzer and three friends (Kaumann, Schmitt or Koch/Keuner, and Büsching), who deserted during World War I. They "disappeared" during the battle of Verdun in France, are believed to be dead, and secretly reappear in early 1918 in Mülheim in the Ruhr region of Germany, where they hide in a basement at the home of one of the men, Kaumann, whose wife has awaited her husband's return for a long time. Now she is hosting four men in her small place, so she and Kaumann have no privacy. Since the men are under constant threat to be caught and shot as deserters, survival is difficult.

Still, they decide not to separate since the only hope keeping them alive is the expectation that a people's rebellion will terminate the senseless war and rehabilitate and even welcome deserters. They plan to produce this revolution. But the revolution never happens, and instead conflicts break out within the group: sexual conflicts, as four men share space with one woman, hunger and conflicts over food, and questions of honesty and treason. Fatzer, considered the smartest member of the group, once promised his companions to bring them food from a local butcher, but instead got wrapped up in a fight with some of the workers. His friends watch as he is being beaten up, and in order to save their own lives, they lie to the authorities stating that they do not know Fatzer. Now Fatzer becomes dangerous for them, and his companions decide to kill him, also because he slept with Kaumann's wife – an act that is alternately described as consensual seduction or as an assault bordering on rape. Fatzer has deviated from the group; his asocial or anti-social actions bring out the conflict between the needs of the individual and those of the collective. In various versions of the story either only Fatzer the "egoist" or all four men die at the end.

Already the name Fatzer is rich in multiple layers of meaning (Wilke 140-42). "Fatzer" means "Schwätzer" (babbler, chatterer), "Spötter" (mocker, scoffer, derider), or "Aufschneider" (show-off, boaster) and is related to the 16th century verb "fatzen" which can mean "verspotten" (to ridicule, to deride), "täuschen" (to baffle, to cheat, to deceive), or "plündern" (to pillage, to plunder). In 1950/51 Brecht compared Fatzer to Thersites, a Greek soldier in Homer's *Iliad* endowed with a bitter, caustic sense of humor who was killed by Achilles for mocking his grief over the death of the Amazon queen Penthesilea (Knopf 1: 169). The name "Fatzer" also refers to the robber "Fetzer," an alias for the historical figure Mathias Weber (1778-1803) who haunted the Rhine region between Germany and France and was killed in public by the guillotine. Weber had received his nickname "Fetzer" from his habit of brutally "zerfetzen" (ripping apart, annihilating) his victims. But he also seems to have been a romanticized figure, a "Typus des edlen Räubers mit Herz" (GBA 10.2: 1137), a sort of Robin Hood who steals from the rich to give to the poor. Brecht knew about this character through a popular serial publication *Räuberhauptmann Fetzer* (Knopf 1: 169). The description of Fatzer's downfall in Brecht's text bears resemblances to the historical trials of robber Fetzer – such as the location of Mülheim, or the organizational patterns of robber gangs (Wilke 162-67). The name "Fatzer" evokes the word "Ketzer" (heretic), and in Brecht's text Fatzer is indeed regarded by his companions if not literally as a heretic, then definitely as a traitor. Finally, "Fatzer" may be read as an anagram of the German word "Fratze" (grimace). A grimace is a distorted, satirical face (in German "Fratze" also resounds the word "Farce"); and the "face" is an important symbol in *Fatzer*, i.e. when Brecht speaks of the "Gesicht des Denkenden" (GBA 10.1: 523) or when he entitles his fourth chapter "das Kapitel der lähmenden Gesichte" (GBA 10.1: 527). The metaphor of the face also brings to mind Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy of the Other, in which concepts such as "face-to-face," the "nudity of the face," the "presence of the face" or even the "epiphany of the face" define Levinas's ethics in essential ways. "To be in relation with the other (autrui) face to face is to be unable to kill. It is also the situation of discourse" (Levinas 9). In the course of the play, Fatzer becomes an "Other" in his group, and as a result of his growing alienation from his companions, they see in Fatzer not a "face" but a "Fratze" in the end, and they kill him.

The unfinished *Fatzer* occupies a transitional role in Brecht's oeuvre. Brecht himself emphasized the difficulty of the material: "Dieser *Fatzer* ist ein harter Bissen, ich baue immer noch am Rahmen herum" (GBA 28: 313). But out of *Fatzer* grew Brecht's *Keunergeschichten*, a collection of ironic, provocative, and educational short stories by the "thinker" Keuner, one of the characters in *Fatzer*. And *Fatzer* prepared the way for the *Lehrstücke* such as *Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* or *Die Maßnahme*. It benefits from the productive tension between elements from earlier anarchist, expressionist, or individualist plays like *Baal* or *Trommeln in der Nacht*, and the new genre of the *Lehrstücke* that is informed by communist ideology and emphasizes rationality, the well-being of the group and the individual's submission to the community. *Fatzer* may also represent a personal transition for Brecht: The egoist/anarchist Fatzer who embodies a literary representation of the youthful Brecht, much like Macheath of the *Threepenny Opera* or *Baal der Böse der Asoziale*, has been juxtaposed to the reflective thinker Koch/Keuner, Brecht's later image of himself (Knopf 1: 173). Brecht's fragmented manuscript is divided into five "Arbeitsphasen," followed by a "Fatzerkommentar." While Fatzer took precedence in his earlier work phases when Brecht still believed in the asocial or anti-social element as a necessary heuristic, a moment of recognition in society (Knopf 1: 173, Wilke 185), the later work phases emphasize the collectivist and rationalist figure of Koch or Keuner.

In 1978 Heiner Müller resuscitated Brecht's bulky five hundred page fragmented manuscript – a collection of scene sketches, poems, choir texts, and drafted story lines – and put together a performable text for a production in Hamburg: "fatzer unaufführbar," (Knopf 1: 174). We can thank Heiner Müller for elevating a rather marginal, transitory, and unfinished manuscript to the status of a seminal theatrical work in the twentieth century. Müller revised his version of *Fatzer* again in 1987 and 1993, periods rich in political reverberations, in 1987 filled with allusions to the West German terrorism group RAF, and in 1993 to the failed socialist experiment in the GDR.

"Brecht gebrauchen, ohne ihn zu kritisieren, ist Verrat." These words conclude Müller's 1979 essay "Keuner ± Fatzer" (21) in which the author explains how he reinterpreted Brecht's "Jahrhunderttext," as he called *Fatzer*, a text that he also admired as an object of envy (*Krieg ohne Schlacht* 309). Müller sees in *Fatzer* Brecht's greatest "Entwurf" (design or sketch) and compares the material to Goethe's *Faust* ("Keuner ± Fatzer" 20). But he also reminds us of a conversation in Svendborg between Benjamin and Brecht about Kafka, in which Benjamin sees greater universality in Kafka's parables than in Brecht's, and he postulates that Brecht deliberately misunderstood Kafka. In Kafka's existential universe each individual is isolated, without any social of moral reference system that Brecht sought to salvage humanity. Müller's *Fatzer* adaptation also reverses some of Brecht's original intentions: Müller again foregrounds the egoist or individualist Fatzer over the collectivist "Kleinbürger im Mao-Look" Koch/Keuner ("Keuner ± Fatzer" 20). While working on *Fatzer* produced in Brecht a turn to Marxism, in Müller it introduced a move away from Brecht as the paternal model: "Hier ... beginnt, in der Abwehr des anarchisch-natürlichen Matriarchats, der Umbau des rebellischen Sohns in die Vaterfigur, der Brechts Erfolg ausmacht und seine Wirkung behindert" ("Keuner ± Fatzer" 20). In addition, Brecht's forced exile and his inability to continue working

in Germany in the 1930s produced an "Emigration in die Klassizität" and "Klassik als Revolutionsersatz," exile into classicism that then replaced the necessary revolution ("Keuner ± Fatzer" 20, 21). Müller in 1979 hopes to turn away from Brecht the father figure who emigrated into classicism and rather rediscover Brecht as the revolutionary and the rebellious son.

This "rebellious son" considered death at a very early age. The theme of death is ubiquitous and predominates in all versions of Brecht's *Fatzer*. The story takes place during war, a time in which death hovers over every citizen and especially deserters. But death is also an important formal element of this fragmented work: As a fragment, Brecht's play *Fatzer* suffered a premature death. Later, Müller was fascinated by the *Fatzermaterial* precisely because of its fragmentary nature. He saw it as a symptom of the fragmentation of German history and the failure of all its revolutions. Comparing *Fatzer* to Thomas Mann's view of German history, Müller states: "Die Parallele zu Thomas Manns Bemerkung über die deutsche Geschichte, in der keine Epoche zu Ende gelebt worden ist, weil keine Revolution erfolgreich war, ablesbar am deutschen Stadtbild, ist offensichtlich" ("Keuner ± Fatzer" 16).

Death appears in multiple metaphors and images in *Fatzer*. The current essay only allows me to hint at its many appearances and connotations within the text. In an early scene the four companions throw the dice to discover whether they can survive their dangerous lot. Fatzer is first and throws a black color which means death. He then encourages the others to do the same:

> Jetzt, wo ich weiß, ich sterb bald
> Möcht ich auch wissen, ob ihr leben sollt
> Würfelt auch (GBA 10.1: 393)

All four men draw black. The dice symbolize uncontrollable fate.

Müller entitled one of his versions of the play *Der Untergang des Egoisten Fatzer*. This title is drawn from a section in Brecht's fourth work phase in which Brecht, unlike Müller, placed the word "Egoist" in quotation marks, thus leaving an evaluation of Fatzer's character as well as the question whether he deserved to die open (GBA 10.1: 469). The Nietzschean or Zarathustran metaphor of the "Untergang" – the fall or downfall – is ever-present in the play. It refers to Fatzer's death, but also to the downfall of an aging decadent world, and the hope for the rise of a new time, a new human, even a new animal (GBA 10.1: 427) in the spirit of Frank Wedekind that was prevalent in the Weimar Republic and indebted to expressionism. A statement by the chorus that Müller chose to open his version of *Fatzer* appears late in the fourth work phase in Brecht's manuscript:

> Welcher Krieg vier Jahre dauerte und
> Noch zu unseren Lebzeiten
> als Verbrechen erkannt wurde.
> Und ausspie ein Geschlecht
> Voll Aussatz
> Das kurz dauerte und
> Untergehend die gealterte Welt
> Abriss. (GBA 10.1: 481-82)

Fatzer too dreams of tearing down the old order and beginning a new one (GBA

10.1: 409).

Religion enters marginally in the discussions of the topic of death. Fatzer does not believe in God, even as he is faced with the certainty of his imminent death:

> Und das ist nicht
> Weil es einen Gott gibt, den gibt
> Es nicht, sondern
> Weil der Mensch vordringt zu der Kenntnis
> Dass zuerst das Essen kommt. (GBA 10.1: 410)

But as in many other works by Brecht, religious symbolism or references to the Bible inform the writing of *Fatzer*. When the three companions save their skin by pretending to the authorities that they do not know Fatzer, this may be seen, similar to Mother Courage's denial of her own son Schweizerkas, as a reference to Judas's betrayal of Jesus (GBA 10.1: 470). Also, Fatzer's realization that war is meaningless is ironically described as a "Sündefall" – the fall from grace, with its obvious reference to Adam and Eve who ate an apple from the tree of knowledge against God's will (GBA 10.1: 475). Fatzer later acknowledges that war is a stronger force than him, and he accepts his own death and the fact that war will outlive him (GBA 10.1: 489).Heiner Müller points to one further religious element in Brecht's *Fatzer* text: the concept of humility, especially in relation to death and killing. He refers to a passage in the third work phase on the absoluteness of death:

> Seid nicht hochfahrend, Brüder
> Sondern demütig und schlagt es tot
> Nicht hochfahrend, sondern: unmenschlich!
> Tut nicht zwei Dinge, sondern
> Eines. Nicht leben und töten, sondern
> N u r töten. Eins ist eins
> Schwarz schwarz und laut nicht leis. (GBA 10.1: 450)

In *Krieg ohne Schlacht* Müller described this combination of humility and killing as a key element of Brecht's *Fatzer* and also of the ideology of RAF, the West German terrorist group Read Army Faction (312). "Töten, mit Demut, das ist der theologische Glutkern des Terrorismus" (*Krieg ohne Schlacht* 316). Could Fatzer be seen as a terrorist – or worse yet, a renegade among a group of terrorists, a deserter among deserters? Brecht had linked *Fatzer* to the murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; Müller related the play to the RAF and later the collapse of the GDR. Whether *Fatzer* can also help us understand modern-day twenty-first century terrorism and its inherent death wish, may be the subject of another deeper, independent investigation. The theologially grounded idea of "Töten mit Demut," as both Brecht and Müller phrased it – killing in humility, rather than out of presumption or a lust for power – has described terrorists of many generations.

Another recurring metaphor in the play is "Fleisch" (meat). This image is prevalent in several other plays by Brecht, such as the fragment *Jae Fleischhacker in Chikago* on which Brecht worked from 1924 until 1929, around the same time as *Fatzer*, and which became a precursor for *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*. Meat is what Fatzer is supposed to bring to his companions so that they can eat; it symbolizes survival and our elementary livelihood. Meat also refers to sexuality:

Our "Fleischlichkeit" defines us as physical and sexual human beings. Sexuality enters into a special relationship with death. Brecht planned both a "Geschlechtskapitel" and a "Todeskapitel," as Müller realizes them in his version (*Werke* 6: 103, 114, 129, 132). These chapters are connected in an almost Freudian way, like the two primal human drives *eros* and *thanatos*. Brecht's reception of Freud is mixed. He admired *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (GBA 24: 83), yet had only ironic reactions to psychoanalysis, as he reveals in *Flüchtlingsgespräche* (GBA 18: 306-309). Nevertheless, there is a noticeable Freudian element in the linking of the pleasure principle and the death drive. Brecht recognizes the animalistic nature of both drives. In death and in our sexuality we return to the condition of animals. When Johann – Don Juan, Don Giovanni – Fatzer seduces Therese Kaumann who is occasionally also called Rosa, the text states: "Dann vögelt er sie und sie wird wie eine Hündin," and Fatzer becomes "das schöne Tier Fatzer" (GBA 10.1: 427).

Brecht argues with Friedrich Engels against "Besitzergreifung" (possessiveness) in family relations (GBA 10.1: 517). This principle applies in *Fatzer* not only to sexuality but also to death. In the Fatzer Commentary the text advises:

> Um sterben zu können
> sei arm!
> *Beim Totenritus:*
> Seht, wie schwer er stirbt! Er besitzt
> zu gern! (GBA 10.1: 526)

In addition to the "Todeskapitel" and the "Sex-Stück" (GBA 10.1: 517-18), "Verrat" or treason is an important topic related to death. Fatzer has threatened the survival of the group, and therefore Büsching sees his death as inevitable or "unvermeidlich" (GBA 10.1: 446). The group expects that Fatzer declares his consensus, and Büsching demands:

> Drum sollst du hingerichtet
> Werden nach dem Beschluss
> Von drei Menschen und einem
> Toten, ohne Aufschub!
> Sag, dass du
> Einverstanden bist. (GBA 10.1: 448)

The importance of "Einverständnis," even with death, points to the future *Lehrstück* and Brecht's growing pedagogical interests. This may take the extreme that death becomes a major pedagogical tool against violence, as seen in a passage from *Fatzerkommentar*:

> Was hilft gegen den Gewalttätigen?
> Sein Tod hilft, wenn der Gewalttätige gestorben ist und die Leute die Lehre im Gedächtnis behalten haben, werden sie an seinem Grabe die Lehre wiederholen (GBA 10.1: 529)

Death is a universal force. According to Koch:

> ... Der Mensch kann
> Nicht in der Luft fliegen von selber
> Aber den Tod
> Muss er mit hinaufnehmen (GBA 10.1: 452)

But Brecht also plays on the word "sterben" (to die) and its implicit connections to the verb "erben" (to inherit), when the "Gegenchor" (counter chorus) states:

> Wir raten euch: seht
> Euch an diese vier, denn ihr werdet sie
> Untergehend sehn handeln wie
> Aufwärtsgehende. Soviel besorgt
> Nicht sterbend, der ohne Erben ist (GBA 10.1: 479-80)

The internal rhyme between *sterben* and *erben* points at the possibility of a purpose for death, the implication that dying is not in vain, and offers a lesson or hope for future generations. But death is also a lonely event, as the "Todeskapitel" in the Fatzer Commentary elucidates: "So wie einer, der gestorben ist, keinen Verwandten mehr hat, soll der Schlafende allein liegen. Auch soll der Denkende in dämmriger Kammer essen mit dem Gesicht zur Wand." (GBA 10.1: 518). Death has a special relationship to the word, to a name. The three men intend to preserve Fatzer's name as they plan to kill him:

> Uns kennt man nicht
> Aber den
> Soll man kennen.
> Ihn wollen wir umbringen, aber
> Seinen Namen lassen wir. (GBA 10.1: 494)

Heiner Müller's version takes this idea one step further. When the chorus shows a projection of the final image in which all men die, it states repeatedly: "Vier tote Männer und ein Name!" (*Werke* 6: 79). At the end of Brecht's fifth work phase, in the section *Fatzer, komm*, this notion appears withdrawn again:

> Vergiss den Namen
> Achte deine Gesetze, Gesetzgeber. (GBA 10.1: 513)

One may be reminded of Brecht's 1936 poem "Warum soll mein Name genannt werden?" Here the poet considers memory beyond his death, and his changing stance on the topic. In his youthful years he would have liked to preserve the mentioning of his name after his death; but later he declares himself "einverstanden" (GBA 14: 321) not only with death but with the fact that his name will be forgotten. In one of his speeches, Fatzer recommends to his friends:

> Behaltet von allem, was an mir ist
> Nur das euch Nützliche.
> Der Rest ist Fatzer. (GBA 10.1: 495)

The rest, one might also say, is a name. This obvious reference to Hamlet's dying words in Act Five of Shakespeare's tragedy – "The rest is silence" – shows that his name is not the most important aspect that should remain of him. Fatzer here becomes silence, which is death. In another section on dying, speaking, and silence, one wonders whether Brecht also borrowed from Wittgenstein. The Fatzer Commentary states:

> Wenn du reden kannst, dann
> Lerne das Reden / wenn du
> Nicht reden kannst, dann lerne

Das Schweigen. (GBA 10.1: 521)

It is not clear how familiar Brecht was with Wittgenstein's works, but the resemblance to the final words of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* – "Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen" – seems striking, with maybe an added pedagogical impetus in Brecht's phrasing.

As a fragment, Brecht's *Fatzer* does not form a fully composed, coherent work, but it contains brilliant ideas and in sections beautiful and expressive poetry. Those critics who in the past have tried to foreground Brecht the poet and downplay his importance as a playwright may have an argument in *Fatzer*. *Fatzer* is also a young author's play, and as a result, one common association with death does not exist in this play: Death is here not associated with *aging*. A young person obsessed with death connects it less with the slow, at times invisible, at times painful processes of aging and illness, but rather with passion, war, revolution, murder, betrayal, or even sexuality – an overabundance of life in its brief intensity and not its slow fading. "Ist doch mein Leben kurz und bald aus und unter den Gehenden / werde ich nicht mehr gesehn" (GBA 10.1: 489): Fatzer's recognition of life's brevity motivates his intense desire for freedom, for expressing his egoism, and for living a life in extremes. Death overshadows all facets of human life, and this awareness at a young age may have kept the unfinished fragment *Fatzer* alive until today.

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MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN. TRANSLATION: DAVID HARE, DIRECTION: CRAIG WILLIS. MUSIC: JONATHAN DOVE. LORD LEEBRICK THEATER COMPANY, EUGENE, OR / USA

"TALK BACK": POST-PRODUCTION DISCUSSION
MODERATOR / COMMENTATOR:
DOROTHEE OSTMEIER, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

20 MAY 2007

DOROTHEE OSTMEIER (DO): *We are all staying here tonight after your three-hour breathtaking performance of Brecht's* ***Mother Courage*** *because we are puzzled by all the contradictory perspectives the play articulated on the tense relations between war, economy, family, and humanity. You as actors, director, stage, costume and lighting designers have lived with and faced these questions intensively during the last couple of weeks of rehearsals and performances and we would like to thank you for taking the time to discuss your experiences with this play with us.*

Today's performance associates the historical events with the embarrassing contemporary war mechanizations: Is there anyone who would not think right away of the questions of victimization and corruption of humanity in the current war crises between America, Iraq and world politics? The laughter of all of us in the audience tonight clearly indicated the flow of our associations. For example, when Mother Courage explained that only an incompetent and weak sergeant of war would search for brave and heroic soldiers, it sounded familiar to us. In fact, it was a relief that she articulated what most of us identify as a very actual problem. Individual heroism and mass deployment have to make up for the poor strategic skills of the military leadership. Craig: Why this play right here and now?

CRAIG WILLIS (DIRECTOR): Largely as a vehicle to generate a dialogue about war and the economic underpinnings that often go denied by our political leaders. The worst feeling I had while working on this piece was the realization that we cannot break the cycle of war's messiness.

DO: *Why the translation by David Hare?*

CRAIG WILLIS (DIRECTOR): My first choice was the Tony Kushner translation, but it still hasn't been published and/or released for production following its initial staging last year by the NY Shakespeare Festival/Public Theatre. That not being available, I still sought a translation that was somewhat fresher in reading of idioms than the Bentley, Mannheim, or Willet translations. My next choice would have been the Mannheim - like the Bentley it is more American than British in the translation to English. And it seems more active and direct in some phraseology than the Bentley.

DO: *Why use music by Jonathan Dove and not that of Paul Dessau?*

CRAIG WILLIS (DIRECTOR):: It wasn't so much avoiding the Dessau, as it was

preferring the Jonathon Dove on two different counts: (1) the Dove is slightly less discordant and (2) it is available in a score with parts broken out. The Dessau is only available in a bad photocopy of the piano score (at least via the publishing houses for the English translations which have used this score). As director today you worry about overtaxing the audience that nowadays is hesitant to sit though a one and a half hour-long film. It is a kind of risk to produce a three hour play and also add such dissonant music. The songs are already odd enough, even more so than traditional musical comedy theater where suddenly the actors break out into singing. The songs are really out of the way. They are unique in Brecht's style, they are unusual and what they are commenting on is generally to the point. I don't know if you need to add cacophony to make the point.

DO: *Have you done other Brecht plays?*

Craig Willis (Director): I have not done other Brecht plays, and have only ever seen *The Threepenny Opera*. I like *Galileo*, but really only considered MC for this season as I was particularly looking for something that spoke to the subject of war. I very much liked the Tony Kushner translation produced by the NY Shakespeare Festival/Public Theatre and directed by George Wolfe. I think many Brecht scholars may have found it too conventional - but I think that any production of Brecht today is going to feel more conventional than it would have 60 years ago--conventions have evolved so much that I rarely see strict realism in theatre production today.

DO: *As a market vendor Mother Courage lives off the war but wants to protect her children from the war. Brecht reveals this compromise as impossible. As an intellectual figure, she is a tragic figure. In many instances, we do not know how to evaluate her utterances, the tensions between her human goals and her expressions. Is there at all any idealism left? Are her human goals revealed as a phantasm? We certainly see that she miscalculates her calculations: whatever she does to protect her children does not work in the long run. The necessities of war and her obsessions with her trade undermine her human goals. Collaboration with the war machine undermines humanity and certainly all working class people are caught in this abyss. Nevertheless, this play is not a tragedy. Shall we call its biting satire, a tragic comedy?*

Judith, how did you, in your role as Mother Courage, work with the complex problems addressed in the play? Isn't Mother Courage a figure of contradictions?

Judith Roberts (Mother Courage): I don't think she resolves any of these. She lives from moment to moment on the battlefield and her ethics comes from the fierce protection of her children, the need for money to survive. The need to survive surmounts everything. It is not that she is not able to evaluate the situation. She also is a pragmatist. She sees what needs to be done and she also sees that she cannot affect anything. This is a feeling that I have come to share with her. But I do not feel - by getting old and fat - that I have lost my anger. The anger is just anger, it is not going to give me anything and is not going to convince anybody

else of anything. As an actor, I see this piece as my only tool to dissect and show the hypocrisy of war.

DO: *You played Mother Courage first when you were young and before you had children. How did the family experience change your performance? How did / does studying Mother Courage affect you?*

JUDITH ROBERTS (MOTHER COURAGE): Growing up you see more, you see more wars coming and going, and you have children to protect through their trials and tribulations. When I played this role first - when I was twenty years old - I was too young for it but felt just as strongly. It was the time of the Vietnam War when I wanted to scream and shout and to do something. We demonstrated, we did all kinds of things, but this play gave me a handle just as today. As an actress it engaged my heartfelt involvement. I think it does not resolve anything. Brecht is just forcing us to think about it all and maybe discuss it. Hopefully, somebody will figure out what to do.

DO: *In re-reading this play I was fascinated by Mother Courage's emancipation. She is disillusioned and liberated from conventional family values, from male-female relationships. She rejects monogamy and promotes an experimental life-style that reminds us of the feminist agenda and the radical social and sexual liberalization of women in the beginning of the 20th century. Discussions of the Weimar Period have been swamped with texts about gender issues, prostitution, "Lustmord," (Tatar) "the new woman,"(Kaes), male vs. female voyeurism (Petro, Elsaesser, Doane, Mulvey) etc. The economic and sexual liberation of women from dominant patriarchal structures after WWI led to the highlighting of feminist issues in cultural discourses and to controversies about how to assert oneself and how to control the new female power. Mother Courage distinguishes between biological motherhood and the socialization and cultural upbringing of her children. She clearly distinguishes between the biological and non biological fathers of her children, a distinction which became mainstream, only a long time after the war in the context of the discussions of divorce, adoption and homosexual/lesbian childrearing policies.*

*See: Mary Ann Doane, "Film and the Masquerade: Theorizing the Female Spectator," *Film Theory and Criticism* (1992): 758-772; Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and Afte : Germany's Historical Imaginary* (2000); Kaes / Jay / Dimendberg "The Rise of the New Woman." *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. 1994: 195-218; Pia Kleber,"Die Courage der Mütter am Beispiel Bertolt Brecht." *Verklaert, Verkitscht, Vergessen: Die Mutter als aesthetische Figur*. 1996: 130-144; Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Film Theory and Criticism* (1992): 746-757; Patrice, Petro, *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany,* 1989; Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany,* 1995.

There are two other female figures in the play: Yvette fits with the figures of the prostitute in the ***Threepenny Opera*** *and* ***Mahagonny****. The other character we need to discuss is Kattrin. Is she an antagonist to Mother Courage as well as to Yvette?*

STEEN MITCHELL (SET DESIGNER): I do not see survival and liberation as the same thing. To me looking at the characters of Mother Courage and Yvette they both face desperate situations: what do I have to sell in order to survive? Mother Courage has created something other than her body. Yvette has only her body and when she looks for marriage she tries to get out of selling herself. For Mother Courage the wagon provides her with what she can sell. If she loses the wagon she becomes Yvette. For me this becomes the question: is this survival or liberation and what is the tension between these issues?

DO: *Richard, how do you approach your acting when you sing, for example, the Salomon song?*

RICHARD LEEBRICK (COOK): No, I am happy to. See, the way I read this play it is very much about economics, depression and--excuse my expression--how the shit roles down hill. It is about the people and how they struggle to survive, all of them. I am really hearing the feminist reading of this and it is enlightening but I also think that throughout history morality is a dubious luxury of sorts. The theory is great but when you are on stage you play actions. The song organically comes out of the need to get a bowl of soup. It is about that simple.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: *I am glad that you bring up the economic issue. What is at stake is the tension between capitalism and complicity. How does capitalism create a society in that we are necessarily complicit? When Mother Courage goes around and sells her stuff, she is complicit by supporting the war. How can you escape this in a capitalist society when you need to profit from it?*

CRAIG WILLIS (DIRECTOR): Well the play is an anti-war play as well as an anti-business play. I look at both Vietnam and Iraq and I am wondering if there is anyone who does not understand that we are there to protect resources for our economy and/or to make money. How can we ever break this cycle? We are as complicit in this country as anyone in not willing to give up our gasoline, automobiles, energy consumption, life styles etc. I am as guilty by running, for example, all these lights. (*Laughter*)

ACTOR: Everyone in this play, especially the poor, add small acts of complicity, the religious, private, cultural side, simply to keep things rolling.

DO: *We might look at Kattrin. Is she an exception to all of this? She is marginalized, wounded, mute and silenced. Kattrin does not follow any model; she expresses the intense power of the pre- or extra-linguistic sphere that precedes rhetorical manipulations. Barbie, would you comment on playing this contradiction: being totally marginalized but nevertheless central?*

BARBIE WU (KATTRIN): Playing Kattrin I don't feel like an actress only playing my part. I am taking every audience with me. As an audience member, you are obviously silent because you are watching a show. So my frustration is your frustration. I have seen everything happening without being able to do a thing about

it. Kattrin definitely understood what Mother Courage was trying to do for her by putting her down all the time. She kept saying, she is not pretty enough, she well never find a husband, she is a rat, and she will never be able to survive. Perhaps she might not attempt great things so she won't hurt herself. This is one of the most challenging roles I ever played. First of all, you have to get shot by a machine gun. Then it was a wonderful experience to try to play silence, and to take advantage of what we are missing out on daily. This has helped me to grow.

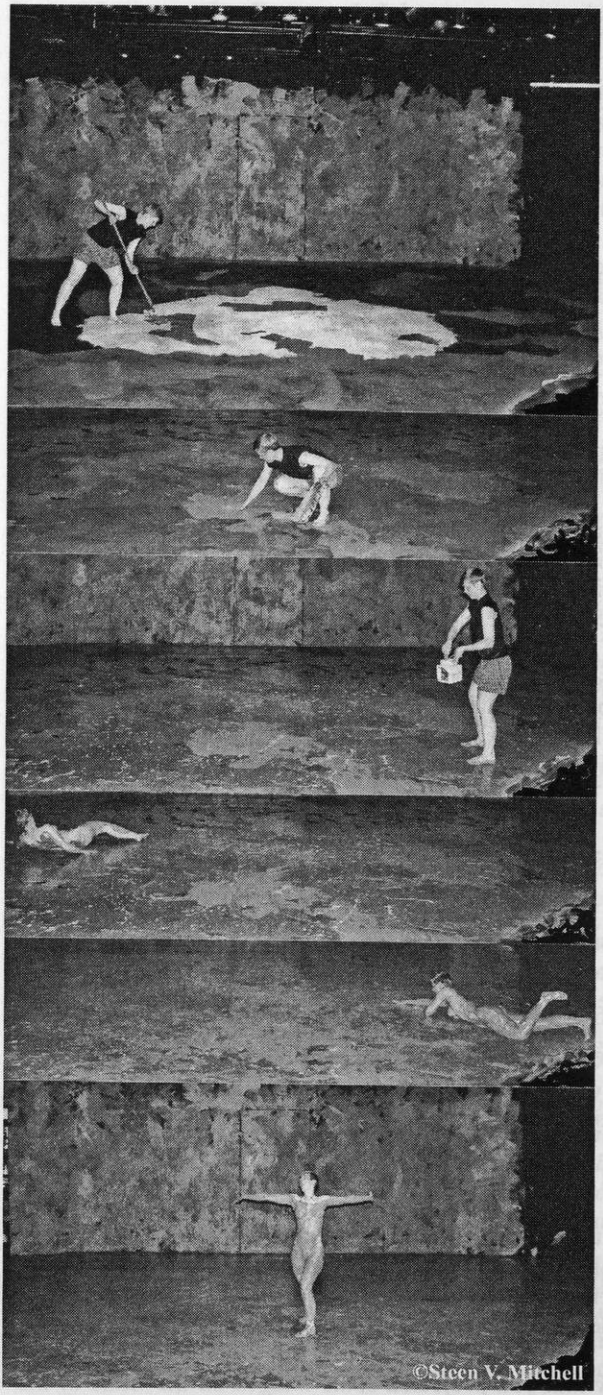
DO: *There are many aspects to the issue of silence in this play. One is the stage design. Isn't it a silent commentary on what is going on? In the case of Kattrin seeing is privileged over speaking. Steen, was this fact at all important for you? Tell us about your floor and stage design. How was it impacted by the play?*

STEEN MITCHELL (SET DESIGNER):: We, the director and the designers, realized early in the design process that we wanted to create a production that was not set in a specific time, and that we wanted to avoid realistic elements (like a farmhouse) in order to keep the audience from being comfortable by seeing something familiar. Mother Courage moves through many countries following the war, and I had to figure out how they go to all the different places, and do that without depicting something that is too real. So we came up with creating an abstract space. The wagon is the center of the play, an extension of Mother Courage. It is the only real set piece that we have. I took this as an opportunity to do a textural collage using the theatre as an installation space. I looked at many paintings about war and kept focusing on body parts, and I started thinking, "Well, I want to work with human form." I finally said to Craig, "I just want to put down a lot of paint and simply roll around in it. What do you think?" And Craig said, "I will turn on the heater for you."

CRAIG WILLIS (DIRECTOR): We did it about six weeks ago and it was cool. (Loud Laughter)

STEEN MITCHELL (SET DESIGNER):: I came in about 8:00 am the next morning. Actually, the floor took only an hour. I had to paint very fast because the paint dries quickly. It took 45 minutes of laying down paint and then 15 minutes to blend the colors with me, which was way less fun than I thought it would be. The idea behind this was not just experimentation but more the question: What is Mother Courage doing by rolling over bodies? On the other hand, I didn't want it to be obvious like doing the floor in one color and all the body prints in another color. To me that was too blatant. So I thought if I use myself as texture - one uses many things to create texture as a painter - it will come out differently than anything else I could use. In fact, it does not look like anything I have ever done. It was a remarkable experience in that way. And I thought some people will get it, most people might not, and really that is fine because war will roll over all of these bodies and some people will see it and some people won't. The human pattern is present as the texture of the space.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: *I saw that you projected some images on the walls of the*



backstage. Could you talk about them?

STEEN MITCHELL (SET DESIGNER): For my visual research I mostly looked at paintings. I did not want to show rubble or some bombed out town. This would be too obvious, so in-your-face. I wanted to add another visual layer that makes people think. Some of them were heroic pictures; there was for example a nude archer. This represented the ideal of heroism, young manhood, and the question: what does this mean in a time of war? I also realized that from some places in the theater you would not be able to see what was projected. This was OK because wherever you are in the world, from your individual perspective you cannot get the whole picture. Perhaps it is only texture or color or you see this picture and not that one.

CRAIG WILLIS (DIRECTOR): It was also interesting that Steen started in a very abstract mode but when it actually came to choosing images, we went more literal than we thought we were headed to-

wards. The projected image had no direct correlation to the scene at hand. I was interested in what the actors choices were. For example, there is an image of a Greco-Roman wrestler that chases a sphinx that we put up during the general's courting of Eilif. For us this spoke to that scene, but it is no direct commentary. That's obvious.

ACTOR: There is a message about war, the detritus of war that we do not get from modern media. We get programmed images; we get propaganda fed and force fed. The play enables me to look at the issues of war with new eyes, to feel them in different parts of my body as, for example, the character Kattrin did. She did not have any marital prospects, she didn't have motherhood; she had to feel what she had in different parts of herself and what brought her to action. I appreciated this in our scene work since it gave me an opportunity to think about our conflict as a human race with different eyes without being told what to think. I appreciated the abstraction.

CRAIG WILLIS (DIRECTOR): It is the same with the costumes. I didn't want them desert camouflaged, and I didn't want them relating historically only to one period. The little anachronisms that people catch on to are fascinating: for example, during our first previews somebody came out and said: that clerk in one scene carries a ballpoint pen but he is wearing a 1940s uniform. It is supposed to be 1642.

DO: *How did you deal with the challenges of epic theater? I am wondering how you as current director in a smaller American town negotiate between the audience's desire to be entertained and the modernist challenge to evoke distancing reflections.*

CRAIG WILLIS (DIRECTOR): This is a challenge our theatre faces constantly. Our mission is to produce thought-provoking theatre. I want to entertain audiences - but not just entertain. And often I want to entertain and challenge the comfort zones we allow to exist in our society--to explore taboo subjects or challenge generally l accepted beliefs which come to be accepted as "Truths." The first play I produced during the first season that I was responsible for programming was Edward Albee's *The Goat; Or Who Is Syliva.* Subtitled "Notes on Tragedy," Albee uses the play to challenge beliefs about what is natural by asking audiences to accept that it is possible for a man to be in love with an animal, and to accept the character's experience of profound grief in the loss of that love. We're lucky to live in a community with a high percentage of theatre attendees who embrace our mission--perhaps it is related to the demographics created by being a college town.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: *This is a question to the cast: how did you feel being exposed to the Brechtian epic style of acting? How was it different for you working in this format that is not naturalism?*

CRAIG WILLIS (DIRECTOR): I should perhaps interject here. I started not being worried about Brechtian acting theory. The alienation is in the writing and would

be also controlled by the choices I and the designers made. I did not ask the actors to spend a lot of time studying Brechtian theory. Acting has changed in the last 60 years since he wrote the play. I have talked to some actors about Brecht's idea that actors should not be only conscious of all the choices they made but also of all the other potential choices they could make. You also have to understand that we do not have the luxury that most of the European theater practices have over time working on pieces for months, much much longer then we would. We spent more time on this than we would normally spend on a production and still we probably put in half the time the Berliner Ensemble would before they mounted it.

Brecht has influenced everything that has happened in the last fifty years in theater. A lot of directors today are doing things constantly that have been set in motion by Brecht. I remember we had this conversation in rehearsal: yes, we do direct address. In fact, I did direct address with "Who's afraid of Virgina Woolf" which no one had expected. At one point Eilif wanted to speak to the audience... and of course, I let the actor do it. When the actor thinks that the playwright wants to speak directly to the audience, s/he should do it.

Patrick Torelle (Chaplain): You did encourage us to make contact with the audience. The script does not always tell you when to do this. We had to make the choices. These were fun and dangerous moments to act. I love doing that but it is always scary, scary for the audience too I suspect.

Actor: There are also moments in the final scenes when all of your actors and human sympathies go out to Mother Courage and her daughter. But that doesn't play true unless you play it very hard. This is an incident when we have to get her out on the road, get her out of here so that we can run our business again before we get into more trouble. You have to play against your natural inclinations.

Actor: I was very relieved early on when we started reading the play and asking what style we were supposed to be working on. This always makes me cringe because I am afraid that we have to commit to some unified phony style. Craig encouraged us to find our own style. That was very freeing. And of course we have to realize that Stanislavski's thinking about acting also changed during this time.

DO: *Craig, in concluding could you please introduce the mission of the Lord Leebrick Theater. How does the performance of Mother Courage reflect this history and the goals of the Lord Leebrick Theater for the Future?*

Craig Willis (Director): The language in our mission statement has changed since I first opted to produce MC, but the philosophy remains fairly constant: "Lord Leebrick Theatre Company entertains audiences with bold, -provoking theatre performed in an intimate space. We believe in the power of theatre to transform the lives of artists, students, audiences and our community." I think it is fairly obvious how MC fits the intent of this mission. And this mission has evolved out of a tradition of performing more intellectually demanding theatre. This tradition ebbed and flowed a bit in the theatre's early days, but even then the

company was doing works such as Beckett, Pinter, Albee, Mamet with only the occasional production of a more conventional/commercially viable work. In the company's first 12 years, a tradition of an annual Shakespeare production developed. I opted to abandon that tradition in favor of creating opportunities to explore other more recent "classic" works, and we have done things such as Wilder's *Skin Of Our Teeth,* a six-person post-modern adaptation of Shakespeare's *Tempest,* this season's *MC* - and next season we'll return to another post-modern adaptation of a Shakespeare classic.

DO: *In this way you are quite Brechtian: production means collaboration. This responds to Brecht's idea of the collective. There is not one producer, but a collective that produces. Thank you very much.*

BOOK REVIEW
"PLÖTZLICH SCHLUG IHRE STIMMUNG UM ..."

SABINE KEBIR, MEIN HERZ LIEGT NEBEN DER SCHREIBMASCHINE: RUTH BERLAUS LEBEN VOR, MIT UND NACH BERTOLT BRECHT (ALGIER: EDITIONS LALLA MOULATI, 2006)

FRANKA KÖPP

Eine zum hundertsten Geburtstag erschienene Biographie zu Ruth Berlau, einer der wichtigsten Mitarbeiterinnen Brechts und seiner zwei Jahrzehnte währenden Liebe, muss jeden Brecht-Interessierten zunächst unbesehen frohlocken lassen. Bisher konnte im wesentlichen nur auf die so verdienstvoll von Hans Bunge 1985 herausgegebene Autobiographie Berlaus zurückgegriffen werden;[1] ihr liegen die von Bunge im Jahre 1959 mehrtägig geführten Interviews mit Berlau zugrunde (eigens dokumentiert in umfangreichen Tonbandmitschnitten und -transkriptionen).[2] Hinzu kam jüngeren Datums Grischa Meyers eindrückliche, 2003 erschienene Monographie zur *Fotografin an Brechts Seite*.[3] Neben diesen beiden maßgebenden Publikationen existierten lediglich einzelne Beiträge zu Ruth Berlau, die bestimmten Aspekten zu Leben und Werk gerecht zu werden suchen,[4] zumeist jedoch der Perspektive Brechts verhaftet bleiben, vorzugsweise Berlau thematisch subsumierend unter „Brechts Frauen,"[5] mitunter gar befangen in ausweglosem Duktus einer Opferstigmatisierung einerseits oder einer für nötig befundenen Verteidigung Brechts andererseits. Nichts wird der freigeistigen Berlau wohl weniger gerecht als derart lineare Erklärungsmuster.

Um so verdienstvoller der 2005 – bereits in Vorbereitung zum anstehenden hundertjährigen Jubiläum – von Stephen Brockmann besorgte Sonderband des Brecht Yearbooks *Who was Ruth Berlau?*,[6] der nach dem frühen Erzählungsband *Jedes Tier kann es*[7] erstmals wieder verschiedene Texte Berlaus selbst (großteils bis dahin unveröffentlichte) zugänglich macht.

Dennoch blieb eine umfassende Studie zu Biographie und Werk Ruth Berlaus ein nicht unerhebliches Desideratum in der Brecht-Forschung, das es zu schließen galt. Wäre doch jener 1906 geborenen Dänin gerecht zu werden, die als 27jährige

Schauspielerin und Mitbegründerin des sogenannten RT (Revolutionært Teater) 1933 Brecht begegnet, rund acht Jahre darauf seiner Bitte entspricht, ihm ins Exil zu folgen,[8] einmal um die Welt, bis hin nach Berlin-Ost 1948 (künftige Hauptstadt des vorgeblich real existierenden sozialistischen Teils Deutschlands), wo sie Brecht um mehr als 17 Jahre überlebt und Anfang 1974 in seiner Nähe auf dem Dorotheenstädtischen Friedhof ihre letzte Ruhe findet. Gerecht zu werden wäre jener Frau, die Brecht bekannter Maßen als ihm teuere „Schwester" charakterisierte: „Brennend, aber nicht verzehrt"[9] und die sich noch in späten Jahren selbst als seine „Kreatur" definierte: „Aber ich war und bin deine Kreatur."[10] – und dies offenkundig bewusst im Sinne der Zwiegestalt des Kreatürlichen, sich ganz der für sie unauflöslichen, bis zur eigenen Existenzgefährdung schmerzensreichen Abhängigkeit gewahr seiend und zugleich sich zu dieser bekennend, sie tragend als große Liebende in der Bejahung schöpferischer Selbstveränderung.

For more on Ruth Berlau, go to www.ecibs.org and read Sabine Kebir's article "Ruth, Bertolt, Michel und der Tod: Bertolt Brechts vergebliche therapeutische Mission"

Mithin der Leser durfte gespannt sein und schickt sich dankbar erwartungsvoll an, dem in zwölf Kapiteln chronologisch präsentierten Lebensweg Berlaus zu folgen. Mit dem ersten Satz vernimmt er: „Ruth Berlau (1906-1974) war Europaradlerin, Schauspielerin, Regisseurin. Sie war auch Autorin, obwohl sie weder die Schriftform des Dänischen noch des Deutschen beherrschte." (7) Man muss, mit Ruth Berlau vertraut oder nicht, angesichts dieser Setzung und Reihenfolge nicht unbedingt in Verblüffung geraten, sähe man sich nicht fortab kontinuierlich mit Charakterisierungen konfrontiert, die eine grundpejorative, stetig mutmaßende Beziehung der Autorin zu der von ihr Porträtierten offenbaren. Da ist die Rede von einer „imposante[n], aber vielfach gespaltene[n] Persönlichkeit" (9), einer „junge[n] Dame," die „scheinbar magersüchtig" war (18), die „nicht ertragen konnte," wenn sich ihr Ehemann „nicht ausschließlich mit ihr beschäftigte" (31), „zwar eine vielbegehrte Frau," deren „wirkliche sexuelle Befriedigung aber ausblieb" (31), zudem „traumatisiert" (34), ein „Bühnensternchen" (34), von „Aktivismus" (36) geprägt, ein „Liebesverhältnis" ersehnend, vor dem Brecht „eine innere Stimme" „gewarnt hatte und weiterhin warnte" (60), ausgestattet mit der „Tendenz zur Nymphomanie" (93) und überdies mit der „unerschütterliche[n] Überzeugung," „daß sich Liebe durch Eifersucht manifestiert" (164), eine „rabiate Briefschreiberin" (114), ein „Script-Girl" (161), ein Mensch, an dem „Neid und Eifersucht" „nagte" (261), „erfüllt von der Sucht zu intrigieren" (285) usw.! Schlussendlich ist sie: „der Störenfried Berlau als eines der vielen ungewöhnlichen Erbstücke Brechts" (362).

Lohnenswert, die hier nur kursorisch und auswahlweise anzuführenden Urteile in ihrem jeweiligen Kontext, vor allem hinsichtlich ihrer vermeintlichen Quellenbegründung zu prüfen. Die vor Diffamierungen nicht zurückschreckende Dreistigkeit der Behauptungen lässt den Leser nahezu sprachlos stehen. Hier vorab nur zwei prägnante Beispiele: a) Die von der Verfasserin für „seltsam gespannt" befundene Stirn Berlaus (26) habe Brecht – so kurzerhand die Unterstellung – zum Gedicht *Die Maske des Bösen* („An meiner Wand hängt ein japanisches Holzwerk [...]")[11] angeregt (sic!), Begründung: „Ein Typoskript, dat. auf ‚28 –

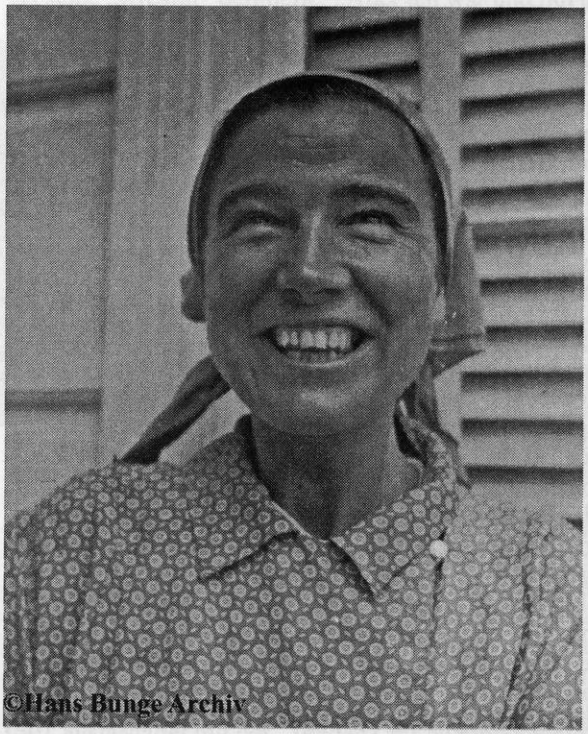
Sept 1942 S. M. – N Y' liegt in RBAHKOP [Ruth-Berlau-Archiv, Königliche Bibliothek Kopenhagen]." (223) Und b) Brechts berühmter kleiner Papp-Esel mit seinem Hinweisschild „Auch ich will dich verstehen!" (umfassendes Sinnbild des Brechtschen Begriffs von Einfachheit als höchstmögliche Stufe einer ästhetischen und wissenschaftlichen Verständigung über äußerst komplizierte sozialhistorische Sachverhalte und Prozesse) wird bemüht, um ihn als Pädagogikum für eine des Schreibens unkundige Berlau zu suggerieren (64).[12] Dank einer sich derart selbst diskreditierenden Perspektive ist man kaum mehr überrascht, dass Brechts signifikante Charakterisierung Ruth Berlaus (sie sei von allen Menschen, die er kenne, „der großzügigste," bezeugt wird eine „Unabhängigkeit des Geistes, die man kaum sonst findet," respektive ihr „Sinn für das Wichtige, der auch selten ist"),[13] durchs Prisma der Autorin gebrochen, als „Beschwörung" einer Kranken gedeutet wird: „Diese Würdigung war eigentlich eine Beschwörung. Die hier aufgezählten Eigenschaften waren bei Ruth Berlau nur aktiv, wenn sie gesund war." (269 f.)

Symptomatisch für derart negierende Deutungsversuche ist, dass auf Brechts wohl eindrücklichste, literarisierende Charakterisierung seiner Geliebten keinerlei Bezug genommen wird. So hatte er bereits im *Buch der Wendungen* festgehalten: „Me-ti sagte über die Liebe Lai-tus zu Kin-jeh: Lai-tus Liebe zu Kin-jeh reichte aus, ein ganzes Volk glücklich zu machen."[14] Nicht nur solcher Vorenthaltungen muss man bei der Lektüre gewärtig sein, selbst eine in jeder Hinsicht unverfängliche Äußerung eines Zeitzeugen wird dem Leser unvollständig, in ihrer Verkürzung negativierend wiedergegeben. So attestierte der Fotograf Theo Vonow seiner Kollegin: „Frau Berlau – eigentlich eine starke Persönlichkeit – sehr selbständig, aber auch gut und sehr geschickt im Labor;"[15] bezugnehmend auf dieselbe Zeugenschaft, ist in hiesiger Abhandlung nur von der nach den Theaterproben sofort selbst die Fotos entwickelnden Berlau die Rede, „wobei sie sehr geschickt gewesen sei" (237). Ist hier die „starke Persönlichkeit" Ruth Berlaus wie andernorts dem Leser notorisch unterschlagen, so wird sie ausgerechnet anlässlich von Brechts Tod behauptet. Dass dies ohne jeden Quellenbezug und in süffisanter Weise geschieht, bedarf keines Kommentars: „Sie war seltsam gefaßt. Keineswegs hatte sie den Kopf verloren. Ihre Fähigkeit zu Entscheidungen und Handlungen war erstaunlich. Heute weiß man, daß es zur Charakteristik der Borderline-Kranken gehört, oft auch in Krisen die Handlungsfähigkeit nicht zu verlieren." (359)

Nun setzt eine Biographie nicht die Zuneigung des Biographen zu der von ihm dargestellten Person voraus. Zwingend jedoch ist der Respekt ihr gegenüber, sprich der Respekt gegenüber den Quellen und damit auch gegenüber Brecht und seiner Liebe. Die Autorin sucht sich bereits in der Vorbemerkung zwei bezeichnende Freibriefe auszustellen. Herausgefordert werden solle zu einer Diskussion über eine Frau, „deren Würde und Kreativität außer Frage steht" und: „Endgültige Schlüssigkeit wird nicht in Anspruch genommen. Interpretationen verstehen sich ausdrücklich als Vermutungen." (11) Erstaunliche Voraberklärungen. Mehr noch, wenn man weiß, dass ursprünglich geplant war, das für den Buch-Einband gewählte Foto (Brecht und Berlau nebeneinandersitzend, Blick in Blick, aufgenommen etwa 1938 von Mogens Voltelen) dreifach zu spalten: nicht nur Brecht von Berlau, sondern auch Berlaus Gesicht![16] Unter dem Vorwand derart außer Frage stehender Würde und rein interpretatorischer Vermutungen unternimmt die Verfasserin im folgenden eine retrospektive Psychologisierung, einschließlich Er-

stellung einer Diagnose: „Borderline" und „Tendenz zur Schizophrenie" (9, 141, 359 u. a.).

Jeder seriöse Psychologe, Psychiater und Neurologe wird sich einer Diagnose und Pathographie für einen ihm nie vor Augen getretenen Menschen enthalten. Folglich wundert nicht, dass die jegliche Lebenssituation omnipräsent interpretierende bis fabulierende Autorin auf die Referenz eines Fachmannes verzichten muss. Statt dessen werden dem Leser auflagenstarke „populärwissenschaftliche Bücher" sowie die Internetseite www.bulimie-borderline.de empfohlen (14). Da auch keinerlei zeitgenössisches ärztliches Gutachten diesbezüglich vorliegt, werden als Indizien für das in der Fachwissenschaft durchaus umstrittene psychologische Konzept der Borderline-Persönlichkeitsstörung[17] angeführt: die schon als Kind „leicht die Kontrolle über sich" verlierende Ruth (Begründung: sie habe sich, weiß eine Mitschülerin anekdotisch zu berichten, schon damals wie eine Schauspielerin durchs Leben bewegt – was die Verfasserin nicht aufhält, einen „Hinweis auf längeren sexuellen Mißbrauch" zu vermuten, „dem das Kind Ruth vielleicht ausgesetzt gewesen" sei, 16 f.!), der unterstellte frühzeitige Gebrauch von „Drogen" (69), „Panik" (Begründung: Berlaus Reise von New York zu Brecht nach Santa Monica angesichts ihrer Schwangerschaft und einer operationswürdigen Krankheit sowie ein Anruf beim sozialen Hilfsdienst, registriert vom FBI, 189 f.), ein „verräterische[r] Perspektivwechsel" in literarischen Texten (sic!) (93, 204, 262), die Krankheit der Schwester, schließlich abrupter Wechsel von „Stimmungen" (69): „Plötzlich schlug ihre Stimmung um: Ihr fiel ein, daß sie es gar nicht nötig habe, sich an Brecht zu hängen." (326) Oder, wiederum im Ton allwissender Prosa: „Sofort schlug ihre Stimmung um. Ein Großer hatte an sie gedacht! Gleich machte sie sich daran, ihm [Ernst Bloch] einen Brief zu schreiben." (331)



Im Ergebnis eines derart pseudowissenschaftlichen Gebarens sieht man sich nicht einer Biographie, sondern dem Versuch gegenüber, Ruth Berlau und ihre

Liebe zu pathologisieren. Verblüffender Weise nimmt die Verfasserin bewusst oder unbewusst in Kauf, Brecht als einen Mann zu zeichnen, der weder im vollen Besitz seiner geistigen noch seiner sinnlichen Kräfte scheint.[18] „Es war wohl weniger Berlaus Schönheit und ihr Eifer, von ihm zu lernen, weshalb er seinen Widerstand aufgegeben hatte. Ausschlaggebender war wohl, daß sie Probleme aufwarf, die ihn als ungelöste Widersprüche der weiblichen Existenz interessierten. [...] in ihrem sprunghaften Wechsel von Stimmungen und Haltungen, den die Psychiatrie damals wahrscheinlich als schizophrene Tendenz bezeichnet hätte,[19] sah er wohl eher eine Vorform dialektischen Denkens." (68 f.) Die Beziehung zwischen Brecht und Berlau wird zum „behavioristischen Lehr- und Therapievertrag" deklariert (75, 77, 168), wobei – ganz im Gegensatz zur Autorin – „Brecht nicht bewußt gewesen zu sein" scheint, dass „eine Beziehung, in der Therapeut und Liebhaber[20] identisch" seien, „große Risiken barg" (78), ja dass ihn seine Beziehung zu Ruth Berlau in eine „Falle" geführt habe (194). Zu guter letzt die schlicht quellenignorante Unterstellung: „In allem, was Brecht schriftlich über Ruth Berlau hinterlassen hat, steht der Therapeut im Vordergrund" (78.). Wie sehr sich eine derartige Interpretation naturgemäß in ihrer eigenen Widersinnigkeit verstrickt, verdeutlicht der Umgang mit Ruth Berlaus wohl schmerzlichster Lebenserfahrung: die Erwartung des gemeinsamen Kindes und sein Verlust unmittelbar nach der Geburt. Man vernimmt, Brechts Liebe zu Ruth Berlau habe „mehr und mehr die Form" angenommen, „in der man ein Kind liebt, das sich aus Krankheits- oder anderen Gründen nicht in die Richtung entwickelt, die man selbst gewünscht hat" (170)! Wenige Seiten darauf ist zu erfahren: „Das heranwachsende Kind," gemeint ist jetzt das gemeinsame, noch ungeborene, „schien bei Brecht jedoch die Hoffnung zu erzeugen, daß die Last des symbiotischen Liebesverlangens [Ruth Berlaus], die sich bislang auf ihn konzentriert hatte, von einem anderen Wesen mitgetragen und damit leichter werden könnte" (188). Brecht mutet demnach – „Therapeut," der er erklärtermaßen ist – einem Kind ein Kind zu! Die vorgeblich grundtherapeutische Haltung Brechts sieht die Verfasserin durch dessen „Verankerung im Behaviorismus" (73) geprägt – so die staunenswerte Kunde, damit Brechts betont kritischen Blick auf eben diesen umstandslos übergehend[21] und um so kühner den eigenen freibeuterisch interpretierenden Habitus gegenüber Medizin und Psychologie fortsetzend. Folglich ist von manch einem der „üblichen behavioristischen Ratschläge" Brechts (229) zu erfahren oder gar von einem „behavioristischen Gedicht" (185)!

In Anbetracht der rundum pathologisierenden Sicht der Autorin ist die Mahnung des einzigen bekannten ärztlichen Gutachtens, ausgestellt am letzten Lebenstag Ruth Berlaus, zu zitieren: „Pat. [Patientin] will respektiert werden. Sonst wird sie gereizt und ist empfindlich und nachtragend."[22] Sachliches Nach-Tragen, quellengenaues Informieren wird angesichts dieser Abhandlung die Aufgabe Zukünftiger sein. Mit gebotener Kürze ein wenig davon hier im Voraus. Wer war Brechts Lai-tu, jene Schwester Kin-jehs, deren Liebe ausreichte, „ein ganzes Volk glücklich zu machen"?[23] Wer war diese faszinierende, schmerzvoll Liebende, der die Verfasserin (freilich ungetrübt ihrer „Nymphomanie"-These) eine „romantische Auffassung von der Liebe" (375), „symbiotische Liebeswünsche" zuschreibt, um zudem solch Jahrtausende alte Sehnsüchte herablassend in die Nähe „der trivialen Massenkultur" zu rücken (10, 64, 194)?[24] Kurz: warum hat Brecht ausgerechnet

diese Frau geliebt? Vier Quellen-Zeugnisse und ihre Wiederkehr in vorgestellter Publikation.

1) Berlau erlebt 1933 erstmals Helene Weigel auf der Bühne, von der Intensität ihrer Kunst ergriffen, beschreibt sie rückblickend in *Brechts Lai-tu*: „Irgendwoher aus dem Saal kam lautes Schluchzen. Jemand muß zusammengebrochen oder geboren worden sein, fuhr es mir durch den Kopf. Aber ich war doch auch genügend theatererfahren, um gleichzeitig begreifen zu können, daß solche Souveränität in der Kunst, solche Ergriffenheit nicht ohne Technik entsteht. Ich fühlte mich völlig schizophren. Immer wieder bei großen Augenblicken bemerke ich dieses Doppelbewußtsein."[25] Die Autorin gibt selbigen Vorgang (in indirekter Rede) quellenfälschend wieder. Berlau habe in diesem Moment „einen dramatischen Zwiespalt in ihrem Verhältnis zur Weigel" gespürt („Bewunderung" und „die weibliche Konkurrentin") (46 f.). In einer Fußnote just zum derart unterstellten „Zwiespalt" wird allein Berlaus markanter Satz vom „Doppelbewußtsein" zitiert („Immer wieder bei großen Augenblicken [...]"), d. h. gänzlich ohne seinen eigentlichen Kontext (62). Entgegen dieser fälschenden Unterschlagung ist das Berlausche Selbstzeugnis vom „Doppelbewußtsein" so betonenswert, da sich genau im doppelt-bewussten-Sein der Kunst gegenüber das eindrucksvolle, zugleich schmerzensreiche Vermögen Ruth Berlaus artikuliert, immer wieder Sinnlichkeit *und* Intellektualität *zusammenzuführen*, statt gegeneinander zu verkürzen. Eine Fähigkeit, die Brecht eminent fasziniert haben muss und der er sich in Berlaus Arbeit über Jahre vergewissern konnte – sei es die Arbeit der „Aufschreiberin,"[26] der Fotografin, Regisseurin oder unmittelbaren Mitarbeiterin.[27] Ungleich dessen ist charakteristisch für den Horizont hier besprochener Abhandlung, dass sie lediglich von einem lebenslangen „Grunddilemma" Berlaus weiß, dem „Widerspruch zwischen Gefühl und Verstand" (58). Nur folgerichtig, wenn dann noch ausgerechnet angesichts von Berlaus betörend hellsichtigem „gespräch [...] mit Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz"[28] behauptet wird, sie habe im Lenzschen *Hofmeister* „ihre eigene Tragödie" wiedergefunden (267)! Auch darauf ist nur mit Berlau selbst zu antworten, vorzugsweise mit dem von ihr so bündig geprägten Begriff von der „wohllust [...] bei bewusstsein"![29]

2) Dem sensationsheischenden, pathologisierenden Blick der Publikation gemäß, zitiert das Cover: „Als mein Gehirn sich spaltete / In Liebe – Haß / Meinte er, ich hätte ihn verraten." Ähnlich werden andere Zeugnisse eines intimen Schmerzes bemüht, ungeachtet dessen, ob es sich um private Notizen bestimmter Lebensphasen oder auch um nachweislich nicht abgesandte Briefe handelt, obgleich die Autorin davon ausgeht (319, 326 f., 342 f.). Nicht zitiert hingegen wird Berlaus eindringlicher Hinweis: „Wie und Warum – wird jeder sich fragen wurde Lai-Tu so?"[30] Geschweige denn hier würde auch nur annähernd eine Antwort gesucht. Eine höchst eindrückliche hat Berlau selbst gegeben, naturgemäß wurde diese weder für das Cover noch sonst des Zitierens würdig befunden: „Liebe kann man doch nicht mit sein Gehirn bestim- / men, liebe Meister. Und wenn – dann geht der Gehirn / ins zwei und ich will meine zusammenhalten: Ich will / dich lieben. Schon weill du liebenswürdig, *liebens / würdig* bist."[31]

3) In einer Tagebuchnotiz (15. Nov. 1953) befragt Berlau Ovid: „Warum bekommen wir [Frauen] nur / dass was du nennst ‚diese grosse genuss' wenn wir lieben. Ovid, natürlich wollte ich / gern mit dir geschlafen haben, sicher warst

Du wunderbar aber ich schreie: warum / gibts so wenig geistreiche männer?" Ihrer Liebe zu Brecht gedenkend, schließt Berlau: „Nur Kasiopeia hat dies alles überstanden – unerreichbar für hohn und spot und / schläge – unerreichbar bist du Kasiopeia für lügen und drech – das kalte mehr lokt / natürlich mein brennende schoss: Ute ist jetzt ein aufdringlische, überflüssige ge- / worden." Verkürzt zitierend und patho-psychologisch parat, weiß die Verfasserin diese „Dagbogsblade" (Tagebuchblätter) [32] als „kurze Depression" (316) zu (dis)qualifizieren.

4) Zum Schluss eine Briefnotiz Berlaus an Brecht, anlässlich seiner Überlegungen, den Buckower Wasserturm zu erwerben: „Bertolt: / Du, wenn du das Turm kauft / kauf dass in deine und meine / Nahme. Dass ist wigtig. / Und veilleicht wenn wir / 90 sind, wir zwei – lese / ich dir was schönes vor über / Kin-Je und seine lieblings- / schüler Lai-tu, oben, ganz / oben wo Stille ist und / der Himmel so nah / da lacht ja selbst / Kasiopeia / deine Kreatur. / Charité."[33] Aufschlussreich, dass die Verfasserin selbst noch diesen berührend intimen, wissenden Ton fälscht, da sie nicht versäumt, *hinzuerfindend* indirekt zu zitieren: Berlau „hoffte, daß sie ihm dort, wenn sie neunzig Jahre alt und einander wieder nähergekommen seien [sic!], etwas über ‚Kin-ye' und seine ‚Lieblingsschülerin Lai-tu' vorlesen könne" (299).

Jeder an Ruth Berlau ernsthaft Interessierte wird hinter derartige Konstruktionen und Fälschungen steigen, sofern er sich nicht einfach nur unangenehm berührt abwendet. Kaum zum Trost gereicht da, dass diese Publikation durch bisher unbekannte Detail-Daten zum Leben Berlaus (insbesondere erstmals umfangreicherer bibliographischer Angaben) verdienstvoll bisherige Wissenslücken schließt. Reißt sie doch auf der anderen Seite in ihrer frappierenden Unseriosität, ihrer offenkundig journalistischen Marktgesetzen folgenden Pathologisierung eine neue Forschungslücke: Ruth Berlaus Biographie wird erst noch zu schreiben sein. Und dies kann nur gelingen, wenn sich künftige Biographen bereit finden, ihr Subjekt – hier insbesondere die große Liebe zweier Menschen und die damit eminent verknüpfte schöpferische Leistung – ernst zu nehmen. Freilich setzte dies ein gehöriges Maß an Demut, Kunst des Verstehens und Verstehenwollens voraus.

ENDNOTES

1 HANS BUNGE, HRSG., *BRECHTS LAI-TU. ERINNERUNGEN UND NOTATE VON RUTH BERLAU* (DARMSTADT: LUCHTERHAND VERLAG, 1985); IM FOLGENDEN ABGEKÜRZT: „*BRECHTS LAI-TU*".

2 AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE, BERLIN, BERTOLT-BRECHT-ARCHIV 2166, TB 611-616; IM FOLGENDEN ABGEKÜRZT: "BBA".

3 GRISCHA MEYER, *RUTH BERLAU. FOTOGRAFIN AN BRECHTS SEITE* (MÜNCHEN: PROPYLÄEN VERLAG, 2003).

4 SIEHE U. A. FRANKA KÖPP, "'ABER ICH WAR UND BIN DEINE KREATUR.' RUTH BERLAUS UND BRECHTS LIEBE ALS GROSSE PRODUKTION," IN *WHO WAS RUTH BERLAU? BRECHT JAHRBUCH* 30 (2005), HRSG. STEPHEN BROCKMANN, 107-134; GRISCHA MEYER, „BERLAU FOTOGRAFIERT BEI BRECHT – EINE ZUSAMMENARBEIT (MEHR ODER WENIGER)," IN *WHO WAS RUTH BERLAU?*, A. A. O., 183-201; HANS CHRISTIAN NØRREGARD, „BRECHT UND SEIN KREIS," IN *EXIL IN DÄNEMARK. DEUTSCHSPRACHIGE WISSENSCHAFTLER, KÜNSTLER UND SCHRIFTSTELLER IM DÄNISCHEN EXIL NACH 1933*, HRSG. WILLY DÄHNHARDT UND BIRGIT S. NIELSEN (HEIDE: WESTHOLSTEINISCHE VERLAGSANSTALT BOYENS, 1993) 401-461; HANS CHRISTIAN NØRREGARD, „BERLAU OHNE BRECHT: ‚ALS ‚ROTE RUTH' GENOSS SIE SOGAR EINE GEWISSE BERÜHMTHEIT IM GANZEN LAND,'" IN *WHO WAS RUTH BERLAU?*, A. A. O., 149-181.

5 SIEHE U. A. HILTRUD HÄNTZSCHEL, "'WENN ICH IHN NUR NICHT SO SEHR BEGEHRTE!' RUTH BERLAU," IN

H. Häntzschel, *Brechts Frauen* (Reinbek: Rowohlt Verlag, 2002), 223-265; Sabine Kebir, „Alles oder nichts: Kin-je und Lai-tu," in S. Kebir, *Ein akzeptabler Mann? Brecht und die Frauen* (Berlin: Buchverlag Der Morgen, 1987), 120-133; John Fuegi, *Brecht & Co. Biographie.* Autorisierte, erweiterte und berichtigte deutsche Fassung von Sebastian Wohlfeil (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt 1997).

6 Ruth Berlau: [Texts], in *Who was Ruth Berlau? Brecht Jahrbuch* 30 (2005), Hrsg. Stephen Brockmann, 219-245.

7 [Ruth Berlau, unter Pseudonym] Maria Sten, *Ethvert Dyr kan det.* (Kopenhagen: Arthur Jensens Forlag, 1940). In deutscher Übersetzung: Ruth Berlau, *Jedes Tier kann es. Erzählungen.* Aus dem Dänischen von Regine Elsässer. Mit einem Nachwort v. Klaus Völker. (Mannheim: Persona Verlag, 1989).

8 Siehe Brecht im April 1940 an Ruth Berlau: "Von jetzt ab werde ich *immer* Deine Reise mitorganisieren. [...] von jetzt ab warte ich auf Dich, wohin immer ich komme, und rechne immer mit Dir. Und ich rechne nicht wegen Dir auf Dein Kommen, sondern wegen mir, Ruth." Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, Hrsg. Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei und Klaus-Detlef Müller (Berlin, Weimar, Frankfurt am Main: Aufbau-Verlag, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987-2000), Bd. XXIX, 163; im Folgenden abgekürzt: „BFA". Im Mai 1941 verlässt Berlau mit der Familie Brecht Helsinki, im Juni/Juli folgt die gemeinsame Fahrt von Wladiwostok ins US-amerikanische Exil.

9 BFA XIV: 438.

10 BBA 973/78.

11 BFA XII: 124.

12 Vgl. dagegen Kontext in *Brechts Lai-tu*, 108.

13 BFA XXX: 19 f.

14 BFA XVIII: 192.

15 Siehe hier die Aussage Theo Vonows, Erkundungen Werner Wüthrichs zu verdanken; wiedergegeben in Werner Wüthrich, *1948. Brechts Zürcher Schicksalsjahr* (Zürich: Chronos Verlag, 2006), 71.

16 Information liegt dem Ruth-Berlau-Archiv vor, Akademie der Künste, Berlin; im Folgenden abgekürzt: "RBA".

17 Siehe Niels Birbaumer, Carl F. Graumann u. a., Hrsg., *Enzyklopädie der Psychologie. Themenbereich D, Praxisgebiete. Klinische Psychologie*, Bd. 2 (Göttingen, Bern u. a.: Verlag für Psychologie Hogrefe, 1997), 810 f., 824 ff.

18 Indirekt konterkariert die Verfasserin damit ihr Anliegen, Brechts Mitarbeiterinnen vor diversen Spielarten einer Opferstigmatisierung zu schützen.

19 An anderer Stelle kommt die Autorin ohne konjunktivische Wendungen von "wahrscheinlich [...] bezeichnet hätte" aus, dort werden Diagnosen unterstellt (siehe 9, 209).

20 Siehe der bevorzugte minimierende Begriff "Liebhaber" (78, 194) statt "Liebende(r)."

21 Siehe dazu BFA XXI: 478: "Der Behaviorismus ist eine Psychologie, die von den Bedürfnissen der Warenproduktion ausgeht, Methoden in die Hand zu bekommen, mit denen man den Käufer beeinflussen kann [...]"!

22 RBA 304.

23 BFA XVIII: 192.

24 Siehe hier u. a. folgende Erklärung der Verfasserin: "Verhängnisvoll ist die Botschaft der trivialen Massenkultur, symbiotische Liebeswünsche auch für Erwachsene immer noch als Ideal hinzustellen, das mit gutem Willen leicht realisierbar sei." (10)

25 *Brechts Lai-tu*, 51.

26 Ruth Berlau hat sich statt "Schriftsteller" die Bezeichnung "Aufschreiber" ausbedungen, siehe u. a. RBA neu 112.

27 Ruth Berlau ist in verschiedener Intensität beteiligt an der Entstehung einzelner Stücke: *Dansen*, *Was kostet das Eisen*, *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*, *Die Gesichte der Simone Machard*, *Schweyk*, *The Duchess of Malfi*. Vor allem aber ist sie in Bertolt Brecht, *Werke: Grosse kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* (Berlin, Weimar, Frankfurt am Main: Aufbau-Verlag, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987-2000) bei folgenden Stücken explizit als Mitarbeiterin ausgewiesen: *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis*, *Der Hofmeister von Jacob Michael Reinhold Lenz* und *Die Tage der Kommune*. Hinzu kommt die gemeinsame Arbeit an den *Flüchtlingsgesprächen* und der *Kriegsfibel*, welche massgeblich dem Engagement Berlaus zu verdanken ist.

28 BBA 974/28-30, als Faksimile in *Who was Ruth Berlau?*, a. a. O., 243-245. Vgl. BFA XXX: 485-487. Berlau gelingt hiermit während ihres Aufenthalts in der Psychiatrischen Anstalt der Charité im März 1950 das ausserordentliche poetische Kunststück, mitten aus der eigenen existentiellen Gefährdung der Lenz-Figur eine Gesprächspartnerin, dem „Bruder" die „Schwester" (BBA 974/29) zur Seite zu stellen, die um das Phänomen weiss, gerade voller Sinnen- *und* Geisteskraft wie „von sinne[n]" zu wirken und ohne Heimat zu sein – dabei ohne jeden Widerruf beider Meister (Brechts) gedenkend (BBA 974/30)!

29 BBA 1194/20.

30 BBA 1186/22: Ruth Berlau an Bertolt Brecht, Berlin, 10. März 1951.

31 BBA 1194/36: Ruth Berlau an Bertolt Brecht, undatiert (1950er Jahre). Vollständig wiedergegeben in *Who was Ruth Berlau?*, a. a. O., 240.

32 BBA 971/37-38.

33 BBA 1186/20. Ruth Berlau an Bertolt Brecht, [Berlin], 1. April 1952.

Interview with Dr. Yusri Khamis. Conducted By Najaat Essa Hassen in Cairo, Egypt. 21 January 2007

Najaat Essa Hassen (Neh): *Wann beginnt die Brecht- Rezeption in Ägypten?*

Yusri Khamis: Anfang der sechziger Jahre begann die Aufführung der Stücke Brechts in Ägypten. Die erste Aufführung war *Die Ausnahme und die Regel,* eine Inszenierung von Farouk El- Damerdasch am El-Djeb Theater / Pocket Theater. Danach, Ende der sechziger Jahre, wurden *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* und *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, inszeniert vom Herrn Sa'ad Ardesch, aufgeführt. Die sechziger Jahre repräsentierten eine kulturell fruchtbare Zeit in Ägypten, denn in dieser Zeit erlebte Ägypten eine Übergangsphase vom Kapitalismus zum Sozialismus durch die Juli- Revolution. Deswegen kann man sagen, dass das epische Theater in die sozialistischen Gedanken der damaligen Übergangsphase in Ägypten passte.

Neh: *Was war neu und aktuell bei Brecht nach Ihrer Beobachtung?*

Yusri Khamis: Die Neuheit des Theaters Brechts war seine unmittelbare Darstellung der wichtigen Probleme, die uns angingen, wie die Frage der gesellschaftlichen Gerechtigkeit, die Enthüllung des Kapitalismus, die Verantwortung der Wissenschaft (*Galilei*) u. a.
Neh: *Gibt oder gab es ägyptische Schriftsteller, die von Brecht beeinflusst wurden?*

Yusri Khamis: Selbstverständlich, seitdem wir Brecht sowohl durch die Übersetzungen als auch durch seine Aufführungen kannten, haben wir Nutzen aus seinem Theater gezogen. Brecht gehörte nicht nur den Deutschen und Deutschland, sondern der ganzen Welt. Heute ist Brecht nicht nur ein Klassiker, sondern gleichzeitig eine Tradition. Einer von diesen Schriftstellern war Nadjib Sirur. Er ägyptisierte *Die Dreigroschenoper* unter dem Titel *König der Bettler.* Zurzeit beschäftigen wir uns mit der Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*, ohne sie zu ägyptisieren. Obwohl die Übertragung eines Stückes von einer Kultur zur anderen und von einer Sprache zur anderen diesem Stück etwas Neues von der neuen Kultur oder neuen Sprache hinzufügte, behielten wir in dieser Oper die brechtsche Struktur des Stückes.

Neh: *Warum wählen Sie* ***Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*** *in dieser Zeit aus?*

Yusri Khamis: Denn wir sehen voraus, dass eine neue brutale imperialistische Macht, unter Leitung Amerikas, die arabische Welt bedroht. Was im Irak und Afghanistan geschieht, erweckt unsere Sorge erneut. Eine solche Brutalität, die man heute im einundzwanzigsten Jahrhundert erlebt, lässt uns fragen; was würden Bach, Beethoven, Marx und Hegel da-

gegen sagen? Deswegen müssen wir diese Brutalität mit allen Mitteln bekämpfen. Der Schriftsteller kämpft mit seinem Bleistift, der Dichter mit seiner Dichtung, der Künstler mit seiner Kunst und der Soldat mit seinem Gewehr.

Neh: *Veränderten Sie den Originaltext der Oper?*

Yusri Khamis: In geringem Maß. Es war nur die Veränderung der Reihenfolge der Auftritte. Da der erste Auftritt zu lang war und kein großes Ereignis enthielt, übertrugen wir einen der vierten Auftritte der zweiten Szene, und zwar des Vielfraßes. Denn unser Zuschauer sucht am Anfang der Aufführung nach einem Ereignis. Die andere Veränderung war die Verkörperung von Gott. Da niemand bei uns (d.h. in der arabischen Welt) Gott oder einen Propheten auf der Bühne als Person verkörpern darf, ließ ich den Held selbst die Wörter Gottes sprechen. Solche ‚'Veränderungen" kann ich keine ‚'Veränderung" im engeren Sinn nennen, sondern es ist ein Respekt unserer Kultur und Tradition. Bei der Übertragung muss man die Tradition der Kultur seines Landes in Betracht ziehen.

Neh: *Wenn ein Satz im brechtschen Drama gegen die Religion ist, wie würde ein ägyptischer Regisseur darauf reagieren? Und wie reagieren die Zuschauer auf Brechts Haltung zur Religion? Gibt es Beispiele dazu?*

Yusri Khamis: Weder die Zensur noch die Zuschauer stehen gegen einen Satz. Aber sie stehen gegen Ereignisse oder eine offenbare Idee, die gegen die Religion sind.

Neh: *Darf der Übersetzer selbst die Sätze, die gegen die Religion sind, verän dern oder löschen?*

Yusri Khamis: Kann sein. Manchmal verändert der Schauspieler selbst so etwas.
Neh: *Sie hatten verschiedene Stücke von Brecht übersetzt. Stimmen Sie der Meinung zu, dass der Übersetzer ein Brechtkenner oder ‚'Absolvent der Brecht-Schule" sein muss?*

Yusri Khamis: Das Studium allein reicht nicht und ist manchmal ganz unwichtig. Wichtig ist, dass er Theaterkenner sein muss.

Neh: *Aber manchmal verursachen die Übersetzungen ein Missverständnis des Stückes. Zum Beispiel, es gibt ein Unterschied zwischen den Übersetzungen der Theologe Prof. Dr. Abdul Rahman Badawi und den Übersetzungen des Brechtkenners Prof. Dr. Abdul Gaffar Mekkawi. Was spielt eine Rolle bei diesen Missverständnissen?*

Yusri Khamis: Zunächst spielt das Interesse für den Text eine Rolle, dann die Überzeugung des Übersetzers von den Gedanken des Textes. Da Abdul Gaffar Mekkawi hauptsächlich ein Dichter ist und sich mit Brecht für eine Phase in Deutschland beschäftigte, umfassen seine Übersetzungen dichterische und harmonische Sprache. Deswegen möchte ich sagen, dass das Studienfach allein keine wichtige Rolle dabei spielt, sondern das sprachliche, geistige Niveau.

Neh: *Aber die Übersetzung eines Textes zum Theater unterscheidet sich von der Übersetzung zum normalen gedruckten Buch.*

Yusri Khamis: Ja klar, in dieser Situation braucht der Übersetzer eine Erfahrung auf dem Gebiet des Theaters, entweder durchs Studium des Theaters oder durch eigene Beschäftigung mit dem Theater.

NEH: *Für Sie, als Übersetzer, der das Theater nicht studierte, wovon unterscheidet sich der übersetzte Text, wenn Sie ihn zur theatralischen Aufführung übersetzen und wenn Sie ihn zum normalen Buch übersetzen?*

YUSRI KHAMIS: Die Übersetzung zum Theater lässt mich zunächst gründlich mit den Einzelheiten des Theaters beschäftigen. Hier muss ich die Begriffe oder die Redewendungen benutzen, die eine Reaktion des Zuschauers im Zuschauerraum erregen. Und das hängt von meiner Erfahrung auf dem Gebiet des Theaters und der Sprache ab. Hier muss der Übersetzer bewusst sein, welche Begriffe ins Theater passen können. Meine erste theatralische Übersetzung war ein Theaterstück von Peter Weiß. Seitdem beschäftigte ich mich mit dem Theater und seiner Technik. Unwillig und in indirekter Weise übte ich von dieser Zeit an den Beruf eines Dramaturgen aus. Den Text der Oper *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* hatte ich vorher drei Mal übersetzt. Aber als wir uns entschieden hatten, den Text am Theater zu spielen, musste ich ihn noch mal übersetzen. Ich resümierte die ganze Oper mit ihren Liedern. Wie gesagt, hier muss man in Betracht ziehen, welche Sätze der Schauspieler auf der Bühne sprechen kann und wie? Er braucht kurze und einfache Sätze.

NEH: *Wenn es Missverständnisse im Zusammenhang mit Brechtschen Aufführungen in Ägypten gäbe, wodurch würden sie verstärkt?*

YUSRI KHAMIS: Eigentlich hat man Brecht bis jetzt nicht wie sonst gespielt. Einige Aufführungen waren gut und näherten sich Brechts theatralischen Vorstellungen. Andere hatten sich vom Stil Brechts entfernt. Dann hatte jeder, besonders die jungen Theaterfachleute, etwas Neues eingefügt, was Brechts Theaterstruktur beschädigte.

NEH: *Galt das auch für die ersten Jahre der Brecht-Rezeption der sechziger Jahre?*

YUSRI KHAMIS: Nein, die Brecht-Rezeption der sechziger Jahre glichen Brechts Theater zu 100%.

NEH: *Wie adaptierte das ägyptische Theater Brechts Theater?*

YUSRI KHAMIS: Bei unserer Adaptionen Brechts behielten wir immer den Brechtschen Text im Original. Aber die epische Schauspielerei war und ist immer noch ein Problem, denn es ist nicht so einfach, einen dramatischen Schauspieler vom epischen Stil zu überzeugen. Und dieses Problem gibt es nicht nur bei dem Schauspieler, sondern auch bei dem Regisseur. Beide müssen Brechts Theaterstil nicht nur studieren, sondern auch ihn gut erkennen und erfassen.

NEH: *Folgte oder folgt das ägyptische Theater eher der aristotelischen Tradition oder eher dem Theater Shakespeares?*

YUSRI KHAMIS: Als wir Brechts Stücke gespielt hatten, war dies nicht der einzige Stil unseres Theaters. Beide Formen und vielleicht noch mehr, gab es parallel. Aber Brechts Theater war damals eine neue moderne Quelle für unser Theater. Bis Heute spielen wir das dramatische Theater und auch Shakespearesche.

NEH: *Wie behandelten die ägyptischen Regisseure bei ihren Brecht-Inszenierungen die drei Einheiten (Ort, Zeit und Handlung) in der Hinsicht Brechts?*

YUSRI KHAMIS: Die Praktizierung der drei Einheiten hängt von der Art der Aufführung ab.

Wenn sie dem dramatischen Theater gehört, findet man die Spuren dieser Einheiten im Sinne Lessings. Aber wenn sie dem epischen Theater gehört, findet man sie im Sinne des Brechtschen Theaters.

Neh: *Inwiefern unterstützen Sie die These, die besagt, dass Brecht vom Theater des Orients, besonders vom chinesischen Theater, viele artistische Züge übernommen hat?*

Yusri Khamis: Vom Theater des Orients nahm Brecht viel Nutzen. In Kairo hatte ich vor ungefähr zwei Jahren die Peking-Oper, die die älteste chinesische Oper ist, gesehen. Damals habe ich festgestellt, dass Brecht sehr viel von der chinesischen Schauspielerei genutzt hatte, wie z. B. die Benutzung der Szenentitel, Sätze die den Vorgang unterbrechen, um das Ereignis mehr zu erklären und den Verfremdungseffekt im Allgemeinen.

Neh: *Inwiefern hat das ägyptische Theater von der Verfremdungstechnik einen Nutzen gezogen?*

Yusri Khamis: Bei unseren Brechtschen Aufführungen hatte man diesen Effekt benutzt, aber mitunter auch unkorrekt praktiziert. Durch das Theater Brechts kannte unser Theater zunächst diesen Effekt. Aber heute praktiziert man ihn kaum.

Neh: *Gab es nach Ihrer Beobachtung eine Brechtinszenierung, die einen nennenswerten sozialen, politischen oder gesellschaftlichen Gewinn erbracht hat? Welche und inwiefern?*

Yusri Khamis: Theatralisch brachte Brechts Theater im Allgemeinen unseren Theaterfachleuten, Schriftstellern, Schauspielern und Regisseuren eine positive Weiterentwicklung. Sie wurden von ihm theatralisch und ‚technisch" beeinflusst. Aber gesellschaftlich brachte es nur eine Entwicklung des Bewusstseins und des Denkprozesses der Zuschauer.

Neh: *Wie Sie gesagt hatten, begann die Brecht-Rezeption in Ägypten in densechziger Jahren. Gab es Veränderungen dieser Rezeption in den beiden letzten Jahrzehnten?*

Yusri Khamis: Ja, denn Brechts Theater ist, meiner Meinung nach, mit den gesellschaftlichen und politischen Veränderungen verbunden. Heutzutage führen wir Brecht wieder auf, weil sich die politische Lage verändert hat. Wir sehen eine neue imperialistische Macht, die uns bedroht, voraus. Deswegen müssen wir unsere Leute durchs Theater davor warnen.

Yusri Khamis: In den sechziger Jahren war die Rezeption überzeugend. Aber heute ist sie es leider nicht.

Neh: *Was fehlt ihr heute?*

Yusri Khamis: Ihr fehlt heute die fruchtbare und richtige Praktizierung der epischen Elemente des Theaters Brechts.

DIRECTING BAAL IN CALGARY

MICHAEL FENTON

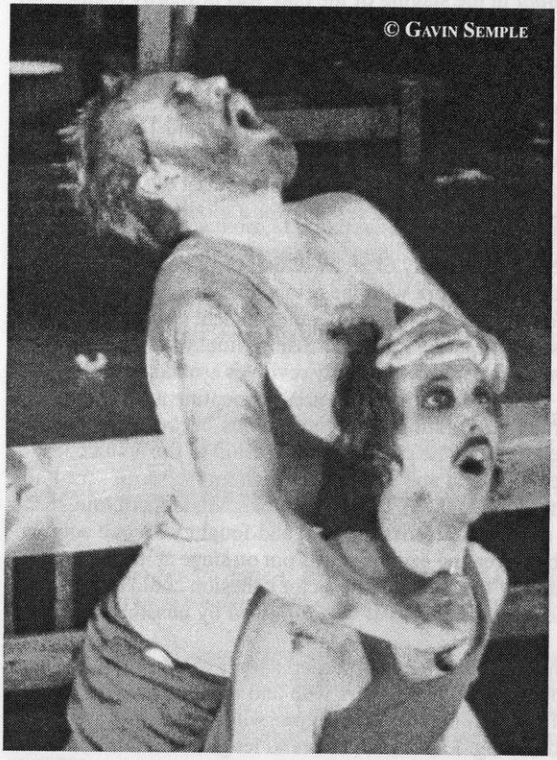
In the fall of 2006 I directed Brecht's *Baal* for the main stage season at the University of Calgary. The play was presented by the Department of Drama in the University Theatre from October 24 – November 4. The translation used in the production was that by William E. Smith and Ralph Mannheim. What drew me to this translation was the provocative imagery of the poetry and the contemporary feel presented through the language of the text. My research and analysis of *Baal* in the staging of the play was primarily focused on the performers understanding - through body and mind - the multiple levels of complexity within the script's background and intention, while having the design concentrate on bringing the aesthetics of the piece to a contemporary audience. The play's historical connection to the dramatic style of Expressionism reinforced my desire to implement this style, a style that was foreign to most actors involved. Through my research and analysis I concluded that the most effective way to make this piece pertinent to a modern audience was to contemporize its design and some language; I felt the psychological mindset of young Brecht telling this story in 1918 Germany would be too inaccessible for a modern audience and, therefore, not effective in addressing its intentions.

Dealing with fourteen performers, a dichotomy of styles and a script heavily steeped in religious ritual and conviction, I started my work with the actors knowing that a strong ensemble must be formed. Drawing on my experience of directing ancient Greek drama, and the primitive nature of Baal's quest for pleasure, I felt addressing ritual would be the most effective means of creating this bond. Since *Baal* so heavily revolves around death, significantly, the death of a fertility god, I decided the ritual of burial, lamenting and desecration of burial should be explored. Further exploration with connections between the ancient times and the present were explored through the creation and worship of the archaic fertility symbol that was attached to the deity Baal and is found throughout the script - the bull. I had the actors generate their own individual bulls and then amalgamate them into small groups, eventually leading to two rival animals that mingled and fought with one another. A version of the work done in the bull-creating exercises was put on stage at the very opening of the play, so the fertility symbol of the deity and the actor cohesion could be apparent from the beginning. The ensemble work of the ritual was followed by ensemble work of the Expressionist dramatic style.

My Expressionistic acting intentions led to a much-needed actor exploration of the Expressionistic style, since I was working with performers who had mostly studied and created within the style of realism. I am familiar with the Expressionist dramatic style and hold an affinity for it in terms of directing. I asked the actors to let go of all inhibitions in this exploring process so they might find unique and effective ways to present their emotions when the text calls for it, and to be able to harness this emotion and make it come alive within the world of the play. Utilizing the ensemble work and melding it with the Expressionistic style generated by the actor's experimentation encouraged the actors as a group to interact and play with each other, and ultimately produce work that physicalized and vocalized their emotional intentions. Through our exploration the extremes were found within both styles and incorporated in movement and voice; this being harnessed allowed us to tackle a complex script that demands extreme portrayal of emotion, violence and sexuality. The sexual nature of the script encompasses a broad spectrum from subtle to overt sexual behaviour ranging from romantic caresses to brutal rape. I decided to keep the large amount of sexuality and punctuate the brutality by keeping it onstage and not hiding it, as Baal and his cohort's endeavours needed to be shown for character intentions, which lead to clearer audience understanding of the text.

The title, not the content of the book *Chaos According to Plan*, by John Fuegi, has been

the strongest influence on my theatre directing in regards to moving actors through space. Presenting a seemingly chaotic setting that encourages and promotes creativity allows performers to explore their characters, and find a stronger understanding of the text. I find that telling actors where to move to in the initial process of blocking stunts creativity and hampers and delays the performer's comprehension of the script. This freedom allotted to the actors is a façade created by me to serve the purpose of my artistic agenda, an agenda that has been meticulously thought out and designed by me to give the appearance of chaos; therefore, the chaos is being used for its creative benefits and is just a tool to attain the final goal of a polished piece.



With the research done and a strong notion of what the final picture will look like, I set the actors out into a rehearsal process that did not seem structured but in fact is. By letting the actors find their own blocking I am able to have the actors invest a stronger interest and passion for the piece - a sense of pride and ownership. Often the picture created by the performers is not practical or as interesting as I feel it could look or sound so I maneuver, coach, and direct them into stronger images and emotion. Another major benefit I find by using this planned organic blocking is that the performers are building on their character development through it; they are being encouraged to play with their discoveries of the characters. Individual character development and the relationships between these characters was started in the earliest phase of the rehearsal process with the creation of the ensemble, where the performers were sometimes asked to create within the group, through the characters they would be performing on stage. When it became apparent that a performer could not grasp a conceptual idea of a character or was struggling with ideas, I would try to help them by giving information that I had attained through research, information that usually related to the deity Baal, Christianity, the life and influences of young Brecht and the understanding of the German mindset at the end of WWI.

My working experience with my design team was positive; I think the play benefited from having so many people involved. There were seven designers in total: a head (set) designer, three costume designers, a lighting designer, a sound designer and a make-up designer. They were all in constant contact with the head designer and myself. The head designer and I wanted to work in a team, which created a large variety of artistic input and

generated a constant barrage of new ideas; we had short but frequent meetings to bounce ideas off of each other. A myriad of ideas were brought up and many were discarded after we felt we had progressed past them, but a lot of them were kept in small eclectic bits that were conjoined together to build upon the overall image of a circus. This circus of life had all types of creatures, some which had mythological characteristics and others that were very real. An eclectic portrayal of life that parallels the influences of young Brecht's life and desires is highlighted within the design. We wanted a world where nothing is hidden and the complexity of Brecht's influences are shown intensely, which is visually and aurally reflected through the designs leaping from natural to manmade.

The powerful yet beautiful build of the set focused on nature and simplicity; the wooden and raw set allowed us to embody the deity Baal through his attachment with nature and raw amoral actions. The vast openness of the set allowed for multiple acting spaces, which corresponded with the jumping episodic structure of the scenes. The ramps and upstage wooden flats created many entrances and exits. The entrances through the flats were narrower and created a feeling of pressure; the pressure on the platform increased when the ramps were put-up, because it confined the actors to a smaller space.The head designer and I played a lot with the idea of a growing mess onstage, that would comment on Baal's declining physical health and ultimate demise. The open spartan stage at the onset of the production was important for the growing degeneration throughout the play's progression, because it allowed us to fill the space with the remnants of Baal's debauchery on his way to death. The actors wading through the fallen debris provided a very real timeline of degeneration in the world of the play. Hiding nothing from the audience focused the significance of the piece on the acting and made it very clear that we were not attempting to lure them in with realism, but forced their suspension of disbelief; however, a disbelief that was still human and not in the world of the gods.

The lighting design played a crucial role in making each scene distinct from the other so it was contrasting and prominent, highlighting that each scene in the world of the play was very different from one another. The strong use of light and roller sounds on the shutters was incorporated to enhance the idea of nothing being hidden, but obvious changes in the world of the play. Changing with various scenes, but more indicative of change in emotion and desire, the projections were used to encapsulate an all-encompassing feeling, which pushed forth the emotional elements within the scenes. The visuals portrayed were influenced by scenes of nature and by the German Expressionist artists Grosz, Neher, Beckmann, Kokoschka and Schiele; artists who exemplify in their work the emotional beauty of nature, the rejection of society after WWI and the hidden sexual desires and happenings of German popular culture.

This popular culture was strongly embodied into the costuming of the actors as well, but held its portrayal within the twentieth-century. Fear of distancing the audience's understanding of the text with a script that is already eclectic in its movement, and seeing the same thematic aspects relevant in contemporary society, the head designer and I decided it would be more intriguing and beguiling to portray the aesthetics of the costumes by using history as a vehicle, which would comment on the modern western world in general. In terms of nudity, the lack of costumes seemed stagy and ineffective and was discarded in our design progression; I think the play has a stronger affinity towards non-sexy clothing and a tendency towards softer colour. It was very clear between the designers and myself that an ominous foreboding presence was not to be communicated through the costume's design aesthetics, as the play is just a touch dark on its own and does not need to be overwhelmed through the design aspect, which I thought would detract from the text and play into the realm of stereotype: black clothing equals bad people.

I wanted the sound to come from a diverse array of sources and used any resource I felt did the job most effectively. From the initial ensemble work the performers had been

creating bull, wind and rain noises, which I implemented with and without canned sound. A variety of canned sound for nature was found and utilized to incorporate the highs and lows of the various storms; the set itself also gave the actors the tool of wood to play with. The canned music of the piece was not as eclectic as the costumes, but instead incorporated the various melodies you would hear from this vicinity's popular culture; a jarring reminder to the audience that what they are seeing onstage is relevant to this locale.

The make-up was experimented with on a grand scale and was trying to reflect unhealthiness and elevated emotion. The natural white pallor of the cast with dark thick circles around the eyes seemed the most effective and avoided a demon or Kabuki look; however, it did bring out a more "gothic" look to the performers, which was acceptable because it fit into that unknown underworld type that Wedekind was so fascinated with, which in turn fit into Brecht's infatuation of the innocence of people on the fringe of society.

Having no real scruples in changing the wording of scripts, I took the liberty to modernize some wording of the text. In order to localize the play and draw a stronger connection with the audience I felt the text needed to be slightly altered, but still provide the embodiment of Brecht's Germany. Post-WWI Germany exudes from this text in death and rejection of society, and to lose that flavour would not only be impossible but shameful. Most changes were subtle word adjustments that brought the world of the play to the Calgary area. The most frequent of this example would be the change from the word schnapps to whisky, an obvious identity change of the common booze of Germany with the popular hard-alcohol of Southern Alberta, Canada. The head designer and I talked frequently about the type of artist today that might embody the artist Baal. What genre of music, visual or dramatic arts of today in North America exemplifies the artistic style and societal actions of the character Baal? We never came up with a solid answer, instead we found aspects through a variety of types of artists that typified Baal--once again eclectic. I had read reviews that made Baal a punk rocker and of course David Bowie himself personified him through the rock and roll image. I understand the choices made by these directors, however, they never completely embodied Baal enough for me, nor were they modern enough. I decided that one of Brecht's poems that he sang needed to be sacrificed for a modern rap song. Hardcore gangbangers of rap are the only artistic style that Baal possesses in our contemporary society. Calgary is not the heartbeat of rap music, but it has a huge following here from the indigenous population to newly arrived immigrants. On a contrasting note I also wanted to show the closest resemblance to the original version I could by having one of the poems spoken as a folk epic in Brecht's native tongue of German; since the actor playing Baal spoke German this was not a problem. Using a dichotomy of poetic genre and language, I wanted to further instill Baal's ability to be relevant in a modern setting.

In order to have the actors understand the complexity of the script and be able to present it onstage they needed to experiment inside the world of the play. Exercises of dramatic style encompassing voice and movement were paramount in the actor's dissection of the text. As much time as possible was taken to play and experiment with meaning and development of character throughout the rehearsal process. The design was centered on a modern viewpoint, but still lent itself to the post-WWI time period and was timeless in its portrayal of nature. Through actor-generated sound, tableau, and individual scene construction, the play was geared to work as an ensemble and to take big risks.

Marxism Isn't Dead ; It's Just Sleeping.An Interview with Oskar Eustis Artistic Director, New York Shakespeare Festival. Conducted By W. Stuart McDowell. 27 March 2007

McDowell: *You've called* ***Mother Courage*** *the greatest play of the 20th century. What about the 21st century: do you think the play will survive, especially in light of the fact that Brecht was a Marxist and Marxism appears to be dead?*

Eustis: Oh no, Marxism isn't dead, it's only sleeping. Listen: there's a fundamental insight that Marx had which is that…the inevitable pressure of society is going to be to give power and ownership to people that actually create value. And that the present phase of the private appropriation of collective creation is a temporary phase in the history of man. Now many of the specifics of what Marx saw have not worked out the way he saw them. Big surprise! … But what I think he was right about was that ultimately the people who produce value and actually do the work will have control over the things they produce, or it will require increasing amounts of force to prevent it from happening. And I think that prediction turned out to be very accurate, in that the 20th century was the bloodiest century in the history of the planet and the 21st century is off to a pretty good start. … There are lessons to be learned from what happened, but to me those lessons are not the irrelevance or death of Marxism.

McDowell: *What about Brecht in America today, in the 21st Century. Do you see his work being more produced or less produced?*

Eustis: I think the great plays are going to be produced a lot. I think *Courage* will be done. We've already have seen major productions of *Galileo* and I think we will see more. I think the parable plays have been having really a quite healthy life: *Good Person, Caucasian Chalk Circle*... I think that we've had occasional really interesting examinations of the *Lehrstuecke*, which to me are probably the most interesting plays that are not produced widely. So I think that Brecht's never really going away and we're going to continue to see interest in his work because the questions he was asking, and what the work addresses are questions that are completely relevant.

McDowell: *What about Brecht's theories, do you think they are a hindrance, especially for actors, or can be a hindrance for them?*

Eustis: Sure, partly because the theories about acting have a huge amount to do with the specific theatre that he was writing for and the tradition he was coming out of, which was a highly Romantic, highly naturalistic bourgeois theatre and he was writing a reaction to that. And so *reading* Brecht's theories tends to be really not useful for actors. Occasionally it is, but mostly they are intellectual provocations. But that's true of any sort of acting theory; that acting is such a hands-on profession that is passed on from teachers to students, from senior actors to younger actors, from directors to actors, in a very hands-on way.

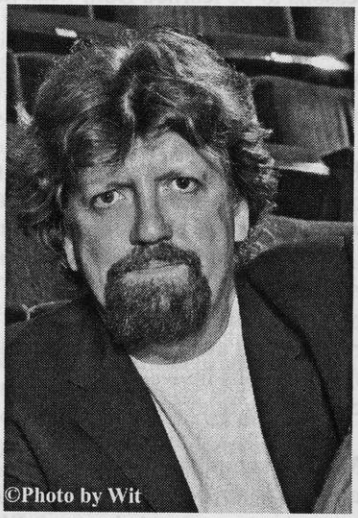
And the reason we have such a powerful Stanislavkian tradition in this country

is that we have a tradition dating from the mid 1920s when Boleslavsky stayed behind (in America) when the Moscow Art Theatre went back to Moscow (during its tour) in '24. We have a tradition of great teachers that has been really unbroken since then of Stanislavski's work, and then we even had Stella Adler, going over and getting it directly from Stanislavski himself and bringing it back.

We don't have the equivalent live chain of hands-on performative tradition with Brecht. Carl Weber is almost the only one of Brecht's circle who actually had anything kind of pedagogical impact in the United States - and he taught directing. So we don't have that same chain. So it's harder to figure out how to make those theories useful to actors. But I think again that as intellectual provocations they're still immensely useful, and then the process of actually translating them into practice is going to be an ongoing exploration.

McDowell: *What about directors. Do you think that Verfremdung – alienation or defamiliarization or whatever you care to call it – do you think that any of these theories can be useful for directors or others?*

Eustis: No question. I think that you have a lot of directors, from Peter Sellars to Robert Woodruff to George Wolfe who have been definitely influenced by theoretical aspects of Brecht's work. Again, how they've translated that into the practice varies widely because it's not part of a hands-on performative tradition, but it is as intellectual inspiration that I think it's been extremely influential.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McDowell: *Let's talk about the 2006 New York Shakespeare Festival Mother Courage at the Delacorte in the summer of 2006. What were you proudest of in the final production?*

Eustis: (Meryl Streep's performance of "The Song of Great Capitulation" was probably my favorite few minutes of theatre that I've seen in the last decade. And it was a combination of Tony, and Brecht of course, and Meryl, and Jeanine Tesori (the musical director), really putting together something that felt to me simultaneously completely true to Brecht in its content, in its jaggedness, in its *verfremdet* effect and yet at the same time utterly American. And it was tremendously smart and tremendously emotional, and highly performative, and I just thought: brilliant. And for me, that was that was the place where all the different elements all came together and worked just perfectly.

McDowell: *How about humor in Brecht. How valuable do you think it is?*

EUSTIS: Very valuable. There's some very funny stuff. I think the scene between Meryl and Austin (Pendleton, the Chaplain), the wood chopping scene: a beautiful Brechtian scene that doesn't feel dry in that way that we have a stereotype of Brecht, but is tremendously juicy and vital, but alienated, and precisely the way he wanted it. You were *thinking about* what the Chaplin was saying, not just caught up in it.

MCDOWELL: *How much Brecht have you staged as a director?*

EUSTIS: The only Brecht I've directed was the *Threepenny* I did many years ago at the Eureka Theatre. But I spent a considerable amount of time in the old East Berlin in the 1970s; my mother was on the faculty of Humboldt University, and I became friends with Heiner Mueller, who was just a dissident playwright at the time, but a very impressive one. That was the period in which I received my major Brecht inoculation.

MCDOWELL: *What about the future? You and Brecht? Are there plays that you want to do yourself?*
EUSTIS: I defiantly want to do a *Galileo*. I'm going to be trying to talk Mr. Kushner into reviving [the script]. He did an adaptation of three of the *Lehrstücke* at NYU about 20 years ago, that were just brilliant. I'm going to try and talk him into letting us reviving that. I would love to do *A Good Person.* Actually, there's a lot I'd love to do! I would love to do a *Baal.*

MCDOWELL: *One last general, broad question. What role do you see Brecht playing in the future for all of us, especially Americans?*

EUSTIS: I think he will be a continual touchstone, and a reminder of the activist possibilities of a political theatre. For me - I have a picture of Helene Weigel's picture facing me right now on my wall and the Berliner Ensemble curtain on the other side of the wall – the example he holds up is an artist who decides their work is about more than just their work, but that their work is also about changing the world and participating in the life of society, and that there's no writer we have in theatre who did that more thoroughly and passionately and deeply than Brecht. And to me that's an example everyday.

MCDOWELL: *Thank you Oskar. Take care.*

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

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IN THIS ISSUE:

MUSIC, MUSIC, MUSIC: DRESDEN DOLLS, BOB DYLAN, ST. JOAN OF THE STOCKYARDS, SPRING AWAKENING, MAHAGONNY, HAPPY END...

ESSENTIAL INTERVIEWS: TOM KUHN, SIMRAN KARIR, OSKAR EUSTIS, YUSRI KHAMIS, FRANZ WITTENBRINK, ALEXANDER DOERING, MIMI LIEN, WALTER BILDERBACK

IN MEMORIAM: GEORGE TABORI

PERFORMANCE CASEBOOK: LIFE OF GALILEO

IBS LOOKS FORWARD TO SYMPOSIUM 2010 - IN HAWAII!!

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