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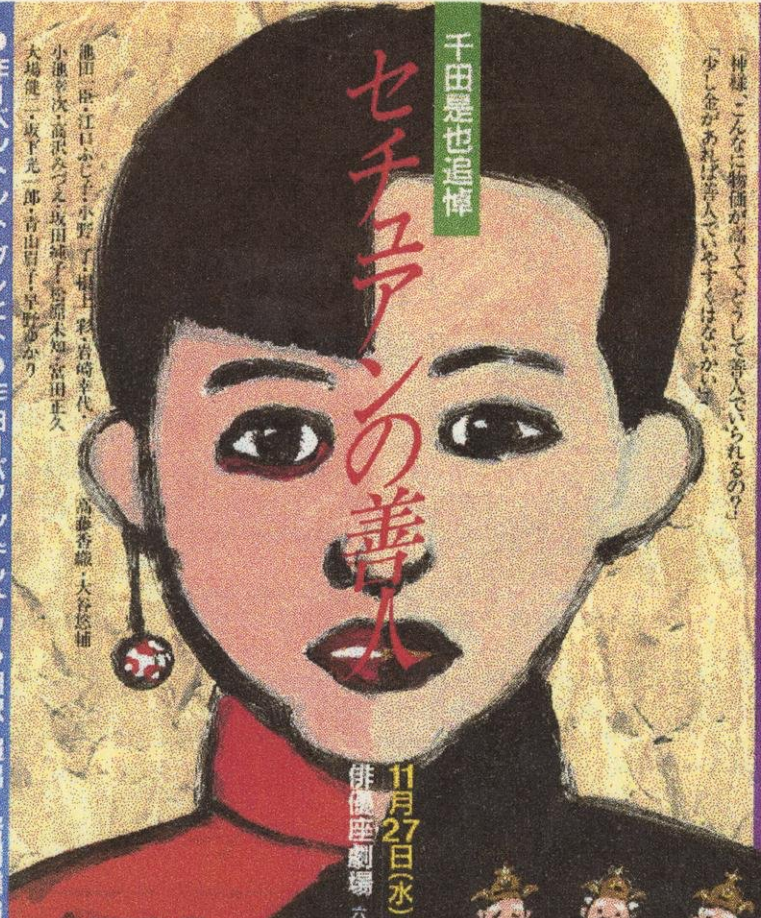
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# COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society

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セチユアの善人

千田是也追悼

●現代劇センター真夏座第87回公演 ●協力 千田ゼミナール・フレイトの会

●作 川ハルト・フレイト ●作曲 川ハルト・テッサウ ●翻訳・演出 川吉海雄治


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11月27日(水)ー12月1日(日)

俳優座劇場 六本木03(3)470-8880



# INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY COMMUNICATIONS

Volume 26 Number 2

December 1997

Editor:

GUDRUN TABBERT-JONES  
Department of Modern Languages  
Santa Clara University  
Santa Clara, CA 95053

Tel. (408) 867-2970  
Fax. (408) 741-0532  
Email [gtabbertjone@scuacc.scu.edu](mailto:gtabbertjone@scuacc.scu.edu)

Associate Editor:

FREDERICK TOLLINI SJ  
Theatre & Dance Department  
Santa Clara University  
Santa Clara, CA 95053

Tel. (408) 554-6861  
Fax. (408) 554-5199  
Email [ftollini@scuacc.scu.edu](mailto:ftollini@scuacc.scu.edu)

Technical Assistant, Production & Composition  
C. Roy Jones Email [royjones@aol.com](mailto:royjones@aol.com)

All Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor. *Communications* welcomes manuscripts relating to all facets of Brecht's work. Manuscripts should conform to the *MLA Style Manual* and should not exceed 7,500 words. You are encouraged to include with your manuscript the text in Word Perfect or Microsoft Word on IBM formatted 3½ or 5¼ diskettes.

The Editor wishes to thank Professor Carl Weber, Drama Department, and Professor Russell Berman, Chair of the German Department, Stanford University, for their support.

See the inside back cover for information on subscriptions and membership. Membership in the IBS includes subscriptions to both *Communications*, published twice a year, and *The Brecht Yearbook*. The Managing Editor of *The Brecht Yearbook* is Maarten van Dijk, University of Waterloo, 200 University Ave. West, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, N2L 3G1

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IBS Officers:

**Michael Morley, President**

School of Humanities, Flinders University, Bedford Park, South Australia 5042

**Siegfried Mews, Vice-President**

Dept. of Germanic Languages, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC 27599, USA

**David Robinson, Secretary/Treasurer** (Elect)

Dept. of Literature and Philosophy, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA 30640, USA

**Gudrun Tabbert-Jones, Editor, *Communications***

Dept. of Modern Languages, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA 95053, USA

For International Brecht Society news, information, and to exchange ideas, visit our Home Page  
<http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/german/brecht/>

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Editor's Report

In 1998 we will be celebrating Brecht's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. The beautifully edited *drive b:*, special edition of *Brecht Yearbook / Theater Heute* has appeared. As Marc Silberman states in his introduction, coming to terms with Brecht, the writer, his texts, and the impact of his personality at the threshold of the millennium is the main theme of that issue.

Marc's introductory remarks apply to some extent to this issue of *Communications* as well. Many of the contributions published in the PERFORMANCE REVIEWS and ARTICLES sections address these pressing issues. How do we interpret Brechtian texts in a changed socio-political environment? How can they speak to audiences in different cultural settings? What does *Arturo Ui* mean in an Israeli context, or *Mother Courage* in Korea? What do directors think of existing translations? These and other pertinent questions emerge as theater practitioners deal with Brechtian texts.

The list of Brecht performances and related events in Germany, in the US, and elsewhere in the UPCOMING EVENTS section is impressive, even though it is not complete. The editor recently learned about Brecht productions and events in Asia and in South America. There is a "Last Minute Announcement" of a Brecht Symposium in Brazil in the back of this issue. Brecht-fever everywhere? A new generation of theater practitioners, academics, and audiences shows no sign of *Brecht-Müdigkeit* and explores his works in terms of current problems. Brecht would chuckle if he were around – and write a poem or two for the occasion.

The editor wishes to acknowledge and thank those who helped with this edition of *Communications*: My thanks to Marc Silberman, Siegfried Mews, and Vera Stegmann who provided me with a steady supply of information. My thanks also to Erdmut Wizisla who sent the newest from Berlin, and to Roy Jones for his technical assistance.

I would like to remind readers to—please!—send me information regarding Brecht productions in the US, as well as other non-German speaking countries. To see how directors coming from different cultural backgrounds and traditions interpret Brecht's texts and make them speak to their audiences is crucial to the discourse on Brecht and his significance in our global culture.

My special thanks to Shimon Levy for sending me his fascinating review of the *Arturo Ui* production in Israel, and to Tatsuji Iwabuchi for the beautiful poster on the front cover announcing the performance of *The Good Person of Szechwan* in Tokyo, Japan.

*Gudrun Tabbert-Jones*  
*Santa Clara University, California*

## OFFICERS' REPORTS

### President's Report Reflections on John Willett's Birthday Party

Although Christ Church was John Willett's Oxford alma mater, the venue for his 80th birthday celebration turned out not to be the Great Hall with its portraits of Henry VIII, John Locke, Lewis Carroll and W. H. Auden, but the more modest surroundings of his former primary school of the same name. Christ Church, Hampstead, was to be reached not by British Rail from Paddington, but by Underground to Hampstead Station, and thereafter...?? Well, even with the benefit of a photocopied section of London from A to Z, a few of the guests passed and re-passed each other as they skirted (what eventually turned out to be) the goal of their several excursions, wandering via the aptly named Flask and Well Walks and New End (I seem to recall having done this sort of thing back in 1964 at the time of my first expedition to Windmill Hill), before finally chancing upon the right entrance to the cozy assembly rooms, where the guests were met, the feast set and the first notes of a merry din could be discerned.

As Frank Muir points out in his irreverent companion to social history; "There is an English proverbial saying that your schooldays are the happiest days of your life. It is not known," he goes on to add, "what man, or what sort of man, first uttered the sentiment," but there has been at least one helpful suggestion: "Show me the man who has enjoyed his schooldays and I will show you a bully and a bore." The source of the quote is another Morley—in this case, the actor Robert. I don't actually know whether John and Anne had chosen the venue to exorcise educational demons, or as an evening's diversionary detour à la recherche du temps perdu. What is entirely clear is that the subject of the celebrations could never be described as either a bully or a bore, so he gives the lie to the Morley view on both counts.

Among the guests were friends and colleagues from most of the areas of John's activities: journalism, the war, the theatre, music, painting and publishing. Others had telephoned their best wishes or their regrets that, through illness or travel difficulties, they could not be there: Martin Esslin, for example, sent a generous and playfully turned 'Bearbeitung' of Brecht's poem "Besuch bei den verbannten Dichtern," which I hope we can reprint in a future *COMMUNICATIONS*. My predecessor as President, Antony Tatlow, had flown in from Ireland; Robyn Archer from Australia via Montpellier; and I from Australia via the States. And while it is usual to note that, on such occasions, "the tributes flowed thick and fast," it would be more correct to note that the flowing was more of the liquid refreshment variety.

Not that there was a dearth of tributes—a droll and neo-Brechtian pastiche written and performed, with thespian élan, by John's former editor and friend at Methuen's, Geoffrey Strachan; a bracket of Eisler/Tucholsky and Hollaender songs, including the entirely apposite "Anna-Luise," by Robyn Archer and me; and two quite dissimilar, yet appropriate parodies of "Surabaja-Johnny" from Robyn Archer and director Di Trevis, in which Volta House/Le Thil-Manneville Johnny was invoked in terms in keeping with his effect on their careers, though not necessarily on their respective love-lives.

Jet-lag, the rapid approach of midnight and ex-President Tatlow's version of the Mafia offer you can't refuse ("my birthday begins at midnight, so we have to continue into June 25" was the cry,

by turns plaintive and persistent) all combined to send me and a few less hardy souls off into the maze of Hampstead streets in search of that mythical creature, the post-11.30 London taxi. But the festivities continued ("Erstens vergeßt nicht kommt das Fressen/Zweitens der, mmm/ ... Viertens Saufen laut Kontrakt"), on and off, for the rest of the week, closing with a lunch at Volta House on Sunday which saw the world premiere for mixed and unmatched voices of composer Dominic Muldowney's mini-cycle tribute. We all wish John a further ten years of typical activity, so that those of us who can stand the pace might join him for a repeat performance in 2007.

*Michael Morley*

*Flinders University, Bedford Park, South Australia*

### **Vice-President's Report**

As the centenary of BB's birth, which has preoccupied many of our colleagues, approaches, I am pleased to announce that the IBS will do its share to contribute to the celebrations of BB virtually all over the world. The latest issue of the quarterly *Dreigroschenheft*, a fairly reliable source of information, lists some of the events in honor and commemoration of BB that are taking place around the globe, and this issue of *Communications* likewise includes information about such events that range from theater productions, exhibits, special courses offered, and graduate student colloquia to a NEH seminar in Berlin during the summer of 1998.

As to the specific contribution of the IBS, I am, of course, speaking of the international symposium at the University of California San Diego that is going to take place from 28 to 31 May 1998 and that has been announced in previous issues of our journal. The planning committee consisting of Marc Silberman of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, long-time editor of the *Brecht-Jahrbuch/Brecht Yearbook*; John Rouse of UCSD, former VP of the IBS and local arrangements representative; Florian Vassen of the Universität Hannover; and myself has been hard at work for more than a year, and I am pleased to say that, at the time of this writing, the foundations for a successful conference have been laid. Any colleague who has ever been engaged in organizing a conference of this magnitude—we are expecting approximately seventy-five active participants—knows that there is a bewildering host of details to be taken care of. But the cautious optimism that I expressed in the preceding issue of *Communications* has been replaced by confidence in our ability to overcome the remaining hurdles. To provide a very brief progress report: we have constructed the program in terms of panels and informed prospective speakers and moderators about the modalities of participation, we have secured **some** funding to financially support participants—especially those from abroad—and we will be able to offer, thanks largely to John Rouse's efforts, an attractive *Rahmenprogramm* including film screenings, theater productions, a visit to Villa Aurora in Los Angeles, and the like. It goes without saying that ultimately the success of the symposium will be measured in terms of its usefulness for those attending as well as those indirectly benefiting from the publications it will generate. To conclude with a slightly changed quotation from the great adapter and restless modifier: "So nützen wir uns, indem wir BB ehren, und / Ehren ihn, indem wir uns nützen, und haben ihn / Also verstanden."

*Siegfried Mews, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

## IN BRIEF

## Berliner Ensemble

Zur Einstimmung auf den 100. Geburtstag wurde das Werk BB's im Brecht-Sommer kräftig entstaubt. "Nicht Brechts Texte, sondern wir sind verstaubt" meinte Chefdramaturg Carl Hegemann. Bei der "Entstaubungsaktion" wurden die Regisseure Leander Haußmann und Christoph Schlingensiefel aktiv.

Schlingensiefel setzte *Die letzten Wochen der Rosa Luxemburg* (1929) und *Rosa Luxemburg* (1944) in Szene. Leander Haußmann nahm sich "Bertolt Brechts Kolportagedramatik" in einer Art Faust-Gretchen-Spiel an. Die Spielzeit 97/98 wurde nun am 13. September mit der Aufführung *Die Maßnahme* unter der Regie von Klaus Emmerich eröffnet. Am Geburtstag wird *Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* (Regie Frank-Patrick Steckel) Premiere haben, und für die Nacht vom 9. auf 10. Februar 1998 ist eine Geburtstags-Fete in Planung. Mit der Stückauswahl für 97/98 hat man sich vor allem auf die Lehrstücke zwischen 1929 und 1930 (*Der Jasager*, *Der Ozeanflug*) konzentriert. Desweiteren strebt das BE flankierende Projekte wie Lesungen und Diskussionen an. Der Text von Lothar Trolle zur Emigrationszeit in Dänemark liegt jetzt unter dem Titel *Klassenkampf* vor. Thomas Heise übernimmt die Regie von *Dickicht Berlin 2*. Es werden Texte und Protokolle, die Erinnerungen an die Zeit im und nach dem Krieg dokumentieren, aufgeführt.

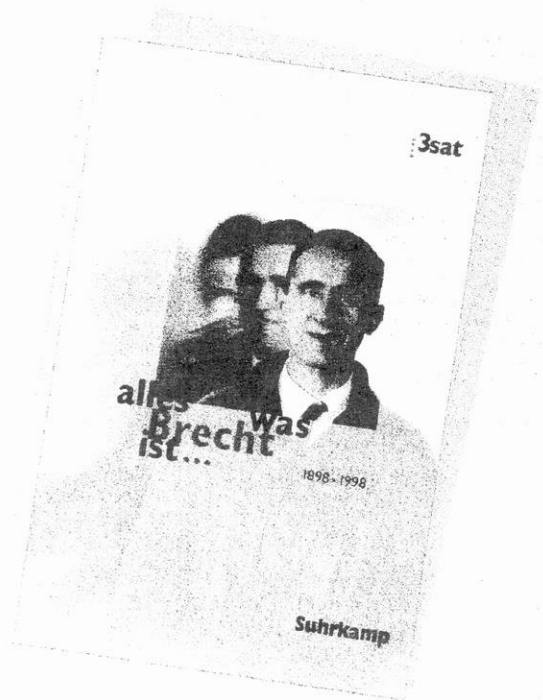
Eine Zusammenarbeit für gemeinsame Projekte mit dem Literaturforum Berlin ist angestrebt.

Im Sommer 98 ist anlässlich des 100. Geburtstages von Eisler im Juli eine Konferenz zur *Maßnahme* geplant. Auch einen zweiten Brecht-Sommer könnte sich das Haus vorstellen.

(Previously published in *Dreigroschenheft* 4, 1997, slightly edited)

Brecht im Theater  
Warum Brecht?

Bis vor geraumer Zeit hat es noch so ausgesehen, als würden die deutschen Theater den



nächstes Jahr anstehenden 100. Geburtstag Bertolt Brechts fast verschlafen. Doch dieser Eindruck war trügerisch, denn nach den jetzt vorliegenden Spielplan- und Verlagsinformationen für die kommende Spielzeit wird es 1998 wohl nur wenige Theater geben, die nicht eine Brecht-Inszenierung zeigen oder wenigstens eine Sonderveranstaltung diesem wichtigsten Theatermann unseres Jahrhunderts widmen werden. Die Jubiläums-Dramaturgie funktioniert. Die bislang umfangreichste Fernsehretrospektive rund um das Werk Bertolt Brechts wird der Fernsehsender 3SAT ab Dezember 1997 präsentieren. Im Medienverbund Fernsehen, Hörfunk und Buch unter weiterer Beteiligung vom Hörfunkprogramm S2-Kultur und



des Suhrkamp-Verlages soll Leben und Werk Brechts gewürdigt werden. Fast alle Theaterstücke—auch in unterschiedlichen Inszenierungen—sowie zahlreiche Einzelbeiträge sollen gezeigt werden.

Diese intensive Beschäftigung mit dem Werk des Dichters könnte der Anstoß für neue inhaltliche Auseinandersetzungen sein. Einen möglichen Anknüpfungspunkt könnte die, bisher kaum thematisierte, unterschiedliche Rezeptionsgeschichte der Brecht-Stücke in Ost und West bis 1989 bilden. Das Feiern eines Geburtstages ist die eine Seite; die andere Seite ist die kritische Frage nach der heutigen Relevanz dieser Texte. Deshalb müssen sich die Theatermacher 1998 eine Frage stellen, die bereits vor längerer Zeit der französische Strukturalist Roland Barthes mit einem Buchtitel formulierte: "Warum Brecht?"

(Previously published in *Dreigroschenheft* 4, 1997)

### Veranstaltungen zum Brecht-Jahr

Mehr Veranstaltungen als Kerzen, die auf einer Geburtstagstorte für Brecht brennen werden, sind für seine Zentenarfeier geplant. Das BE eröffnet am 3. Dezember eine Ausstellung über Caspar Neher und hat für Dezember und Januar drei Brecht-Premieren angekündigt. Zwischen 6. und 12. Februar veranstaltet das Theater zusammen mit dem **Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus** die Brecht-Tage 1998. Am Abend der Editoren (6. Februar), in den Nächten der Regisseure (7. Februar) und der Dichter (9. Februar) oder am Vormittag der Germanisten (10. Februar) treffen sich alle jene, die sich mit dem umfassenden Werk auseinandersetzen. In der **Akademie der Künste** wird am 25. Januar eine große Brecht-Exposition eröffnet, die bis zum 29. März zu sehen ist. Zur vorherigen Einstimmung werden zwischen 11. und 25. Januar Filme und Aufzeichnungen von Inszenierungen aus sämtlichen Jahrzehnten gezeigt. Wo die Wiege Brechts stand, da fällt das Jubiläum persönlich aus. In **Augsburg** wird im museal genutzten Geburtshaus eine neue Etage eröffnet. Auch ist hier am 22. Februar der Ausgangspunkt von Nina Hagens und Meret Beckers Brecht gewidmeter Tournee. Und am 19. Mai wird

hier der Brecht-Preis verliehen. Bei den **Münchner Gedenkfeiern** mischt Brecht-Tochter Hanne Hiob mit. Sie wird bei den finnischen Präsentationen vom 1. bis zum 5. Februar in Gasteig anwesend sein. Außerdem wandert die Brecht-Ausstellung der Berliner Akademie der Künste ins Literaturhaus München. Fern der süddeutschen Gefilde initiiert das **Goethe-Institut** etwa fünfzig Veranstaltungen. In **Kalifornien**, wo Brecht im Exil lebte, treffen sich in Amerika lebende deutsche Künstler zum "Brechtathon." 1998 bestimmt Brecht auch das Programm des Pariser Goethe-Instituts. Nicht gebunden an einen geographischen Ort sind die Funk-Hommagen. **3 sat** gratuliert vom 6. Dezember bis zum Februar mit der umfassenden Fernseh-Retrospektive "Alles, was Brecht ist."

([http://www.tagesspiegel-Berlin.de/tsp\\_f/aktuell/kultursplash.html](http://www.tagesspiegel-Berlin.de/tsp_f/aktuell/kultursplash.html))

### Zwölf Brecht-Fragmente uraufgeführt

Am 26 Juni fand eine Uraufführungsserie von 12 Brecht-Fragmenten, die aus den Tiefen des Brecht-Archivs zum ersten Mal auf die Bühne gelangten: Texte, die zwischen 1917 und 1944 entstanden und Brechts work-in-progress zeigen, darunter so legendäre Projekte wie *Der böse Baal der Asoziale*, *A Woman Killed With Kindness* und *Die letzten Wochen der Rosa Luxemburg*. Diese kleinen Sensationen wurden zwischen Brecht-Denkmal und Hinterbühne in (fast) allen Räumen des Theaters unter anderem von Carmen-Maja Antoni, Ernst Binder, Maxim Dessau, Leander Haußmann, Armin Petras, Jürgen Kruse, Christoph Schlingensiefel und Angelika Waller inszeniert. Daneben gab es Brecht-Hörspiele, eine Versteigerung von Brecht-Lithographien von Arno Mohr und Herbert Sandberg sowie Publikumsgespräche mit Regisseuren und Schauspielern in Hof und Kantine.

Um Brechts Anschluß ans Techno-Zeitalter zu demonstrieren, nahm das BE mit einem eigenen Wagen am 12. Juli an der Love-Parade teil: "brecht loves paradises." Zu den Höhepunkten gegen Ende des Sommers gehörten zwei Gastspiele mit Brechts *Kaukasischem Kreidekreis*—vom 10. Bis 11. Juli gastierte das "Terrain vague" aus Paris und vom 16. bis zum 20. Juli das "Theatre Complicite" aus London, begleitet von einem durch Peter Palitzsch geleiteten Workshop zum *Kreidekreis*.

(Excerpts from *Brecht Sommer 97*, Pressematerial, 12 Juni, 1997)

## BRECHT-URAUFFÜHRUNGEN Zu den Brecht-Fragmenten am BE

Die Uraufführungen von 12 Fragmenten Brechts—darunter so legendäre Projekte wie *Die Reisen des Glücksgotts*, *Der böse Baal der Asoziale* und *Leben des Konfutze*—werden durch die erstmalige Edition dieser Texte in der neuen Werkausgabe des Suhrkamp-Verlages ermöglicht.

Sie enthält Fragmente und Stückentwürfe Brechts aus den Jahren 1917 bis 1956, und dieser zeitliche Rahmen bildet auch das geschichtliche Spannungsfeld, dem sich 15 Regisseure stellen. Von frühesten Versuchen wie dem *Oratorium* und der *Sintflut*, die noch im Gestus der *Hauspostille* verfaßt sind, bis zu späteren Projekten wie *Rosa Luxemburg*, einem Stoff, der Brecht über 25 Jahre hinweg immer wieder beschäftigt hat.

Mit diesem Experiment wird nicht nur der klassische Spiel-Raum des Berliner Ensembles, sondern auch der klassische Kanon der bekannten Werke Brechts in Frage gestellt: jenseits der ummauerten Pracht des alten Bühnenhauses begegnet das Publikum einem unbekannten Brecht, neben die großen Stücke des Exils treten die Fragmente als Dokumente einer Theaterarbeit, die dem brechtschen Begriff der "Versuche" eine neue Dimension geben.

Heiner Müller hat diesen Begriff als Ansatz einer neuen Theaterarbeit mit Brecht verstanden, sein Verdikt von 1975 ist noch aktuell: "Brecht gebrauchen, ohne ihn zu kritisieren, ist Verrat." Und aktuell ist Brechts Frage von 1940: "Wie kann das Theater aus dem geistigen Rauschmittelhandel herausgenommen und aus einer Stätte der Illusionen zu einer Stätte der Erfahrungen gemacht werden?"

Das Experiment mit Brechts Fragmenten ist auch ein Versuch, Antworten auf diese Frage

zu finden: ungewöhnliche Antworten auf ungewöhnliche Texte, die ihren Weg aus der Nacht der Archive in das Licht des Theaters erst noch finden müssen.

(Previously published in *Brecht Sommer 97*, Pressematerial, 12 June, 1997)

The Grove Press Guide to  
Bertolt BRECHT

### **Bertolt Brecht:** A Study Guide by Eric Bentley



#### News from Eric Bentley

*On February 2, Eric Bentley will be inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame, along with Harold Pinter, Lauren Bacall and others.*

*Also see pages 34—35.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE SESSIONS  
MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION  
Toronto, December 27 - 30, 1997

Program arranged by the International Brecht  
Society

### Queering Brecht

Sunday, 28 December, 1997

10:15 - 11:30 a.m. Huron, Sheraton Center

Presiding: **Vera Stegmann**, Lehigh Univ.

1. "Baal and Beyond: Masculinity in Brecht and Klaus Mann," **James Robert Keller**, Graduate Center, city Univ. of New York.
2. "Clashing Gender: Male and Female Voices in the *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*," **Robson Correa De Camargo**, Univ. de São Paulo
3. "Brecht's Queer Meat," **Pamela L. Brown**, New York Univ.
4. "Only a 'Passing Phase'? The Queer Dimensions of Brecht's Early Berlin Years," **James David Steakley**, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison

Respondent: **Gudrun Tabbert-Jones**, Santa Clara Univ.

### Brecht, Utopia, Postsocialism

Tuesday, 30 December, 1997

12:00 - 1:15 p.m., Windsor, Sheraton Center

Presiding: **Siegfried Mews**, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

1. "Poetic Utopias/Dystopias in Brecht's Texts of the Twenties," **Dorothee Ostmeier**, Univ. of Washington
2. "Utopias from Hell: Brecht's *Mahagonny* and Adorno's *Treasure of Indian Joe*," **Karla L. Schulz**, Univ. of Oregon
3. "Alienation (Effect) in the Brave New

(Postsocialist) World," **Charles E. Gannon**, Univ. of Liverpool

4. "From Post-Brechtian Theater to Conceptual Theater," **Claire Leich-Galland**, New York, NY

Respondent: **Klaus Berghahn**, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison

*(Please, submit ideas for next year's IBS sessions at the MLA conference in San Francisco to Siegfried Mews, UNC at Chapel Hill)*

## 10<sup>th</sup> SYMPOSIUM OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY: Brecht 100 = 2000

Univ. of California, San Diego,  
May 28 - 31, 1998

*The 10<sup>th</sup> IBS Symposium begins on Thursday afternoon, May 28 and continues through Sunday evening, 31 May, 1998. Highlights of the symposium will include:*

**Sixteen sessions** with 48 papers by scholars and theater practitioners from Europe, Latin America, Australia, South Africa, and North America.

**A day-trip to Los Angeles** tracing the German exile community in Santa Monica, Hollywood, and Pacific Palisades. The trip will include a reception at the Villa Aurora, the former home of Lion Feuchtwanger in Pacific Palisades.

**Performances** at La Jolla Playhouse (a professional repertory theatre located on the UCSD campus), San Diego Repertory Theatre (a professional company located in the scenic Gaslight District of downtown San Diego), and on campus.

**A film series** provided courtesy of the Goethe Institut, Los Angeles—including rare footage of Brecht working with Charles Laughton on the Hollywood *Galileo*, and from *The Mother* and other Brecht productions at the Berliner Ensemble.

**A new film** by Jutta Brückner on Brecht, *Liebe*,

*Revolution und andere gefährliche Sachen.*

**The American premiere** of Alexander Stephan's film for German television on German exile intellectuals and the FBI, *Im Visier der FBI*.

A fuller description of symposium events - including a reservation form for theatre and other performances - will be available in early January. In the meantime, people interested in attending should make hotel reservations as soon as possible. For reservations forms and other information, send an E-mail request to [jrouse@ucsd.edu](mailto:jrouse@ucsd.edu).

If you do not have access to E-mail, write or fax:

Dr. John Rouse  
IBS Symposium Local Arrangements  
UCSD Theatre Dept., 0344  
9500 Gilman Dr.  
La Jolla, CA 92093-0344  
Tel: (619) 822-1498  
Fax: (612) 534-1080

## BRECHT 100 <=> 2000 Culture and Politics in These Times

*10th Symposium of the International Brecht Society,  
Tentative Program (November 1997):*

### Thursday, 28 May

16-18:30: registration and reception  
18:30-19:30: welcome and keynote address  
20-24: La Jolla Playhouse performance and discussion

### Friday, 29 May, 9-10:30

1. "Hanns Eisler Centenary Session"  
Moderator/Respondent: **Michael Morley** (Adelaide, Australia)

**Joachim Lucchesi** (Berlin, Germany)

**Albrecht Betz** (Aachen, Germany)

**David Blake** (London, England)

2. "The *Alienation*-Effect: Sources and Consequences"

Moderator/Respondent: **Carl Weber** (Stanford, CA)

**Mary Louise Hill** (Syracuse, NY)

**Jonathan Kalb** (New York, NY)

**Juliet Koss** (New York, NY)

3. "Theater-Politik"

Moderator/Respondent: **Gerhard Fischer**  
(University of New South Wales, Australia)

**Ralf Simon** (Bonn, Germany)

**Marianne Streisand** (Berlin, Germany)

**Petra Stuber** (Leipzig, Germany)

4. "Poetry I"

Moderator/Respondent: Arnold Blumer  
(Stellenbosch, South Africa)

**Ehrhard Bahr** (Los Angeles, CA)

**Tom Kuhn** (Oxford, England)

**Vera Stegmann** (Bethlehem, PA)

### Friday, 29 May, 11-12:30

5. "Recent Brecht Productions"

Moderator/Respondent: **Arnold Aronson** (New York, NY)

**Marna King** (Madison, WI)

**Malcolm Purkey** (Witwatersrand, South Africa)

**Janelle Reinelt** (Davis, CA)

6. "*Gestus*"

Moderator/Respondent: **Joachim Fiebach** (Berlin, Germany)

**Robert Cohen** (New York, NY)

**Hans Thies Lehmann** (Frankfurt, Germany)

**Patrice Pavis** (Paris, France)

7. "Poetry II"

Moderator/Respondent: **Hans Peter Hermann**  
(Freiburg, Germany)

**Anna Campanile** (Pisa, Italy)

**Albrecht Klopfer** (Tokyo, Japan)

**Karen Leeder** (Oxford, England)

8. "Brecht in Latin America"

Moderator/Respondent: **Lorena Ellis** (New York, NY)

**Vilma Botrel Cotinho de Melo** (Bela Horizonte, Brazil)

**Sara Joffre** (Callao, Peru)

**Adam Versenyi** (Chapel Hill, NC)

### Friday, 29 May

13-18: films, videos, workshops, acting plenary

20-23: on campus performances

### Saturday, 30 May, 9-10:30

9. "Brecht and Music"

Moderator/Respondent: **Maarten van Dijk**



(Waterloo, Canada)

**Peter Ferran** (Rochester, NY)

**April Seager** (St. Louis, MO)

**Simon Williams** (Santa Barbara, CA)

10. "Teaching Brecht"

Moderator/Respondent: **Walt Jones** (San Diego, CA)

**Peter Harris** (Toronto, Canada)

**David Blostein** (Toronto, Canada)

**Pia Kleber** (Toronto, Canada)

11. "Theorie und Praxis: Die zwanziger Jahre"

Moderator/Respondent: **Karl-Heinz Schoeps** (Urbana, IL)

**Hans-Jörg Knobloch** (Johannesburg, South Africa)

**Nikolaus Müller-Schöll** (Paris, France)

**Darko Suvin** (Montreal, Canada)

12. "Das Lehrstück"

Moderator/Respondent: **Inge Gellert** (Berlin, Germany)

**Gerd Koch** (Berlin, Germany)

**Patrick Primavesi** (Frankfurt, Germany)

**William Rasch** (Bloomington, IN)

Saturday, 30 May, 11-12:30

13. "Mother Courage in America"

Moderator/Respondent: **Tom Markus** (Salt Lake City, UT)

**Robert Potter** (Santa Barbara, CA)

**Peter Lackner** (Santa Barbara, CA)

**Michael Addison** (Boonville, CA)

14. "Brecht in the United States"

Moderator/Respondent: **Ralf Remshardt** (Gainesville, FL)

**Peter Höyng** (Knoxville, TN)

**Michael Kater** (York, Canada)

**James K. Lyon** (Provo, UT)

15. "Statik - Körper - Standbilder"

Moderator/Respondent: **Florian Vaßen** (Hannover, Germany)

**Ingrid Dormien Koudela** (Sao Paulo, Brazil)

**Sigrid Thielking** (Essen, Germany)

**Erdmut Wizisla** (Berlin, Germany)

16. "New Theories"

Moderator/Respondent: **Susanne Winnacker** (Frankfurt, Germany)

**Teresa Ritterhoff** (New York, NY)

**Antony Tatlow** (Dublin, Ireland)

**Judith Wilke** (Frankfurt, Germany)

Saturday, 30 May

13-17: films, IBS business meeting, directors' plenary

18-20: bus to Gaslight District in downtown San Diego and dinner

20-24: San Diego Repertory Company performance and discussion

Sunday, 31 May

9-18: bus excursion to Los Angeles, Villa Aurora and tour

20-22: Jutta Brückner screens new Brecht film and discussion

## NEH-SUMMER SEMINAR IN BERLIN

### BERTOLT BRECHT; THE BERLIN YEARS.

*During the 1998 centenary of Brecht's birth, Siegfried Mews (UNC at Chapel Hill) and Marc Silberman (Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison) will codirect an NEH (National Endowment for the Humanities) funded summer seminar for college teachers in Berlin on one of the most influential twentieth-century playwrights and theoreticians of the theater.*

The seminar will draw attention both to "Weimar Culture" and postwar German cultural developments. Holding the seminar in Berlin will offer participants the unique opportunity to closely read a selection of Brecht's texts and to gain access to specialized research facilities while taking advantage of centenary events such as stage productions and exhibitions.

The seminar focus will encourage participants to situate readings and discussions within the socio-cultural context and literary traditions of Brecht's Berlin, formulate and plan research projects, and discuss ways in which Brecht's texts may be productively used in the undergraduate classroom.

Sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the six-week seminar will take place

from 8 June to 17 July, 1998. It is intended for undergraduate teachers from fields such as German Studies, drama and theater history, music history comparative literature, cultural studies, and intellectual history. Applicants need not be completely fluent in German, but they will be expected to read Brecht's plays in the original and to understand spoken German.

Fifteen participants will receive stipends of \$ 3 700 each, an amount from which they are required to pay room, board, travel, and incidental expenses.

Application deadline: 1 March 1998. For further information and application materials (available at the beginning of October), please contact: dscahan@email.unc.edu

## INKRIT CONFERENCE

### CALL FOR PAPERS AND/OR SUGGESTIONS

The Berlin Institute of Critical Theory (InkriT), founded in 1996 to support the *Historical-critical Dictionary of Marxism*, invites to participate in its third international conference:

### QUESTIONS OF CRITICAL THEORY / FRAGEN KRITISCHER THEORIE HEUTE

1—3 May, 1998, in the Jagdschloß Glienicke, near Berlin:

*Conference languages: German and English*

The purpose of the conference is to contribute to a reorientation of critical social thought today, to reflect its tasks, aims and subjects as well as to re-evaluate its traditions. "Critical theory" is not meant here in a narrow school sense (Frankfurt...). Among other authors to be considered, the centenaries of Brecht, Eisler and Marcuse should be

used as an occasion for reappraisal of their works.

There will also be the opportunity to present and discuss selected articles in preparation for HKWM-volume 4 (F-Geg).

The accommodation in the castle is relatively cheap (70 DM/day, 3 meals included, some more luxurious hotel rooms will probably be available, also within the castle).

InkriT-fellows and supporters will be admitted without paying the conference fee which will be for the others 50DM (students 25DM).

Every participant may (but must not) present a paper. Please send short summaries of the paper you want to present and make your reservation until the end of October. By then more detailed information will be available.

Please, address your answer to  
WF.Haug@glasnost.de

## Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste

### Bertolt Brecht: 1898 \* 1998

#### 22 Versuche, eine Arbeit zu beschreiben

**Ausstellung: 25.Januar bis 29.März 1998**

"Vierzig Jahre," prophezeite der zweiundzwanzigjährige Brecht, "und mein Werk ist der Abgesang des Jahrtausends." Mit dem Gestus der Selbststilisierung, den der junge Stückeschreiber beherrschte, notierte er wenig später: "Ich beobachte, daß ich anfangs, ein Klassiker zu werden." Dieses Schicksal holte ihn ein, freilich um den Preis der von Max Frisch konstatierten "durchschlagenden Wirkungslosigkeit eines Klassikers." Dabei erweist sich, daß Brecht wie kaum ein anderer Theater, Literatur und politisches Denken in der ganzen Welt beeinflußt hat. Zudem sind Brechts Themen ein Spiegel der Welt und des Jahrhunderts: Marxismus und Sozialismus, dialektisches Denken, Ökonomie, Faschismus und Krieg, Verantwortung der Naturwissenschaften, Kunstformen und Wahrnehmungsweisen der Moderne. Die Akademie der

Künste nimmt den 100. Geburtstag Brechts am 10. Februar 1998 zum Anlaß, in einer Ausstellung und in Veranstaltungen das Werk dieses Jahrhundertautors auf seinen Materialwert und seine Aktualität hin zu prüfen.

Die Ausstellung rückt die Arbeitsbibliothek des Schriftstellers in den Mittelpunkt. Vor dem Hintergrund einer Dokumentation von Leben und Werk zeigen und akzentuieren ausgewählte Bücher mit Eintragungen, Bearbeitungsvermerken und Widmungen Brechts Denken, Schreiben und Handeln. Die Quellen und Arbeitsmaterialien treten in Beziehung zu Dokumenten aus dem Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv: Handschriften, Typoskripten, Lebenszeugnissen und Fotos, ergänzt durch Bühnenbildmodelle, Kostüme und Plastiken.

22 Versuche, Brechts Arbeitsweise zu beschreiben, sind eine Annäherung an die Werk- und Denkgeschichte. Exemplarische Werke und Gegenstände erzählen Stationen einer intellektuellen Biographie. Über Vorgänge, die Brecht inspirierten, und Ideen, die im Manuskript Gestalt annahmen, eröffnet sich der Zugang in die Werkstatt des Künstlers. Die Vielfalt von Brechts Arbeitsgebieten ermöglicht interdisziplinäre Aspekte: zum Theater treten Musik, Bildende Kunst, Baukunst, Fotografie. Die Ausstellung beleuchtet neben den im Druck und auf der Bühne weltweit verbreiteten Texten die weniger bekannten fragmentarischen Versuche, Entwürfe, Bruchstücke und Arbeitspläne. Die Konfrontation mit dem Handwerk des Künstlers kann das Bild des allzu klassisch gewordenen Brecht aufbrechen, sie gibt den Blick frei auf Gelingen und Scheitern in einem Werk, das die Hoffnungen und Irrtümer des Jahrhunderts widerspiegelt.

Zur Ausstellung erscheint ein Katalog der Akademie der Künste mit unbekannten Fotos und Texten, Gesprächsaufzeichnungen und Randglossen in den Büchern des Autors. Unter dem Titel "Die Bibliothek Bertolt Brechts" publiziert der Suhrkamp Verlag ferner ein kommentiertes Verzeichnis, das sämtliche Titel erfaßt und über vorhandene Widmungen, Eintragungen, An- bzw. Unterstreichungen informiert.

Erdmut Wizisla, Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv

## Gliederung der Ausstellung

### Mythologie, Religion, Philosophie, Marxismus, Ökonomie:

1. Berichtigungen alter Mythen *Medea-Kassandra-Antigone*.
2. "Sie werden lachen: die Bibel."  
"Die Bibel"—"Oratorium"—"Maria"—"Hitler-Choräle."
3. "Als der Denkende in einen großen Sturm kam."  
Montaigne, Gracian, Diderot, Hegel,  
"Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner,"  
"Flüchtlingsgespräche."
4. "Das Manifest ist als Pamphlet selbst ein Kunstwerk."  
"Lehrgedicht" nach Lukrez—Marx-Studien -  
Versifizierung des *Kommunistischen Manifests*.
5. "Die Art, wie das Getreide der Welt verteilt wurde." Ökonomie—*Joe Fleischhacker in Chicago*,  
"Die Erziehung der Hirse."

### Geschichte, Politik:

6. Eine Jüdin aus Polen. Rosa Luxemburg.
7. "Seitdem / Hat die Welt ihre Hoffnung."  
Sowjetunion—Stalin und Trotzki—Tretjakow—*Me-ti/Buch der Wendungen*.
8. "Das große Carthago führte drei Kriege."  
Militarismus—Fatzner—*Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*—Schweyk.
9. "So was hätt einmal fast die Welt regiert!"  
Faschismus—Hitler—Reichstagsbrand—  
"Die Horst-Wessel-Legende,"—*Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*.

### Bildende Kunst, Fotografie, Architektur, Musik:

10. "Die Welt ist aus den Fugen."  
Verfremdungstechnik in den erzählenden Bildern  
des älteren Brueghel—Grusche Vachnadze—  
"Wenn die Haifische Menschen wären."
11. "Die Schnur der alten / Aufgerollten  
chinesischen Leinwand." Konfutsé—Laotse—  
"Bemerkungen über die chinesische

Schauspielkunst"—"Chinesische Gedichte."

12. "Die eigentliche Realität ist in die Funktionale gerutscht." Fotografie—*Kriegsfibel*—*Modellbücher*.

13. "Was sind schon Städte, gebaut / Ohne die Weisheit des Volkes?" Bauen und Wohnen.

14. "Musik machen ist besser als Musik hören."  
"Misuk"—Der Komponist Brecht—Kompositionen für die Bühne.

### Literatur:

15. "Das ABC der Deutschen Misere."

*Studien—Der Hofmeister* von Jacob Michael Reinhold Lenz, *Urfaust*-Inszenierung—"Thesen zur 'Faustus'-Diskussion."

16. "Kehren wir zu den Kriminalromanen zurück!" Kriminalstoffe—Verbrechen—Detektivromane

17. "Alle großen Gedichte haben den Wert von Dokumenten." Kurzer Bericht über 400 (vierhundert) junge Lyriker,"—"Wie man Gedichte lesen muß."

18. "Im Lehrplan fehlen die abschreckenden Beispiele." "Theorie der Pädagogien"—"Schule der Ästhetik"—"reform der rechtschreibung."

### Theater:

19. "Plagiat als Kunst." Laxheit in Fragen geistigen Eigentums—*Dreigroschenoper*—Villon.

20. "Ins Licht treten / Die Treffbaren, die Erfreubaren / Die Änderbaren." Theorie und Praxis des Theaters—*Kleines Organon für das Theater - Der Messingkauf—Katzgraben-Notate* Beckett.

21. "Diese Physiker nehmen ihre Erfahrungen jedenfalls ernst." *Leben des Galilei*—Leben des Einstein.

22. "Die Darstellung des Neuen ist nicht leicht."  
"Hans Garbe erzählt"—"Büsching."

### Veranstaltungsprogramm Brecht-Ausstellung

#### Film:

Sonntag, 11. Januar 1998.

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

*Die Dreigroschenoper* (Deutschland/USA 1930/31).

Drehbuch: frei nach Bertolt Brecht.

Regie: Georg Wilhelm Pabst. Einführung in das Programm der Filme: Wolfgang Gersch.

Mittwoch, 14. Januar 1998.

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

*Die Mysterien eines Frisiersalons* (Deutschland 1923) Buch und Regie: Bertolt Brecht, Erich Engel, Karl Valentin. *Kuhle Wampe* oder *Wem gehört die Welt?* (Deutschland 1932) Drehbuch: Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Ottwalt, Regie: Slatan Dudow.

Sonntag, 18. Januar 1998.

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

*Galileo* (1947). Filmdokumentation der Inszenierung des Coronet Theatre, Beverly Hills, Regie: Joseph Losey. *Der Hofmeister* (1950/1997). Filmdokumentation einzelner Szenen der Inszenierung des Berliner Ensembles. Regie: Bertolt Brecht, Caspar Neher. Auswahl und Kommentar: Peter Voigt, Uraufführung der Rekonstruktion.

Mittwoch, 21. Januar 1998

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

*Nach meinem letzten Umzug* (BRD 1952/1971). Filmdokumentation aus der Frühzeit des Berliner Ensembles, Regie: Hans Jürgen Syberberg  
*Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar* (DDR 1953) Filmdokumentation der Inszenierung des Berliner Ensembles, in der Regie von Egon Monk  
Regie: Käthe Rülcke-Weiler, Jens-Peter Proll.

### Eröffnung

Sonntag, 25. Januar 1998:

11.30 Uhr, Studio.

#### Ausstellung:

Bertolt Brecht: "...und mein Werk ist der Abgesang des Jahrtausends," 22 Versuche, eine Arbeit zu beschreiben, Es sprechen: György Konrad, Präsident der Akademie der Künste, Erdmut Wizisla, Leiter des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs, "Anmerkungen zu Brecht," von Christoph Hein, Kerstin Hensel und Stefan Heym.



**Film:**

Sonntag, 25. Januar 1998

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

*Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (DDR 1960)  
Dokumentarverfilmung der Inszenierung des  
Berliner Ensembles von 1949, in der Regie von  
Bertolt Brecht und Erich Engel, Drehbuch und  
Regie: Peter Palitzsch, Manfred Wekwerth

**Gespräch:**

Mittwoch, 28. Januar 1998

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

“Über das Arbeiten mit Brecht,” Berichte und  
Gespräch mit Benno Besson, Angelika Hurwicz,  
Egon Monk, Peter Palitzsch und B.K. Tragelehn.

**Lesung:**

Sonntag, 1. Februar 1998

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

“Erinnerungen an Bertolt Brecht.”

Mit Texten von Walter Benjamin, Arnolt Bronnen,  
Lion Feuchtwanger, Max Frisch, Herbert Ihering,  
Lotte Lenya, Hans Mayer, Caspar Neher, Vladimir  
Pozner, Sergej Tretjakow, Manfred Wekwerth,  
Arnold Zweig u.a.

**Gespräch:**

Mittwoch, 4. Februar 1998

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

“Über das Annehmen von Vorschlägen.”

Thesen und Gespräch mit Reinhard Baumgart,  
Friedrich Dieckmann, Werner Hecht,  
Katharina Thalbach und Klaus Völker.

**Lesung:**

Sonntag, 8. Februar 1998

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

*Gedichte* von Bertolt Brecht, gelesen von, Volker  
Braun, Eugen Gomringer, Peter Härtling, Harald  
Hartung, Rolf Haufs, Walter Höllerer, Rainer  
Kirsch, Wulf Kirsten, Michael Krüger, Karl Mickel,  
Oskar Pastior und Peter Rühmkorf, Mitglieder der

Abteilung Literatur

**Festakt:**

Dienstag, 10. Februar 1998

20.00 Uhr, Studio.

Bertolt Brecht zum 100. Geburtstag  
Es sprechen: György Konrad, Präsident der  
Akademie der Künste, Peter Härtling  
Direktor der Abteilung Literatur, Erwin  
Geschonneck, Angelika Hurwicz, Regine Lutz,  
Käthe Reichel und Heinz Schubert lesen Texte von  
Bertolt Brecht

**Veranstaltungen:**

11. Januar bis 8. Februar 1998

*Dr. Erdmut Wizisla, Archivleiter*

Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv  
Stiftung Archiv der Akademie der Künste  
Chausseestraße 125  
10115 Berlin - Germany

z.Zt. Luisenstraße 60  
10117 Berlin  
Tel. 49/(0)30 - 285 385 38  
Fax. 49/(0)30 - 285 385 33

# Revisualizing Brecht

*On the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his Birth*

The Graduate Students of  
the Department of Germanic Languages at  
The University of North Carolina  
at Chapel Hill  
present their 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Graduate Student  
Colloquium February 20-21, 1998

## *Call for Papers*

### Possible Topics Include

*Staging Language • Brechtian Gender Politics • Rethinking Theatre • Brecht and the Body • Heiner Miller and other Brechtians • Brecht Reception in the East and West • Theatrical • Revolutionary Pedagogy • Modernist Theatre and Brecht • Brecht and the Theatre of Cruelty • Brecht and the Physiognomy of Gesture*

*Any other topics about Brecht are welcomed.  
The panel will also be open to topics other than Brecht.*

Papers may be given in either in English or German. Proposals should be between one and two pages and be sent to:

The Department of Germanic Languages  
c/o Michael Kusiak  
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
488 Dey Hall, CB# 3160  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27659-3160

For more information or to send your proposal via email, write to:  
kusiak@email.unc.edu or epotter@email.unc.edu

## Brecht Performances Outside of Germany 1997 / 1998

- Buenos Aires (Argentina)**  
*Die Gesichte der Simone Machard*, Teatro General San Martin.
- Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)**  
*Die Mutter*, Lobo Producoes Artisticas.
- Salvador/Bahia (Brazil)**  
*Don Juan*, Grupo Intercena-Bahia.
- Sao Paulo (Brazil)**  
*Im Dickicht der Städte*, Grupo Le Plat du Jour.
- Sofia (Bulgaria)**  
*Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches*, The Theatre of the Bulgarian Army.
- Peking (China)**  
*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Chinesische Jugendkunst-Theater.
- Rhodos (Greece)**  
*Die jüdische Frau*, Theatre of the Municipality.
- Haifa (Israel)**  
*Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*, The Haifa Municipal Theatre.
- Milano (Italy)**  
*Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*, Compagnia Micol SRL.
- Napoli (Italy)**  
*Leben des Galilei*, Cooperativa Le Nuvole.
- Tokyo (Japan)**  
*Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* and *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder*, Tokoy Engeki Ensemble.
- Riga (Lithuania)**  
*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Latvijas Dailes Teatris.
- Rotterdam (Holland)**  
*Der Brotladen*, Toneelgroep kFact.
- Polen**  
*Die Dreigroschenoper*, Theater Boguslawskiego.
- Piatra Neamtz (Rumania)**  
*Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti*, Teatrul Tineretului.
- Montevideo (Uruguay)**  
*Baal*, Teatro del Anglo.

(Previously published in *Dreigroschenheft* Nr. 4 / 1997)

## Brecht-Stagings at American Professional Theaters in 1997/1998

According to the production schedules for theaters coast-to-coast, as published in the October issue of *AMERICAN THEATRE*, the journal of TCG (Theatre Communications Group), the umbrella organization of all American non-profit theaters, there will be eight productions during the 1997—1998 season

- New York City**  
*The Mother*, an Irondale Ensemble Project, 11/19—12/20, 1997.
- Philadelphia (Pennsylvania)**  
*Threepenny Opera*, Vilma Theater, 12/3—28, 1997.
- Atlanta (Georgia)**  
*In the Jungle of the Cities*, 7 Stages, 2/18—3/15, 1998.
- Cambridge (Massachusetts)**  
*In the Jungle of the Cities*, American Repertory Theater, 2/20—3/14, 1998.
- Atlanta (Georgia)**  
*Galileo*, The Shakespeare Tavern, 4/8—5/16, 1998.
- Chapel Hill (North Carolina)**  
*Threepenny Opera*, Playmakers' Repertory Company, 4/15—5/10, 1998.
- San Jose (California)**  
*Happy End*, San Jose Repertory Theatre, 5/31—6/28.
- San Diego (California)**  
The La Jolla Playhouse is in planning a Brecht-Production on occasion of the Brecht Conference of the International Brecht Society at the University of California, San Diego. (see page 8)

Carl Weber, Stanford University

## Brecht-Productions in Berlin, Germany 1997 / 1998

### Renaissance-Theater:

*Das wirkliche Leben des Jakob Geherda* (6/26/97),  
Regie: Piet Drescher.

### Berliner Ensemble:

*Die Maßnahme* (9/13/97), Regie: Klaus Emmerich.  
*Lane/Weill: Happy End* (11/8/97), Regie: Bärbel Jaksch.  
*Das Leben des Galilei* (12/12/97), Regie: B.K. Tragelehn.  
*Der Ozeanflug* (97/98), Regie: Robert Wilson.  
*Das Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* (97/98), Regie: Frank Patrick Steckel.  
*Medea* (97/98), Regie: Horst Sagert.

### Deutsches Theater:

*Im Dickicht der Städte* (ab Nov. 97), Regie: Johanna Schall.  
*Dreigroschenoper*, *Mann ist Mann* (97/98) Regie: Ostermeier.  
*Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis* (97/98), Regie: Thomas Langhoff.

(Previously published in *Dreigroschenheft* Nr. 4 / 1997)



## PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

### Senior Students from the Chemnitz Municipal Theatre Perform *The Good Person of Szechwan* at the University of Toronto.

Maarten van Dijk, Toronto

Brecht's great gender bender is a pleasure on the page. On stage its fragile joys can be less apparent. A slightly too literal interpretation of the exotic setting, and even a touch of over-earnestness can create the wrong kind of sentimental epic, a working-class *Turandot* without the tunes. A director lacking a sense of humour and a vigorous cutting-pencil may easily transform elegant, complex allegory into clumsy, schematic ear-bashing. Most of all, a Shen Teh who is slightly too sweet, too genteel, or too caring can turn the Angel of the Slums into the Tooth-caries Fairy.

It took a visiting troupe of senior students from the Chemnitz Municipal Theatre (connected to the "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" Hochschule of Leipzig), performing in Toronto at the University College Playhouse, to show exactly how to avoid all the pitfalls lying in wait for the unskilled and unwary in *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*. In the first place, it was not apparent that this superbly assured production by Brigitte Soubeyran was being performed by students at all. It was not until the masks came off for the curtain calls that the audience registered the youth of the actors. In the second place, while this version was obviously scaled down for international transportation, making use of the simplest locally available materials, it showed how Brecht's large-scale plays do not necessarily require the expensive apparatus of a major theatre to achieve an epic quality. The director also wisely decided to cut with determination. We lost some important lines and scenes, the most significant perhaps the one where Shen Teh turns into Shui Ta and sings the "Song of Defencelessness," but Brecht's richness can

deal with some trimming.

Soubeyran's stage is littered with garbage and junk, from Coca-Cola cups to discarded television sets. Shen Teh's house and her shop are made out of cardboard boxes. The harsh ambience of Brecht's "uninhabitable place" is sketched with the simplest means. All the effort and attention has gone into the acting, and into the beautifully crafted costumes and masks of Mike Hahne. These do not concern themselves with an oriental setting, but with the characters as instantly recognizable types who could inhabit any contemporary urban environment.

The masks, made of stocking-like material with ears, noses and hair attached, at the first superficial impression suggest bank-robbers in nylon stockings. It quickly becomes apparent that their extreme ingenuity allows the natural contours of the face and the mouth and eyes to be fully expressive, soon the impression deepens to the impact of a George Grosz drawing come to life, and finally to an understanding of the strange paradox of masks: that through artifice they intensify our perception of reality. By having everyone masked Soubeyran makes it possible for ten actors to play all the parts, many doubling, trebling and even quadrupling. Here Shen Teh/Shui Ta is not the only one masked, neither is she the only travesty role. Mrs. Mi Tzu, and a very pregnant sister-in-law, for example, are both played most effectively by men. We lose the uniqueness of the Shen Teh/Shui Ta transformation, but gain a carnivalesque, virtuoso energy. This clarifies the allegory, stresses Brecht's subversive humour, and prevents preachiness. It also makes Shen Teh's transformation into her nasty cousin completely convincing.

Working with masks must be one of the riskiest and most difficult of theatrical tasks, because it mercilessly exposes deficiencies in vocal and physical expressive techniques. Masks cannot simply be "stuck on" to naturalistic performances—



they require a completely different aesthetic adjustment in body language, gestural rhythm, and speech projection. It might appear that increasing the number of masks would also tend to increase the play's stylization, with a concomitant hardening of the schematic tendency of the allegory. Such a conclusion betrays a hankering for the kind of realism that is counter-productive in mounting this very poetic play. It is the common attitude that thinks of realism as somehow uttering a theatrical language of "depths" (psychology, truth, motivation), and more formalistic, or stylized work, especially that involving masks, as being about "surfaces" (stereotypes, predictability, artificiality). Soubeyran is obviously aware of this tendency, for in the programme she speaks of her kind of masks enveloping the performers in a second skin, and quotes Paul Valéry to the effect that "there is nothing deeper than the skin." The paradoxical sincerity of surfaces lies at the heart of the theatrical illusion, along with the ludic quality of quick mask and costume changes. This production provides a rare example of the sheer celebratory pleasure in seeing masks worn meaningfully, and in performers relishing their own invention and technical mastery. At the same time Soubeyran keeps the story moving, and there is no sentimentalism or self-indulgence, because her actors are too busy communicating.

The production opens quietly, with Wang already on stage, starting a conversation with the audience. Marco Dyrlich avoids the problems of false pathos inherent in this character's victim status by his easy relationship with the public. The three gods when they first glide in are served a drink by the water-seller. Their immateriality is depicted simply by sunglasses and blank masks. They show their material lack of concern by dropping their styrofoam cups casually among the other litter on the stage. The gods make their next appearance in Wang's dream on the TV sets lying among the trash. They have, in a witty, contemporary touch, become "virtual" representatives of three great world religions, a mullah, a lama, a Catholic bishop. This



is power and authority as postmodern simulacra—celestial spin doctors totally disconnected from the real gritty world of Szechwan.

Isabel Schosnig's Shen Teh is completely unsentimental: a tough, chunky, optimistic little whore with magenta hair, in a black vinyl bustier, mini-skirt, and torn fish-net stockings who has worked hard at her trade. Her voice (and it is apparent how much of the leading role depends on voice) ranges from the gentle tones one would expect for a "good person" to a buzz-saw twang that has cut through bar fights and dealt decisively with bad customers. In scene three she entertains Sun with an earthy imitation of a "dignified gentleman," making a pot belly by pushing her naked stomach out over her tight skirt. When she tells the story of the pet

crane, Schosnig wisely ignores Brecht's stage direction ("half laughing, half crying") and instead attempts to impress Sun with her mimicry, suddenly uttering three ear-piercing crane squawks and then continuing to tell her story. We understand why Shu Fu wants to write her a blank cheque—he contemplates her bottom as she bends over to pick up some washing. At her wedding she is hoisted aloft by the guests and blows a kiss after slipping her hand under her skirt—a crude gesture from her trade. This Shen Teh's material sexuality cannot be comfortably separated from an abstract spiritual goodness. As Shui Ta Schosnig becomes a posturing little bantam, with the deep, penetrating nasal growl of a wheeler-dealer who expects to be heard over a crowd.

Her performance is made up of sharp and moving contrasts between humour and desperation. In the climactic scene where Shui Ta/She Teh discovers Sun's perfidy, she/he whirls around the tiny shop like a caged animal, barking "the business is gone, it's gone" from deep within her body. Towards the end of the play while discussing Shen Teh's disappearance with Sun, Shui Ta breaks off the conversation, walks "downstairs"—which consists of the old mime trick of progressive crouching behind an up-ended bed—then bursts unseen into the deeply felt sobs of Shen Teh, walks "upstairs" again and is immediately a tough Shui Ta once more. The mime trick, expertly executed, gets a laugh; the sobs cut it off. The essence of Brecht's theatre lives in such thoughtful contradictions. Schosnig has tremendous range and power and will no doubt go far.

The other performances are equally accomplished. Katharina Schmalenberg makes the small but key part of Mrs. Shin into a star turn, tripping over the stage like an obsessively inquisitive hen (at one stage, thanks to her mask, she literally pricks up an ear). She inspects the shop with her head moving in predatory, bird-like jerks, as if about to peck at something, and throughout a delightful performance demonstrates how concentrated listening can be as memorable as pages of dialogue. She also plays the niece, and is instantly transformed into a spaced-out adolescent slut.

Henning Vogt is a tall, sensual Sun whose macho body language reveals a swaggering sexual

arrogance. He is both cruel and vulnerable. With a change of mask and posture he becomes a thoroughly creepy nephew. Jörg Westphal plays four different parts, the most memorable being his plump, petty bourgeois Mrs. Mi Tzu, who picks her way disdainfully through the garbage, occasionally sending a piece of trash hurtling into the wings with a well-aimed fastidious kick. In the scene where she, the barber and Shui Ta have a quiet smoke and share a moment of complacent class solidarity, Westphal's business with the cigar as he imagines the lustful attractions of Sun is subtly obscene and hilarious.

The enjoyment the actors find in such telling details is infectious. The policeman is played by Matthias Otte with a thick Saxon accent, at once officious and menacing. Tim Lang is a fussy, fastidious barber, and it is hard to imagine that only moments before he was the hugely pregnant sister-in-law who somehow conveys the impression of having had far too many children. The formal surface delights of the performance are always at the service of the play's deeper meaning, however. This is most clearly expressed in the theatrical highlight of the show, the brutal "Song of the Eighth Elephant." Soubeyran has kept the Dessau tune, but the very complex rhythmic accompaniment is provided simply by the actors themselves as they chop, roll, cut and pound the tobacco in Shui Ta's sweatshop, while Shui Ta sits on top of a step ladder laughing triumphantly. At once an impressive virtuoso display of theatrical business and of real-world business exploitation, this scene summed up all the strengths of the production.

This ideal is the one expressed in the fourth night of the *Messingkauf*, where the philosopher's plan to use art for didactic purposes unites with the artists' plan to "invest their knowledge, experience and social curiosity in art." Much has recently been written about the significance of the gender splitting in the play, as if it were a separate theme. But in a time of apparently universal market-place triumphalism, third-world exploitation, and high youth unemployment, all of *Good Person* has a stinging immediacy. The gods' remark that "we cannot meddle in the sphere of economics" or Sun's bitter conclusion about the value of his education as a pilot: "...I read all the manuals in flying school at Peking. But just one page of one manual I happened

to miss, the one where it says Airmen Not Wanted," must have a strong resonance in a city like Chemnitz, with 20% unemployment. It certainly struck a powerful chord with the students in the Toronto audience. US tobacco companies are at last offering to make contributions to the health care of smokers, while subtly continuing to make the habit seem cool to the young. In this context, the "Song of the Smoke" performed as an exhausted underclass puffs addictively and carcinogenically away filling the stage with thick clouds of poisonous fumes, seems even more sinister and urgently relevant than Brecht perhaps intended.

Soubeyran teaches at the prestigious Ernst Busch Theatre School in Berlin and has worked at the Berliner Ensemble with Weigel and Besson, as well as the Deutsches Theater. With its attention to the utmost precision and detail, to humour, to lightness and ease, and unlaboured intelligence, her work has the hallmarks of a great theatrical tradition—a tradition to which North Americans are not frequently enough exposed. Pia Kleber's successful efforts to bring the company to Canada through making connections with the Chemnitz theatre and the University College Drama programme, go a long way towards giving a taste of that tradition, and of the high standards of performance and interpretation that can be reached when the arts are properly valued and supported.

### **Puntila in Nordwest-Schonen**

*Jan Esper Olsson*

Auf einer Freilichtbühne beim Schloß Wrams Gunnarstorp nordöstlich von Helsingborg erlangte das Spiel vom Tawatländischen Großbauern großen Erfolg, wenngleich in lokal angeglichenen Form. Das kleine Theaterunternehmen Theatron führt in Zusammenarbeit mit den Laientheaterspielern im früheren Bergbaustädtchen Bjuv Brechts *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti* in einer Adaptation zu den Verhältnissen in Nordwest-Schonen unter dem Titel *Kalle och hans herre* auf (Anspielung auf Diderots *Jacques et son maître*).

Die Aufführungsreihe im Vorsommer kulminierte zum schwedischen Mitsommerfest, das auch in der Verlobungsfeier im Stück thematisch eingebaut war.

Dies ist eine Anpassung des Inszenierungskonzepts an die Bedingungen einer Freilichtaufführung, und dazu gehörten auch die Kabarettnummern mit einschlägigen Liedern, die das Publikum beim Suchen der Plätze in Stimmung versetzten. Weitere Aufführungen fanden Ende August—Anfang September, 1997 statt.

Hans Polster, jahrzehntelang Regisseur in Göteborg, im finnischen Turku als Oberspielleiter und in Helsingborg, führte Regie und spielte die große Rolle des Gutsbesitzers, brüllend, lallend, prustend und betäubend, wie es die Kritikerin in Helsingborgs *Dagblad* erlebte.

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*Mit Bedauern erfuhren wir, daß Jan Esper Olsson im Sommer dieses Jahres verstorben ist.*

### **Mutter Courage in Seoul**

*Goethe-Institut Seoul*

*Die Frau—Mutter Courage* ist ein Monodrama von Kim Jong Ok (Regie und Autor). Eine Koproduktion der beiden Theater *Jayo* und *Hakjon*. Es handelt sich um eine Schauspielerin, die Anfang 1950 während des Koreakrieges in Brechts *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* die Rolle der Mutter Courage spielt. Das Stück wurde in die historische Vergangenheit Koreas übertragen. Da Brecht ein kommunistischer Schriftsteller war, hat man den Hintergrund geändert. Ihr Mann zog zwangsweise für Japan in den Zweiten Weltkrieg. Ihr einziger Sohn ist als Freiwilliger in den Koreakrieg gezogen. Sie schöpft ihre Kraft aus ihrer schauspielerischen Tätigkeit.

Die Handlungsstruktur ist dreidimensional: 1894 (Zeit, in der die Schauspielerin auftritt), 1950 (Zeit, in der das Stück aufgeführt wird), und 1997 (Zeit, in der die Schauspielerin Park Yong Ja ihren eigenen Schmerz vor dem Publikum ausdrückt). Das Thema des Stückes: Was bedeutet es, Mutter zu sein in unserer Zeit?

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## Wer hat Angst vor Bertolt Brecht? *Die Maßnahme am Berliner Ensemble*

Stefan Mahlke

Walter Benjamin sprach einmal davon, daß die bürgerliche Gesellschaft ein erstaunliches Aufnahmevermögen von Kritik habe. Da werde noch jede Störung, jede Provokation in kürzester Zeit eingemeindet, ohne daß die Ordnung irgendeinen Schaden nehme. Benjamins Feststellung ist in ihrer allgemeinen Aussage kaum zu widersprechen. Das gilt wie für jeden anderen auch für Brecht, selbst für sein umstrittenstes Stück, *Die Maßnahme*. Nach über 40 Jahren Aufführungsverbot ist das Lehrstück von den Erben jetzt freigegeben worden. Ein konkreter Fall von Eingemeindung in den Kulturbetrieb ist nun in der Inszenierung am Berliner Ensemble zu betrachten.

Regisseur Klaus Emmerich gibt das Stück als Oratorium—das allein ist das Kommen wert. Ein in der Höhe "schwebender" Kontrollchor singt die Untersuchung, die vier Agitatoren treten in weißen Hemden und schwarzen Hosen bzw. Rock an Mikrophone und legen—ans Publikum gerichtet—ihren Fall dar: die notwendige Tötung des jungen Genossen. Auch wenn die jungen Darsteller nicht ganz die Klasse haben, den, "hohen Ton" abzuliefern, so ist dennoch etwas von dem zu ahnen, was Brecht für das epische Theater forderte: "spirituell, zeremoniell, rituell" sollen die Vorgänge auf der Bühne sein. Denn "nicht nahekomen sollten sich Zuschauer und Spieler," sondern voneinander entfernen. "Sonst fällt der Schrecken weg, der zum Erkennen nötig ist." Letztlich zieht die Inszenierung genau davor zurück. Deshalb läßt sie einen der vier Agitatoren stammeln; deshalb läßt sie die vier Agitatoren von jungen Schauspielern darstellen. Doch das ginge noch. Wirklich peinlich sind erst die vier alten Agitatoren (als revolutionsmüde Väter/Müttergeneration), die gelangweilt, gelegentlich über die Lesebrille ins Publikum schauend(!), das Geschehen verfolgen und ihre wenigen Texte versprechen: "Klug ist, der seine Fehler schnell zu vergess...verbessern versteht." Das soll ironisch sein, vielleicht auch die alte BE-Garde treffen. Offensichtlich aber hat sich die Regie jenem Gemeinplatz nicht verweigern können, der da meint, daß nach dem Zusammenbruch des Ostblocks ein so

erzkommunistisches Stück wie *Die Maßnahme* nur in ironischer Distanzierung gebracht werden könnte. Das ist mißlich, denn gerade das Erzkommunistische an der *Maßnahme* ist das Moderne an ihr: als das konsequent—und deshalb so schmerzvolle—Antidividualistische, also Antihumanistische. Deshalb ist die *Maßnahme* auch nicht als Tragödie zu spielen. Angesichts von Rationalisierung und Massenarbeitslosigkeit sind Verse wie:

Weiß ich was ein Mensch ist?

Weiß ich, wer das weiß?

Ich weiß nicht, was ein Mensch ist,

Ich kenne nur seinen Preis.

erstmal zu Ende zu denken. Der "Song von Angebot und Nachfrage" verlangt, was Benjamin "im Hoffnungslosen Fuß fassen," also "auf den Grund der Dinge gelangen" nannte. Die eigentlich nicht neue Erkenntnis, daß der Mensch ökonomisch als Ware Arbeitskraft betrachtet wird, ist offensichtlich noch immer voller Schrecken, gegen den man sich mit Ironie abzuschirmen versucht. Genau sie ist der Grund, wo Lieder wie "Ändere die Welt, sie braucht es" oder "Lob der Partei" aufsitzen. Hanns Eislers Anspielung auf Schlager und Jazz in der Lied-Komposition muß man durchaus nicht denunziatorisch verstehen. Vielmehr kann man in der Darbietung durch den Tenor Götz Schulte die Lust an der unterhaltenden Schönheit solch antihumanistischer Sätze sehen. Schultes Gesang ist stark angelehnt an den von Erik Wirl aus dem Jahre 1931 (zu hören als historische Aufnahme auf einer jüngst erschienenen CD, *Bertolt Brecht: An die Nachgeborenen*, Der Hörverlag). Die Frage des jungen Genossen: "Was ist eigentlich ein Mensch?" dagegen ist viel zu nah, zu vertraut gestellt. Brecht selbst spielte den jungen Genossen bei der besagten Aufnahme—und er fragte wie ein Außerirdischer.

*Die Maßnahme* ist ein Lehrstück, und das heißt, gelernt werden soll von den Mitspielern, durch das möglichst präideologische Skandieren der Texte. Die Inszenierung versucht, diese Besonderheit des Typus Lehrstück aufzunehmen. Der junge Genosse wird abwechselnd von einem der vier Agitatoren dargestellt—schließlich ist es aber doch der so "sympathisch" stotternde Agitator, der in die Kalkgrube muß. Das ist der Sieg des Mitleids. Auch die Verweisung ans Publikum ("Auch ihr jetzt denkt nach (über / Eine bessere Möglichkeit.)," der eine

minutenlange Pause folgt, in der die Saalbeleuchtung langsam angeht, ist schlecht von Brecht gelernt. Der hatte im Epilog des *Guten Menschen von Sezuan* solch vermeintlich öffnende Publikumsansprache mittels Kindersprache parodiert.

Musiziert und gesungen wurde großartig. Die Eislersche Musik, vorgetragen vom Konzertchor der Deutschen Staatsoper als Kontrollchor und dem Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin (Leitung: Roland Kluttig) ist das eigentliche Ereignis des Abends. Schlager, Operette und Choral, Jazz und Arbeiterlied werden in der Inszenierung als musikalische Quellen hörbar. Beeindruckend immer wieder die sparsame Instrumentierung (Schlagwerk, Horn, Trompete, Posaune). Die Musik ist es, die den Abend, aber nicht die Inszenierung rettet. Angesichts ihrer Klasse wird umso deutlicher, daß sich die Regie an Brecht vorbeimogelt.

### **Die Maßnahme in Berlin** Ingo Arend

“Furchtbar ist es zu töten. Aber nicht andere nur, auch uns töten wir, wenn es nottut. Da doch nur mit Gewalt diese tötende Welt zu ändern ist, wie jeder Lebende weiß.” Der Satz aus Bertolt Brechts umstrittenstem Stück *Die Maßnahme*, der die Plakate zur Premiere im Berliner Ensemble zierte, scheint wie eine Signatur unseres Jahrhunderts. Die Geschichte der vier kommunistischen Agitatoren, die einen jungen Genossen erschießen und anschließend in eine Kalkgrube werfen, weil er eigenmächtig gehandelt hat, zeigt, wie die Utopie der Veränderung zum Kadavergehorsam mutierte. Die Selbstaufgabe des Individuums unter die Disziplin der Partei geht bis zur Einwilligung in die eigene Tötung. Brechts Stück wurde schon nach der Uraufführung 1930 in der Berliner Philharmonie als “Gebetsbuch des Teufels” beschimpft.

Wie das Berliner Ensemble mit diesem heiklen Stoff, der Einblick in die gewaltbereiten Anfänge nicht nur des brechtschen Theaters gibt, umgehen würde, mußte man auch als Indiz für die intellektuelle Vergangenheitsbewältigung ansehen.

“Distanzieren ohne destruieren” heißt die kluge Losung am Schiffbauerdamm. Das

Abdruckverbot des Lehrstücks durch Suhrkamp-Chief Siegfried Unseld hatte man umgangen, indem man es als Anmerkungen zum *Kommunistischen Manifest* im Programmheft untergebracht hatte, was die Frage aufwirft, ob Gewalt nur eine Fußnote der zur Revolutionsdogmatik entarteten Verheißung war. Klaus Emmerichs Inszenierung verzichtete auf eine pathetische Abrechnung mit dem Irrglauben der bedingungslosen Unterordnung unter das Kollektiv. Die vier stotternden Agitatoren in schwarz-weißer Allerweltsuniform legten das Relikt sozialistischer Klassik mit Ironie und Zweifel bloß.

*Die Maßnahme* ist ein vertracktes Erbe mit Symbolcharakter. Das zwiespältige Dokument im ästhetischen Mausoleum seines Schöpfers so ironisch in den Kanon einzureihen, steht in der antiautoritären Stoßrichtung der brechtschen Lehrstücke und beschleunigt zugleich den heilsamen Prozeß dessen, was Margarete Mitscherlich schon Ende der sechziger Jahre “Das Ende der Vorbilder” nannte. Mißtraut den Klassikern! Trotzdem verschwanden mit dieser Balsamierung zur artifiziellen Sprechoper andere Lesarten. Lobt man das Formenrepertoire dieses Rollenspiels und Katechismus existentieller Entscheidungssituationen im Spannungsfeld von Individuum und Gruppe, die sich in der Gewaltwelt heute nicht geändert haben, sieht es leicht so aus, als ob man von seinen mörderischen Konsequenzen absehen will. Aber bei allem Distanzierungszwang, den das Stück herausfordert, bildet sich heute nicht eine ähnliche Grenzsituation? Der Rechtsdruck zu Beginn der dreißiger Jahre, unter dessen Eindruck Intellektuelle wie Brecht glaubten, sich mit Stücken wie *Die Maßnahme* auf die Klassenseite schlagen, sie einüben zu müssen, steht heute so nicht bevor. Heute wird für ein anderes Gesellschaftsexperiment getrommelt. Es ähnelt dem Bild Brechts von den Agitatoren, die die chinesische Grenze überschreiten: Auf Gedeih und Verderb bereit sein für das Neue, das ABC von Globalisierung und Flexibilisierung verbreiten. Der neuerliche Ruf zur Unterordnung unter die neuen Heilslehren kommt heute von der Gegenseite: Flexibilisiere die Welt, sie braucht es!

Ob man *Die Maßnahme* heute als “Theater der Zukunft” bezeichnen würde wie Brecht? Als Distanzierungsübung mit Nachdenkpause fürs



Publikum hat zumindest das Lehrstück Zukunftsfähigkeit bewiesen. Einen Abend vor dem bundesweiten "Tag des offenen Denkmals" entschied die Aufführung am BE mit, ob das Haus nur noch als museales Schaustück oder als Theater der Zukunft taugt. So wie die Inszenierung Brechts *Große Pädagogik* sachte wegdrückte, ohne sie unkenntlich zu machen, schien sie ein Fingerzeig, wie nicht nur das krisengeschüttelte Berliner Ensemble wieder Fahrt gewinnen könnte. Wer eine Zukunft haben will, muß etwas hinter sich lassen.

(Freitag 39, 19. September 1997)

### **Kreidekreis in London und Berlin**

Andres Müry

Der Meister hat sich mit angeklatschtem Haar, Hasenzahnbiss und Woody-Allen-Brille verfremdet. Im ausgebeulten schwarzen Anzug humpelt er herein. Wenn er nicht gerade einen Schluck aus der Pulle nimmt, wirft er beim Gestikulieren affenartig die Hände von sich.

Sind wir in einer billigen Comedy-Show? Nein, im Londoner Royal National Theatre, wo Simon McBurney in Bertolt Brechts Klassiker *Der kaukasische Kreidekreis* den Dorfrichter Azdak gibt. Der Chef der weltberühmten Truppe Théâtre de Complicité, die schon öfter mit dem "National" koproduzierte, war in seinen Anfängen Stand-Up-Comedian. Und Brecht hatte, als er 1944 in der Emigration das Stück schrieb, amerikanisches Variété und Musical im Sinn und den Broadway angepeilt. Erfolglos, versteht sich.

Schon das Vorspiel trieft von naiver sozialistischer Propaganda: Da debattieren nach dem Abzug der Naziarmee 1944 in einem zerstörten kaukasischen Dorf die Mitglieder zweier Sowjetkolchosen friedlich, welche der beiden Gruppen—Ziegenhüter oder Obstanbauer—dem Tal die bessere Nutzung bringt. Ein Märchen aus dem mittelalterlichen Grusenien, das darauf ein Sänger-Erzähler darbringt, soll ihnen Antwort geben: Grusche, eine Küchenmagd, bringt das Kind der Gouver-

neursfrau, das diese nach dem Sturz ihres Mannes im Stich ließ, heil durch die Bürgerkriegswirren. Als die leibliche Mutter das Kind nach dem Krieg zurückfordert, bekommt Grusche es vom Volksrichter Azdak nach dem Motto "Die Kinder den Mütterlichen" zugesprochen.

Das schlichte Spiel, das den Broadway rühren sollte, inszenierte Brecht schließlich 1954 an seinem Theater, dem Berliner Ensemble in der DDR. Eine internationale Karriere als Klassiker des Allgemeinen, wie er es geplant hatte, machte das Stück erst nach seinem Tod.

Seit den 70er Jahren, erst recht seit dem Zusammenbruch des sozialistischen Lagers und der Erosion ideologischen Denkens, stehen indes die reifen, in der Emigration entstandenen Werke Brechts im Geruch, verlogen und tot zu sein, besonders bei Theaterintellektuellen jeder Couleur im neuen Deutschland. Wenn die Regisseure sie nicht gleich zertrümmern, wie jüngst Frank Castorf und Einar Schleef den *Puntilla*, fällt ihnen nichts mehr dazu ein.

Was hat uns Brecht heute noch zu sagen? Einiges—wenn einer wie Simon McBurney, 39, frisch daherkommt und Brechts episches Erzähltheater neu erfindet, oder anders: hinter der erklärten Dramaturgie die Erzählung aufspürt. Er und seine multinationale Truppe sind darauf trainiert, Episches auf der Bühne hinreißend zu verlebendigen:

Man muß bloß den richtigen Einstieg finden. "Wenn du vor mehreren Leuten eine Geschichte erzählst," erklärt Simon McBurney, "bildet sich automatisch ein Kreis." So verlangte er vom Direktor des "National" statt einer bombastischen Ausstattung einzig, daß man das Olivier-Theater durch zusätzliche Sitzreihen zur Arena umbaute.

Mitten im Rund der Zuschauer kann sich die auf der Straße erworbene Haupttugend der "Theater-Komplizen" am schönsten entfalten: Beweglichkeit, sparsame Requisiten, offene Verwandlungen, Phantasie statt Opulenz. Ein Zeltdach über der Arena dient als Projektionsfläche für Bilder von Krieg und Vertreibung: Flüchtlingsströme, Feuersbrünste.

Aus der 14köpfigen Truppe, die die 60 Rollen spielen, ragt die schmale, zähe Juliet Stevenson heraus, eine der jungen Spielerinnen des "National," die der Grusche Naivität, innere Kraft und zugleich körperliche Artistik mitteilt. Mit Haube, Lederwams

und lumpenumwickelten Füßen gleicht sie der "Tollen Grete" aus dem Kriegsbild von Breughel, die Brecht als Vorbild diente.

Lauter Mittel des Complicité-Stils: Der Säugling ist zu Beginn eine Puppe, die von Grusche—oder von einem verhüllten Spieler von Hand zum Leben erweckt wird. Den morschen Steg, auf dem sich Grusche mit dem Kind über den Abgrund rettet, bildet die Truppe aus ihren Körpern und langen Holzstangen. Der Richtersitz, von dem herunter sich Azdak mit Grusche streitet: ein Holztisch, darauf ein Bürodrehstuhl.

McBurney verbeugt sich listig vor dem Meister, indem er versichert: "Unser Theater hat Brecht völlig absorbiert, er ist in fast allem präsent, was wir tun." Doch war er klug genug, die alte Übersetzung von James und Tania Stern und W.H. Auden, der der Staub des sozialistischen Krippenspiels anhaftet, beiseite zu legen und sich auch von der—für den deutschen Sprachraum obligatorischen—Musik Paul Dessaus zu trennen.

Beim irischen Dramatiker Patrick McGuinness bestellte er eine neue Fassung, und sein Bruder Gerard komponierte—nach einer gemeinsamen Reise nach Georgien—eine Musik.

Was bei Brecht der süddeutsche, ist bei McBurney nun ein irischer Sound, den die Schauspieler, allen voran Juliet Stevenson, aufnehmen. So bekommt dieser *Kreidekreis* etwas von einer irischen Volksballade, in die zuweilen wundersam georgische Gesänge einströmen. Wohl wahr: Wenn der Sänger-Erzähler Jeffrey Kissoon, ein afrikanischstämmiger Brite, Sentenzen wie "schrecklich ist die Verführung zum Guten!" ("Terrible is the temptation to the good!") rhythmisch herausschleudert, dann wird das Pathos, anders als im Deutschen, erträglich. Und die Schlußmoral ("Die Kinder den Mütterlichen, das Tal den Bewässerern") überläßt McBurney klugerweise dem stockend sprechenden Kind.

Im Juli 1997 gastierte dieser fulminante *Kreidekreis* am Berliner Ensemble, zum Brecht-Sommer," der die Festivitäten zum 100.Geburtstag des Dichters vom nächsten Jahr einleitete.

(Focus 18, 1998, slightly edited)



*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui  
in the Israeli Context*  
Shimon Levy, Tel Aviv University

Bertolt Brecht has long been a winner in the Israeli theatrical hit parade, and some 40 productions of his plays have been mounted on major Israeli stages in the last 60 years. The first was Ha'Ohel's ("Workers' Theater") *Three Penny Opera* in the late 1930s, the last to date *Arturo Ui*, played in the Haifa Municipal Theatre (premiere Feb.18, 1997), not to mention dozens of drama schools and semi-professional productions which have been playing Brecht's plays throughout this period. The reasons for Brecht's popularity on the relatively young professional Hebrew (beginning in the early 1920s) stage, even before the establishment of the State of Israel, will not be analyzed in this context. However, it is important to explain, at least briefly that, on top of Brecht's intrinsic and world-wide accepted dramatic quality, he was also a German socialist, who, as such, has been viewed as "kosher" in the eyes of Jewish theatre makers, many of them German Jews who escaped Hitler's Nazi regime.

When the National Socialists rose to power in Germany in 1933, Jews had to loose their lives or flee from a country which previously had been a relative cultural paradise where—as Jews—they played a highly intensive role. As an ardent anti-fascist, Brecht represented the spirit of criticism and

"good" German culture. When German Jews immigrated to Palestine in the mid-1930s, the socially critical Brecht plays were understandably received almost as an automatic cultural import item. Furthermore, Israel in its early years was culturally and theatrically dominated by socialistic ideology which Brecht's works, wonderfully accommodated.

Following the assassination of Itzhak Rabin in November 1995, the right-wing Likud party, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, won the elections, in May 1996, by only a slim margin. People of the Labour block have often been heard to express their feelings of the political loss in highly emotional terms, such as, "we lost our country to 'them,'" namely to the anti-peace-annexationist-settlers, the Jewish-Orthodox and the right-wing populists. Benjamin Netanyahu himself had spent long years outside of Israel, and besides being Israel's representative in the UN, was also the brother of Yoni Netanyahu, who was killed, as a daring commando officer, in the Entebbe airplane kidnapping affair in Uganda. "Bibi" Netanyahu, as his opponents of the left never allow him to forget, also used to be a salesman in the furniture business. In his well-planned rise to power, first in his own Likud party, then in the national elections, he and his team resorted to shrewd manipulation of the media.

When the Haifa Municipal Theatre decided to mount Brecht's *Arturo Ui*, the time was ripe for a slashing political satire parodying and criticizing Netanyahu through Brecht's ridiculous thriller on the Chicago gangster. Though hardly changing the original text, Avraham Oz's new translation (the first translation was made by the late Hebrew poet David Avidan) inserted a number of Israeli slogans, political associations and media related clichés, so as to make it utterly clear to the 1997 audience, who our gangster Arturo Ui is in this particular production. One of those terms was "Shalom and Bitachon," meaning "Peace and Security," so often used by many politicians, but abused and misused by Netanyahu, in the eyes of his left wing critics. Whoever did not get the message was henceforth invited to make the associations by him/herself by visiting the Hacarmel and Maheane-Yehuda vegetable markets in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and being impressed by the sweeping, yelling support of the lettuce vendors for "Haide Bibi."

The first production of an Israeli *Arturo Ui* had been mounted by the National Theatre Habima in 1970, relating the textual as well as sub- and contextual story of Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and Roehm, as clearly intended in Brecht's original. The 1970 version was directed by the Australian director Michael Blakemore who was brought over from England, aided by two other non-Israeli theatre people, Annena Stubbs, the designer, and Hans-Dieter Husele, the musician. The Habima 1970 production received mainly slashing reviews. Critic Haim Gamzo called the show a "Colossal Boredom" [*Haaretz*, 3/ 19/ 1970]. Yigal Tumarkin, famous sculptor and theatre designer who worked with Bertolt Brecht in Berlin in the 1950s, did not spare his rod either and described the show in words such as "I ran away in the intermission, couldn't take the boredom and the anger I felt... in this megalomaniac, nouveau-riche and tasteless show...". [*Haaretz*, 13.3.70]. Michael Ohad wrote: "The way to hell is paved with good intentions." [*Haaretz*, 3/ 13/ 70]. Bo'az Evron wished that Ui's part ( played by Nisha Asherov ) be played with the devilish wit and the magical power that brought him to rule. [*Yediot Ahronot*, 3/ 18/ 1970]

One may conclude that the apparently much too "English" (in other words not 'Israeli,' not 'ours'...) interpretation of Brecht's 1941 play in Israel of 1970, failed because it was not contextualized enough in the political and racial ambience of the period.

The Haifa Municipal Theatre, in a blatantly left-wing, contemporary-satirical version, on the other hand, was politically clear without being overly explicit, faithful to the original and yet innovative in its adaptation—actually, re-location, to Israel in the late 1990s. Director Sinai Peter placed his show in the electronic-media oriented Israel, and made an intensive use of on-stage television screens that doubled the Ui image. In a not so strange way, this was an Israeli repeat of the Nixon-Kennedy television debate. Not only did Peter replace the well-known "Brechtian signs" with contemporary ones, but in fact he directly alluded to Netanyahu's technique of rising to power. Nowadays, claimed director Sinai Peter, television expresses contemporary modes of suppression and adds yet another oppressive component to capitalism, power

struggles and political manipulations. [Quoted by Weitz, *Yediot Ahronot*, 4/ 6/ 1973]

It is interesting to note that, in generally praising the show, the Israeli critics in 1996/7 did no more than hint at the actual political relevance of the Haifa Theatre production. I propose that they took it for granted that the now more sophisticated audience would draw their own conclusions. Also, one may guess, they did not want to expose the inherent comparison between an Israeli leader, right-wing as he is, and the epitome of evil for the Jewish people, as Hitler was referred to in Brecht's play.

Of particular satirical, communicational and theatrical influence was the scene in the show in which the actor teaches Arturo Ui how to walk, talk, sit and move "efficiently." Netanyahu, as many in the Israeli theatre audiences know, took many "Public Relations" lessons in preparation for his televised public appearances. In the Haifa Theatre, Arturo Ui the gangster-protagonist must even learn how to recite Mark Anthony's eulogy over Caesar's dead body. This, in the Israeli context of early 1997, inevitably means only Rabin's body. Israeli film, TV and theatre actor Moshe Ivgy was reflected on the screens and may have reminded the audience of the traumatic night of Rabin's assassination. Allegations about Netanyahu's links with Russian Mafia activists, doubtful money sources and various power groups helped Israeli audiences connect Arturo with Netanyahu.

Israel in the 1990s has been exposed to a number of politically oriented theatre shows. More than the quite documentary and explicitly political productions of Pollard or Gorodrish, for example, also dealing with the conflicts between justice and political power, more distanced, subtle and sophisticated fables are also likely to teach us more about ourselves and our own corruption. At the Haifa Municipal Theatre *Arturo Ui* served as a necessary theatrical eye-opener. "Mögen andere von ihrer Schande sprechen, ich spreche von der meinen" Brecht once said. In Israel in late 1990, Brecht's socio-dramatic lessons function, again, as an invitation to cast a penetrating gaze through the deliberately thin, self-referential, pseudo-televisional theatrical mask.

### **The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui, at the University of Washington, Seattle.**

*Nachfolgend Auszüge aus Notaten von zehn Graduate Studenten der Germanistik, Komparatistik, Regie und Theaterwissenschaft, die im Rahmen eines European Studies Course, "Modern German Drama and Politics," den Prof. Dr. Heinz Uwe Haus im Herbstsemester an der Universität Washington hielt, sich auch mit Schauspiel und Regie betreffenden methodischen Fragen der Brecht-Rezeption anhand der Inszenierung beschäftigten. Die erwähnten Gesichtspunkte und Problematisierungen, insbesondere auch der interdisziplinäre Kontext, vermitteln produktive Impulse für den wissenschaftlichen und künstlerischen Umgang mit Brecht an unseren Universitäten.*

### **Generative Contradictions.**

#### **Dorothy Holland:**

I would like to discuss a few staging choices which appeared to be contradictions (to text or theatrical convention), yet effectively served to illuminate the play. The first is the choice to cast a woman to play Ui. This supremely unexpected choice serves as a particularly powerful generator of meaning, brilliantly capturing the unlikely, incredulous nature of Arturo's rise. This casting creates a contradiction which works on the spectator throughout the performance; the constant disjunction between the image of this modest female frame and the dramatic figure of the gangster boss—the thug who evokes terror with violence and treachery—foregrounds the question, "How could this happen?!" It also insinuates the chilling reality that evil often comes in seemingly innocuous, even pleasing forms.

In addition, Jolene Hjerleid's performance helped extend the contradictory elements in Ui's character as she was able to go further into the desperate, pleading aspects without falling into parody, and she was capable of portraying the treacherous and deadly aspects of Ui, as well. That Jolene was dressed in female attire, increased the tension; the costume for the final rally was excellent. Where we would expect the uniform, Ui appearing in

a woman's pin-stripped suit and heels produced a delightful effect—strange, yet, somehow fitting. Heels made Ui taller and evoked both power and seduction. The suit read 'business' tailored, smart, sleek a power suit, yet, clearly a woman's outfit. The anomalous aspects generated interesting associations, including: an inherently non-powerful person's (woman's) deliberate attempt to signify power; it also signaled vanity, perversity, power in a new form—untrustworthy in a more complex and elusive way. Monstrous and fascinating at the same time.

Regarding Hedda Sjögrenäs' performance: Ui's being played by a woman did not seem so jarringly out of place. Hedda's creative contradictions had less to do with her gender than with her skills as an actress and her ability to play both the comic and tragic aspects of this character. Drunk, ham, sham, pompous fool, inspired artist, idealist, she captured them all. And, by the end of the scene, this character who, at first, seems most "out of it" recognizes most clearly the truth of the situation. He sees the horrific reality of what is occurring, his own complicity, and he painfully recognizes the appropriation and destruction of his ideal.

Another generative contradiction occurs in this scene; it comes at the point when the uncultured Ui, after taking the Julius Caesar text to read aloud, suddenly drops the book, yet continues speaking the lines sans script. He'd never heard of Shakespeare and now suddenly he's quoting the lines from memory?! Suddenly the lines are truly his, or always were, or is this like some Hollywood extravaganza where characters can launch into songs and dances as if by magic?

Finally, I want to say something about the use of actor who played Dogsborough as an ever present part of the gangster scenes. This actor, who stood out from the rest by virtue of his age, was not easy to hide or to transform. To see him as the penitent Dogsborough writing his confession and will, and then to see him as one of the gangsters unavoidably presented the spectator with an irreconcilable contradiction—the good man who is to be pitied for his mistake, and the fully conspiratory gangster figure. Sheet names this paradox: "Some green and goeey twigs that could be snakes—But no, they're twigs. Or are they...?" The audience had to grapple

with this incongruity, no matter how subtly the perception played upon them. Once Dogsborough dons the brown coat (between his "never" of scene 5 and his appearance in City Hall, scene 6) he is a full participant in, and responsible for Arturo's rise.

### **Anke Biendarra:**

Es sei dahingestellt, ob ein amerikanisches Publikum die im Grunde offensichtlichen Parallelen zu den Nazi-Größen erkennt. Wer denkt in diesem Land an Hindenburg, wenn er Arturos Steigbügelhalter Dogsborough sieht? Wer identifiziert seinen treuen Freund Ernesto Roma mit Ernst Röhm? Und schließlich wird wohl kaum jemand die verzweifelt komischen Versuche Uis, Format und Charisma im Schauspielunterricht zu 'erlernen,' so automatisch wie ein Deutscher mit den grotesken Bildern assoziieren, die Hitler in ähnlicher Situation zeigen.

Noch stärker wird das Gefühl, irgendetwas passe nicht, in der sich anschließenden Szene mit Ernesto Roma (Scott Capehard), dessen Ähnlichkeit mit einer SS-Charge die Inszenierung auf eindrucksvolle Weise herausarbeitet. Von der alten Freundschaft ist zwischen beiden die Rede. Ernesto beschwört die Einigkeit, die stark macht. Tatsächlich aber vermerkt der Zuschauer nicht männerbündische Freundschaft, sondern ein erotisches Knistern zwischen dem ungleichen Paar. Spannung kommt auf, doch ist es nicht die homoerotische Neigung, auf die das Stück in Referenz auf Röhm anspielt. Wir sehen doch immer nur die Frau und den Mann, und mögen daher nicht glauben, daß Ui in der nächsten Szene ihren treuesten Freund erschießt.

"Verfremdung!" wird da mancher rufen und einwenden, daß auch das Mittel den Zweck heiligen könne. Vielleicht trägt die Idee einer "Artura" doch, wenn man die weibliche Metapher am Schluß hoch bewertet. Dann wäre alles Böse auf Eva und den Sündenfall zurückzuführen und Geschichte die ewige Wiederholung des immer Gleichen, das nur in neuen Kleidern daherkommt. Hat Brecht uns das sagen wollen?



**Timothy Joseph Rogers:**

Also, because of my narrow and distorted understanding of Hitler, I had in my mind an Ui character with fiery, evil charisma. The Ui situation (Ui representing the social injustice of extortion and political force) was made more real for me due to the strangeness of Arturo being performed by a petite young actress who starts out manly and ends womanly. This dynamic distortion caused me to dwell on the significance of the choice, thus causing me to ask many questions indirectly about the "Ui situation." Therefore, in my ignorance of *Verfremdungseffekt*, I was a happy victim of the device and its effectiveness was made perfectly clear.

**Dialectical Relationships**

**Pawit Mahasarinand:**

The woman's rise to power, in the audience's perception, seemed more resistible and put much more meaning to the play. This was proved in the acting lesson scene where an alcoholic actor (again played by a woman) taught him how to walk, stand, and give a public speech gracefully like a great political leader in our history (a man). Considering the fact that a woman is normally more worried about her appearance than a man, the characterization of Ui in this production made it almost impossible for Ui to be an elegant leader, and made the scene one of the most severely ironical and meaningful moments in the play. The portrayal of a person who tries, in vain, to be what he/she can never be, the strong contrast between the public and private charisma of Ui, is obvious in the scene. The significance of image in the contemporary world was also ridiculed. In the materialistic world dominated by capitalism, people are more concerned with their appearance than their morality. The participation of the press, the media who currently controls the public perception is another classic element in this play. Ui's need to be in the public spotlight, despite the poor personal characteristics, was effectively supported by the press. In the present age of information technology, one tends to make friends with the media in order to rise to power.

Another unexpected, yet less surprising, casting is for the role of O'Casey, the chairman of the

investigating committee, the representative of the justice system. Though in reality we have a lot of women in that position, they have rarely been portrayed on stage. This casting thus puts the 55 year old play right in the political correctness era, and adds contemporary quality to a classic.

The director's decision not to put any signs that link the play's action to those that happened in Europe in the 1930s effectively supports this casting, and the production concept. This well-known Brechtian technique would have been the most effective, if it had been produced in 1941, while Hitler was still in the focus. Though Brecht intended to ridicule Hitler as he believed he was a great criminal and not a good political leader, we have seen too many stories of Hitler already. This production's interpretation, without any allegorical placards, provided its audience with much more meaning, and supported the notion that Arturo Ui is a universal figure, not merely a parody of Hitler.

**Mike Kelly:**

We are continuously confronted with conflicting stereotypes: On the one hand the ruthless, cruel, and calculating Mafia boss, being portrayed by a female actress who makes no attempt to compensate for her femininity through external appearances (she wears skirts, heels, make-up, etc.) on the other. This apparent disregard of gender in less prominent roles throughout the play, such as minor gangster roles being played by women, does indeed distance the audience from the events on stage and allow us to view the action critically, rather than identifying with the characters and becoming emotionally involved in the story.

Gender decisions in the casting is not the only means by which Haus purposely disappoints traditional theater-goers' expectations, however. The inventive use of only three rolling wooden "islands" of various sizes as nearly the entire collection of stage props and the use of other forms of the performing arts (singing, dancing, and at times possibly a combined touch of vaudeville) are others. Rather than using the opening and closing of a curtain or the end of acting and the dimming of lights to signify to the audience the beginning and end of each scene, the actors still on stage at the end of the

previous scene simply rearrange the “set” by pushing the wooden constructions into new positions. All this is accompanied by other actors who stand along the sides of the stage, facing the audience and singing and dancing.

The final, and perhaps most ingenious invention of this production comes at the end. Between the final scene and its preceding one, members of the cast pass out bright red mini-flags with the name “Ui” imprinted on them. In the final scene, which portrays the election of Ui, the audience is encouraged to wave the flags at appropriate places in Ui’s address. Between scenes some members of the cast sitting in the audience hold monologues about their involvement with Ui and take part in the election in one way or another. The effect of this strategy is to put the audience into the play and plot with the actors. This does not occur in the classical sense of losing oneself in the story, however, but rather in the Brechtian sense of a dialectical relationship. In other words, we gain a better, more critical understanding of the essential truths through involvement.

### V-Affec(ta)tions

#### Steve Moe:

This production’s evolved manifestations of Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* are worth particular mention for their capacity to bridge the last fifty years and to bring the final election scene brutally close to the present, namely the eve of our own impending exercise of directed democracy here in the United States. Brecht’s own admonition that “das Komische darf nicht ohne das Grausige sein”<sup>1</sup> must be kept in mind to appreciate the use of such comic devices as a very Michael Jacksonesque grab for the genitals,<sup>2</sup> an exquisitely choreographed cheer leading scene prior to Ui/Hitler’s electoral “win” in Cicero/Austria, or the chorus’ hilarious versions of old popular songs adapted with new lyrics describing each scene change. These distancing devices give service to *V-Effekte* equal to those of more serious inversions of our expectations (e.g. actresses in female costume playing various significant male characters, repeated direct addressing of the audience, or the involvement of the audience as

voting participants in the last scene’s election convention), and add to them an irony inexorably tied to their humor and absurdity. But perhaps most important and effective for this specific geographical and (a)historical climate is their direct ties to our contemporary American Pop Culture realities. The signature gesture of a problematic Pop icon such as Michael Jackson, or the immediately recognizable melodies of popular classics such as “Cup o’ Joe,” “The Boy From New York City,” and the popularized spiritual “When the Saints Come Marching In” are such integral parts of our cultural consciousness that they become all the more poetic when displaced in the context of the staging of a “serious” German historical. To place these pillars of American popular culture amongst a critical retelling of a very dangerous turn in our recent history is to shake the foundations of our need to feel safely removed from Nazi Germany and Auschwitz. Yet it is exactly this retreat into the comfort zone of a *späten Geburt* that the epilogue hopes to discourage (“Daß keiner uns zu früh triumphiert / Der Schoß ist fruchtbar noch, aus dem das kroch!”<sup>3</sup>). With various implementations of carefully crafted and manipulated distancing devices, we are tricked into enjoying a stern reminder of the societal weaknesses that can spawn a tyrant.

1 From the April 12, 1941 entry in Brecht’s *Arbeitsjournal*, quoted on p. 131 of Brecht’s *Aufhaltsamer Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*, Raimund Gerz (ed), Frankfurt (Main): Suhrkamp, 1983.

2 Brecht’s original stage directions call for an only slightly more discrete “vor dem Geschlechtsteil Zusammenlegen der Hände.” (Gerz 50).

3 Gerz 110.

#### Theresa May:

Where Brecht’s placards often denote scene and locations changes, in Heinz Uwe-Haus’s Arturo song and dance perform this distancing function, and spice up the meaning as well. Here is one of many “conscious contradictions” in the production. The melodies used are ones already ingrained in the American psyche—songs of the 1930’s like *Mr. Sandman*, *You Are My Sunshine*, *When Jonnie Comes Marching Home*, *American ‘Tis of Thee*—yet the words are Brecht’s. The melodies serve to

distance us from the moment which just occurred in the story by transporting us emotionally to moments in our own lives (where were you when *Bop Shoo Bop* was playing on the radio?). Each song is a kind of hook for this American audience, triggering specific memories, emotions, nostalgia. Because these are songs we know, they serve simultaneously to distance us and draw us in. As the play progresses, the tunes also move forward in time. The play, we think, is about the “bad guys,” but the songs are about us. As the melodies are getting closer to home, closer to contemporary time, with the use of the Jet’s song from *West Side Story* and *Bop Shoo Bop*, we become more unhinged. Finally, as we see a good old American football cheer—Ui! Ui!—it is as if we have been roped in by the very device used to distance us. In this way we are pulled back and forth between the play and our own memories. These melodies, which inhabit our subconscious, have slowly but surely drawn us in (while simultaneously distancing us) until it is not only Ui there on stage, it is ourselves. Brecht and Haus unmasked us.

Only twice does a song appear within the story (i.e., not a scene change device). At the end of Scene 8 a young black woman—a grocer—sings, reminiscent of the image of the blonde German youth singing allegiance to Hitler’s movement. But here the blonde German youth is masked in the image of a black American woman. We hear simultaneously the voice of freedom superimposed over the voice of fascism. Later, Dulfet’s funeral procession is done to a song reminiscent of southern spirituals, ringing back images of similar processions in which the coffins carried the martyrs of the American Civil Rights movement.

Had the sound been turned off, however, the story could have been told in images alone. “I wrote *Ui* with the possibility of production constantly in my mind’s eye ...,” Brecht wrote in 1941 (*Journals*). Hurwicz, an actor with the Berliner Ensemble remarks about Brecht, “[h]is work reminds one of primers in which the meaning of a story could be read from the pictures” (Fuegi, p.145). Haus staged *Ui* like a 1930’s silent film. A sequenced series of stills and specific actions within them told the story without words. Images were used like bullets and fired at point blank range. Each picture was

consciously composed like a fine photo, becoming, then, symbolic beyond its function in the story. Under the umbrella of the Cauliflower Trust the four members will keep dry together—an image of corporate collusion. Dogsborough and son seem to be a Norman Rockwell painting. Roma’s assassination sears the mind with images of political violence from China to Central America. In the flower shop, bodies move like live plants, simultaneously asking how many buildings (organizations, companies, governments) are made with human beings used like brick and mortar? The final scene is haunting for Americans on the brink of a national election. Here is the political figure as a conscious construction for the public eye.

In the casting and character of *Ui*, Haus again makes “use of conscious contradiction” (Fuegi, p. 149) as a method for “dialectics made visible” (Fuegi, p. 158). The distancing devices serve not only to keep the mind awake, but to shed new light, to reveal, to unmask deeper meanings. *Ui*, as played by Jolene Hjerleid, at once distances us from the character (because she is a woman and of small stature) and takes us deeper into *Ui*’s character. In Jolene’s performance we see past the gangster mask into the vulnerable internal reality of *Ui*, where insecurities are conjured as the enemy and inadequacies become weapons, where false self worth is bought at any price. This distance allows us some empathy, or at least sympathy, with *Ui*—who of us has not felt afraid of the future, too small to act? It is precisely here, at the meeting place between the image and ourselves, that we are most disturbed, most provoked. Here, again, the mask serves to unmask more of the character and more of us. This unresolved duality is a key to deeper meaning. In the end the contradictions provide the play’s humanity. We recognize ourselves in that which is contrary.

1 Bertolt Brecht, *Journals 1943-1955*. New York: Routledge 1993..

2 John Fuegi, *Bertolt Brecht, Diary of a Production*, MA. Cambridge.

## Transformation of Morals

### *Kornelia Luettmann:*

The paradigmatic function of the play arises from the fact that both historical topics become recognizable. Whereas the almost Hollywood-like sets show the milieu of the American gangster, the parallels to Hitler's rise to power are intimated through a few gestures and props. In both historical situations a criminal acquires entrance into a bourgeois world whose representatives distance themselves in disgust from gangsters but at the same time prove themselves to be corrupt and corruptible, making use of similarly criminal methods in order to increase their wealth. In this sense it is not so much the criminal who stands at the center of the parable, but rather the criminal structures of a society that gains wealth by taking it away from the general public. The criminal who wishes to become integrated in this society comes into contact with structures that are themselves already criminal. The main challenge for the production of the play is simply to expose these social structures as paradigmatic in order to keep the spectator from dismissing them as merely historical.

Haus does not make use of the entire arsenal of Brechtian alienation effects, concentrating instead on some essential elements that are then effectively brought out. Instead of integrating projection and texts for instance, which often brings about the boring didactic effect of Brecht's plays, Haus concentrates on the comic and entertaining aspects of the parable. The fairground atmosphere, for instance, which is introduced in the prologue, continues on throughout the play. This effect is achieved through short *intermezzi* between the scenes that remind one of a musical. During these interludes the platforms, on and under which the actors are moving about, are quickly rebuilt. Every scene begins with a new configuration, almost reminding one of a group portrait. One is reminded of a street-ballad recital in which every stage of the story is represented by a picture.

The most alienating aspect of this production is without a doubt that the title role is played by a woman. The representation of the gangster by a petite and feminine actress works against the clichés

and stereotypes of the 'strong man,' the power-hungry and ambitious macho. At the same time the concept of the 'weak woman' loses its meaning, for the feminine Ui, without raising her voice and without ever picking up a weapon, is in control of a gang of burly gunmen. Violence and power are presented as factors that have little to do with body and gender and more to do with intelligence. Ui actually becomes more and more feminine as the play progresses. At the beginning "he" is wearing clothing that is somewhere between gangster's attire and a soldier's uniform: a long coat and combat boots. At the moment when "he" becomes more powerful however, "he" appears in a fancy dress and pumps. While the clothing has become socially appropriate, then, the criminal underneath remains unchanged.

The comic effects of the parable are clearly worked out in Haus' production. Cauliflower, for instance comes up again and again as an object of contention. It no longer seems so funny however, when the same cauliflower becomes a motive for murder. There are an infinite number of other objects which could serve as substitutes for cauliflower. Another very effective comic scene is the one in which Ui is taking lessons from an actor in order to be able to impress the public with fitting gestures. Although the criminal is exposed here to ridicule, his words nonetheless provoke thought: while high society is impressed by one's bank balance, for the lower levels of society a few simple gestures suffice.

### *Jonathan Dally:*

For the characters, their 'morals' are defined as what they see in their view of the world as *right* [fair] or *wrong* [unjust].

One main reason in showing this transformation is that it heightens the conflict between the other characters in the play; additionally the alteration also increases the disharmony within the character itself. This shift in attitude also increases the ability of the audience to separate the 'good' actions and deeds from the 'bad' ones. Conversion of these characters also shows their development and importance in the play. The last reason is of the author's doing. Brecht chose to write the play as both a familiar

parable and as warning to the audience of the worsening situation in Germany: "Theatre remains theatre even when it is instructive, and in so far as it is good theatre it will amuse."<sup>1</sup> Of course, the most noticeable transformation occurs with the character of Old Dogsborough. A good and honorable man, he is used and his position is abused by the leaders of the Trust and Arturo. The Trust uses him to get their loan, and Arturo uses him to secure his reputation. The downfall of Old Dogsborough starts and ends with his acceptance of Sheet's company. Unfortunately, the fall of Dogsborough results in the rise of Arturo. Because of the collective greed of these three characters, the play could well have been titled "The Irresistible Fall of Old Dogsborough." However, Old Dogsborough is the only character who truly realizes and attempts to publicize the error in his choice. More importantly, his recognition of and regret for his actions separates him from all the other characters.

The leaders of the Cauliflower Trust also have a shift in moral attitudes. Although they are initially disgusted with the idea of using a gangster like Arturo to regain their hold on the vegetable trade in Chicago, they quickly accept him. Their shift occurs when they witness Arturo's defense and support of Old Dogsborough at City Hall. The Trust suddenly realizes that Arturo is aware of their abuse of the loan approved by Old Dogsborough, and his discovery could implicate them. From then on, even though the Trust doesn't approve of his tactics, they choose to side with Arturo, as he is improving their business.

The grocers of Chicago (and of Cicero) also drastically change their position in the play. Naturally, they are opposed to paying for Arturo's 'protection,' but Arturo manages to convince them. Arturo strong-arms them, by having his men burn down Crockett's warehouse or shoot an opposing grocer. Arturo states: "...Whoever is not for me is against me, and let him face the consequences." Although the grocers do not change willingly, they are nonetheless compelled to submit to 'Force and violence.' They are victims of Arturo's lust for power.

Betty Dullfeet also undergoes a radical alteration, as she submits to the avarice and malice of Arturo. Initially, she is not unsympathetic towards

Arturo, as she warns him of her husband's zeal, and is somewhat charmed by Arturo in the flower shop ("We understand each other"). After Ignatius' death, she is aware that Arturo was responsible, and she confronts him at her husband's funeral. Arturo empathizes with her, and even plays the martyr when she refuses to talk to him. Although she abandons him in the cemetery, suddenly in the following scene at the Convention Hall, she asks the grocers of Cicero to place their confidence in him. She chooses to capitulate under the force and violence of Arturo.

Arturo is certainly an interesting study in character transformation. He, a self-described "simple son of Brooklyn," quickly develops throughout the play. His de-moralization has several stages. The 1<sup>st</sup> step is his discovery of the loan, and his eventual manipulation of Old Dogsborough. The 2<sup>nd</sup> step is his rapid metamorphosis from gangster to showman, induced by the actor in Scene 7. With only a few simple posture and voice lessons, Arturo transforms from a two-bit gangster to a back-stabbing politician. The 3<sup>rd</sup> step is the double-cross of his friend of 18 years, Ernesto Roma. With the prodding of Giri, he decides to have Roma killed: "Duty (to your friend) be screwed," because "business is immortal." The final step in Arturo's conversion is the murder of Ignatius Dullfeet, and the subsequent submission of Betty; both events are the last stage in Arturo's rise. Arturo's changes are his own choices; in relatively little time, he becomes a powerful gangster.

All of the five characters discussed are transformed in the course of the play. They are either forced to compromise their morals, or they choose to do so at the expense of others. Brecht shows transformations, because he wants the audience to see that people on the stage and in the audience really can and do change. They change for better or worse; either as their own choice, or because of external forces. Brecht also believed that the audience sees this transformation, could learn something from it, and then apply this 'lesson' to their daily social and political life.

1 Herzfeld-Sander, Margaret, ed. *Essays on German Theatre*. New York: Continuum, 1985.



**Teri Minton:**

Director Haus chose not to ignore history, but not to dwell on it either. "This is not," he said to the cast at their first meeting, "a play about Hitler." Certain scenes do require a knowledge of Hitler and his mannerisms, especially the scene in which Ui takes elocution lessons from an old school Shakespearean actor. However, the essence of the play is how a crook, whether he be Hitler or Al Capone, can rise to a place of prominence and power, gaining legitimizing support along the way.

Except for some of the motions of Ui, there were no direct references to Hitler in the University of Washington production. Haus suggested early in the rehearsal process that the company might bring tell-tale mannerisms of many public figures into the production but it proved beyond the capabilities of the actors, within the short rehearsal period, to bring that idea to fruition. Instead, the presentation of the characters within scenes was extremely straightforward, simply focused on telling the story.

The advantages of this approach, especially given the timeliness of the production, may well have outweighed any negative side effects. The audience, steeped in the campaigns raging in the news, brought politics into the hall with them, informing their response to scenes leading up to Ui's final convention hall speech. This more open direct approach also allowed the student actors to devise connecting material in the form of short songs announcing the upcoming scenes (and covering the scene changes) which played on popular American tunes. Arturo Ui was cast most successfully as a woman, wearing by the play's end a beautifully tailored woman's suit, expanding the possibilities to encompass the political scene of the 1990s. The ahistorical solution may have sacrificed some of Brecht's wit, but, in so doing, preserved his spirit in a production designed for the America of today.

Please, see the more complete article by James Stark, p. 50-55.



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speaks

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“Song of Mother Courage, The Fishwife and  
the Soldier, The Great Capitulation, Army  
Chaplain's Song, The Song of the Wise and  
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## Some Unfamiliar Music For a Savage-Tender Tale

*D.J.R. Brucknes*

The music written for Brecht's *Mother Courage* by Darius Milhaud, which has lain unplayed in manuscript for more than 35 years until now, brings an extraordinarily intimate emotional power to this ferocious antiwar chronicle play. In it, an indomitable woman drags a kind of traveling PX in a cart, along with her three children by three fathers, across Europe for more than a decade during the Thirty Years' War in the 17th century. Brecht has seldom had a more familiar human face than in this production by the Jean Cocteau Repertory Theater, and he has seldom seemed more threatening.

In 1959, two decades after the play was written, new music by Milhaud was commissioned to replace the original score by Paul Dessau, and Eric Bentley was asked to revise his translation to suit the new score. Financing for the planned production fell through and the music remained in the hands of Milhaud's widow, who released it this year for the Cocteau company's version, which runs in repertory through the end of March.

Milhaud scored the songs and incidental music for 14 instruments. Ellen Mandel has adapted it for four musicians seated in a backstage loft. All the hints of folk songs and Lutheran hymns that Milhaud called on come through clearly, and for the compact auditorium of the Bouwerie Lane Theater this ensemble is just right. At times the music slightly softens the bitter irony of Brecht's dialogue and at others makes it even harsher. It makes the play sound like an opera that's decayed into a dirge—written expressly for each member of the audience. Under the carefully understated direction of Robert Hupp, 14 members of the company make the 30-odd characters engage in

something like the very interior meditation of a person nearly maddened by the lunacy of war. Inevitably, Elise Stone as Mother Courage stands out, and there are memorable performances by Harris Berlinsky as the army cook, Will Leckie as the loathsome chaplain, Kennedy Brown as the more simple-minded of Mother Courage's sons and Molly Pietz as her mute daughter.

In the end, however, we leave not with individuals in mind, but with an image of emptiness, signified by the black, barren cart of Mother Courage. On this set by Robert Klingelhoef it groans around in a great circle, pushed by exhausted people; it, in turn, is a cog that moves a vast mill wheel behind it, the engine, in Brecht's words, of "the mill of God that grinds slowly."

As the lights go down, all the soldiers, religious fanatics, thieves, whores and fools that have swept across our sight for two hours are gone. Mother Courage alone, "the hyena of the battlefield," shoves the cart on its course, a track strewn with the bandages, uniforms, guns and food she was hauling to reap the profits of war; all this stuff looks remarkably like lost hopes. There is a hectic disorder to this performance, and it fits. Brecht in a bad mood should not be a pretty sight. The message here is the chaplain's despairing sarcasm, "heroes are cheap." It is surprising how much it hurts to hear that.

English version by **Eric Bentley** and **Darius Milhaud**; directed by Robert Hupp; musical supervision by Ellen Mandel; sets by Robert Klingelhoef; costumes by Margaret A. McKown; lighting by Brian Aldous. Presented by the Jean Cocteau Repertory. At the Bouwerie Lane Theater, 330 Bowery, East Village. WITH: Elise Stone, Christopher Black, Kennedy Brown, Molly Pietz, Harris Berlinsky, Will Leckie, Amy Fitts, Craig Smith, Joseph Menino, Abner Genece, Patrick Hall, Neeraj Kochhar, Raplee Nobori and Desi Moreno.

(Previously published in *New York Times*, Jan 27, 1997)

## ARTICLES

TRANSLATING BRECHT FOR THE  
STAGE (Literally)

Wendy Arons, U.C. San Diego

In 1993 I was commissioned by the La Jolla Playhouse to produce a “literal” translation of *The Good Person of Sechuan* for an eventual adaptation of the play by Tony Kushner. In this paper I discuss what it means to produce a “literal” translation, I will demonstrate the choices I made in doing the “literal translation” (in terms of syntax and vocabulary), and discuss why I made those choices. I will also compare the literal translation to the final version of the script and show what changes were made to make the script more stage worthy.

I would like to start by giving a brief history of how this project began and what the goals of the theater were in commissioning a new translation of the play. In early 1993 Lisa Peterson, the associate Artistic Director of the Playhouse, contacted Tony Kushner and asked him if he would be interested in adapting *The Good Person of Sechuan* into an American, and more specifically into a Southern Californian context. Her original idea was to situate the play in the US-Mexico borderlands, and to bring the mix of cultures and the tensions that are inherent in the region into the production. Kushner who has a deep love and knowledge of Brecht’s work, agreed to the project. However, although he is very familiar with the play in translation and even though he reads and speaks some German, he did not feel that his German was strong enough to adapt the play from the original himself, and both he and Lisa Peterson felt that the existing published translations were either too British or too literary or too “academic”—they wanted very much to have a fresh take on the play. So in September of that year Lisa Peterson contacted me and asked me to produce a “literal” translation of the play for Kushner’s use in his adaptation.

At the time I was just beginning my second year in the PhD program in Literature at UCSD. Lisa Peterson got my name through the Theater Department at UCSD, where I had completed a Master’s Degree in Dramaturgy a few years earlier and where I had already translated several plays from

German into English, including Brecht’s *In the Jungle of Cities*. Peterson explained the project to me and, as is common in the professional theater, gave me an impossible deadline and offered me a ridiculously small sum of money. I had about two weeks to translate not only the original script of the play but also the revised version of the play that Brecht worked on in California, the so-called “Santa Monica” version. The script was then sent on to Kushner, who decided after looking at it that he wasn’t interested in “adapting” the play at all, but rather in simply giving the play a new translation. So what began as a literal translation that would eventually lead to a loose adaptation turned into the beginning of a collaborative effort on a new translation.

I’m giving you this background information by way of making what I think is a rather important introductory point: which is that this translation work was highly conditioned by the practical necessities of working on a theatrical production and by the pressures of time and economy, and was not in any way based or grounded in translation theory. Both the literal translation that I gave to the Playhouse and the final script which was produced on stage were finished under incredible time constraints. I didn’t have the time to research what it meant to do a “literal” translation or even to look up what the difference might be between a “literal” and polished translation, let alone consult the theorists on the best way to proceed with translation. The work I am presenting here is very much a result of learning on the job. More than anything I would like to use this paper to share what I learned and to give a sense of the way that translating Brecht “literally” helped to “crack open” the text and yield some very interesting results in the final version.

The first and most important question I had to answer for myself before I began the project was: what exactly is a “literal translation”? This is a more difficult question to answer than it seems at first, particularly when you are producing a literal translation for someone else’s use, because it is hard to know just how “raw” a text they want. In this case, I had been told that Kushner could read “a little” German, and I knew that he had available to

him several “finished” translations of the play—the Bentley, the Willett and Mannheim, etc.—so I wasn’t worried that mine had to be a “definitive” translation. But it wasn’t clear to me how “literal” the translation should be. After all, as most readers are obviously aware, syntactically German and English are very different languages, and one cannot simply translate word for word and have an intelligible sentence. So, to begin with, I asked the people who hired me what they would define as a “literal translation.” The director, Lisa Peterson, said simply that they wanted a text which was “as close to the original as possible.” As I have said, her initial plan was to have an adaptation of the text, and her overriding concern was to find a language and milieu for the play that would “speak” to a Southern California audience. So she wanted Kushner to have the chance to work from a text that was close to German as possible, in order to free him from other translators’ choices. The literary manager of the playhouse added that I should do the work without looking at existing translations—that above all, they wanted to get away from what they felt was the British and academic flavor of the existing translations. I also asked a colleague who had done several translations what she would do with the project. Her response was that, given the time restraints and budget, she would translate by simply putting down the first thing that came into her head. In the end, of course, I had to answer this question for myself.

What I determined was that, given my deadline, I had little choice but to follow my colleague’s advice to a great extent. But the one thing I wanted to avoid was producing a translation that was too “smooth” and too idiomatic. That, to me, went beyond the job of “literal translation.” If I was not careful—if I simply put down what came into my head as I read the German—I was afraid I would create a text that was too seamless, that did not allow room for the playwright Kushner to do his work, as adapter. I took the task of “literal” translation to mean that I needed to come up with a text that was clumsy and awkward in the way that a translation is when it has not been polished, and that retained the odd clunkiness of something that has been translated word for word. And above all -- and I think this was my overriding goal—I felt very

strongly that the greatest service I could do for the project was to make a text which gave Kushner the impression that he was reading it in German. That is, I wanted the text to “read” in English in such a way that it would feel to him that he was “reading” German. This was especially important because I knew that Kushner could read some German and was familiar with the rhythm and poetry of the language, I knew that he had been a longtime scholar of Brecht’s plays and was very familiar with his language and poetry, and I knew that in his own writing Kushner is very concerned with the rhythm and poetry of language. So it was crucial that I provide a literal translation that would give him a sense of how the German “read” to an English-speaking person who could read German, and that allowed him to “feel” the German and the Brecht in the text.

As a result, I approached this literal translation in two ways, simultaneously. In order to do it quickly, I adopted the “first thing that comes into my head” policy. But I checked myself from making it too smooth by retaining the original syntax and word order of the sentence as much as possible, even where it made for an awkward or crude sentence in English. At the same time, I also gave several alternatives for words for which there was no “one, best” translation, or for which the layers of meaning within the word were not expressed in their English “best” equivalent. As a result of this, my “literal” translation was awkward and crude, and filled with notes and footnotes indicating alternative ways of expressing many of the words and concepts. And finally, for every German idiomatic expression or proverb, I gave both what I felt was the closest or best American idiom *and* a literal, word for word translation of the idiomatic expression itself. This turned out to be one of the more important aspects of the translating work when the project transformed from an adaptation into a new translation, because in many instances my “word for word” translations of German idioms and proverbs helped Kushner to break away from tired expressions in English and invent new idioms which were vibrantly alive on the stage.

I would like to turn now to the text and give some examples of the choices I made, and also to present what the text became in its final form. I have

to say before I give these examples that to a certain extent it is difficult to present this work because it reads like a “bad translation.” And yet I think one of the reasons this project succeeded is that I allowed the translation to be “bad”—that I resisted my very strong impulse and desire to “clean up” the text and make it read like English—because it was precisely the “rawness” of the text that kept it open for Kushner to find a tone and language for the play that was right for the American stage of the 90s.

The first examples I have are from the first speech of the play, and I think they give a good sense of the extent to which the literal translation mimicked the syntax, word order, and sentence length and rhythm of the original. They also give good examples of instances where I used footnotes and bracketed comments to elaborate on words or phrases which didn’t have a single best translation.

Here is transcription of the Water Seller’s first speech in German with my literal translation below:

#### Original:

Ich bin Wasserverkäufer hier in der Hauptstadt von Sezuán. Mein Geschäft ist mühselig. Wenn es wenig Wasser gibt, muß ich weit danach laufen. Und gibt es viel, bin ich ohne Verdienst. Aber in unserer Provinz herrscht überhaupt große Armut. Es heißt allgemein, daß uns nur noch die Götter helfen können. Zu meiner unaussprechlichen Freude erfahre ich von einem Vieheinkäufer, der viel herunkommt, daß einige der höchsten Götter schon unterwegs sind und auch hier in Sezuán erwartet werden dürfen. Der Himmel soll sehr beunruhigt sein wegen der vielen Klagen, die zu ihm aufsteigen. Seit drei Tagen warte ich hier am Eingang der Stadt, besonders gegen Abend, damit ich sie als erste begrüßen kann. Später habe ich ja dazu wohl kaum mehr Gelegenheit, sie werden von Hochgestellten umgeben sein und überhaupt stark überlaufen werden. Wenn ich sie nur erkenne! Sie müssen ja nicht zusammen kommen. Vielleicht kommen sie einzeln, damit sie nicht so auffallen. Die dort können es nicht sein, die kommen von der Arbeit.

#### Literal Translation:

I am a water seller here in the capital of Sechuan. My business is difficult [tiresome]. When there is little water, I have to go far for it. And if

there is a lot, I have no profit. But on the whole great poverty rules [reigns in] our province.<sup>1</sup> This generally means that only the Gods can help us now. To my unspeakable joy I have learned from a cattle purchaser who comes around here often that some of the highest Gods are already underway and may also be expected here in Sechuan. Heaven is reported [known] to be very disturbed<sup>2</sup> because of the many complaints that go up to it. For three days I have waited here at the entrance to the city, especially towards evening, so that I can be the first to greet them. Later I would probably have hardly the opportunity, they will be surrounded by high officials and in general heavily overrun [pestered, besieged]. If only I recognize them! They won’t necessarily come together<sup>3</sup>. Perhaps they’ll come singly, so that they don’t stand out so. Those there can’t be them, they are coming from work.

Note that the first four sentences of the speech are short, direct, and to the point, and in the literal translation I generally retained the word order of the German. In Line 2 you can see that I gave two meanings for the word “mühselig.” I felt that “difficult” was the best English word to express this concept, but I thought it needed help from “tiresome,” which gives the sense of the way that work which is “mühselig” is also wearying. In the final script Kushner changed this sentence to: “My business wears me out,” which I think works wonderfully, because it expresses both the difficulty and the pains of the water seller’s business in a contemporary American idiom. In sentences three and four I once again stuck as close to the German syntax as possible. I considered translating the fourth sentence as: “And if there is a lot, I don’t make anything” or “I don’t make any money,” but this was an instance where I felt that the English idiom would be too smooth, and also I felt that it completely changed the feel of the sentence, which has a very dry and abrupt ending. In the final script, Kushner chose to combine these two sentences into one sentence which reads: “When it’s dry I have to walk miles to fetch water to sell, and when it’s wet, I go broke.” Although the rhythm here is not quite as staccato as Brecht’s, it retains all of the flavor and feel of the original and yet is at the same time very contemporary and American. And although “I go broke” is different from “I have no profit,”—which



is what “ohne Verdienst” means—in the American context it is a much stronger and more active way of expressing how hard business is for the Water Seller. In addition, the phrase “I go broke” has a bit of a comic punch for the actor to work with.

The next sentence is an example of the way in which in the literal translation I gave both the literal and figurative meanings of an idiomatic expression. The German reads: “Aber in unserer Provinz herrscht überhaupt große Armut.” As I indicate in footnote one, if I were translating this “out of my head” into an American English idiom I would render this sentence “But in our province there is generally great poverty,” because the word “herrschen” has a figurative use as a substitute for the verb “sein”/“to be.” But its first and more literal meaning is “to rule” or “to reign.” Brecht’s use of “herrschen” here seems important in the context of this play, in which so many relationships and events are contingent upon economics. So, as awkward as it seemed, I chose to translate the sentence as: “But on the whole great poverty rules [reigns in] our province,” in order to retain that sense of poverty governing the people. Kushner also felt that this concept was important, and even shortened the sentence in the final version in order to make it more direct and powerful: “Great poverty rules this province.”

I think this line is a good example of how the process of translating the play literally helped to mine the play for subtle but important linguistic elements. The constraint to be “literal” enabled us to pull out layers of meaning from the script that were dramaturgically significant. Brecht’s choice of the word “herrschen” here is hardly accidental—if he only wanted to state that there is a great deal of poverty, he could have used the expression “es gibt.” In other translations of the play, the idea that the province is “ruled” or “reigned” by poverty—which is there in the Brecht—is lost. Three of the published renderings of the line are:

[Bentley:] “But in our part of the world there is nothing unusual about poverty.”

[Hoffman:] “This whole province is impoverished.”

[Willett:] “But utter poverty is the rule in our province.”

My point here is not to criticize others’ work in

translating, but rather to give a sense of what the process of being “literal” with a text can achieve. As I mentioned earlier, had I been asked to translate this *idiomatically*, I would certainly have given the line as “But in our province there is generally great poverty,” also ignoring the literal sense of the word “herrschen” in favor of its figurative use as an alternative for the verb “to be.” But when you are forced to translate *literally*, you then must dig out those subconscious meanings that always creep beneath and beside a word that is being used in its figurative sense, for words always retain the shadow of their original meaning. As it turns out, here the constraint to translate *literally* cracked open the text a bit and gave us a crucial piece of dramaturgical information at the beginning of the very first speech which, of course, the whole of the play confirms: that money relations are what govern and reign this world.

I would like to give one final example from the Water Seller’s speech to illustrate the advantages of literal translation. The seventh and eighth sentences read in German: “Zu meiner unaussprechlichen Freude erfahre ich von einem Vieheinkäufer, der viel herkommt, daß einige der höchsten Götter schon unterwegs sind und auch hier in Sezuan erwartet werden dürfen. Der Himmel soll sehr beunruhigt sein wegen der vielen Klagen, die zu ihm aufsteigen.” The first of these sentences I gave a very direct, virtually word for word translation. But the second sentence posed some difficulty. The use of “soil” indicates that someone—and most likely, given the context, it was the cattle buyer—has said that heaven is disturbed; but it can also be interpreted as “heaven is known to or reported to be disturbed.” The text I gave Kushner gave all three options. It read: “Heaven is reported [known] to be very disturbed because of the many complaints that go up to it” with a footnote giving the alternatives, “He says heaven is very disturbed...” and “Heaven is said to be very disturbed...”. Tony Kushner opted to make the cattle purchaser the bearer of this opinion about heaven as well as the news that the Gods are coming and combined both actions in one sentence. The water seller says in the final script: “I’ve learned from an itinerant cattle dealer that the Heavens have been shaken by the number of complaints floating up from here, and now several of the highest Gods are



headed this way and may soon be expected in Sezuán." This is an example of a place where the awkwardness of the literal translation freed Kushner to rethink the water seller's tale and put it in a narrative order which would make it vivid to the audience. Even though it might read a bit into Brecht's original, this is a very successful reworking of the translation, because it avoids the passivity and generality of "it is said" or "they say" which is so weak in English and allows the cattle dealer to become activated and present in the water seller's speech, which is very important for the actor who is playing the role. Also, the choice of "itinerant" to replace the phrase "who comes around here often" is quite an elegant solution: while it might feel like "high diction" for the water seller, it effectively keeps the sentence from stalling and allows the actor to push ahead with the story he's telling.

For reasons of space, I will not go line by line through the rest of this speech—I primarily wanted to present a few concrete examples of my working method and the reasoning behind my choices, and point out how the literal translation was put to use in creating a new take on the play. Although many of the changes Kushner made to the literal translation were minor, his playwright's experience and instinct gave the script the vibrancy and theatricality that makes the German text so wonderful. Below I have transcribed the final version of the speech to show that Kushner's final language has a directness very similar to Brecht's:

"I am a water seller here in the capital city of Sezuán. My business wears me out. When it's dry I have to walk miles to fetch water to sell, and when it's wet, I go broke. Great poverty rules this province. So we all say: Only the Gods can help us now. And to my unspeakable joy, I've learned from an itinerant cattle dealer that the Heavens have been shaken by the number of complaints floating up from here, and now several of the highest Gods are headed this way and may soon be expected in Sezuán. I've been waiting at the city gates, for three evenings, so that I can be first to welcome them. It'll be my only chance, later they'll be surrounded by the high and mighty, clamoring for their attentions. I must recognize them! They don't have to come in a group, they could come one at a time so as not to stand out. (He sees workers passing.)"

Before I close, I would like to give just one example to demonstrate how the literal translation of idiomatic expressions led to very vibrant and new idioms in Kushner's hands. One of the more delightful things about the final script was the freshness and Americanness of the idioms, proverbs, and sayings. When I rendered the text literally, I generally gave both what I thought was a good idiomatic equivalent and a word for word translation of each saying. What interested me was the extent to which Kushner completely ignored my idiomatic translations and mined the literal ones for new or unusual expressions of the idea. For example, in the first tobacco shop scene, the carpenter accuses Shen Te of colluding with Shin to cheat him out of his money. The expression he uses in German is: "Sie stecken natürlich mit dieser Shin unter einer Decke!" In the literal translation, I translated this literally as, "You're naturally with that Shin under one blanket" and then added the note: "idiom is similar to English: 'You're hand in glove with that Shin.'" Kushner ignored my idiomatic suggestion completely, preferring instead to work with the imagery of the two being under a blanket together—in the final version, he made the line: "You and that Shin woman, you're probably in bed together on this!" There is something wonderfully crude and suggestive in this expression, and it is an eminently acceptable line for the enraged carpenter.

I would like to conclude by summarizing some of the things we discovered from the process of literal translation. Perhaps one of the great advantages of using a literal translation as an intermediary stage to a final script is that it "gets in the playwright's way" and forces him or her to think about what meanings are proliferating beneath and beside the text. This is important because those meanings are always present at some level to the native speaker when he or she reads or hears the original. Although we can't always choose words or phrases that will give the same resonance in a final translation, we can make conscious choices about what might be dramaturgically or thematically significant in the text's connotative realm, and find ways of expressing that in translation. The other major advantage to using a literal translation is that it opens the door to new idioms by giving the playwright an opportunity to mull on what the idiom

in the original language was made up of, and to produce an English substitute that could invoke and evoke similar imagery. Although it may seem counterintuitive to translate literally, it seems clear that a literal translation is an indispensable tool for the playwright seeking to translate foreign works into a modern context.<sup>4</sup>

- 1 Or: "But in our province there is generally great poverty. *"herrschen,"* literally, to rule or reign; also used fig. as "to be."
- 2 Or: "He says heaven is very disturbed," or: "Heaven is said to be very disturbed."
- 3 It: "They must of course not come together," i.e. They don't have to come together.
- 4 This has recently been pointed out by the *New York Times* in an article describing the working methods of several playwright—translators, including David Mamet and Tony Kushner (*NYT* 8/3/97).

## TEACHING BRECHT'S POETRY IN ENGLISH

Peter Werres

George Washington University

Some laxity and seeming randomness of presentation characterize much of Brecht's poetic writing, yet it is wrong to assume that the writer could simply not be bothered to turn his prose into poetry. In one of his very last poems, Brecht reflected one last time on his way of wording his thoughts, poetically and on stage: "And I always thought: the very simplest words must be enough." Earlier he had spoken, in the oxymoron style that had become his trademark, of his desire "*allem die kleinste Größe zu geben.*" For Brecht, the boldness of the message is usually not conveyed by "posturing, strong words, and forceful rhythms" (Hamburger) but by the seemingly off-hand, seemingly effortless *gestus* which, however, leaves no gaps between that which is said and the way of saying it: what does not need to be said remains unsaid; total economy of stylistic means prevails. It is this boldness, at times an offensive boldness (with its special appeal to young readers), that is virtually always part of Brecht's poetic gesture. Brecht does not lead the

reader on Easter egg hunts, nor is he a poet subscribing to an outwardly complicated style. This has misled some translators to assume that Brecht's poetry is—naturally with the exception of his songs—merely prose in the guise of poetry, and that, therefore, plain prose translations will suffice.

Brecht's poetry purposely transmutes as little of life as possible into a petrified, fossilized state and thus gives testimony to his strong belief in the dialectical flow of things, in *panta rhei*, in the fact that everything is forever in flux. The use of magnificently simple metaphors is Brecht's assurance that things are continually changing and forever dialectically in motion. It was Brecht's strong desire to create a poetry devoid of any monumental tendencies—monumentalism in the sense of production of petrification, of fossilizing life by artistic means. He gave literal expression to this belief in his beautiful, dialectically charged poem "*Ich benötige keinen Grabstein.*" Brecht's perceived casualness is thus to be seen as an antidote to the monumentalism that characterized so many of his contemporaries.

Just as Francois Villon had turned poetry away from the delicate allegorical style of the late Middle Ages toward the experience of everyday life, Brecht, with a similarly terse and direct style and vivid images, brought about nothing short of a reversal of dominant poetic trends since Baudelaire. By using a diction largely cleansed of ornamental and sentimental elements so prevalent among his contemporaries, Brecht's poetry manages to harmonize aesthetic and immediate human concerns, including societal contradictions. One of Brecht's achievements was to have extended the scope of the poetic genre onto all realms of the human experience (including human sexuality and even the most mundane rituals of everyday life).

Leaving aside the issue of whether one should ever attempt teaching or even reading poetry in translation in the first place, it has to be stated that while Brecht's poetry, as Elizabeth Hauptmann asserted, transplants well into English, it also bears noting that it is by no means easy to translate. Often one does not even realize how dense, how condensed and precise Brecht's poetry is—until one attempts to translate it. American anthologies of German poetry usually contain the ubiquitous same two or three

Brecht poems, mostly in lack-luster, often just awkward translation, as does *Twentieth Century German Verse*, edited by Patrick Bridgwater. Notable exceptions can be found in *Modern German Poetry: An Anthology with Verse Translations*, edited by Michael Hamburger and Christopher Middleton or, more recently, in *Introduction to German Poetry: A Dual Language Book*, edited by Gustave Mathieu and Guy Stern. The focus of the following will be to outline what of Brecht's poetry used to be available in translation (and what, therefore, could be reproduced, albeit laboriously, for individual classes), and what is presently available.

While graduate students of German and most undergraduate majors most likely will be able to read Brecht's poetry in the original, readily available in many excellent German editions, a much larger number of undergraduate students (and even some graduate Comp. Lit. students) may have to rely on English translations of his poetry, predominately in survey and topical courses often designed to have more cross-disciplinary appeal. For much of Brecht's dramatic oeuvre, there are several choices as regards available translations: *Wer die Wahl hat, hat die Qual*. As regards Brecht's poetry, however, we are not afforded the luxury or pain of brooding over choices of available English translations on the American market. Some of Brecht's best poetry and songs, of course, are contained in several of his most popular plays, but these songs or poems are by no means representative of the entire body of Brecht's poetry.

After the end of Communist Socialism, at a time when much of the political message of the playwright Brecht would appear compromised, at a time when Brecht's actual authorship of much of his dramatic oeuvre is openly questioned, a new interest in Brecht the individual has emerged. And where would a writer reveal more about him/herself, about his or her inner workings, than in poetry? Poetry, mind you, nearly exclusively penned by Brecht himself, i.e. as a rule genuine Brecht and not the product of collective efforts, not "Brecht & Co." Poetry, in compact form mirroring the entire work of a writer of world class literature, should be available and easily accessible for classroom use, one should think.

So what is presently available in English in

anthologies? The *Penguin Book of German Verse*, not revised since 1959, but still going strong, promises on the back cover, beyond classical highlights, "several notable poets in this century, including...Bertolt Brecht." It contains only two poems by Brecht. At the same time, it offers six poems by Morgenstern, seven by Stefan George, five by Trakl, four by Friedrich Georg Jünger (and, of course, inevitably, thirty by Goethe). The Bridgwater edition of *Twentieth Century German Verse*, part of the Penguin Poets Series, used to offer fourteen pages of Brecht's poetry (a total of eleven poems), but has long been out of print. The Hamburger/Middleton anthology of *Modern German Poetry* offered the widest representative selection (and congenial translations) of Brecht poetry, a total of twenty-eight pages (16 poems), among them many not to be found in other anthologies, but it, as well, is out of print. Curiously, a good number of Brecht poems are presently available in more topically oriented anthologies; cases in point: *The Dual-Language Treasury of German Love Poems* or *Holocaust Poetry*. This could enrich the otherwise lean diet of available Brecht poetry in translation, yet we couldn't really expect our students to buy an entire anthology just to catch one or two Brecht poems.

As regards entire volumes of Brecht poetry: in the 1970s, a reasonably priced paperback edition of Bertolt Brecht: *Plays, Poetry, & Prose* edited by Manheim and Willett was in the works, to be published by Vintage Books, but the poetry part of this particular edition never materialized. A bilingual edition of *Die Hauspostille/Manual of Piety* was published by Grove Press, copyright Bentley and Hugo Schmidt. Published in 1966, it was out of print for all of the 1980s, until reprinted as an Evergreen edition in 1991. Yet, given the large body of brilliant Brecht poetry, why would the *Manual of Piety* be chosen as worthy of a reprint over other Brecht volumes? Before being able to identify with ordinariness, Brecht, like most headstrong young people, had passed through a phase of individualistic revolt, and I would not consider it unlikely that the publishers of *Manual of Piety*, aware of its appeal to young people, catered to sensationalist impulses, relying on the shock value of Brecht, the often crude philistine basher: the cover

of the new edition promises a “brutally incisive” poet.

But what about the availability of the much larger body of his later, more balanced, mature writing? With the exception of Willett’s Brecht: *Songs and Poems from the Plays and Brecht: 100 Poems*, published in Great Britain and thus difficult or near impossible to order for the ordinary college book store, virtually nothing is available. In 1976, Methuen published a hard cover *Bertolt Brecht: Poems 1913–1956*, edited by Willett and Mannheim with the co-operation of Erich Fried, containing virtually all important Brecht poems known at the time. This edition should have rightfully become the standard volume of Brecht’s poetry in English translation, ideally in updated, inexpensive paperback form. Not only did the latter never materialize, but by now, even the hard cover edition is out of print. In their introduction to the one and only edition, Manheim and Willett had given their assessment of the revolutionary importance of Brecht the poet:

Well after his death in 1956 Brecht the poet remained like an unsuspected time-bomb ticking away beneath the engine-room of world literature.... Anyone who fails to see that his language was that of a poet is missing the main motive force of all his work. It is bad luck that so many of us have been led to approach Brecht from the wrong end: studying the theories first and then the plays, and only coming to the poems as a by-product of his theatre work....

Is the appalling lack of availability of any representative collection of Brecht poetry merely another manifestation of “the rapid disappearance of English renderings of German-language titles from the U.S. Books in Print” (Mews), amidst a global tendency of the book market to produce large marketable editions, sell them at the cover price for as long as the market will permit, sell the remainder to discounters (revised U.S. tax laws have made warehousing of books an unaffordable luxury), and then move on to greener pastures? The answer is, of course, yes, but in the case of Brecht, especially as regards his poetry, the marked absence of available English titles would appear to go beyond the dictates of the market.

One quick look around will reveal, for

example, that most Russian poets are abundantly available in translation. Singling out Mayakovsky, for instance, comparable to Brecht as regards time frame as well as scope and volume of poetic output, we can choose among a number of volumes containing most of his poetry. Could it be that twenty years after Manheim’s and Willett’s observations quoted above, word still has not gotten around about Brecht the poet? If at all, present-day American students of German literature may remember that Brecht started as a poet. They may know some of his early ballads, possibly from some of his plays, frequently however via a detour: from discussions of the very popular songs of contemporary German Liedermacher, guitar poets, like Wolf Biermann, who borrow as freely and openly from Brecht as he borrowed from others, subscribing to a “work in progress” philosophy. Yet virtually nobody is aware, and most students are thus surprised to learn, that Brecht not only continued to write poems until his death but amassed a formidable body of poetry: with over 2,500 poems total, *Stückeschreiber* Brecht wrote more poetry than most famous icons of German verse, including immortal poets like Rilke. In the Hecht/Hauptmann Suhrkamp edition of 1967, Brecht’s poetic oeuvre comprises three volumes; five volumes in the more recent *Große Kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*.

Of course, the ubiquitous half a dozen poems to be found in various anthologies alone hints at Brecht’s remarkably varied poetic output and allow us to sample a poetry urbane and public to a degree known only from classic eras—and didn’t Brecht himself state that a major poet reaches immortality (i.e. entrance to Parnassus of world literature) with the publication of half a dozen durable poems? (Good Poems, according to Horace, are more durable than iron.) But how would our students react if we were to tell them that, for instance, a half dozen poems would suffice for Goethe or Heine and that, incidentally, this was all that was available in English translation? We wouldn’t dare and we won’t have to: As recently as 1986, Heine’s *Selected Verse* was reissued as a bilingual Penguin Classic, containing 181 poems. And not only does Goethe’s poetry continue to be available in several editions, e.g. as a Penguin Classic (Goethe, *Selected Verse*),

but an entire volume of Goethe: *The Collected Works* in 12 Volumes, edited by Christopher Middleton and recently published by Princeton University Press, contains translations of Goethe's poetry, side by side with the German originals.

After WWII, Brecht became of exemplary importance for many younger Western poets, especially, of course, in his then divided homeland. And are German writers whose poetry has run through the Brecht filter of condensed literary perception available in English translation? Frequently, they are. Beyond the context of German literature, Brecht's poetry covers an abundance of archetypal human concerns (incessantly pondering, for instance, issues related to the pursuit of happiness) and offers timeless imagery thus lending itself extremely well to comparison and juxtaposition with poetic reflections of other giants of world literature—most of them readily available in English. For the classroom, the problem therefore arises that although what Brecht may be compared to and juxtaposed with is readily available in English, Brecht himself is not. Providing copies of Brecht poems is hardly a solution: Of all genres, the discussion of poetry will, most likely, progress in the least linear, i.e. predictable fashion. Given a certain topic or aspect, it is virtually impossible to anticipate which Brecht poem may apply as one thought-provoking poem leads to another and the focus of discussion shifts. Yet this freethinking atmosphere is exactly what Brecht had propagated when he asked us "in jeder neuen Situation neu nachzudenken." For the classroom, this will mean that someone, most likely the professor, will think of another Brecht poem reflecting this change of focus, a poem most likely not contained in the prepared package, so discussion is postponed and the next day it's back to the photocopier. So, ironically, of all poets, it is Brecht where we can least afford not having his entire poetic oeuvre at hand at all times in the classroom community of thinkers and questioners. And of all poets, it is Brecht of whom virtually nothing is available in English. What a contradiction! But Brecht never tired of telling us: "Die Widersprüche sind die Hoffnungen."

So, why is Brecht's poetry not available in English these days? Of course, complicated copyright issues (e.g. poems also contained in plays) and the multifaceted interests of the Brecht heirs come into

play. But more obviously, overall political paradigms have changed: of the once omnipotent holy trinity of class, race, and gender, discussion of class issues has been virtually phased out over recent years. Let us remember: In America, we presently live in a political climate where liberals, once ridiculed by the left as not sincerely working towards or even interested in change (case in point: Phil Ochs's song "Love me, love me, I'm a liberal"), are demonized by the political mainstream. The adjective "liberal" has become the unspeakable; although not a four letter word, it has become the "l-word" in political discourse and constitutes, in contemporary America, the kiss of death for any candidate seeking public office. According to Brecht's friend Walter Benjamin, "art is the regent of utopia," and utopianism has often been called not necessarily the cutting, but certainly the growing, edge of society. Times lacking utopian ideas traditionally are considered the heyday of the philistine, times of socio-political rollback and of atrophy in the arts. Dialectics, of course, have not come to an end simply because Communist Socialism has. This does not bode well for publishing a writer like Brecht. "Die Widersprüche sind die Hoffnungen." Could this, among other things, spell "Springtime for Brecht's Poetry"—ideally in English translation, perhaps belatedly for the poet's 100th birthday?





## TEACHING BRECHT: DECONSTRUCTING EPIC THEATRE

David Catanzarite, Pomona College

Michael Billington laments in the *Manchester Guardian*<sup>1</sup> that the National Theatre's November, 1995 production of *Mother Courage* was a weightless interpretation "for those who hate Brecht." Billington decries the play on all counts save the acting of Diana Rigg and a few other cast members. Director Jonathan Kent jettisoned everything Brechtian, reports Billington, while translator David Hare replaced Brecht's theme of "war as business" with an abstraction of "time and war." Paul Bond's set was dominated by the huge image of a bird wheeling overhead; Brecht's pointed historicization of the Thirty Years War was blurred by echoes of trench warfare and World War I. The result, asserts Billington, is a toothless *Courage* that sidestepped Brecht's ironic attack on petite bourgeois philosophy, depoliticizing the play and warping it into what Brecht would have dismissed as "culinary" theatre.

Bertolt Brecht has now joined the ranks of Shakespeare, Wagner, and Sophocles in the postmodern canon as a subject for deconstruction. Brecht himself might have enjoyed the paradox, since he was one of the great pioneers of deconstruction even before Derrida and de Man brought the term into coinage. In our present era of performative deconstructions it is inevitable that Brecht will be thus reinvented. The critical question is: what kinds of deconstruction will serve the evolution of political theatre? Will Brecht's legacy be appropriated for just so much entertaining pastiche, or can his alternative "Poetics" for the theatre prove useful to the next generation of political artists? What do we address when we teach "Brecht," and more significantly, how shall we teach it? "It cannot be impossible / To learn that which is useful."<sup>2</sup>

As a stage director and acting teacher, my first concern is to give actors, designers, and student directors a trenchant set of tools for converting text into action. Whenever possible, I subscribe to a student-centered "discovery learning" system that capitalizes on the learners' prior knowledge and skills.<sup>3</sup> Such a system proves particularly useful for teaching Brecht. Typically, our college students come to Brecht already having viewed tens of

thousands of plays.... by way of cinema and television. They have already absorbed a deep but very narrow expertise in the aesthetics of conventional realism, with its emphasis on empathy and illusion. Hence, the first critical schema our students know how to apply: "I really believed she was the character she was playing. I completely forgot I was in a theatre!" or, "It was lame. It wasn't realistic at all."

Unless they have been exposed to a great variety of theatre, most beginning students are not conversant with other dramatic styles and aesthetic systems. They have been awash in thousands of hours of TV, which forces them to accept drama in a very narrow way. Our students have read less, and watched television more, than our generation did. While they have a harder time than we visualizing abstract verbal cues—a skill cultivated by reading—this generation has super-developed visual perception, responding quickly and with comprehension to concrete visual examples.

They are therefore best served by instruction that eschews the conventional lecture-then-recite format, and instead proceeds from concrete, discovery learning experiences. These are followed by guided reflection, observation, and analysis, before the learner is at last encouraged to generalize from specific models to authentic applications "at the workplace."

For example, one might teach the "big ideas" of *Verfremdungseffekt* and *gestus* by first demonstrating a few conventions of the half-mask, then provoking speculation about the effect of mixing masked and non-masked characters in a production, and finally generalizing to explicate dialectical acting and various other means of achieving *V-effect* on stage.

In addition to their visual aptitude, students also typically come to us with a trained appreciation for poststructural semiotics. Pop culture, particularly MTV, is on the cutting edge of experimentation with audio-visual pastiche, appropriation, and intertextuality. The hip hop practice of "sampling"—mixing a deconstructed TV sound bite, or even a whole track from an "old school" song into an unrelated composition—has made "deejaying" an art form unto itself. Various "covers" of older songs—by bands such as the Talking Heads ("Take Me to the

River”) and any number of punk bands—force an original song through a contrasting style so extreme that both its lyrics and music emerge deconstructed. This was exactly what a punk girl-band, The Flying Lizards, did to Brecht and Weill’s “Mandalay Song.” The original “Mandalay Song” is itself a vivid juxtaposition of clashing genres—brutal lyrics set against delicate music, and sweet-sounding poetry against atonal jazz. But in the early eighties, the Lizards transformed Brecht’s original japes about prostitution and the law of supply and demand into ironic commentary on male sexuality. Using specific examples from pop music provides our students with a cognitive bridge to poststructuralism in general. Brecht and Weill foreshadowed today’s popular musicians, using similar principles within their songs to achieve *Verfremdungseffekt*.

Actually, *V-effect* most of Brecht’s production vocabulary are the children of pioneering experiments in deconstruction by Russia’s revolutionary avant-garde.<sup>4</sup> Early theories about *gestus*, historicization, and episodic structure were born of the Russians’ radical impulse to dismantle not only bourgeois literature, but history, culture, and human behavior itself. Meyerhold and many of his fellow early Soviet directors made a practice of using “text as pretext,” pulling apart pre-revolutionary plays with deliberate disregard for authorial intent in order to find other meanings. The actual psychological mechanisms upon which dialectical theatre is based were first identified in Constructivist experiments. Acting styles and stage technology were deployed to explore the capacity of actor and audience to step out of a living moment, examine it in political context, then dive back in as participant/observers.<sup>5</sup> It remained for the dramaturg Brecht to refine these Constructivist production concepts and build them into his literary masterpieces. The Russian experiments still offer a valuable key to training designers and especially actors for the Brechtian theatre.

Contemporary theatre provides a plethora of concrete examples from which to launch a discourse on the principles of epic design. In fact, many of the conventions considered radical in Brecht and Piscator’s time have become standard design practice in America over the past few decades. Driven in part by economic necessity, American scenographers have abandoned the semiotics—if not the teleology—of

illusionism, while embracing the visual lexicon of epic theatre: exposed lighting instruments and stage machinery, projected titles, and scene changes in view of the audience, to name just a few. The trajectory of stage design moves ever farther from the naturalism that dominates mainstream cinema and television. On the other hand, the ascendancy of TV and film has had a converse effect on American stage acting. Our actor training is skewed to the demands of the market to such a degree that styles other than realism are virtually ignored.<sup>6</sup>

To perform *gestural* theatre, actors must develop their ability to overlap acting styles with deliberate skill; they must also achieve a psychological agility which enables them to step quickly in and out of character and across the footlights. A Brechtian actor must have the theatrical intelligence to respond to different genres that co-exist within the same epic play. In order to contribute to the effective historicization of a play, he or she must also have enough dramaturgical training to research a historical period and comprehend the world *gestalt* of another epoch.

But how does a teacher draw out Brechtian responses from his/her students? One’s first impulse might be to turn toward Shakespeare for period training. In our day, however, Shakespeare is often performed out of period, and more often than not without “breaking the fourth wall.” Asides and soliloquies are often cut, dismantled into private psychological moments, or directed to other characters onstage. This common practice of reshaping Shakespeare to a mainstream aesthetic doesn’t always serve the text, but it is relatively easy to achieve because Shakespeare’s characters speak pretty much what they think and feel.

Shakespeare’s plots are sprawling and resilient enough to endure the amputation of asides and rhetorical contrivances. With so many such treatments of Shakespeare in currency—especially in popular film versions—it can be difficult to convince our less widely experienced students that Elizabethan acting was significantly different from today’s brand of realism.

Thankfully, style issues are much more pronounced in genres such as Restoration comedy. In 1995 I directed John Barton’s adaptation of *The Rover* at Pomona College in California. Aphra

Behn's masterpiece is complex even by Restoration standards, demanding ubiquitous masquery coupled with frequent, strategic use of character asides. Plot and dialogue are so tightly knit as to resist any major deletions, and a great deal of subtextual information is delivered in rapid-fire asides to the audience. My actors and I soon discovered that the success of our storytelling turned on a precise delineation of the worlds to which asides were addressed: either to the imaginary world onstage, or to the parallel world of the audience. Such "agility across the footlights" is likewise essential training for street performance, clowning, melodrama, and the standard American musical. Add to these skills a facility to step in and out of character in the manner of some performance artists (e.g. Karen Finley), traditional storytellers, or puppeteers, and one has a template for training in the fundamentals of gestural acting.

It is also useful to note that Stanislavski's acting theories, especially his later ideas, are not incompatible with the teaching of *gestural* acting. In *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavski quotes Salvini: "An actor lives, weeps and laughs on the stage, and all the while he is watching his own tears and smiles. It is this double function, this balance between life and acting, that makes art."<sup>7</sup> The real disagreement between Stanislavski and Brecht lies not in their beliefs about the actor's process, but in their divergent approaches to directing its effect on the audience. As a director, Stanislavski was bent on the naturalistic goal of provoking an audience's empathy. He sought to disguise the actor/character duality, hiding the actor within the role and submerging the role within the imaginary world of the play. Brecht sought just the opposite audience response, and therefore strove to expose the mechanics of the acting process: characters were often foregrounded from the imaginary world of the play, and actors foregrounded from the characters they portrayed.

Another discrepancy between naturalistic and epic acting is their diverse management of the dialectic within a character. Finding psychological opposites (internal conflict) within a character is an important requirement of good naturalistic acting; but it is also a requirement that such opposites be artfully camouflaged with psychological nuance. By contrast, epic theatre shows human nature as changing and changeable; thus actors must highlight

their characters' opposites, exposing the characters' decision-making process to active examination by the audience. Certainly, an actor acts behavior, not theory or literary ideas. But it is crucial for actors to have an elementary grasp of Marxism and dialectical thinking in order to serve an epic text.

A complaint that often distinguishes American productions of Brecht is that uninformed actors and directors separate Brecht's plays from their political foundation. Our students have been steeped since childhood in America's myth of a classless society. Without a rudimentary grasp of dialectical materialism and class struggle, it is unlikely that young actors and directors will respect the political goals of epic theatre, nor make informed acting choices that serve the throughline of an episodic play.

*Bertolt Brecht: Poems on the Theatre* explains many of Brecht's theories far more clearly and simply than most commentators have done. There is an excellent summary of the "Street Scene" paradigm in "On the Everyday Theatre:"

Notice too  
How serious and careful his imitation.  
He knows that much depends on his precision:  
Whether the innocent is ruined,  
Whether the injured one receives his  
compensation.  
See him now do what he has already done  
Over again.  
He hesitates,  
Calls on his memory's aid,  
Doubts if his imitation is truly good,  
Stops to demand correction for this detail or that.  
Observe with reverence.  
And observe with astonishment:  
This imitator never loses himself in his imitation.  
Never does he lend himself whole  
To the person he plays.  
He remains, disengaged, the one who shows.<sup>8</sup>

Let us turn at this point to Brecht's poesy and the plays themselves. Ironically, the content of Brecht's plays is the single greatest impediment in making epic theatre relevant to our students. While these texts record the genesis of epic drama, they have ceased in the main to adequately address political issues facing the next generation. Even a complex Marxist response to the social problems of

mid-century Europe is too blunt an instrument to serve on the political cutting edge of this decade. Class struggle in post-industrial America is inextricably bound to the cultural dynamics of race, gender, environmental concerns, and the mass media. Moreover, Brecht's constructions of gender are retrograde at best, and at worst openly misogynist. With the notable exception of Anna Fierling (*Mother Courage*), Brecht provides as few meaningful roles for women as any of the "dead-white-male" playwrights ... and considerably fewer than many. One cannot blame a young actress with even a hint of feminist consciousness for bypassing Brecht.

Fortunately, Brecht's own deconstructions provide a model to address this problem of political relevance. When necessary, the mechanics of epic style can be effectively taught by dividing them from the content of the plays. Brecht appropriated stage conventions, plots, and even whole passages from older European texts, Chinese opera, Japanese Kabuki and Noh drama. Just as he placed them in new contexts to make them astonish and "estrangle," so his theories and portions of his plays might be appropriated to further the evolution of political theatre.

Giorgio Strehler has lately proposed that very diverse productions of Brecht's plays be encouraged in order to test their place in history.<sup>9</sup> This is a refreshing prospect. Informed experimentation is the best guarantee that the plays will not join the theatrical canon drained of their politics, like the National Theatre's production of *Mother Courage* cited earlier. But whether or not Brecht's plays continue to be produced in their entirety, his poetry, characters, and classic stagings from the Model-books might be deconstructed and put to use as icons in newer epic plays, warping their specific politics to a broader relevance.

Brechtian staging and acting, apart from Brecht's plays, have already been worked into the latest generation of political theatre. Carl Weber places the work of Anna Deavere Smith in *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles* among the best examples of gestural acting in recent years.<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that the actress/playwright admits scant direct experience with Brecht's plays, yet she has absorbed the aesthetics of epic theatre from other sources. Meanwhile, numerous American

playwrights and directors, including Tony Kushner, Luis Valdez, and Elizabeth Wong, have appropriated much from the Brechtian model.

Perhaps Brecht's highest achievement as a poet was his deconstruction of language, re-inventing the simplest possible vocabulary to articulate profound ideas. He meshed working-class German with the refinements of classical poetry, forging an idiom which sets a basic tone for epic theatre. Such wordcraft is paralleled by only a handful of contemporary writers. In English, Edward Bond is a foremost example.

Bond has also followed Brecht in applying a sort of deconstruction to his adaptation of an earlier play. Bond's version of *Lear*, and Brecht's response to the film "Gunga Din" in *A Man's A Man*; to *Edward II*, *Turandot* and numerous other plays, are not simply stylistic revisions of the originals. They reshape the earlier texts to tell different stories, using the original characters, themes, and settings as iconographies. The old meanings are not exactly replaced; they are viewed, as Ian Stuart suggests of Edward Bond's *Lear* through a new and more useful lens.<sup>11</sup>

These adaptations are in effect historicizations of earlier works, creating a *Verfremdungseffekt* in the intertextual dialectic between the old plays and the new.

Ntozake Shange has already staged one such adaptation of Brecht, a Civil War version of *Mother Courage*.<sup>12</sup> But even more radical deconstructions of Brecht's fables may emerge as the next generation cuts its teeth, particularly if they they historicize Brecht himself by revisiting his plays in the context of gender or his naive, Eurocentric racism. (I would personally love to see a Julie Taymor deconstruction of *Mahagonny*.) The next century of Brecht in America holds fertile opportunities. The future is only limited by three factors: the capacity of *Verfremdungseffekt* to evolve in tandem with postmodern aesthetics; the copyrights (property laws) our government applies to a poet's words; and the strategic choices we teachers make for passing along Brecht's legacy.

*This paper was presented at the Modern Language Association Conference's Brecht Forum in Chicago, December 29, 1995.*

## NOTES

1 Michael Billington, "Emotionless Brecht for the Bourgeoisie," *The Manchester Guardian* 25 Nov. 1995, p.27.

2 John Berger and Anna Bostock, trans., *Bertolt Brecht: Poems on the Theatre*. Suffolk: Scorpion Press, 1961, p. 20. From the poem, "An Address to Danish Worker Actors on the Art of Observation."

3 Jacqueline Grennon and Martin G. Brooks, *In Search of Understanding: The Case for Constructivist Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1993.

4 Jean Benedetti, "Brecht, Stanislavski, and the Art of Acting," *The Brecht Yearbook* 20, 1995, pp.101-111.

5 Robert Barton, *Style for Actor*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing, 1993, pp.298-299.

6 Janelle Reinelt, *After Brecht: British Epic Theatre*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Mich. Press, 1994. pp. 2-10.

7 Constantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1993. p.183.

8 *Poems on the Theatre*. pp.5-9.

9 Olivier Schmitt, "Witness to Life," *Communications from the International Brecht Society*, 24, No. 2, Dec. 1995, pp.11-12. Slightly edited reprint of interview with Strehler from *Le Monde* (Paris) July 9/10, 1995.

10 Carl Weber, "Brecht's 'Street Scene'—On Broadway of all Places?" A Conversation with Anna Deavere Smith, *The Brecht Yearbook* 20, 1995, pp. 51-64.

11 Ian Stuart, personal discussion December 5, 1995. Stuart is editor of four volumes of *Edward Bond Letters*.

12 Weber's interview with Smith mentions the production, and includes this footnote: "Ntozake Shange wrote an adaptation of *Mother Courage* for the New York Shakespeare Festival. Her version situates the play's fable in the American West at the end and after the Civil War. *Mother Courage and her children* are African Americans, like several other characters in the play."

Jean Cocteau Repertory  
at the Bouwerie Lane Theatre  
presented *Bertolt Brecht's*

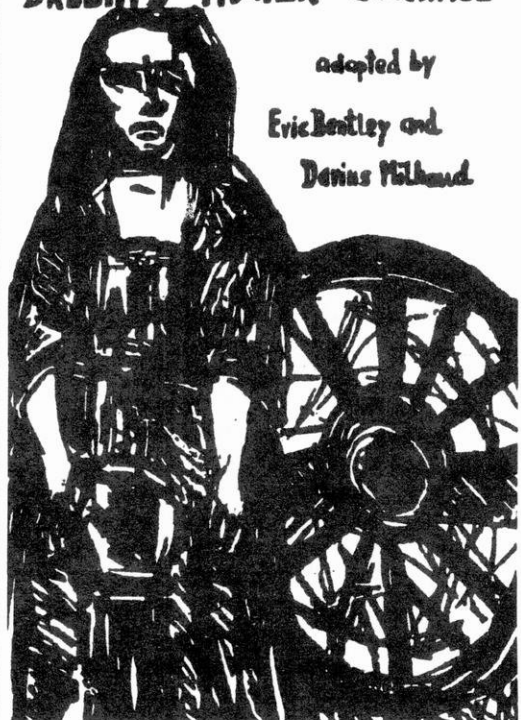
## Mother Courage and Her Children

adapted by *Eric Bentley and Darius Milhaud*  
*Performed from January to June 1997*

An exhibition of Woodcuts by Isle Schreiber-Noll accompanied the production

## BRECHT'S MOTHER COURAGE

adapted by  
*Eric Bentley and  
Darius Milhaud*



Das Geniezeichen Brechts ist, das mit seinen Dramen eine neue künstlerische Totalität da ist, mit eigenen Gesetzen, mit eigener Dramaturgie.

*H. Ihering*



# ACTING IN BRECHT'S *ARTURO UI*

James Stark, Seattle University

As a *Germanist*, I have had a scholarly, that is to say, a theoretical interest in the plays of Brecht for most of my twenty-five year academic career. I have also been interested personally in the theater craft of acting, albeit irregularly and for a shorter period of time. This fall in Seattle I was very fortunate to be able to combine these two interests in a University of Washington production of Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. This particular show was directed by the prominent German interpreter of Brecht, Heinz-Uwe Haus from Berlin.

To chronicle the development of this work in progress as well as to observe the techniques involved in putting Brecht's theory into practice, I kept a day book of my experience. What follows is the result of an attempt to track the theory and practice of the parts of scene tableaux, movement, songs, costumes and set, that would ultimately form the whole of this Seattle production of Brecht's play. Haus, as director, cast himself also in the role of teacher to these thirteen actors, six women and six men, of the Professional Actors Training Program of the UW, and one middle-aged German professor/actor, myself, cast, not unsurprisingly as "Old Dogsborough." Haus's intent, it seemed, was to prepare the actors politically, psychologically as well as historically. For Haus, Brecht's works should not be monumentalized or *verkalkt*; Brecht's theater can only survive if it is shown to be contemporary and pertinent to its audience. As Haus writes in his production notes, "What constitutes an *alienation effect* for the German audience does not necessarily have the same effect elsewhere. Little would be accomplished if years after the demise of the Third Reich, we attempted a kind of historical farce. Facism had and has many faces: Nazism was not its only one and not the last as the history of our century demonstrates."

In his collaborative directoral style, Haus regularly worked to establish the connection between Ui as an American gangster and Hitler, the quintessential malefactor, while telling the story, in Brecht's words: "...as an attempt to explain the rise of Hitler to the capitalist world by transferring it into a familiar environment," and to show Ui as "...a

parable written with the intention of destroying the usual dangerous respect for the great killers." (*Arbeitsjournal*, 4/1/41)

To bring home the "familiar environment" to the actors, Haus employed various pedagogical techniques. First he had the actors collect newspaper clippings dealing with corruption, graft and general malfeasance by current political and corporate figures. Before very long the bulletin board in the rehearsal room was full of stories of public figures captured in their weakest human moments. In referring to the play's political topicality Haus himself notes that: "...it (political topicality) allows the audience to experience—by means of various theatrical devices—how the Ui-like qualities in capitalist normality and the petty bourgeois soul in *Ui* constitute a latent danger for democracy." (Unpublished notes on *Ui*.)

Next, to put the play into the context of gangsterism, the entire cast, along with the costumer, Kira Knight, and assistant director, Teri Minton, viewed selected scenes from the film "The Usual Suspects." Haus provided commentary on Andreotti and Craxi in Italy to demonstrate, in Brecht's terms, "how the historical events always shine through: on the other hand, the dramatic action which 'conceals'...must have its own life, that is it must theoretically be effective even without its suggestiveness..." (*Arbeitsjournal*, 4 / 1/ 41).

To refresh the historical context, the actors all viewed Joachim Fest's filmed documentary, "Hitler, eine Karriere" to understand how large masses of people realized themselves through a group identity. The actress playing Ui, Jolene Hjerleid, viewed the film, "The Power of the Will" for the psychological impact of Hitler on the masses, as well as for some of Hitler's mannerisms which she incorporated into her characterization. But the figure of Ui should not simply be directly translatable to Hitler. As Haus notes in his unpublished notes to Ui:

"The Italo-American Mafia or images from Hollywood B-movies, accurate and revealing because of their traditional familiarity, give the effect of authenticity. In short: condensations, abbreviations, reduction to mechanisms are causes of shared social experiences. Hitler mustache and Nazi paraphernalia would only get in the way."

Throughout the individual scene development

process, where each scene had its own unity, but was simultaneously integral to the rest of the play, Haus salted and peppered his direction with knowledgeable references to European and American cultural ideas. One particular cultural/historical description the actors found interesting was that of the “deutscher Tick”, of the “little man” looking over his shoulder in referring to the grocers in the final Convention Hall scene.

According to Haus, this “German glance” began during the Third Reich and extended into the German Democratic Republic (GDR) time in Germany. Haus explained that this was a sign of the suppressed common man who in turn suppresses others to divert attention from the reality of his own suppression and repression. In other words, one should beware of the “little guy,” for he is most dangerous—he is the monster. Following on this was a discussion not only of David Goldhagen’s thesis of exactly that sense of common man monstrosity in his recently published book, *Germany’s Willing Executioners*, but also of other places, where dictatorial suppression takes place.

Still within the scene development procedure, but in an American context, Haus reflected on various aspects of Americana to include the preaching function of Seventh Day Adventists and Mormons, as well as televangelists recently fallen from grace. This especially was intended to demonstrate the irony of Old Dogsborough’s political and social sanctimony.

In still another observation of Americana, Haus was fascinated with the very American institutions of the barber shop quartet and the cheer leading squad. He saw in them the basic American cheerfulness and optimism: the quintessence of “have a nice day” and the “smile face” logo. Haus proposed and the musically talented actors disposed the barber shop quartet in the Prologue, singing the headlines to the tune of “You are My Sunshine.” The actors were able to contrast the chorus-line kick, barber shop, and upbeat tune with Brecht’s text of murder, assassination, blackmail, scandal, and warehouse fire.

The very physical “cheer” was developed by the actors with intimations of Chinese acrobatics when they spelled out “Ui” with their bodies. The command, “Get Protection,” reminiscent of the

normal exhortation to defeat the opposing team, referred here to Ui’s veiled threat to the Grocers. It was delivered with such intensity and intimidation that it perverted the basic optimism of the traditional American cheer. The barber shop quartet in the Prologue along with the pep rally cheer prior to the final scene of the “Mass-meeting of the Chicago Grocers,” externalized elemental feeling and formed a frame of parody antithetical to American audience expectations of these devices.

To reinforce the sense of ensemble and collaboration, while covering some thirty roles with thirteen actors, Haus encouraged the actors’ participation in and responsibility for decisions regarding movement and blocking. The director did not conduct auditions for specific roles. Rather, actors were requested to develop a tableau in various scenes. Haus referred to Bosch and Bruegel scenes as models of encapsulated tableaux. The roles developed out of this study of who would work best with whom and in which character. This method yielded sufficiently “alienating” results, most notably having an attractive, petite actress play the role of Ui.

Already in the first week of rehearsal some elements I initially considered secondary if not even extraneous to the basic concept of the play, were worked through extensively in consultation with the actors. One such was the decision to substitute songs for the banners typical of Brecht productions to announce scene changes.

As the rehearsals progressed, several of the cast members created and coordinated songs to be sung by actors during shifts in scenes. These songs were derived from current and recent American show/pop tunes. They include the following: “Birdland,” an a capella song from the group “Manhattan Transfer” in the first and last scenes. Scene 2, “Before the Merchandise Mart” was introduced by a song entitled “What You Don’t Know About Women” from the musical, *City of Angels*. To introduce “Dogsborough’s Saloon,” the 1950s harmony song, “Blue Moon” was adapted. Scene 4 was changed to a “Bookie’s Office on 122nd Street” and the tune used was “Java Jive,” an a capella tune taken from “Manhattan Transfer”. Both in “Dogsborough’s Country House,” scene 5 and 12 adapted to scene 9, the tune was an Andrews Sisters

version of "Mr. Sandman." "City Hall" was introduced by the American anthem, "The star-spangled Banner." Both scenes of "Ui's Suite at the Mammoth Hotel" were marked by "Tuxedo Junction" by "Manhattan Transfer." Scene 8 is initiated by the American classic "When Johnny Comes Marching Home." The music from "A Garage" was from *West Side Story*; "Givola's Shop" was inspired by the musical *Little Shop of Horrors*. The "Cicero Cemetery" scene used an a capella gospel song called "Mary" by the contemporary gospel group, "Take 6."

During the initial audience seating and at the intermission, the sound track from the Chaplin film, "City Lights" delivered a mellow ambience prior to the opening violence and mayhem. With these songs, the director and the actors were able to deliver Brecht's words and ideas to an American audience within an American context.

In this multifaceted production, the costume designer, Kira Knight, created not only a period piece with gangsters in striped suits and fedoras, but also the suggestion of aggressive force, dressing most of the actors in brown Army winter overcoats and black combat boots. "Rome" and "Young Inna" both wore black uniforms and riding boots complete with pistol belts, reminiscent of the Nazi SS.

Thematic linkages were made between the world of business and gangster/military and Hitler/Nazi by having almost all the characters, many of whom played multiple roles, wear, at least at some time, those same boots and coats. The Army coat which the "Barker" takes from the Givola character at the end of the Prologue transforms the "Barker" into the character of Ui, played by the same actress. Haus was, of course, cognizant of the need to avoid the direct linking of the two plots (gangster, Nazi). As Brecht points out in his *Arbeitsjournal* (4/1/41):

"Among other things, an all too direct linking of the two plots (gangster plot and Nazi plot), that is, a form in which the gangster plot would only be a symbolization of the other story, would be intolerable, because one would then constantly look for the 'meaning' of this or that feature and for the original behind each figure..."

In addition to the scene tableaux, songs and costumes, the set designer, Evan Alexander,

provided a warehouse set as in old gangster movies, with skeletal beams exposed, and industrial lighting, at times dark and sinister, with an upstage alley effect; the wood floor was painted to look like concrete. There was a blurring of the line of the fourth wall and stage; large enough space was provided for the actors to manipulate the placement of three raked platforms. The space allowed the actors to force the unexpected and make use of abstract spaces, as in the film "Metropolis." In this context, Haus made reference to expressionist stages of the early 20th century, especially the Dutch expressionist stage designer, Mazerell.

In an almost surreal sequence at the very beginning the largest raked platform of three was forcefully pushed onto the center stage from the "alley" by eight of the actors all dressed in combat boots, Army brown overcoats and fedoras, all the while emitting a communal roar. During the "Barker's" speech in the Prologue, these actors, kneeling around this platform, formed a wordless chorus, mouthing cheers and providing catcalls and "raspberries." At the end of the Prologue, the militant chorus exited in a Suzuki-style march off the floor through the audience in what was suggestive of the Stechschritt or "goosestep." The stage was set, and the audience was effectively off balance.

Thus began and ended six weeks of rehearsal and a ten performance run of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* in Seattle. The entire experience of not only observing a work in progress, but also participating in it, was at once exhausting and exhilarating. I witnessed a very fruitful, on-going exchange of ideas among the various component elements of this production, to include the actors, set designer, costume designer, assistant director, stage manager, sound and lighting designers and of course, the director, Heinz-Uwe Haus. I gained insights I could never comprehend or fully assimilate from reading and personal research. Not least, I developed a more profound understanding of Brecht's *Ui*, but also, a deeper respect for the complex art and craft of theater in general, which is all too often taken for granted by the average theater-goer as well as by critics and academics.

## BB FÜR KINDER Das andere Publikum, Soziales Lernen und ästhetische Erfahrung.<sup>1</sup>

Gerd Koch, Berlin

Brief an einen Freund und Kollegen, Leiter eines  
Jugendclubs am Theater.

Lieber F.,

Du schriebst mir neulich, daß Du als Leiter des  
Jugendclubs selbständig etwas zum Brecht-Jahr 1998  
anbieten willst. Du wolltest nicht—schon wieder—  
bloßes Anhängsel des Intendanten/Dramaturgen, des  
Spielplans sein.

Wenn das große Haus einen—sagen wir—  
*Hamlet* macht, dann machst Du eben einen kleinen  
*Hamlet*, so einen für Laien, für Kinder im  
Jugendclub Eures Hauses. Und 1998? Das Große  
Haus macht einen großen BB und Du sollst  
irgendwie einen kleinen bb machen. Und nun fragst  
Du mich; ich soll Dir in Sachen Bert Brecht etwas  
raten. Nun gut: Ich bin nicht Dein Intendant, Dein  
Dramaturg. Aber ich habe es auch zu tun mit  
Personen, die theaterinteressiert sind, die sogenannte  
Laien sind. Und ich verstehe meine theater-  
pädagogische Arbeit an verschiedenen Orten als  
Versuch, Spaß und Interesse am Theatralischen, am  
Theatralen zu wecken. Und da Theater einen  
Handlungszusammenhang darstellt, biete ich selten  
seminaristische Kurse an, sondern ein "learning by  
doing." Ich weiß mich darin gut bei Brecht  
aufgehoben—wie im übrigen auch in der Arbeit mit  
Laien, mit denen, die ein Publikum bilden (können,  
wollen, werden, sollen...): Schauspielkunst und  
Zuschaukunst kommen so zusammen.

Du warst im Juni 1996 in Stuttgart beim 7.  
Bundestreffen der "Jugendclubs an Theatern." Aus  
meinem Zeitungsarchiv ein Ausriß, in dem meines  
Erachtens etwas umständlich aber sachlich recht gut  
das beschrieben wird, was ein Jugendclub am  
Theater zu leisten vermag: "Es kommt darauf an, daß  
etwas lebt," zitierte Klaus Hoffmann von der  
mitveranstaltenden Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft *Spiel  
und Theater Bertolt Brecht*. Theater sei dann  
lebendig, wenn man den Zuschauer erreiche, seine  
Hoffnungen und Befürchtungen wecke. Mit den  
Jugendclubs haben die Theater nach Hoffmanns

Ansicht einen lebendigen Stachel im Fleisch. Damit  
können sie betrachten, erfahren, besinnen und  
Einblick nehmen in das, was Menschen bewegt. Das  
Ziel sei Selbstsozialisation und nicht sozialisiert  
werden durch andere. Bürgermeister Wolfgang  
Schuster sprach von einem gesellschaftspolitischen  
Auftrag, den die Arbeit der Jugendclubs erfüllt."  
(*Esslinger und Cannstatter Zeitung*, 20. Juni 1996)  
Nun meine Idee für Deine erste Arbeit im Theater  
Club aus Anlaß von Brechts 100.Geburtsstag;  
erwachsen aus meinen Erfahrungen; bitte, nur mit  
Vorsicht in Deinen Handlungszusammenhang  
übertragen!

1. Nimm die beiden gerade erschienenen  
Bände mit Stück-Fragmenten aus der *Großen  
kommentierten Berliner und Frankfurter Brecht-  
Ausgabe* zur Hand (Bände 10/ 1/ 2). Du wirst mehr  
als ein Dutzend Skizzen, Entwürfe, Fragmente aus  
über 40 Jahren finden.

2. Bitte, trachte nicht danach, diese 'Stück-  
Werke' (welch ein Doppelsinn!?) ergänzen zu  
wollen, etwa mit Passagen aus sogenannten fertigen,  
abgeschlossenen Stücken Brechts mit ähnlicher  
Thematik.

3. Akzeptiere für Dich, für Deine Theater-  
Club-Tätigkeit, eine ganz neue Stück-Gattung, das  
Fragment. Daß da etwas zu fehlen scheint, sollte Dir  
konstitutiver Bestandteil dieser Gattung sein. Bitte,  
nicht textlich rekonstruieren, sondern: Falls da  
Lücken gesehen werden, beim praktischen  
Erspielen, dann sollten das Erfahrungswissen, der  
Erfahrungswunsch Deiner Club-Teilnehmer/innen  
dort hineinkommen: sie bringen ihre Texte, ihre  
anderen Kontexte ein, collagieren sich mit Brechts  
Vorgaben.

4. Nimm das Fragmentarische also als das  
Normale, als die Regel. Du weißt, daß ich solches  
Vorgehen nicht nur unter motivationalen  
Gesichtspunkten für wichtig halte: Wo ich als nicht  
professioneller Spieler etwas (mehr) von mir  
hineingeben kann, da mache ich die Sache eher zu  
der meinen.

Noch zwei andere Begründungen habe ich:

a) Brecht schrieb 1936/37 an seinen sozio-  
logisch-philosophischen Ratgeber Karl Korsch, daß  
er sich von ihm "Sätze," aus dem Zusammenhang  
"Gerissenes, Sporadisches," ganz und gar  
Skizziertes, "ohne Gewähr, verant-wortungslos in

wissenschaftlichem Sinn," erwarte: "Sie verstehen schon. Es wäre Arbeits-material." So denke ich, sollten wir, solltest Du, an die Fragmente Brechts herangehen: Arbeitsmaterial für eine sozial-ästhetische Produktion mit Deinem Klientel experimentell zu be- und erarbeiten, so daß ein Drittes, ein eigenes Produkt nach solchen Prozessen entsteht. Und meine weitere Erwägung/Begründung:

b) Große, geschlossene Systeme und ihre Erzählungen haben wohl abgedankt. Das Fragmentarische menschlicher Existenz wird deutlicher und wird zur Struktur von sog. "Risikogesellschaften." Menschliche Biographien werden zu "Bastelbiographien," die umbaufähig bleiben müssen; mehrere Identitäten oder Selbstkonzepte müssen sich im gesellschaftlichen Rollenspiel bewähren; auf immer neuen und anderen gesellschaftlichen Inseln müssen wir präsent sein ("Insel Springer" müssen schon Kinder sein). Und bei alledem will man/frau noch ganz unverwechselbar sein/erscheinen. Brecht hat zu solchen Um-Funktionierungen ja einiges geschrieben, und gerade auch die Fragmente legen davon nicht nur vom Inhalt her, sondern zusätzlich von der Form davon Zeugnis ab.

5. Am deutlichsten wird dies, was die Soziologie erst in den letzten Jahren so recht zur Kenntnis nimmt, in Brechts Fragmenten. *Der böse Baal der Asoziale* (Du hast, da wir uns lange kennen, sicher schon auf diesen Hinweis gewartet—ich spitze meine Rede gern auf diese facettenreiche Sammlung von Spiel-Ideen und Stückchen zu, wie Du weißt). Leider aber muß ich Dich bei diesem Text-Material bitten, den Band 10/ 1 der neuen Brecht-Ausgabe zur Seite zu legen: Er hat Brechts (unvollständige) Schreibe normiert, so daß einige Haken, die das Spiel anregen, fehlen (z.B. fehlt der Schreibfehler "asozial," Klein- und Groß-schreibung wurden normiert, statt Brechts hinterlassene Un-Korrektheit als Herausforderung stehen zu lassen. Ähnliches ist mit der Zeichensetzung geschehen—also: Glättung; schade!). Bitte greife wieder auf die Sammlung zum *Baal*-Stoff von Dieter Schmidt aus dem Jahre 1969 zurück. Überdies findest Du da weitere Szenen, Skizzen und Entwürfe, mit denen Du arbeiten kannst.

6. Ganz konkret etwas zum Theater-spielen mit den Mitgliedern Deines Theater-Clubs:

Gehe induktiv vor. Mache keinen Vorkurs zur Werk- und/oder *Baal*—Geschichte à la: *Baal*—ein

vorderasiatischer Gott, negativ besetzt etwa in "Beelzebub," zugleich ein geniales Jugendwerk Bertolt Brechts usw. Nimm aber das auf, was am Beginn der Fragmentausgaben steht:

Baal soll "auftauchen als /gast/hure/richter/kauf mann ... /ingenieur .../hilfsbedürftiger ... /liebhaber der natur/demagoge/arbeiter/(streikbrecher)/mutter/historiker/soldat/liebhaber (hier folgt der Hinweis auf ein anderes Fragment, *den Brotladen*, mit seiner "bäckergesellenszene," (Anm. gk) "als pfaffe/als beamter." Übe Deine Mitspielerinnen und -spieler in diese Rollenvorgaben ein und laß sie die nachfolgenden Szenen und Skizzen mit eben diesen Rollenvorgabenspielen: Geht das? Geht das nicht? Wie geht das? Welche Reibungen, welche Anschärfungen, welche Entkoppelungen, welche Ankoppelungen ergeben sich? Was entsteht wie neu?

Ein Beispiel: Was wird aus diesem nicht abgeschlossenen Dialog Brechts, wenn Baal, der von einem Gastgeber und der (seiner?) Frau erwartet wird, mal als Richter, mal als Hilfsbedürftiger, mal als Ingenieur, mal als Soldat auftaucht? Hier der Text, der Beginn einer unvollendeten Szene:

DER GASTGEBER: wir erwarten den herrn baal. Seines talentes halber wollen wir ihn bereitwillig aufnehmen.

DIE FRAU; das essen ist zubereitet. Wer ein reichliches essen gegessen hat der öffnet sich.

Hier kann entweder ad hoc Text improvisiert werden oder aber innerhalb einer kleinen Werkstatt fürs szenische Schreiben können Texte als Fortsetzung fixiert werden (was sich übrigens leichter machen läßt, wenn man zu mehreren—evtl. in der Zahl der zu spielenden Rollen—schreibt).

Als die Brechtschen Fragmente (z.T. zum erstenmal) das Licht eines professionell arbeitenden Theaters, nämlich im Juli 1997 im Berliner Ensemble, erblickten, hieß es sehr richtig zum *Bösen Baal*-Stoff: Brecht habe "daran gedacht, Baal in verschiedensten Rollen der Gesellschaft auftauchen zu lassen, um auf diese Weise die Asozialität Baals mit der Asozialität der Gesellschaft zu konfrontieren. Baal erweist sich als einer, der mit der Gesellschaft nicht einverstanden ist, weil er mit ihr 'einverstanden' ist." (Dieser Text ist im übrigen eine verknappte Fassung des prägnanten Kommentars zum *Bösen Baal* von Jan Knopf in seinem



*Brecht-Handbuch* (S. 368). Ach ja: Die Mitglieder eines Theater-Clubs wollen meist nicht nur für sich spielen, sondern gerade anderen etwas zeigen, vorführen (eine richtige Inszenierung soll's werden!).

Natürlich geht das mit diesen Fragmenten ganz vorzüglich, z.B. so: Du markierst ganz schlicht mit Kreide oder Klebeband eine Spielfläche. Alle Spieler/innen müssen mit unterschiedlichem *Baal* in den Ring. Solche Vorgänge lassen sich sehr gut vor Publikum ausstellen (statt des schlicht markierten Spielplatzes ließe sich eine Art 'Boxring als Bühne denken; und zusätzlich könntest Du noch diese Idee aufnehmen: jede/r muß durch alle Rollenvorgaben Brechts für den *Baal* gehen, jeder macht mal die Hure, mal den Richter usw.).

Zu kompliziert das alles für die Mitspielerinnen und -spieler Deines Theater-Clubs? Ich kann Dich beruhigen: In diesem Sommer haben 8-bis 10-jährige Schüler/innen, deren Muttersprache nicht Deutsch ist, mit *Baal*-Fragmenten gespielt—und zwar außerordentlich gekonnt und sich angesprochen fühlend. Auch mit Erwachsenen verschiedener Berufe lassen sich die Fragmente spielen, wenn man einen erfahrungs-offenen Spielansatz wählt—und das ist ja unser beider Interesse.

Laß mich am Schluß zusammenfassen: Am schönsten kann man das, was meines Erachtens der Stücktypus "Fragment" bietet, am *Bösen Baal* zeigen. Geht man so vor, wie ich hier skizzierte, dann gelingt beides: Spiel mit mir als sozialem Wesen, mit meiner Biographie, und spiel mit einem Brechtschen ästhetischen, künstlerischen Spielangebot. Wenn das keine kulturelle Bildung ist! Und die wollen doch Dein Intendant, Deine Dramaturgie. Also, auf ins Experiment!

Mit kollegialen Grüßen,  
Dein gk

1. vgl. Annett Israel / Silke Riemann (Hrsg.): *Das andere Publikum. Deutsches Kinder- und Jugendtheater*. Berlin 1996, und "KORRESPONDENZEN. Zeitschrift für Theaterpädagogik," Heft 23-25, 1995, mit dem Themenschwerpunkt: "Soziales Lernen und ästhetische Erfahrung" (Heftredaktion: Gerd Koch, Marianne Streisand).

**Prof. Dr. Gerd Koch**, Diplom - Pädagoge, lehrt an der Alice-Salomon-Fachhochschule Berlin Pädagogik und Soziale Kulturarbeit mit dem Schwerpunkt Theater(pädagogik), gibt

die *KORRESPONDENZEN. Zeitschrift für Theaterpädagogik* mit heraus, veröffentlichte zuletzt als Herausgeber *Theatralisierung von Lehr-Lernprozessen* (Berlin/ Milow 1995) und zusammen mit Rainer E. Zimmermann (in Verbindung mit dem Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus) *U Topoi. Ästhetik und politische Praxis bei Ernst Bloch* (Mössingen-Talheim 1966).

### **Last Minute Announcement:**

### ***Six Questions about Bert Brecht***

International Symposium sponsored by the  
Goethe Institute in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
August 26 — 28, 1998

Invited guests who will address six questions concerning Brecht's relevance today include: Fernando Gonzalez (*Chile*), Ludwig Margules (*Mexico*), Fernando Peixoto (*Brazil*), Gerd Bornheim (*Brazil*), Fredric Jameson (*USA*), Antony Tatlow (*Ireland*), Augusto Boal (*Brazil*), Gerd Irrlitz (*Germany*), Reinaldo Montero (*Cuba*), Luiz Fernando Lobo (*Brazil*), Alexander Stillmark (*Germany*), John Willett (*United Kingdom*), Marcio Meirelles (*Brazil*), Marc Silberman (*USA*), Martin Roeder-Zerndt (*Germany*), Osvaldo Dragun (*Argentina*), Moacyr Goes (*Brazil*), Peter Palitzsch (*Germany*).

*The symposium is being supported by the Goethe Institute Rio, the Communal Agency RioArte, the Cultural Center of the Bank of Brazil, and the International Brecht Society*

For information, contact:  
Dr. Klaus Vetter, Goethe Institute  
Av. Graca Aranha 416 - 9th fl.  
20030 - 001 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
Tel. 55 -21 533 4862  
Fax 55 -21 533 7092  
email: Girjinstitut@wg.easyline.com.br

# Treasurer' Report

During the Summer of 1997, Ward Lewis of the University of Georgia ended his long tenure as IBS Secretary/Treasurer, passing his duties to David W. Robinson of Georgia Southern University. New bank accounts (checking and savings) were opened in Statesboro, Georgia, on September 5, and the old Athens, Georgia, account was closed on September 30.

## DOLLAR ACCOUNT (SAVINGS)

5 September 1997		10 November 1997
	Receipts:	\$2,310.00
	Interest:	\$3.26
	Transfers to Checking:	\$700.00
		-----
Balance (opening):\$1,526.28	Balance	\$3,139.54

## DOLLAR ACCOUNT (CHECKING)

5 September 1997		10 November 1997
	Receipts	\$1,108.46
	Disbursements:	\$1,481.87
		-----
Balance: \$500.00	Balance	\$126.59

## DM ACCOUNT

30 June 1997		8 November 19978
	Receipts:	DM 165,74
	Disbursements:	DM 9,90
		-----
Balance: DM 4.566,20	Balance:	DM 4.722,04

(Deutsche Bank Düsseldorf Konto-Nr. 76/74146 BLZ 300 702 000)

*David W. Robinson, Secretary/Treasurer (Acting)*  
*Georgia Southern University*

## IBS MEMBERSHIP

All IBS members receive *The Brecht Yearbook* and *Communications* from the *International Brecht Society* as a benefit of membership and are invited to participate in the Society's symposia. The Society is officially multi-lingual; *Communications* welcomes contributions in English, German, Spanish, and French.

To join the IBS, fill out the form below, and send it to the Secretary/Treasurer. Make checks payable to the *International Brecht Society* in American currency only. Members in Europe may deposit dues in DM directly in the Deutsche Bank account indicated below. Please notify the Secretary/Treasurer of the date and amount of your payment, together with your address. Institutions may request an invoice for accounting purposes.

**Name:**

**Occupation / Institution / Affiliation:**

**Address:**

**Fields of interest** (e.g. acting, music, directing, research, politics, other 'Brechtian' writers):

<b>Membership category</b> (check one)	<b>Dues US \$</b>	<b>Dues DM</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Student (up to three years / bis zu drei Jahren)	\$ 20.00	DM 30,—
<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Member / Ordentliches Mitglied		
annual income under \$ 30,000 (DM 45.000)	\$ 30.00	DM 45,—
annual income over \$ 30,000 (DM 45.000)	\$ 40.00	DM 60,—
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member / Fördermitglied	\$ 50.00	DM 80,—
<input type="checkbox"/> International Member / Korporatives Mitglied	\$ 50.00	DM 80,—

### **Method of payment**

- ☐ Check enclosed in US \$ drawn on an American bank
- ☐ Invoice
- ☐ Direct bank deposit in Deutsche Bank Düsseldorf, Konto Nr. 76-74146, BLZ 300 702 00. (Please inform the Secretary/Treasurer of your address and deposit.)

**Send to:**

**David W. Robinson, Secretary/Treasurer** (Elect)

Department. of Literature and Philosophy

P.O. Box 8023

Georgia Southern University

Statesboro, GA 30640-8023

dwrob@gsvms2.cc.gasou.edu

## **International Brecht Society**

Dr. G. Tabbert-Jones, Editor  
Department of Modern Languages  
Santa Clara University  
Santa Clara, CA 95053

