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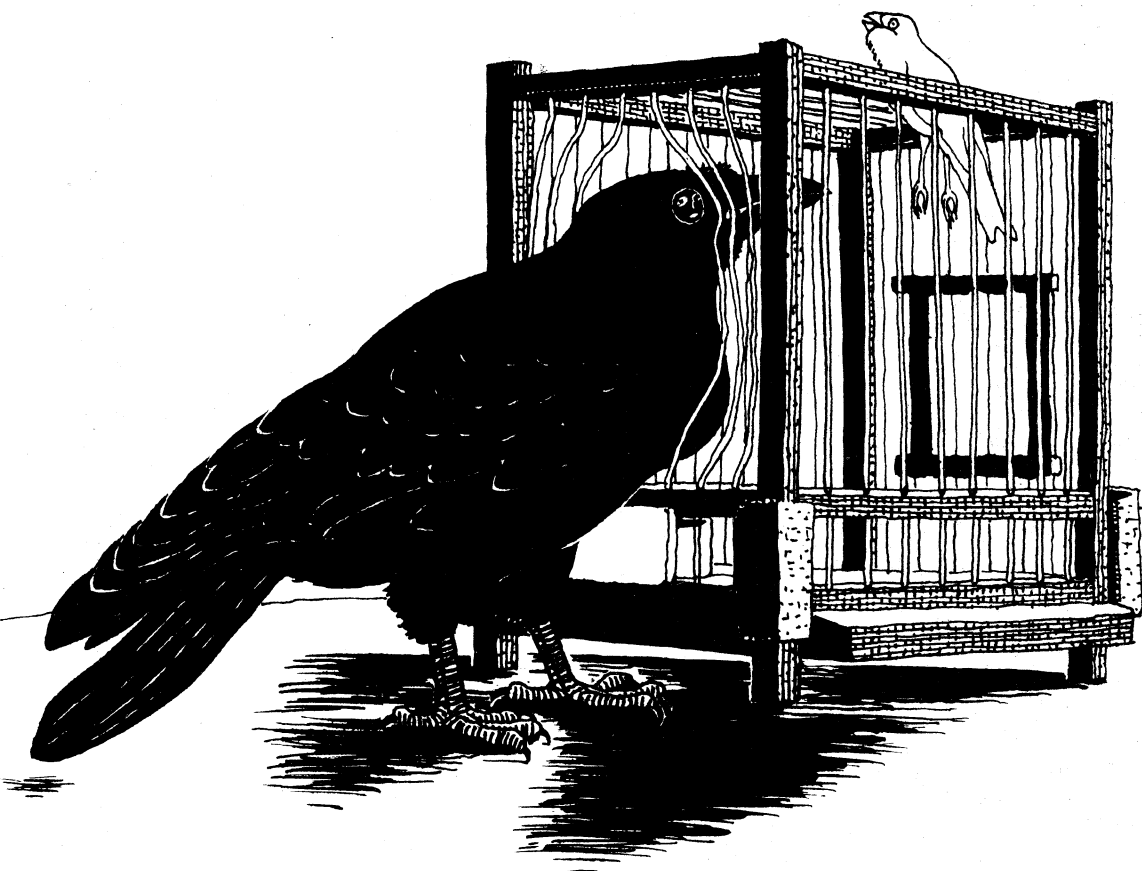
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# COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society

Volume 15, Number 1



Wenn du nicht singen könntest  
Wärst du so frei wie ich.

# COMMUNICATIONS

from the INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

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Volume XV

November 1985

Number 1

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Note. . . . .	2
Astrid von Kotze: Workers' Plays in South Africa . . . . .	3
Göran Bjelkental: <u>Lux in Tenebris</u> : A Scenario. . . . .	17
Ann Gadon: <u>Lux in Tenebris</u> in Chicago. . . . .	24
Warren Leming: On Directing Brecht . . . . .	28
R.G. Davis: A Short Statement on Re-Visioning. . . . .	30
Heinz-Uwe Haus: Notes on <u>Ui</u> in Greece. . . . .	32
DeVina Barajas: Singing Brecht . . . . .	35
Antony Tatlow: Aimez-vous Brecht? A Polemic. . . . .	38
Production Reviews: <u>Fear and Misery</u> in Toruń (Poland) / <u>Mahagonny</u> in Bad Hersfeld / <u>Mother Courage</u> and <u>Man Equals Man</u> in London / <u>Threepenny Opera</u> in Quito / <u>Threepenny Opera</u> in Eureka (Cal.) / Brecht on Film in Chicago / <u>Don Juan</u> in Ann Arbor (Michigan) / Ekkehard Schall in New York City / <u>Roundheads and Pointheads</u> in New York City / <u>Happy End</u> in Los Angeles / <u>A Man's a Man</u> in La Jolla (Cal.) / <u>Kleinbürgerhochzeit</u> in West Berlin. . . . .	43
Notate . . . . .	60
Reports:	
"Brecht's Legacy" at the American Theatre Association Convention	61
IBS Officers (President, Secretary/Treasurer). . . . .	65
Notes / Conference Calls / MLA . . . . .	69
Bibliography . . . . .	75
Contributors . . . . .	80



## editor's note

This issue of Communications offers several unique contributions to the ongoing impact of Brecht and Brechtian aesthetics. I am particularly happy to introduce the work of scholar/activist Astrid von Kotze, whose article on workers' plays in South Africa conveys provocative thoughts on the political dimensions and limitations of Brechtian theater. The experiment she reports on suggests an interesting complement to A. Blumer's earlier article in Communications 13/1 on Brecht in South Africa as well as to a similar experiment undertaken in Terni, Italy (cf. "Brecht in der Fabrik," Alternative 107, April 1976). Göran Bjelkental and Ann Gadon address the early and neglected Brecht text Lux in Tenebris in two different media -- film and stage performance -- with strikingly different effects. Joining director Gadon in commenting on their theater practice with Brecht are directors Warren Leming, R.G. Davis, Heinz-Uwe Haus, and performer DeVina Barajas. Connecting these and other articles together is the cover design by graphic artist Hannelore Teutsch, inspired -- not coincidentally -- by a verse from one of Brecht's children's songs about a raven and a singing canary (cf. "Tierverse" in Brecht, Gedichte, Vol. V).

As usual, the November issue of Communications includes the IBS officers' reports and the annual Brecht bibliography. Also conference calls for two important Brecht conferences will be found in the 'Notes' section. North American readers are reminded of the Brecht sessions at the MLA Convention in Chicago (December 1985); and this year's topics and papers promise to open up some new territory. All IBS members should give some thought to proposals for future Brecht sessions at the 1986 and 1987 MLA conventions, as these will be voted on at this year's meetings. Come prepared! or if you will not be attending, contact Karl-Heinz Schoeps, Secretary/Treasurer, with your proposals.

The IBS elections are scheduled, according to by-laws of the Constitution, every two years. In order to implement the balloting procedure in Summer 1986, the Executive Committee is seeking nominations now from the membership. In particular, individuals who are interested in serving as Secretary/Treasurer or as Editor of Communications should step forward by contacting me or one of the other officers as soon as possible. Don't be shy!

Finally, for those of you who have material to submit to the journal for publication, we suggest that you send it to us in the form of IBM or Mac diskettes, if possible. We're now computerized! For others, we will still type. . .

Marc Silberman

## WORKER PLAYS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Astrid von Kotze

The need to express oneself artistically becomes all the more urgent when (a) access to cultural reproduction is largely denied, and (b) the working population is condemned to drudgery and long-distance travelling, as in the structures of the South African apartheid system. Worker organization in South Africa is becoming increasingly a social movement apart from political and economic necessity. It brings together large numbers of people who initially related to each other through immediate problems at the factory or through campaigns and strategies. In short, these people related primarily as workers and only secondarily as men and women with creative potential. This secondary aspect, however, has prompted the trade union movement to incorporate plays, musical groups and choirs as an extension of its education program. Emerging worker plays are not meant for a consumer public, and they are created and performed within the perimeter of working class leisure time and space. The need to investigate these developments in order to encourage and coordinate activity among worker groups prompted this paper. Its intention is, further, to describe how workshop plays are events of a different nature, evolving and obeying their own laws of development.

### TOWARDS COMMUNITY THEATRE: SECURITY

Responding to a union call for donations to a strike fund in 1979, some members of Junction Avenue Theatre Company set out to do a workshop play. Within three weeks, working almost daily after their 'regular' jobs, they devised and rehearsed Security. This 45 minute play depicts a man, who, unable to obtain work in a tight labor market, takes the job of a 'watchdog' outside a factory. He is equipped with kennel and collar -- even jokingly admits it might not be a 'white collar job' but a 'dog collar' one -- and is trained by an aspiring middleclass clerk under the supervision of Mr. Fatman, the boss. Through a grueling process of learning to walk, sit and attack like a dog and of unlearning speech, he finally turns out to be no more than the 'underdog' he was initially. The play was performed in community halls, churches and yards outside 'white' Johannesburg. When it had completed its 'run' of mostly weekend performances -- this being the only time when working class audiences could attend -- it had indeed managed to raise some funds for the union. More importantly, though, it set the participants on a course of alternative theatrical exploits. More than the previous plays of the Company, Security focused on the dramatic presentation of cause and effect relationships and

## 4 Communications

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their impact on the country's exploited and oppressed peoples. Moreover, it was the first step towards performing (a) outside established theatrical venues, (b) within the leisure time of the working class rather than the traditional evening shows, (c) at spaces where people were already gathered for some common purpose rather than inviting them to come specifically to see a play.

After Security the link with the unions became stronger and work on the first project in the new 'mold' began. Three members of the Junction Avenue Theatre Company joined workers who were involved in dismissal disputes in the dense industrial area of the East Rand outside Johannesburg. They met nightly for three months and produced Ilanga Lizophumela Abasebenzi (The Sun Rises for the Workers). The play depicts a recent dispute at the factory, showing its history and causes and analyzing the conflict to make the underlying structures visible. Active audience participation was written into the play. In fact, it had different endings, depending on suggestions from the audience. Songs, too, played an important role in constituting the framework of the play and in creating a common sense of solidarity. There were numerous problems with producing the play. Financial: since workers had been dismissed, they had no income and often could not afford the bus-fare to come to workshops; this play, as well as others, was not subsidized in any way. Political: workers were forced out of the area of Johannesburg and sent to their 'homelands' owing to the illegal strike. Communicative: most participants were basically illiterate, which made production of written 'scripts' impossible, so that people had to rely on memory; in addition, a wide range of languages was spoken by the various participants, and the workshop coordinator could only speak English. Responses to the play were enthusiastic, and after it was videoed, Ilanga was seen by thousands of workers throughout the Republic. In the final instance this was very useful because future workshop members could learn what a play is and what it might look like by reference to Ilanga.

### DEVELOPING THE DUNLOP PLAY

A recent play performed by workers shall serve as model for this type of theatre and its educational values.

#### The Project:

After having moved to Durban, two members of the Junction Avenue Theatre Company were approached by the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) with the request to "workshop" a play with some newly organized MAWU members from the Dunlop factory. The play was to be performed at the union's annual General Meeting some three months later. Initial meetings and subsequent workshops with workers from the plant were held at the union offices twice weekly after hours, ie. between the first shift and the night shift. The time factor proved to be a major difficulty

because the longest time span at any one point when all 13 members of the group could be present was approximately one hour. The play in its final state, however, was longer. Never once, therefore, was a full play rehearsal possible before performances. Another obstacle, particularly when it came to more physical action, was the small workshop space with up to 25 people sometimes present. However, there were advantages too: transport problems which the coordinators had been faced with in previous projects did not exist owing to the factory's close proximity to the factory; occasional interruptions of workers coming to speak with the shop stewards about problems and grievances helped to avoid the establishment of a play reality outside the reality of the workplace; in addition, the group got used to operating within a very limited space, which proved useful for later performances.

#### The Participants:

The 13 participants, ranging in age from 20 to about 55, were all fairly well versed in English, had a common language (Zulu), and were literate. Most of them were second generation township dwellers, ie. they grew up and lived in the segregated locations around the broader Durban area and spent up to two hours daily travelling from their homes to the factory. Others grew up in the 'homelands' Transkei and Quazulu and came to Durban as migrant workers. Their immediate families still lived there, whereas they boarded with relatives or lived in hostels. Their overriding common denominator was the experience of being a black worker in South Africa and more specifically at Dunlop. Their previous exposure to the theatre was as varied as their backgrounds. While some had participated in school or church plays or seen plays by the township author and director Gibson Kente, others had no institutional theatre experience at all. In order to explain the nature of a play to them, reference was made to Ilanga Lizophumela Abasebenzi, and thus an approximate mind's eye vision of a possible finished product was created.

#### The Workshop Methods:

The shared social and working basis served as the point of departure at the first meeting. Each man in turn introduced himself to the group by first stating in which part of the plant he was employed and then miming his routine basic motions performed daily. To this was added an acoustic imitation of the machine noises around him, and when 'switched on' simultaneously at the end, the group produced a lively and descriptive image of an assembly line-type work process. Any verbal dialogue was recorded on tape, and these tapes were subsequently transcribed and translated because the language used during improvisations was Zulu, which the workshop coordinators did not speak. Scripts were then edited, arranged and handed out as scenes emerged, and except for those parts acted out in English, the participants translated the script back into Zulu. Written scripts were thus merely a basis for continual improvisations.

## 6 Communications

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To describe the process of workshopping more fully, the first scene of the play, which was created at the first full workshop, shall serve as an example. It was noticed that the old man who had been working at Dunlop for 37 years was wearing a gold watch. He explained that it was a gift from the company to acknowledge its gratitude for 25 years of service. He proceeded to describe the ceremony at which he and others were honored and presented their gifts: some meat ("Which was tripe, really"), some beer ("We were told to drink it there and then but not to get drunk. We were not allowed to take it home.") and a little cake for the children at home. After he told the story, the group split up into 'managers' and 'workers'. Suggestions as to how the white managers should be portrayed were tried out to the great amusement of everyone, and, judging by the laughter and enthusiasm, the most authentic presentations were mimes of great stomachs, an assumed air of superiority and the allegedly typical 'stuck-up' way of walking. By the time of the performance pink half-masks or just noses were added. The group quickly decided who should play the managers, and while they 'rehearsed' their roles and prepared speeches, the rest of the group arranged themselves as an audience behind the worker who was to be honored. A 'cheerleader' was chosen, and he practiced signals for studied laughter and applause. Meanwhile the old man prepared his part: he became a shuffling, embarrassed worker who wrung his hands, pulled up his shoulders and bowed his head in submission. For later performances he wore an oversized pair of boots which further enhanced the sense of acute embarrassment. The enactment of the ceremony followed, played twice to give the two 'managers' a chance to make a speech. These two speeches, when transcribed and translated, were collapsed into one and subsequently split up between two actors. Similarly, the various ideas from the two improvisations were gathered, the best ones chosen and then edited into the speeches. This first workshop was so successful that no further work on the play's beginning was necessary until the rehearsal stage.

The second workshop was dedicated to the creation of songs. The group was divided into three with the task of creating the lyrics and tune for a song depicting working life at Dunlop. After 30 minutes all met again, and each group in turn performed its song. As in the speeches, the lyrics of the three suggestions were contracted into one, and one especially talented participant was given the 'homework' to improve the tune and fit the newly incorporated words into it. Songs played a vital role at this stage in workshops: they served to draw the group together as a whole at the outset of each meeting, and they provided an essential warm-up exercise and a useful lead into further work on the play. Equally, the participants were particularly conscientious about 'homework'. At the end of each workshop suggestions were made about the content of the next meeting, and without fail some members would arrive with a few notes and ideas both for new scenes and additions to old ones.

A series of workshops on the production process in the various factory floors and departments followed, and then participants created a scene depicting their lunch hour. For this they swiftly made a board and gathered some stones so they could play a game of 'checkers', which is very common and popular in all factories. This became the framework for a later scene in which union recruitment and a discussion on the importance of unionization were presented. In order to get differing viewpoints from those held by the participants, they were asked to improvise a home scene in which a father, mother and various sons have a fight about unions. This method proved useful for educational and creative purposes. The improvisation started with two people: a husband comes home from work late because of a union meeting, and his disgruntled wife accuses him of seeing other women. Not believing his explanations, she launches into an attack about what his tardiness means for her in terms of the household. He tries to convince her of the importance of unionization and worker solidarity while she cites her problems with the reproductive functions which he should share. As the conversation slackened, the workshop coordinators 'sent in' another participant, a son. The son, being more conservative, takes up the side of his mother but from a different point of view: being a union member is dangerous, the father might get sacked, police harassment and unemployment are dangers. Against this increasing onslaught the father has to defend himself with yet stronger arguments, and, to assist him, another 'son' enters the scene. This improvisation was continued until the topic of unionization was explored sufficiently. For the play the role of the mother became that of the 'impimpi' (traitor; lackey), who openly adopts the side of management and taunts workers in order to report them later. The dramatic tension of a scene like this is obvious. The humor it generated due to workers modelling themselves on actual 'impimpis' and supervisors provided the necessary entertainment, saving the scene from heavy-handedness.

This humor, recognized as an essential ingredient in all workshop plays, was extended into a subsequent scene. During the course of discussion the 'impimpi' progressively lost ground, and when the others broke out into a song celebrating the strength of unity, he was visibly shaken. Just at that moment the workshop coordinator sent in two 'policemen' to break up the meeting and arrest the leaders. As they entered, the workers changed the tune of their song and turned it into a hymn, picked up bibles and pretended to be gathered for religious reasons. The 'impimpi' now showed his change of heart by becoming the leader in the game of deception. This conceit was arrived at in debate about which other forms of gathering were legal and 'innocent'. It was also pointed out that during the political campaigns of the late fifties these tactics were indeed used.

How to present 25 years of service at Dunlop caused the biggest problem to the workshop, since the method of story-telling would be too lengthy and inappropriate,

## 8 Communications

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given the large audiences. The workshop coordinators suggested the use of a 'cranky', a device made popular by agit-prop groups of the sixties and seventies: on a roll of paper or canvas continuous images are painted; this roll is clipped onto a large frame, and by means of a handle or 'crank' the roll is slowly unwound. The device is like a very simple movie screen and lends itself to the presentation of a progressive time lapse. After the structure, use and method of a cranky was explained, ten historical moments were singled out to be portrayed as symbolic pictures and dates. To arrive at those ten moments, each workshop member was given a piece of paper on which he wrote those occurrences between 1958 and 1973 which seemed most prominent. The participants then singled out the ten most important ones in terms of their bearing on workers. The mid-sixties, which were relatively uneventful for worker militancy, were marked by the memory of the old man. He recalled the 'man on the moon', and in the later play he enacted a fictional conversation with Neil Armstrong on the moon, where working conditions were very different. . .

While half of the workshop then worked on brief introductions to each of the historical frames on the cranky (these were spoken by the old man as a retrospective following his '25 years service ceremony'), the other half worked on drawings for the frames. Making the cranky generated a lot of debate about the role of the visual arts in working class culture in South Africa because it became obvious that owing to very minimal exposure, there is no established code of signs and signals one can rely on. The traditional comic strip representation of a prisoner in striped pajamas with a large number, for example, will not be read by a worker audience as signifying prison, and the workshop members insisted on a more realistic rendering of images of people. To further dramatize the 25 years, some of the ten events were presented in short sketches or simple tableaux -- like a man with an umbrella chasing a worker with a broom who swept the 'big flood of 1965' off the stage. The final result was a multi-media presentation which utilized fully all acoustic and visual means at hand.

### STRUCTURING THE CONTENT OF THE PLAY

Whereas individual scenes on a given topic were created spontaneously and quickly, conceptualizing the play as a whole was a major difficulty for the group. At this point the coordinators had to assist with structuring and scripting more than at any other stage. They put forward various alternative possibilities concerning the overall 'story-line'. Through discussion it was decided to show a worker's history from the point of entering employment at the Dunlop plant during days of political turmoil up to the present, on the one hand focusing on specific developments within the plant as regards the various worker-management structures culminating in the current agreement between MAWU and Dunlop, and on the other hand, relating this development to the greater labor movement in South Africa.

## THE DUNLOP PLAY

The play opens with the cast entering from the audience, singing the MAWU song. They launch straight into the first scene in which the old worker is honored for longstanding service:

Manager: (addressing workers and audience alike) Welcome to this great occasion, this, the 25th anniversary of some of our Dunlop workers. . . We are here as a big company because of your devotion to us. . . The people we are celebrating today are the people who bear full proof to what I am mentioning right now: they should be an example to you all. . .

After being presented with an outsize paper-maché golden watch, the old worker steps forward and replies:

They gained my sweat. They made money out of my sweat. I am sick and poor. Today we shall tell you of these 25 years that we gave away and what we got in return.

The old man becomes a young worker who emerges from the audience and mimes the search for work. He enters the stage and is sent from production manager to supervisor to 'boss boy'. Each in turn explains to him what work at the factory is about and what is expected of him:

Supervisor: This is your machine. What's this?

Worker: This is my machine.

Supervisor. Wrong, you idiot.

Worker: But you said this is my machine.

Supervisor: Don't interrupt. This is your wife.

Worker: Ho, my wife, this thing? Aikon, this might look like your wife, my wife is back home and. . .

Supervisor: Forget about your wife back home, you won't see her for a long time. Here at work this is your wife. You are married to her now. You treat her right an she will treat you right too. You be nice to her, she will be nice back. But you mess her up, boy, and she will mess you up good and proper. Start work.

Through the instructions the audience becomes familiar with working conditions and routines at the plant, and some of the problems such as health hazzards are introduced. The scene moves into a mime of the work process, interrupted by sirens which divide up the shift. As the sirens accelerate in frequency, so does the speed of work, ending in a chaotic impression of bodies and tires. The young worker is left exhausted:



## 10 Communications

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I was tired that day; tired of work and tired of tires. 25 years of working for this firm while life bypassed me outside.

He walks to the cranky and starts to turn it, revealing the first image. During the following sequence of images, sketches and introductory comments by the old man turned narrator, the group sings a song about working life. The 25 years end with an image of strikers, denoting the great Durban strikes of 1972 and the strike at Dunlop of 1973: actor-workers assume a threatening pose, holding knobkerries (sticks) and shouting 'Usuthu!' (a traditional war cry). The young worker turns 'impimpi' and is manhandled as a scab laborer:

Send him to the Mines! Scab! Impimpi! When everyone has put down the tools, you join in, understand!

The general call for the manager is intercepted by the old man, who turns narrator:

And so we got to speak to the boss. He made all kinds of promises and then came up with a new idea: a liaison committee.

Setting up a liaison committee, the brain child of the Department of Labor, is ridiculed in a scene in which not even the bosses are quite sure of the structure and workings of such a body. Workers in turn are not fooled by the proposed management-appointed representatives and only reluctantly draw up a list of grievances and demands:

I want to stop nightshifts! I want a car like the manager! I want to share the profits! I want all the tires back that I made in 5 years!

At this point the audience is invited to contribute demands and thus drawn into the dispute. The list of complaints is subsequently discussed in a meeting between managers, appointed workers' representatives and the boss-boy, who functions as a go-between and interpreter. He abuses his position of power and deliberately distorts facts in 'translation'. The entire scene is played in English, since the workers are capable of communicating in the managers' language, but the fact that they are subjected to the whims of the go-between renders them even more ineffective and becomes a sign of their voicelessness in negotiation processes:

Foreman: (reads) They want an increase.

Manager: Increase? Now, gentlemen, there's been a slump in production lately...

Foreman: All the scrap you've been making. Scrap, scrap, scrap.

Manager: Ask them, who pays here.

Worker: You pay, but we work.

Manager: What do they say?

Foreman: (to workers) Are you getting cheeky again? (to manager) They say they understand. They do not want an increase.

Worker: What are you saying, man? (Abuses in Zulu)

Foreman: Now listen here: You must start thinking for the firm -- you are not here to represent the workers.

Old Man/Narrator: (tells the audience the obvious) The Liaison Committee achieved nothing in its 8 years at Dunlop.

Meanwhile the work process is reconstituted and interrupted by the lunch-hour siren, the signal for a scene during which some workers discuss the need for effective unionization while others play 'checkers'. Those members of the audience who are not members of a union can identify with the viewpoints of the hesitant and sceptical worker who claims:

The Union just takes your money.

But he is immediately instructed:

Our contributions and membership fees. . .

followed by a string of examples about how the union helped to fight a member's case. Informative pamphlets are handed out, and just as the cast breaks into song, the scene is interrupted by 'police' -- as outlined in the description above.

Management, to whom the talk of unions is reported by the 'impimpi', calls in their personnel manager. He suggests an in-house union, the Durban Rubber Workers' Union (DRWU), with its offices in the factory in order to stamp out 'outside' influences. The personnel manager, now a DRWU organiser, sets out to recruit members on stage and in the audience, but he is heckled. A battle of words begins: DRWU and MAWU compete with each other, shouting arguments through megaphones:

DRWU: Think for the firm. The union does not want trouble. MAWU wants to break the firm, they want you to loose your jobs. MAWU will get you into trouble.

MAWU: We believe that workers should be recognized as people. We believe in de-mocratic control. We demand a living wage. . .

Yet again the bosses are called to arbitrate. They ask the workers which of the two unions they want. The call for MAWU is a unified one and as a final 'triumph' the boss-boy changes sides and joins his brothers from MAWU. At this stage the play re-enters the reality of the larger union meeting, and the audience joins the cast in a victorious song celebrating unity.

## 12 Communications

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### PERFORMANCES AND RESPONSES

The premiere of the The Dunlop Play took place in Durban in April 1983, at the annual General Meeting of MAWU, attended by some 1000 people. The hall had a small narrow stage which housed a long tressle table and chairs for union officials. These were cleared away, and the play's only 'scenery' -- the cranky and a pile of tires which functioned as chairs, tables and factory products in turn -- were set up. The audience, most of whom had to stand, since the hall provides for an audience of only about 400, clearly did not know what to expect of the announced 'play', and tensions were high. The play's opening song resounded in the corridors outside long before the players actually entered and squeezed their way through the extreme congestion, and by the time they had found their way onto the stage, the audience was joining into the chorus of the song. Some confused and agitated spectators even followed the cast up to the stage and gave a brief impromptu song-and-dance performance. Throughout the entire performance audience participation was lively, interruptions frequent, and consequently a number of improvised responses were incorporated. The play emerged not only as it was scripted but with additions and modifications to suit the occasion. This was the case during future performances as well, and certain parts of the play which needed reworking were altered, making it a 'work in progress'. After the final triumphant song, the players were lifted off the stage and carried shoulder high like celebrated soccer players.

The Dunlop worker-actors gained such popularity that it was not surprising to find them being chosen as shop stewards at the next election. Invitations to perform the Dunlop Play poured in from all over the Republic. Because of lack of funds for travel and the impossibility of taking off work, only five could be accepted. The response generated was always enthusiastic and encouraging (apart from one celebrated South African authoress who found the play 'boring' -- needless to say, she does not speak Zulu and thus had to rely on an understanding gathered from the visual elements alone). Now, a year later [1984], the play is still being performed and cited as an example of workers' theatre, more of which should be done.

### EVALUATION

So much for the immediate success; but to what extent was the Dunlop Play an effective educational medium, and what did it achieve?

"Workshops are good. They bring people together. I didn't know anybody at the factory before. They knew me because as a driver I go all over the place. But I never saw them and never spoke to anybody."

Themba reflects the extreme isolation of his job. Through the workshops he met some of those people who saw him but whom he never saw, and he established strong links which have improved the work place.

"If you see someone at the meeting and then at work, you can speak to him."

Firstly, then, the workshops brought different people together as workers, on the one hand, and as men, on the other. The opportunity to share some of their experiences in discussion and enactment drew them together and established a sense of solidarity with each other. While more casual meetings at the union offices and the like might have established a kind of empathy and intellectual understanding of the common ground for their grievances, the workshops made them come to grips with the roots of their dilemmas and provided insights into the causal relationships:

I understood why and how I am being taken advantage of."

The experience that alienation and isolation at work could be overcome to some extent was very valuable and, in turn, it became one of the aims of the play to tell the audience: "We must be together and fight together like the men in the play."

Secondly, each participant emerged from the workshops with a newly established sense of self-worth and self-confidence. Within the discipline of mass production where the worker is "annexed for life by a limited function", where he is but a "fragment of a man" (Marx), and in addition, within the specific South African context, there are few channels open to a black man to stand up and be heard. Most of the participants suffered from considerable stage fright. They overcame such fears as their confidence grew about what they had to say and that it was important that they said it. The newly acquired performance skills also came in useful during worker-management confrontations and negotiations:

"Even now, I can stand up to my supervisor and look into his face and tell him what I think."

So sums up Bongani. The worker-actors have emerged as leaders, and they confront their leadership with strength and pride, both at their workplace and at home.

Thirdly, participants learned about the other sections of the plant, and apart from acquiring knowledge about the manufacture of tires, they gained insights into the working conditions and hardships of fellow workers on different shop floors.

"You share the problems that hurt you, and you can see what a man feels when he goes to work. I also saw that in some sections of Dunlop the dust and the smell and the heat is really bad; people get sick from it."

More generally, workers learned to articulate their insights through discussion, and the younger members of the group became familiar with parts of labor history they had not learned before. This arose particularly around the workshops dealing with 25 years of social and personal history. The fact that so many of them did regular 'homework' between workshops showed very clearly that they remained preoccupied with the topics and issues raised at individual sessions.

Fourthly, the workshop technique of assuming roles and arguing different viewpoints as a creative method was also very useful from the educational point of view. It

## 14 Communications

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brought to light attitudes which were prejudiced and often unreflected, and frequently it led to confrontations between the group's older and younger members. However deep the generation gap might be, though, they shared one basic premise: they were workers at Dunlop, and as such they had to unite.

Fifthly, it has been mentioned that songs play an important role in workshops and performances. In order to fully appreciate the position of music and song, a brief note on indigenous cultural forms is necessary. Theatre as an institution has a thin base in South African working class life. Where developed, it was introduced through churches and mission schools to promote their brand of education. Needless to say, the orientation was more to the established European traditions rather than to any local forms. Traditional cultural forms survive through oral literature mainly, but 'story-telling' incorporates mimetic and re-enactment qualities akin to theatrical forms. This is where songs and dance routines and much celebrated individual performances come in. At any union meeting -- and this was the framework for most of the performances of the Dunlop Play -- songs serve as an introduction to the meeting, as a 'unification mechanism', as entertainment, and as commentary on speeches. The call and response technique inherent to many worker songs, where one singer will introduce the song and ad lib any number of new verses while the rest of the gathering joins in as a chorus, could be easily utilized by a play to achieve audience participation, and indeed, the Dunlop Play closed with such a song. This song, which had strong rhythmic quality, was taken from the play into the meeting, connecting the two and thus integrating the play into the larger context of the gathering.

The role played by songs in workshops was demonstrated by three songs created during several workshops with women textile workers on the Johannesburg East Rand two years ago. Although the workshops never resulted in a finished play, the songs survived. At one of the union meetings during which the Dunlop Play was performed, I was surprised to hear suddenly a familiar tune and words sung by the entire audience during the 'warm-up' before the beginning of the meeting. It was clearly the song we had created then, and two others followed. They have now been incorporated into the general canon of worker songs, and their origins will be recognized only by those who made it. It might be of interest to mention at this point that women played no part in the Dunlop Play itself; there are no women workers at the factory. There had been workshops with a group of dismissed women workers, though, and subsequently with (female) textile workers who wanted assistance with a play they had written but which lacked structure and needed to be 'chopped' into performable length. There are special problems in working with women: only recently have they been permitted to appear on stage. Usually they are prevented by their men, who are either 'traditional' and conservative or simply jealous, not allowing 'their' women to be seen by so many men; or they do not allow

them to participate in workshops because they would neglect their domestic duties. Moreover, only those men whose families believe in a union and support workshops as part of union work will permit women to come. Finally, working with women after hours poses a transport problem -- public transport is not safe. These women's problems have not been dealt with in any play; there is a tremendous gap, obviously.

Finally, much has been said and written about the difficulty of measuring a play's effect on social reality. It might have been coincidental, but at the same time as that scene about the 1958 potato boycott was improvised, Dunlop workers went on a canteen boycott as a result of which the canteen has been closed permanently. More directly related to the making of the play has been the formation of a 'cultural group' which incorporates members of the workshop as well as others from various factories. They have begun to share and criticize their creative writings in regular meetings, and a number of playlets, epic poems in the tradition of 'praise poetry' and stories have been written, performed and published in worker newspapers. Other unions and factories were encouraged if not inspired to such a degree that various groups have begun to tell their stories in sketches and plays. This then, is the final statement of the Dunlop Play, in Brecht's words: "The discontented man, he shall be our teacher in reconstructing the community."

Elements of Brecht's epic theatre and particularly the Lehrstück abound. As in the Lehrstücke the didactic value lies at least as much in being workshoped as in performance. The method of assuming different roles, thus practicing various viewpoints, actions and responses was, as outlined above, a predominant creative and educational feature of the workshops. Unlike the Lehrstücke, however, no models or patterns were pre-given by an author but rather suggested by the participants themselves. There was no need to teach and practice mechanical work processes, as these exist a priori in the daily experience of worker-actors. A reproduction of work processes does not rely on imitation but rather on a continuation of the factory reality. In performance the audience complied with the Lehrstück's demand for active and critical participation. The greatest assistance Brecht's theories and practice rendered was in suggesting ways to structure the material by means of a narrator/commentator, songs and visual materials. However, it is particularly with regards to the time and space of performance that the project of worker-plays demand adaptation of Brecht.

Worker-plays in South Africa never occupy a stage; they have to be mobile and infinitely adjustable to different community venues ranging from small union halls to mass stadiums. Brecht's principles, aimed at counter-acting the division of theatrical reality and concrete social reality outside the theatre institution, fell away: the performances of worker-plays are part of working life as much as

union meetings and mass cultural events. The largely homogeneous audience has assembled to share a theatrical experience rather than to be consumers of 'art'. The intentionality of these plays differs from Brecht's aim to spur his audience into a cognitive and reflective position. Worker players and audience alike demand a celebration of the struggles which make up working class life. It is in terms of the alienation effects that the biggest adjustments of epic principles had to be made. Despite the efforts of the workshop coordinators to incorporate alienation techniques in order to generate a critical distancing of the audience, workshop members expressed an overriding determination for social realism in performance. They wanted to portray themselves on stage, insisting that they did not play a role but merely an objectified, ie. generalized, version of themselves. Equally, there was a definite demand for heroes and collective heroism. The social realism is a response to the audience's desire to identify both with individual figures and the collective struggle which they recognize as being theirs. Similarly, the cathartic experience which culminates in the victorious celebration of worker-unity is very much in contradiction to Brecht's intentions but arises out of the socio-political context of South Africa. Dealing with the portrayal of managers, on the other hand, the workshop members opted for a comic presentation which was funny while at the same time it revealed power relations. Only in the assumption of de facto roles, then, could Brechtian acting techniques be applied.

Removing plays from their theatrical setting has to lead to a re-thinking and re-application of Brecht's ideas. While plays like the Dunlop Play evolve their own script along methods not unlike Brecht's exercises for scholars and students, their principles of performance respond to socio-historical needs rather than adhering to aesthetic considerations. Finally, they obey 'aesthetic laws' nurtured in the working class experience and cultural practice of South Africa's repressive labor economy and, as such, reflect the political and moral considerations of an embryonic grassroots working class movement.

### POSTSCRIPT 1984

The Dunlop play saga continues: the factory has been hit by strike, all 1200 workers were dismissed. During the last 3 strike weeks, workers have met daily, and a number of playlets, mask-mimes, oral poetry performances and the like have been performed almost daily. A workshop produces scenes for performance on a regular basis, and thus the potential effects outlined in the article have appeared and escalated. It's very exciting from the cultural point of view!

## LUX IN TENEBRIS: A FILM SCENARIO

Göran Bjelkental

### Author's Note:

I came across Lux in Tenebris for the first time about five years ago when I had just discovered the English/American translations of Brecht's Complete Plays. At the same time I had decided to make an effort to try to get a chance to direct a feature film, something I passively had been wishing for a long time. Since submitting film scripts seemed to be the only realistic way to approach the problem and since I didn't feel up to writing an original one, I started to look for material that would be suitable for a film treatment. It was only a few weeks after I had read Lux in Tenebris that I found myself thinking of it as a film. I think it was the activity around the queue outside the tent in the first scene that gave me the first idea. Being fond of the moving camera as it is used in the films of Max Ophuls (or at the extreme in Hitchcock's Rope), the whole thing developed from there.

I never tried to determine the reasons why I wanted to do something from this particular play, but I suppose it has to do with the way Paduk is using the brothel to make his protest spectacular. He is using all the "naughty" and "dirty" associations around the subject in a way that makes it suitable and clean for the righteous citizen, something that is done a lot in our society, especially in connection with sexual issues. More people than ever make a living from protests. Having heard about the impossibilities of getting permission to do film versions of Brecht plays, I never really thought that there would be any result. I wanted, as a first step, to get a grant from the Swedish Film Institute for developing the script, and it turned out that dealing with the Institute was to be tougher. I have written a diary about the entire two-year process which was published in the Swedish film magazine Chaplin (Nr. 181, Sept. 1982). The first treatment (3 pages) was sent to the Institute in May 1980, and the motive for refusing was "you don't make films from Brecht plays". The second try in September was denied a grant because an option for the play was needed.

The first reply from Frau Schall-Brecht was a reaction to the shorter treatment. She wrote, "I have read your treatment and I must unfortunately say that you don't give a good impression. I am totally against the idea that songs from other works would be used. Please concentrate wholly on Lux in Tenebris. A frame story could be discussed, but you must tell me more before I can give a definite answer." This was in March 1981, a whole year after I got the idea, and by now I realized that a "yes" or "no" would not be forthcoming for some time. In the meantime I started



## 18 Communications

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developing an original synopsis which was sent to to the Institute. The refusal came a few weeks later.

Frau Schall-Brecht insisted in a reply to a second letter that she needed more detailed descriptions before she could make a decision. It was at this point that the present treatment was written and translated (by Kristian Fiedler, a Swedish actor born in Germany) into German. Within a month the reply arrived from Berlin: "I find your idea not uninteresting. May I ask you for a financial bid?" The same happy day a letter from the Film Institute informed me that another original synopsis had been given a grant for further script development.

In December 1981, the Institute refused Lux in Tenebris grants for the third time despite the promise from Schall-Brecht. In January 1982, the contract for the option arrived, and a few months later I finished the script without a grant. All that was needed was a producer, and I still need one now.

The actual scenario of Lux in Tenebris is about 80 pages long and in Swedish. But this short synopsis gives a good picture of the whole project. There is a further frame in my treatment which belongs to the actual screening of the finished film, which is why it isn't in the script. Outside the cinema, before the beginning of the film, one of the male ushers is shouting in a megaphone: "Come and see, filth and immorality. Come and see, filth and immorality." After the screening a mechanical piano in the foyer is playing a tune from the brothel and a red light (like the one turned on in the film when business as usual starts again) shines above the entrance to the cinema. To my knowledge, this would be the first time that a megaphone, a mechanical piano and a red lantern are distributed with a film print.

I include a copy of my second letter to Barbara Schall-Brecht so you can see what finally persuaded her to give permission. Some minor changes have been made, and some additions that were not mentioned, such as the use of David Bowie's "Moon of Alabama" in the last scene (of the play within the film).

Letter to Barbara Schall-Brecht

Dear Mrs. Schall-Brecht,

. . .I agree that songs from other works by Brecht do not fit into the epilogue. Nothing has been left out from Brecht's texts, and no important texts have been added (only a few dialogues).

The intention is not to make a filmed theater performance but rather a film which uses the special language and expressive possibilities of the cinema. The frame story (with the filming and related monkey business) helps produce distance to the play. The frame story also lifts the play out of its theatrical situation in order to make it cinematic. The essence of theater is to concentrate the plot and the number of people on the stage. A realistic film communicates the impression of being reality with its crowds of people and loose plot elements appearing to happen spontaneously.

Brecht said that theater should not pretend to be reality. By means of the film's frame story, both different realities are placed in a dialectical relationship to one another. The play's plot is distanced by the plot in the film studio. Other elements of distanciation include:

a) on the one hand, we have the impression that the play is being staged and filmed as a real theatrical production (most viewers know that a film is not made in this way);

b) on the other hand, the frame story (scenes about shooting the film) is shot in the studio, while the play is shot in fact on location (although everything looks very realistic, real clouds and trees, it is apparently no more than a set).

The play's conflicts are developed through the mise-en-scene, ie. instead of showing relations by means of editing, they are shown within the image: foreground and background constantly complement or contradict each other. As a result, the actors' acting can attain the same continuity as on the stage. Thus the film scenario is written with two columns -- foreground and background. . .

Sincerely yours,



Göran Bjelkental

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### Scenario

Frame story scenes are in black and white, play scenes in color.

#### 1. Credits

We are in a film studio. Behind the credits preparations for shooting a film are being made. People adjusting floods, loading the camera, testing a microphone, etc.

Actors are waiting to begin. The actress playing Hogge practices a gesture with the telephone. Everybody is getting ready to start, and the well-known routine "lights-camera-action" leads to the end of the credits and the beginning of the play.

#### 2. Introduction

A cleaning woman walks around and cleans up the brothel. We can imagine the

## 20 Communications

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atmosphere when it is full of clients and whores. Hogge sits at one of the tables and tries to call from a telephone which doesn't work.

A piano is standing on a small raised dias. The sound of a march from a loudspeaker comes from outside the brothel. Hogge makes a last try with the telephone before throwing it into the water bucket which in the meantime has been moving closer and closer to her. Water splashes on the cleaning woman, which Hogge had not intended. She calms down and helps the cleaning woman dry herself off. Then Hogge goes to the window, pulls the drapes aside and looks out. During this scene we see the reactions of the director and the scriptgirl as well as of the actors playing Paduk, his assistant and the people in the line waiting for their entrance (short black and white sequences).

### 3. Scene 1

See sketch 1-7. The whole scene in one shot with constantly moving camera.

### 4. Scene 2

The beginning of the conversation between Paduk and the journalist plays outside the tent at its entrance and starts at the end of the long travelling which began in Scene 1. (The male journalist is played by a woman as a female journalist.) Paduk and the journalist enter the tent where the lecture/demonstration is taking place. (In short black and white sequences we see now and again how the actors who played the crowd on the way to the tent now change costumes into members of the Christian-Catholic Apprentices Association or drink coffee while waiting for the next entrance.)

Paduk diffidently moves along the inside wall of the tent to a table where he looks for a poster and then shows it to the journalist. We cannot see it, but to judge from her facial expression, it must be disgusting. They leave the tent and go to the tree at the side of the road. At the tree Paduk bends over the fence and attaches the poster to the street side of the tree. We still cannot see it. At the same time Paduk tells about the flood lights, he plays with a light switch hanging from the tree. Two floods light up in the tree and illuminate the brothel's facade. (Beginning in Scene 1 it has grown increasingly darker.) When Paduk realizes at the end of the scene that the lecture is over, we see the audience streaming out of the tents, and the rest of the conversation between Paduk and the journalist is intercut with audience reactions from the beginning of Scene 3. In short black and white images of the framestory we see, before the audience appears, how the actors who play the roles of the audience members finish their break and position themselves at the tent opening, waiting for their signal to stream out.

### 5. Scene 3

The 73 apprentices of the Christian-Catholic Association move down the road in a

religious, ecstatic half-dance. [The dialog between Paduk and the chaplain not yet written] For the transition between Scene 3 and 4, after the journalist's sentence, see sketch 11-16.

6. Scene 4

Paduk and Hogge remain during their entire dialog on separate sides of the fence. Two actions occur simultaneously in the background:

Behind Paduk we see the line of people waiting in front of the tent. One man in the line becomes visibly more and more interested in Paduk's and Hogge's conversation. It is the same man who begins to speak with Paduk in Scene 5.

Behind Hogge a boy with a guitar enters. He sits down on the brothel steps and begins to play. During Hogge's long speech the guitar accompanies her anger. We make a connection between Hogge and the boy on the steps which, however, turns out to be wrong, as Hogge immediately afterwards angrily goes up the steps, kicking the boy out of her way.

7. Scene 5

[Not yet written]

8. Scene 6

[Not yet written] In the background the prostitute picks up the apprentice from Scene 3 and 4.

9. Scene 7

Paduk and his assistant stand at the table in front of the tent. A police car arrives at the car accident near the tree in the background. A policeman gets out, goes to the car and examines it. His only reaction is to write out a ticket, which he tries to attach to the broken windshield. He stands for a moment at the car with his night stick, then he returns to the police car which continues on its way, turning the corner.

A moment later the three policemen come around the same corner, go to the brothel and knock. Because the camera pans around Paduk and his assistant, all this can be played in the background. When the policemen begin to speak at the scene's end, they are seen for the first time in close-up, whereas Paduk is now in the background, alone at the table and counting the tips. When the brothel door doesn't open, the policeman strikes it with his night stick -- the same one.

10. Scene 8

[Not yet written, but will focus on Paduk and Hogge with minimal background activity]

11. Scene 9

Paduk is standing on the table and taking down a sign over the tent door when the

## 22 Communications

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assistant comes out of the tent. [The rest of their dialog is not yet complete.] When Paduk begins his monologue, we hear the piano music from the brothel (which started after Hogge had returned) change to the Alabama Song (Oh, show me the way to the next whiskey bar...), also as if coming from the brothel. During his monologue, Paduk goes to the tree.

Gasoline drips from the car. Towards the end of the monologue he lights a cigar and throws the burning match away, very near to the gas puddle. At the end of the monologue he turns off the headlights. It has now become dark, and for the first time we see the moon and the brothel's red light. The song has just reached the refrain (Oh, moon of Alabama, we now must say goodbye). Paduk enters the brothel.

### 12. Musical epilogue

Paduk enters the brothel, which in contrast to earlier is now full of life. The song on the jukebox is coming to an end. The piano player begins once again. The epilogue is dominated by a few songs sung by the whores at the same time the brothel's business is underway and while earlier plot strands are brought together:

--The car explodes in front of the brothel.

--The suspicious man in Scene 3 stands outside the bay window looking in. A loose brick causes him to fall into the water barrel.

--The whore and the apprentice leave together, and through the window we see them walking down the road.

--The policeman with the night stick finally succeeds in jumping through the window but the night stick, attached to his holster, is cut off by the broken glass.

--The man with the guitar appears again as the accompanist for one of the songs, which -- because of his earlier appearance -- gives the song's message greater weight.

### 13. Final texts

Black and white. The shooting has ended and studio hands begin to turn off the floods. The actors change clothes, and the technicians pack up their things. Two of the actresses who played whores (Eva and Marie) quickly straighten themselves up and leave. The last one leaves and turns out the light so that it becomes dark during the last text.

### 14. After the last texts

Black and white. This and the previous scene are played without any actual dialog. Eva and Marie enter a bar and sit at the bar. Someone is playing the piano, several people stand around him and listen. The actors who played the apprentice and the whore are sitting at one of the tables. They are holding hands on the table. Two young men become interested in Eva and Marie. Some begin to sing at the piano. The two young men approach the bar and sit down by Eva and Marie. The director and several other film crew members come into the bar and behave as if it

Die Hogge links hinter dem Fenster zieht die Gardine weg sieht heraus.  
Hausfassade mit Fenster und Tür. Eine Strasse davor.  
Auf unserer Strassenseite  
Ein Zaun der die Strasse entlang läuft.

### Lux in Tenebris in Chicago

Ann Gadon

This past Spring Chicago Filmmakers, an alternative exhibition house, in association with Brecht expert Warren Leming, hosted a four-day festival entitled "Brecht on Film." As part of the festival I directed a live performance of one of Brecht's earliest plays, the comic sketch Lux in Tenebris or "Light in the Darkness."

What makes Lux in Tenebris significant today, particularly in light of the growing influence of America's New Right, is the play's exploration of the motives behind the veneer of morality. As part of the A-Effect, Brecht wrote about "making the familiar look unfamiliar" or estranging the audience from behavior they take for granted to enable them to view it critically. My intention with Lux in Tenebris was to show audiences parallels between the character Paduk's actions and those of New Right advocates. Scene 6, for example, in which Paduk speaks to the crowd about the evils of venereal disease, shares its style with Jerry Falwell's sermons and the PTL Club, while the tactics adopted by anti-abortionists, including the distribution of films such as The Silent Scream and publicity featuring brutal visualizations of aborted fetuses, share similarities with Paduk's action of holding up a jar of eyeballs decayed by disease in the face of prostitutes. Although the largely upper middle class audience that attends theatre today may see the New Right as ridiculous, they need to sense its danger to their personal freedoms.

My goal in the play's opening moments was to indict the audience as participants in the play's action by making them a contributing factor to Paduk's rise to economic and political success. I achieved this by having Paduk address the theatre audience directly as if they were a group of potential customers. For example, Paduk's opening line is "Soft chancre: one mark. Gonorrhea: one-sixty. Syphilis: two-fifty." When the lights came up Paduk stood alone on stage, but as he began speaking, his "customers," the actors, rose from their seats among the theatre patrons and crossed onto the stage. From this point on, Paduk involved both the theatre audience and the actors when he addressed his customers at large. By including the audience among Paduk's victims, I hoped to provoke them into an active critical position where they would reevaluate whether they could be susceptible to Paduk or have been victims of someone comparable to him in their past or present.

Scene 1 presented two of the play's key concepts. First, Paduk lacked any guilt about profitting from displays of venereal disease. He projected the attitude that "business is business," whether one sells ball bearings or tickets to an event such as his. To achieve this effect I had Paduk stress that his position as a salesman of venereal disease was just another job to him. His physical model was a vendor at a sporting event, hawking a generic product to an anonymous crowd. Secondly, he implied that he would go to any lengths, whether violent or mentally manipulative, to protect his profit. For example, when the drunk refused to pay full price for the exhibit, Paduk got rid of the drunk by throwing him across the stage. Paduk's response was reflexive. I wanted the audience to feel that Paduk could murder someone and make his behavior seem matter-of-fact. Necessity dictated his actions as opposed to conscience.

Scene 2 examined the way the press gathers its information. The priority of the reporter in this scene was to get good quotes rather than accurate facts. He fed Paduk questions in such a way as to stimulate yes or no responses in order to quote his question in the article as Paduk's answer. Furthermore, the reporter never saw the exhibit because of a personal bias he had against such displays, and he based all of his information on Paduk's reports.

The important element in Paduk's treatment of the press was that he understood how to exploit its biases in his favor. He played the role of the great purveyor of morality. Although the audience saw Paduk's obvious ridiculousness, the reporter got the quotes he wanted; therefore, he was convinced of Paduk's authenticity.

It is impossible to view Scene 2 without seeing similarities between the reporter's style and that of Rupert Murdoch's tabloids. The playwrights David Hare and Howard Brenton recently collaborated on a play entitled Pravda which ran at London's National Theatre during the Spring of 1985 and which dealt with a newspaper mogul fashioned after Murdoch. The production used giant projections of Murdoch-style front pages to substantiate the exploitive nature of his papers. Although I wanted to adapt a similar technique, budgetary and technical limitations did not allow it. This effect would have been extrememly valuable to demonstrate how the new medium represents events such as Paduk's exhibit in order to sell papers.

Scene 3, with the Chaplain and Paduk, paralleled Scene 2. Just as the reporter's priority was to get a good story even at the expense of the facts, the Chaplain recognized the true nature of Paduk's exhibit but he chose to support the public sentiment in favor of Paduk because he secretly enjoyed seeing such things. The Chaplain used his position to get a good price for the workers to see the exhibit. When Paduk quoted an admission price to the Chaplain, I had the Chaplain act very suspiciously toward Paduk, as if he thought the owner was trying to cheat him. At



that point I had the Chaplain pull out a large wad of bills and reluctantly part with the admissions. When the Chaplain introduced himself, and Paduk replied to him, "All are welcome here," I had Paduk imitate the Chaplain and continue to do so until the end of the scene, while the Chaplain seemed not to notice. This behavior had two purposes. First, it emphasized the Chaplain's pomposity by mocking his behavior, and secondly it showed how Paduk changed according to whom he was with and what he wanted to get from the person. He became what he thought the person wanted to see so that he could profit to his fullest advantage.

The most important aspect of Scene 4 was that the audience learned Paduk's social background from his acquaintance with the character of Mrs. Hogge, the madam of the brothel across from Paduk's exhibit. Hogge was as fleshy as her name suggested. Her tactic in Scene 4, to coax Paduk into an empathetic position, was to employ her sexuality; however, Hogge's seduction was a whore's seduction, ie. its motivation was profit rather than lust or love. Paduk saw through Hogge's attempt to manipulate him. After initially disguising the fact that he knew the madam, he openly gloated over the fact that he had the economic upper hand over this woman whom he formerly had to beg in order to frequent her business. Paduk's humiliation of Hogge was a basic clowning trick, the mocking of the fat woman. The more angry Mrs. Hogge got, the more ridiculous she appeared, as her body undulated and her chins trembled in response to her fury. Although she called Paduk "despicable," the audience saw her indictment of Paduk as a derogatory gesture against herself because she was no less base than Paduk. Only her tactics differed.

Scene 6 mocks the behavior of religious evangelists. During his "sermon" in this scene, Paduk spoke extremely persuasively. He projected such great commitment to enlightening people about the evils of venereal disease, that the audience perceived how extremely convincing he could be. However, two factors kept the audience from falling for Paduk's seduction. First, Paduk transformed himself from the person the audience saw in Scene 5; he had now "become" a preacher. His accent became upper class, and he projected a priestly spirit which differed tremendously from his attitudes in all the preceding scenes. His behavior at this point was clearly a facade. Moreover, Brecht indicated that the wax models of body parts rotted by disease are to be used as a distancing technique. These objects were ludicrous and sensationalist. At each of the performances audiences burst into laughter when Paduk exhibited one of his models because they were so obviously unbelievable. The fakery of Paduk's actions was reinforced by the fact that he immediately dropped his facade when the Young Catholic Workers left the stage. Although Brecht indicated that Paduk's intentions were malevolent, he wanted the audience to recognize that Paduk epitomized a type of person that was dangerous and that a veneer or morality could hide exploitative purposes. In Scene 7 Paduk's machinations began to backfire, starting with the rebellion of his assistant. When

the assistant disappeared into the tent, Paduk crumbled. His complaints about his situation escalated until he was behaving like a small child having a temper tantrum as he wailed: "And the time it will take to teach a new one those Latin names! Torture! And that fellow from City Hall! The ass! The fink!" When the men started to return to the brothel, Paduk needed some form of consolation. At this point I had him run to the money box, hug it lovingly and start counting his money as a comforting gesture. This turn of events put him in the emotionally and economically disadvantaged position of being susceptible to the takeover by Hogge in the next scene.

In Scene 8 Hogge defeated Paduk because she had the power of economics on her side. I had her enter with a portfolio under her arm and, once she was seated, proceed to conduct their meeting as if she were in a corporate board room. In her portfolio she had charts which documented her business proposal to Paduk. Her manner was cool and objective, the epitome of being businesslike. The result of this attitude was to depersonalize the issue of their discussion until the women whose bodies they spoke of selling became merely objects and products.

Paduk capitulated to Mrs. Hogge because he saw that it was an inevitable step. Also, the madam appealed not only to his wallet and his brain, but she also titillated him by showing him pictures of his favorite prostitutes. Ultimately, this scene demonstrated two main principles: first, that major business decisions can be influenced by appealing to a man's sexual appetite as well as to his pocket book, and second, that a member of a Fortune 500 company and a madam are both business people, although one may sell bodies and the other may sell commodities. They merely use different means for financial gains.

Paduk's final speech reinforced the character's relationship to the current New Right. He spoke of "making private intercourse a criminal offense and abortion punishable by death." The danger of the New Right is that they see abortion and intercourse as areas subject to their morality as opposed to individual preference. Brecht's play prompts the audience to look beyond the actions inspired by such righteousness because the intentions can be a method for subverting public policy to serve the purposes of a few individuals.

## ON DIRECTING BRECHT

Warren Leming

Notes from the 1985 Mahagonny production by the Remains Ensemble at Cross Currents Cabaret (Chicago, Illinois)

Mahagonny is very much about music, containing, as it does, a critique of musical form. Brecht was perhaps the first of what has become the "urban rock" personality. The leather jacket, cigar, hard-guy style, original songs sung to guitar; all anticipate Presley, Dylan, Morrison and Jagger. But Brecht moved far beyond this carefully created persona. He takes the modern city lyric in a direction yet to be understood, and he is certainly among the very first to critique popular culture using his own work as basis. The Brecht/Weill controversy over Mahagonny seemed to hinge on Weill's high art intentions and Brecht's more populist concerns. But how to bring that out? Mahagonny had remained a very expensive suburb. How to make it as accessible as the Greyhound bus station? Jimmy Mahoney is a rocker, and Brecht's story charts the migration to the "Great Cities" with the subsequent good-guy/bad-guy melodramas still at the core of much "pop" capitalism. Mahagonny's American equivalent, in a much more alienated context, is Shepherd's Tooth of Crime.

### WEEK ONE - Rehearsal

Recruit Disturbing Records' Al Wittek to create music for the show and to act as "one-man-band." Wittek, with an extensive theatre background (Chicago production of Whores of Babylon; lighting and set design work) was the only "trained" musician in the cast, and he provided single-handedly the musical center for the entire show. Cast of ten to perform instrumentally where possible.

Divide cast into three basic groups to reflect Brecht's sociology and fable:

Begbick, Fatty and Moses--an all-woman new wave ensemble modeled on the early Velvet Underground

Jenny and a friend modeled on dance rock à la the B-52's and Lounge Lizards, Del Byzantines

Jimmy, Joe, Bill and Jake (the Lumberjacks) modeled on Sun Records' era of rock-a-billy

### WEEK TWO

Video demonstrations, had they been available, would have been invaluable. Abstracting from Brecht's terminology leads to confusion and frustration for the

actors. The demonstrable is workable, with short discussions following the rehearsals.

#### WEEK THREE

The musical groupings are proving to be absolutely consistent with Brecht's fable and further serve to situate the class nature of the "pop" hierarchy. The great advantage of Sprechstimme is that we can now mate performer's ability with musical material. No one is left hung up because of "singing" problems. In fact, actors who can "sing" are losing the text in favor of vocalisms.

#### WEEK FOUR

Actor cooperation a key factor. The rehearsal schedule so tight that the final scene of the show will be rehearsed and blocked within three days of the first preview. Actor "discovery" and retention is a necessary aspect of this type of rehearsal work. The show cannot be directed moment to moment, beat to beat. There is simply not time. Actor response to the risk factor here serves to drive the show forward.

#### WEEK FIVE

Cross Currents Cabaret's Thom Goodman, the artistic director, continues to provide valuable help and ideas. He has previously organized Brecht evenings at the Cabaret and has worked with Ron Davis at Epic West. It is Goodman's insight that the show must be further "turned out" toward the audience in order to help break the show open for the actors.

Polaroid photos of cast groupings facilitate blocking and help preserve the staging for future reference.

Play J.J. Cale recordings for some cast members as a means of illustrating a "non-singing" style of presentation.

#### WEEK SIX

Fourteen-hour days take their toll on cast and staff. Opening preview is not satisfactory, as the cast has not had time to find the rhythm of the show. The Whiskey Bar song is retained direct from Brecht's own music, but the Benares song is jettisoned, alas, as it does not advance the show and, more pointedly, there is not time to rehearse it.

#### FIRST WEEK OF ACTUAL RUN

Cast morale bottoms out with a pan from Sun Times' reviewer who, with no inkling of American popular music or its history, finds the show an attack on "decent" people. A rave from the Chicago Tribune's Richard Christiansen restores confidence, a confidence which will build throughout the run, culminating in the cast's desire to continue the production or revive it at a future date.

Using the Mahagonny discoveries as a basis, and at Thom Goodman's instigation, begin work on a cabaret revue: Weimar. Brecht is an attitude, and the best thing about that attitude is that it can be learned.

A SHORT STATEMENT ON RE-VISIONING:  
FROM TRANSLATION TO INTERPRETATION

R. G. Davis

In any discussion of doing, redoing or re-visioning Brecht it is my view that one must first carefully examine or re-examine the translation. In my work with three authors from other languages -- Molière, Dario Fo and Brecht -- I found that one must always have the original text in hand during a rehearsal lest the confusion of the translation continue on into the performance. In every production of a play by a foreign author I have been involved in someone questions the translation and needs to know the author's exact words and original intentions. I turned up nine different translations of Molière's Malade imaginaire, eventually choosing two as the basis for my production script; we still had to check with the original. I found, for example, that the very sophisticated and relevant discussion about medicine between Béralde and Argan was usually hacked up, confused or missing from those other translations.

In Dario Fo's works, which are more fluid and less accurate, where tapes are used for translations and there are two or three versions in print, a definitive text of a play is wishful thinking. The original text helps in providing hints as to the speech rhythms and characteristics of the people. Fo also uses a great deal of Milanese slang which some prissy translators avoid. In addition to the text, the cultural ambiance surrounding Dario Fo becomes very important. Political life in Italy and Fo's persona should influence both the translation and the performance of his works. Productions in North America turn silly because actors are used who provide the slapstick and the jokes yet have no political personae. When they mouth these political texts, they become fake. They become bad actors!

With Brecht in The Exception and the Rule, the translation we used in Australia was a re-examined and re-fixed Eric Bentley. We needed the original to settle a discussion about a few words that had bypassed our re-examiner. Brecht's scripts are firmer than Dario Fo's. However, there are two Galileos in print in English, and there exist various ways to translate any set of German phrases into American English, British English and Australian English.

The process I have used effectively is to pass the text through three phases -- word for word, sense to sense, and then culture to culture. The first step is a translation by a native speaker from the mother language to the target language,

followed by a review by a poet or linguist in the target language, then re-examined by a theatrical person, director, dramaturg, and reviewed by actors during rehearsals. An implicit interpretation has been going on during this procedure, for every translator has a political-social viewpoint in both languages. Only after these three phases is the text ready for the director and/or dramaturg to determine what the play shall focus on and what questions it addresses in today's society, to determine the fable. The second stage is explicitly dramaturgical and is influenced both by the socio-political views of the director and dramaturg (if there is one) and by the designer. Designers (props, costumes, lights) set the tone with the director while the budget and production conditions along with the actors make additions and subtractions to any interpretation. If the play is to address important social conditions, then a re-vision is a matter of good dramaturgy and good production sense. A relevant, perhaps prescient production is then necessarily a re-vision.

In short, the important matter in any and all re-vision is the focus and quality of the re-vision. What are the social questions that this production addresses? Are they the questions that need to be addressed? How has this production addressed them? How has this production been manifested on stage and what is its reception?

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Professor Steven Sondrup reports that he now has all of Brecht's published poems (from the four volume Gedichte and supplement volume) in the computer data bank at Brigham Young University. He is willing to undertake searches for words, word combinations, concepts or metaphors beginning in January 1986, for no charge to serious scholars. For more information, contact Professor Sondrup, Dept. of Comparative Literature, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602. Telephone: 801/378 2579 (office), 801/581 0806 (home).

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## NOTES ON UI IN GREECE

Heinz-Uwe Haus

1) The present-day relevance of this play lies in the fact that -- through numerous means of theatrical persuasive power -- it allows one to experience how "the Ui-type within the capitalistic context and the small-mindedness in Ui" (Haugk) pose a latent danger for bourgeois democracy. Forty years after Nazism was crushed, historical awareness is disappearing in many areas, and the fascination with fascist alternatives and structures is on the rise. Deliberately or through carelessness, phenomena are being ripped out of their historical framework and discussed in a "value-free" context. Der unaufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui -- written by Brecht in Finland in the Spring of 1941, when he was fleeing the encroaching Hitler dictatorship in Europe and on his way to the US -- was not and is not a play about German National Socialism. It makes sense neither as a roman à clef -- Givola = Goebbels, Ragg = Strasser, Dogsborough = Hindenburg -- nor as a "general outline" of fascism. In his Arbeitsjournal Brecht describes the points he wants to make as follows: "In Ui it was a matter of letting the historical events shine through continually, while at the same time imbuing the 'outer covering' (which actually serves to uncover) with a life of its own, ie. it has to work -- theoretically speaking -- even beyond the level of personalities. . ." (1.4.1941). Justifiably Haugk concludes: "If the 'outer covering'. . . is an 'uncovering,' then that which is to be demonstrated cannot be something which covers." Ui, then, "does not signify Hitler, but rather those features which have been borrowed from Hitler and combined with other material in the Ui-figure mean something more." Parable (model world) and historical background (parallels) are woven together: the audience is constantly reminded of something beyond that which is actually being portrayed on the stage.

2) Brecht demands that the story-line be told in such a way that "the perpetrators of major political crimes. . . are exposed, preferably to ridicule. . ." His instructions are clear:

-The play is "an attempt to explain Hitler's rise to the capitalistic world by setting it in a milieu with which they are familiar."

-"Ui is a parable play, written with the intention of destroying the dangerous, yet all too common, respect for great killers."

- "Common sense dare not let itself be intimidated when confronted with history; what is valid for us on the small scale we have to put into effect on the large."

- "The circle is intentionally drawn tight: it is limited to the level of state, industrialists, Junkers, and petty bourgeois. That suffices to realize the

purpose in mind. The play does not intend to provide a general, basic outline of the historical situation in the thirties."

-The projected texts should reinforce "the development of those aspects which are presented in excerpt or panoptic form."

In the prologue of the play itself reference is made to structures which provide various forms of mediation and reception: the gangster story, the authentic report, a story comparable to Richard III. Each of these approaches -- if taken alone -- would lead to a wrong conclusion, if one were not to seek out that which specifically applies to the time and space of the very real public to which the play is being presented. Brecht cites and uses them because of their potential to evoke complementary perspectives, for Ui is expressly not Richard III. Often scenes which resemble classical constellations turn out to be distinctly different than those of Shakespeare or Goethe. In the dramaturgy, seemingly familiar courses of events are reshaped, a process which gradually provokes intellectual discernment. Thus the made-to-measure pinstripe better suits our contemporary Tiger Taoka --with his 10 billion annual turnover as boss of Jamagutsai Rubber in Osaka, which runs the dock-worker agency for the port city of Kobe -- than it does Clark, who is actually not a gangster at all. (In a ZDF TV program in the FRG aired on an evening in late October, the Japanese Jaksa [Jakusa = gangster] presented themselves as honorable businessmen, each of whom was quite obviously missing half of his left little finger -- an alienation effect that might well have stemmed from Brecht himself.) The Italian-American Mafia or images straight out of Hollywood B-films, striking and revealing because they are traditionally close to the public, most nearly approximate authenticity. In short, concentrations, truncations, and diversions to mechanisms constitute bases for these social experiences as well. Hitler-moustaches and Nazi-paraphernalia would only lessen the effect.

3) To what end does Brecht employ what he called the "double alienation of gangster plot and grand style" (28.3.1941), when he warns, in the previously cited remark, "too close a link between the two plots (GANGSTER and NAZI plots) -- that is to say a form in which the gangster plot would merely symbolize the other one --, would be intolerable because no one would then be looking incessantly for the 'meaning' of this or that feature, would be trying to find the model for every figure. . . ." (1.4.1941) That which constitutes an alienation effect for the German audience does not necessarily evoke the same reaction elsewhere. This was the case with regard to the US in 1941, since it was with an eye to the American theater that the prospective emigrant wrote the play. He wrote it for "Gods [sic] own country," which in its particular ideology apostrophized fascism as alien and as a product of other nations; in Ui that ostensibly so un-American thing was represented as an American possibility. In Brecht's approach, it becomes obvious where the potential lies. For certainly little would be accomplished if we attempted a kind of historical farce forty years after the fall of the Third Reich. Fascism had and has many faces: Nazism was not the only one and not the last, as the



history of this century demonstrates. Both before and since, the Greek people have had to suffer, to a more than sufficient degree, the stranglehold of other manifestations.

4) Why should Ui's rise be shown as stoppable? And: stoppable by whom? It is quite clear that Ui does not remain simply an agent of the trust, rather, his dictatorship becomes something more than the dictatorship of the trust. Where the bourgeois-capitalist system is inconsistent, where it perpetrates its crimes under the protection of particular norms and forms, it damages them. The "grand style" which links the Nazi and gangster plots, represents the public modus vivendi of these entrepreneurs and their politicians. It stands for two things: for a depraved way of carrying out major or state undertakings, one which greatly impresses the petty bourgeoisie; and for the exemplary shaping of a social gesture: a model of demagoguery. Haugk calls its function: "compromise between the claims of the people upon those who rule and the ruling interests themselves." Brecht destabilized the antithesis between gangsters and grand style: crime and idealizing are depicted as homologous. Evoking the "higher principles" of political morality, in order to "put a proper face" on immoral striving for profit, is exposed as a shabby enterprise, but at the same time it is shown to be an effective weapon of the ruling classes.

5) The language is a montage of colloquial and elevated expression, of big-city jargon and the language of Elizabethan dramas, of plastic, direct expression and worn out clichés. The crass gesticulation of carnival theater stands alongside high poetic standards. The juxtaposition of iambic pentameter upon the low social niveau serves as a measure of the significance its actions have for society as a whole. The language is visual. For this reason it was open for the use of shadow theater dolls, which -- much like the plebian Kragiosis [Trans. note: Karagös = Hanswurst in Turkish shadow-plays, cf. Wahrig] tradition -- lend it aesthetic and political weight. The Reichstag fire trial, with its little known facts, had to be shown blatantly, both in meaning and form, as an exemplary precedent, the pattern of bourgeois justice. Right from the beginning the dolls, which replace wax figures, are established as means; Ui will therefore remain present on the stage area long after we have forgotten the transformation of the announcer into the role of Ui. The dolls offer a blance of playfulness and basic gesture which keeps one from forgetting that all art and all inquiries serve a purpose: ie. to contrast the finesse as well as the ghastliness of our abilities and our growing strength. The lightness and colorfulness of the play with the dolls -- carried out by six actresses -- stands in contrast to the historical stage composition: the compelling transformations which it makes possible, relegate the responsibility for this performance to the actors. The masks are the bridges to the dolls: transformation, prelude, gestural investigation.

## SINGING BRECHT

DeVina Barajas

It has never been easy for us -- performing Brecht Songs. We are, first of all, two women within a world of male intellectuals and businessmen, and, second of all, and perhaps partially because of that, we have had to maintain at least 99% of the financial load ourselves. We have been accused of being pushy, aggressive, and top-of-all-toppers, too "slick." We suffer from what WE call Brecht-itis! Brecht may have died in 1956, but he left his difficulties and controversies "for those born after." And it is some of those difficulties and controversies, in regards to interpreting Brecht Songs both theoretically and practically, that we would like to address.

"We" are The Brecht Chansonettes, Ina Wittich, a German actress-singer, and I, DeVina, the guitarist, an American actress with Mexican heritage. We have worked together since 1978, and from 1982 on, I have replaced the conventionally used Brecht accompanist, the pianist. Our Brecht Song programs, titled "Change the World: It Needs it," "Mack the Knife is Back in Town!", or "As You Make Your Bed . . .," introduce Brecht through his poems and ballads in collaboration with the composers Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler and Bertolt Brecht himself, where his own music exists. We lay the priority on the words and perform either bi-lingually (English/German) or solely in German where it applies. The songs are linked together with historical narrative about the times and pertinent background of each song -- our goal: to communicate using the words and gestus of each piece.

The "gestus," the most important element in a Brecht piece, consists of words AND music. It is not enough, therefore, just to listen to a Brecht Song in the original language. Although the musicality of the German words along with the music contributes to the gestus, the words must have direct meaning and be able to be assimilated at the moment. When studying a Brecht Song, one takes the words, separate from the music, and studies it as a poem, as a written message about a theme that must be, most importantly, communicated. This theme becomes the gestus of the written piece. Only when that gestus is understood should one attempt to study it together with the music. The gestus of the music, then, becomes the "gut" of the piece, the emotion (although that is a dirty word for many in conjunction with Brecht) that will force people to "think with their guts," that will "move" them to an intellectual understanding and reaction. And because of that combination the Brecht Song becomes timeless and applicable to everyone: it comments on every feeling, emotional or intellectual, that one could possibly associate with a particular theme. To listen to a Brecht Song once, therefore, is not enough. Try listening 50 times, and each time still brings out a new understanding. That

is how it is for us, singing Brecht. With a different city and audience, the songs take on new meaning each time. We work together on stage, at the moment, communicating through the gestus. We know what the core of each song is and we must be able to adapt to each situation in order to communicate effectively each time. Ina interprets, communicates, speaks and sings to the audience with Brecht's words, and I comment through the music. It becomes a Brecht Song for today.

You might say we have become successful. There are concerts, and we have a following. We have toured extensively throughout California, been invited to various places in Oregon, Washington, Arizona, New Mexico, South Dakota, Switzerland, and are presently touring throughout Germany. But since we want to break through the conventionalism attached to performing Brecht Songs, we present a certain amount of controversy. First, we have returned to the guitar, to a more original Brecht. In the "Dritter Psalm" he wrote: "In der roten Sonne auf den Steinen liebe ich die Gitarren: es sind Därme von Vieh, die Klampfe singt viehisch, sie frisst kleine Lieder" (In the red sun on the stones I love the guitars; they are beasts' guts, the guitar sings like a beast, it munches little songs). The guitar is the instrument that Brecht himself played in cabarets in Munich and Berlin when he sang his songs. But I play music that was originally intended for the piano while trying to maintain the gestus in my transcriptions on an instrument that has been a revolutionary weapon for many cultures for some time now. The guitar is a pertinent and communicative symbol. Second, there is our "style." We see that Epic Theatre, as Brecht created it, had its effect -- then. It had an important effect that alienated people and subjects to be reviewed with a new critical eye. A chair was no longer a chair. It became something else in order to see that chair clearly again. We take this theory and apply it to today's standards, even physical ones. We don't have to dress in black, not wear make-up, and be informal on stage -- that becomes non-communicative and a "museum piece" in today's terms. That is no longer new. Instead, we are two women on a bare stage, a stark one, alive and with a purpose. We take Brecht's theory, the gestus in the poems and music, and deliver them as cabaretists, as women, as performers of the 1980's. We bring Brecht back in to the pertinent German "liedermacher" scene.

We also sing everywhere we are asked to. Everywhere, and everyone who wants to hear us sing, we sing for -- but we never compromise our material or our message. Although some political groups reproach us for singing for "the other side," The Brecht Chansonnets answer with purpose. It is not those that know Brecht's message that necessarily need to hear it. Mostly it is in those situations where Brecht is still a dirty word, where the messages and images are still uncomfortable to hear, that the words have the most impact. These situations do not come about often, in any case. Once in a while a private party of high officials or convention organizers will ask us to perform. But since these institutions and organizations do not always support Brecht's politics, we feel that the opportunity cannot be thrown away!

In radio interviews we are often asked which audience we prefer -- the German or the American, and how do they compare. There is, first of all, no preference. They are different audiences with different backgrounds that influence their ideas and their openness to our work. We find, though, that America offers a better chance for Brecht today. Americans are, in general, naive in the art of interpreting Brecht's works and Brecht Songs, which makes them more open and anxious. The Germans, on the other hand, have had Brecht in their culture so long that he has unfortunately become a "museum piece" for the average person. "Brecht is done in this way and not so!" This is a wall we encounter in Germany more frequently than in America. In that environment the Alienation Effect has no effect. It is a wall, and sometimes an unbreakable barrier, but not always.

We live in a world of commercialism and competition. We constantly worry about wrapping our package interestingly enough to be bought, an idea that seems to contradict Brecht but nonetheless a necessary evil. We need and want large audiences for various reasons: because we have a message, because we do not rehearse day in and day out just for fun, and, to face reality, because we have theatre rent and publicity expenses to cover. Reality -- the one theme that Brecht scholars do not consider when sitting in a library, poring over theoretical books and then later lecturing "knowledgeably" to hungry students. That reality is left for the people standing between theory and practice to figure out, although to say that we are "left" is also false. Performers are constantly reminded, reprimanded, criticized about the "theory," a theory that offers little help in understanding how to deal with this "necessary evil." The contradiction of "the poor theatre" succeeding in a predominantly capitalistic world remains the biggest gap between theoretician and practitioner. One way we try to close this gap is by using titles like "Mack the Knife is Back in Town!" This title, for example, got us booked in one of the most popular cabarets in San Francisco. People came expecting to hear jazz and Louis Armstrong and Bobby Darin impersonations. Needless to say, they were a little surprised. Instead of Armstrong and Darin they got what we always do -- Brecht, Eisler, and Weill -- no compromise there, BUT, they did not leave either. And not only did the audience enjoy the evening of Brecht/Weill/Eisler, so did the most highly respected critic from the San Francisco music scene. He gave us a rave review that sold out our next concert. But whether they come and stay out of fascination, interest to see these two women on stage, to practice a little German, or just to sit there in complete shock, we don't care, as long as they listen. The understanding comes for some after the concert, when we stay and discuss or answer questions. The hour or two afterwards is also a part of our work and also very important. As for us, by the time we are heading for home again, we are dead tired but satisfied to know that we have done our little bit to "change the world: it needs it!"

## AIMEZ-VOUS BRECHT? A POLEMIC

Antony Tatlow

(The following article refers to a review by James Fenton of John Willett's Brecht in Context and Ronald Hayman's Brecht: A Biography, published in The New York Review of Books, March 15, 1984.)

Successful polemic requires both the moral energy that derives from clarity of perception and a sure command of the necessary facts. James Fenton's "review" of Hayman's and Willett's recent books on Brecht attempts a polemic on their subject. It fails because in place of analytic clarity he offers rhetorical bluster, and when he should be using evidence dispassionately, we encounter systematic innuendo and distortion. I would have been inclined to abandon such invective to itself were it not for two factors: an important forum, the New York Review of Books, has chosen to publish it and not all readers will be in a position to test Fenton's assertions.

Because he cannot by himself produce the necessary devastating critique of Brecht, Fenton pushes Auden to the fore whilst calling on Hannah Arendt to cover his rear. Since he has to admit that Arendt had her facts wrong, refusing (after Willett had pointed this out to her several times) to alter later statements, he takes recourse to irrelevant invocations: "this impressive mind." Auden's extreme personal distaste for Brecht is well-known and surely not difficult to fathom. They were at the same time too similar and too different. More significant than Auden's conversation stopper which Fenton fires off in his first sentence -- that of all literary people he had known, only Frost, Yeats and Brecht struck him as "positively evil" -- is surely the fact revealed by Willett, and may I say concealed by Fenton, that Auden was unable to translate the most important line in the The Caucasian Chalk Circle -- "Schrecklich ist die Verführung zur Güte" (Terrible is the temptation to do good) -- because he did not understand it. If you haven't understood that, you haven't understood Brecht. It raises the suspicion, at least, that some of the other shots may be wide of the mark as well. So let us disregard Fenton's allies and whether or not they are too busy shooting themselves in the foot by mistake, and turn our attention to the main body of his argument.

Fenton's main charge is that Brecht did not practice what he preached, that he had one standard for himself and another for everyone else, that he advocated sacrifice, discipline and so forth whilst taking good care not to be trapped by his own advice. Fenton draws all this to a point in a particularly pompous phrase: "One should always be alert to the deformities of noncombattant writing." Other writers

went to Spain but Brecht only wrote The Measures Taken. (Raleigh went to Ireland but Shakespeare only wrote Henry V.) Since Brecht was a combative writer and did not flinch from the combat he provoked, since the evidence of his courage as a writer is pretty nigh incontestable, "noncombattant writing" must refer to the works of those authors who have not also participated in literal physical violence: a fairly inclusive category, I should have thought.

But Fenton is clearly impressed by the connection between the advocacy of physical violence in writing and the unwillingness of the author to engage in it himself. Any first-year student could tell him there is a difference between a play, its characters, what they advocate, and the world beyond it. I have reservations about The Measures Taken, but you cannot use it to prove that Brecht recommended others should revel "in submission to party discipline," which he didn't intend to do himself. You can't take the play's speeches, or the play itself, out of context. Fenton ought to look at the basic philology presented by Steinweg (or even my own discussion of the play's genesis). But I can't see him being terribly impressed by noncombattant criticism.

No, he starts from the fact that Brecht was "evil" (Auden) and "a crook" (Auden) and then searches for evidence. What else does he come up with? Since you cannot be a great poet without knowing yourself, Fenton would like to think that he was ashamed of the "disparity between his public and private position." According to Fenton his public position was that his art was devoted to "the service of the revolution." As for his private position -- "His life, on the other hand, (Fenton finds this limb useful too) and those of his lovers, assistants, colleagues appears dedicated to the art, above all to the work of the individual genius." This is a curious, and a spurious, separation. It implies Brecht really only cared about himself and everyone else acquiesced in this process. The "colleagues" I know would certainly disagree with that assumption. But Fenton suspects that Brecht secretly knew they were wrong and that he was in consequence filled with self-disgust. Hence his "threatening horror of the personal," his obsession with filth and why he wished a stiletto thrust through his heart after death, as if he were some kind of Transylvanian monster. It doesn't seem to have occurred to Fenton that he may have wanted to be damned sure he really was dead before they closed the coffin.

Willetts "has a gift for missing the point" and his "opening paragraph" will give the reader "some idea of what to expect from the rest of the book." This is perhaps the silliest comment in his whole review because that opening paragraph, which he completely misunderstands, has nothing to do with what follows. Willetts' book is a rich and stimulating account of Brecht's work in the context of the arts of his day. Fenton ignores this whole discussion except to comment that we ought

to be able to distinguish between "what belongs genuinely to Brecht's artistic achievement and what he picked up from others," which is a nitpicking distinction impossible to discuss. When Brecht relocates Villon in The Threepenny Opera, does that make Villon a co-author of the play? Has Fenton ever heard of montage? Willett's political views in that passage are "either politically disingenuous or ga-ga." All Willett says is that people become enemies when you look at them down the barrel of your gun. That seems to me a necessary first step back from the brink of mutual annihilation. But Fenton is made of sterner stuff.

Fenton's "review" is a search for evidence of Brecht's nastiness and here comes piece of evidence number one. He quotes Hayman's translation of a passage from Brecht's diary of 26.2.1921: "Why can't the Jews be disposed of? Because for thousands of years they've been quartered, broken on the wheel, tortured, spat at. But the spit runs dry before they do." Hayman glosses this with the remark that despite Brecht's friendship with Jews, including Marianne Zoff whom he married, there is here "little sympathy for the Jews" and the "ruthlessness is what gives force to both his thinking and his style," upon which Fenton comments: "a recognition long overdue." The innuendo here is that Brecht was not only ruthless but also a covert anti-Semite. This was news to me, so I turned to the passage in its context. It sounds like the Final Solution, and then we have Brecht the proto-Nazi to match the proto-Stalinist girding up for the show trials with The Measures Taken. What he actually wrote was "Warum kann man mit den Juden nicht fertig werden?" The translation itself is controvertible. "Fertig werden" has a range of meanings -- deal with, get along with, manage the problem of. But Brecht's meaning depends on its context. And that context has nothing whatsoever to do with solving any Jewish problem. So let's even assume that Willett's translation is the right one: "Why can't the Jews be got out of the way?" (Diaries 1920-1922, London: Methuen, 1979, p. 62). The reason why this can't be done is not, as selective quotation makes it appear, insufficient ruthlessness or spittle. If anything, the reverse is closer to the truth. This passage is followed by the thought that tragedy is an invention trying, mendaciously, to deal with violence, that when the mouth of the mind is stuffed with earth, its scream down the centuries is absent. And it is preceded by these words: "Corpses are the products of anxiety (Angst). Anxiety remains." The inescapable conclusion, if you look at the whole passage, is that persecuting or murdering the Jews is the surest way of never solving the problem. Is this even a tactless illustration? Brecht simply registers a historical fact -- he is a writer after all -- and adds the supposition that it hasn't worked and probably never will. Not because of insufficient ruthlessness but because the anxiety that produces the ruthlessness can never be assuaged. The most one can say is that this is a tragic view of humanity, and demur at accepting it or its presuppositions, but that is how Brecht thought in 1921.

Let's have a look at Fenton's second example of Brecht's crookedness. It's the famous case of the Austrian passport. He gives the story a new twist. Gaining possession of or retaining this document is not now the primary crime (I would have thought it an absolutely basic precaution before returning to Stalin's orbit if you intend to disagree with him). The crookedness now consists in the way he asked for it. Fenton quotes Hayman's translation. I don't have the original German, and Hayman doesn't tell us where he got it from -- his biography is something of a collage, and I don't want to discuss it or its evaluations. What does Brecht apparently say? "Let me emphasize that I consider myself to be only a poet and do not wish to serve any definite political ideology. Nor do I wish to be regarded as the exponent of any such ideology. I repudiate the idea of repatriating myself in Germany." For Fenton this passage reveals its full crookedness when juxtaposed with the following from a letter to the East German Ministry of Culture a year later: "Our artists are prepared to change and with complete devotion to support you in the battle for a great new art."

Fenton has demonstrated Brecht's "eagerness to please" and our natural reaction is supposed to be: what a self-serving slob! But if you turn to the whole letter you find once again the reverse is closer to the truth. What does this obsequious document reveal? Written during the Lucullus controversy which the Party thought too pacifist, it consists of three paragraphs. The first says that he can take their objections into account (and the actual changes were minimal). The second paragraph justifies his choice of subject. The longest paragraph tells the Ministry of Culture in no uncertain terms that it is not enough for them to express their dislike of the opera's formalism, they must present arguments and prove them. Brecht offers a vigorous defense of Dessau's music. This final paragraph ends with the following sentence: "Die Hauptsache ist doch, daß unsere Künstler bereit sind, zu ändern und Euch im Kampf um eine neue große Kunst mit voller Hingabe zu unterstützen." What does this now mean? It is a semi-placatory ending to a largely critical letter. Anyone familiar with the arguments of the period will get the point immediately. Brecht is staking out his territory. His devotion was to "a new great art" whose social function he envisaged very differently from the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Culture. One can also see that Fenton mistranslates "ändern" which clearly means "to make changes" and not "to change (themselves obsequiously)".

Fenton devotes something over a column to Arendt and Brecht's "ode(s) to Stalin." No mention, of course, of his other poems about Stalin. But Arendt was not tough enough, for Die Erziehung der Hirse "sounds exactly like the Khmer Rouge." The point about this poem, which I don't particularly value, is once again its context. Fenton argues that no matter what the poem says, "credit redounds to the leader." With such an argument you can prove Shostakovich was a Stalinist. In that context



## 42 Communications

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Brecht's praise of Stalin, one mention, is something less than fulsome, just as the public statement on his death -- "the embodiment of their hopes" (ie. which have not been realized) -- falls somewhat short of acclamation. And Fenton "misses the point" of the sheep-shit as well.

This gift for missing the point is nowhere more elegantly displayed than in his comment that The Caucasian Chalk Circle is "Stalinist Chinoiserie" which theatre people read "the way they would read Arthur Waley." The contempt is evident, the arguments are not. Or does he believe the first scene amounts to "praise" of Stalin? If so, he hasn't begun to understand Brecht. Presumably the rest of that play constitutes the Chinoiserie. That is not even justified prejudice, it is plain old ignorance. And ignorance is unsuccessful polemic's best friend.

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## recent productions

### *FURCHT UND ELEND DES DRITTEN REICHES*

Directed by Grazyna Domanska, in Torun, Poland, premiere Spring 1984

by Jan Olsson

The first season for Krystyna Meissner as director of the Wilam Horzycy Theatre in Torun was impressive because of its high repertoire quality. It established clearly the notion that theatre is the most serious thing in the world, which should be concerned with only the centrally important and essential items of thought and imagination -- and that it is a very funny thing as well. Sartre, Bulgakow, Rózewicz, Brecht, and Gombrowicz are the highlights I can think of offhand. Meissner also follows the stimulating and sometimes fruitful mode of using a variety of accidental places for performances. So Sartre (*Les Mouches*) was played in a somber room in the 13th century Town Hall. Mala Scena, The Small Stage, is not a chamber auditorium within the theatre itself but the branch of the theatre which is engaged in arranging performances *extra muros*. In an authentic stable that seemed designed for Mack the Knife's wedding party, the Small Stage performed *Furcht und Elend des dritten Reiches* under the direction of Grazyna Domanska.

The performance is a montage of scenes just as the suite is itself. Brecht stressed this in a polemic against Lukács, who, he claimed, failed in perceiving this quality. But Domanska makes a montage of the montage, combining essentially unabridged scenes with fragments of others and adding a frame which remains longer in memory than the scenes themselves, a frame of color, sound and movement. She establishes this in the beginning when men in Nazi uniforms rush onto the stage from behind the audience shouting, shooting and waving Nazi flags. It creates an atmosphere of threateningly spectacular variety theatre, and the variety theme is maintained between scenes when a performer sings songs in the style of the early thirties. But also the show from the opening maintains its power through iteration in the course of the performance and through the presence of the black-white-red flags in the dark stable.

The arrangement has one important consequence: comparatively little of the text can be performed, making allowance for the option of a rather short evening in these technically primitive conditions. It is not uncommon to make a choice among the 24 scenes. Domanska plays eight of them more or less abridged and has one more told as a story by a character. Some elements are borrowed from scenes not performed. The material is used in a musical way, which gives the director an opportunity to repeat a motif, such as the zinc coffin which should not be opened because nobody is allowed to see what happened to the man inside.

An effort is made to treat the scenes as parts of a coherent story allowing the persons of the different scenes to be either members or acquaintances of one family. Thus the husband in the scene "Der Verrat" returns as an active Nazi supporter in a later scene, and the son from "Der Spitzel" returns in several scenes. This is not and maybe cannot be carried out to its logical

consequences, so the result is not quite convincing. The motif of racism is left out. This may sound astonishing, but there is an argument for it: if the Nazis had not used antisemitism as a coarse vehicle for the populist ensnaring of the masses, they would have found something else, just like the reactionaries would have found somebody else, had it not been Hitler.

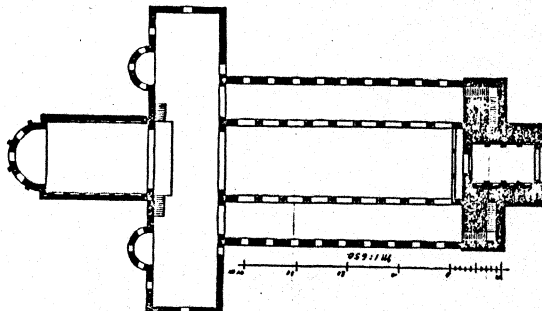
In its style, in its dramaturgical and scenic arrangement, the performance seems apt to deconstruct Polish prejudices against Brecht. Brechtian drama and Brechtian ideals of theatre and actorship have a difficult stand in Poland. The Poles tend to regard Brecht as too cold and dry, too intellectual and didactic, in opposition to the emotional Polish theatre tradition. The chanson interludes in the performance hold reminiscences not only of the world of "Cabaret" but even more of the Polish Thirties.

### MAHAGONNY IN RUINS: The Bad Hersfelder Festspiele 1984

by Martin W. Walsh, University of Michigan

The Bad Hersfelder Festspiele celebrated its 35th anniversary in the summer of 1985, which makes it one of Germany's oldest outdoor theatre festivals. Since 1967 it has mounted ten Brecht productions, the first six under the direction of Ulrich Erfurt. Actors of international reputation have tackled Brechtian roles, in recent years notably Mario Adorf as Arturo Ui (1979) and Will Quadflieg as Galileo (1980).

In the summer of 1984 the Festspiele presented *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* in what can only be considered in hindsight an act of madness. The Bad Hersfelder Festspiele is housed in the ruin of a massive 11th century Benedictine church. The stage occupies the former sanctuary and both transepts. It is 55 meters deep and 60 meters wide, on two major levels with a broad stairway center connecting them, for a total of 1200 square meters of playing area! One could literally build a red-light district on such a plot, and it should have been obvious to all that the cabaret atmosphere of the 1930 Brecht/Weill opera would be seriously in danger of evaporating altogether. Such indeed was the case.



Grundriss der Stifterruine

The Festspiele seems to take pride in using the whole of its available space, making no provision for blocking off specific areas for particular types of play. Shaping the space is therefore left up to the stage designer who in this case was a novice to the *Stiftsruine*. Moreover the Festspiele does not seem to be so well endowed as to make anything and everything possible. A very large loudspeaker hanging center did help to relieve the openness to the night sky. Less effective were electric sign boards over the aisle arches. One would question whether the slow movement of illuminated letters really translates Brecht's intentions for the on-stage sign. These together with the giant loudspeaker did create a certain amount of tension in the Hurricane scene, but unaccountably the large map and the arrow which leaps over "Mahagonny" were cut.

Not all of these decisions, of course, were those of designer Thomas Richter-Forgách. Günter Roth, a free-lance director of some stature, must share responsibility for other, not very enlightening "improvements" on Brecht. The most gratuitous was a finale featuring the Mahagonny chorus with placard posters of Mao, Christ, Bogart, Gandhi, John XIII, Marilyn Monroe, Trotsky, John F. Kennedy. Why? They are certainly less caustic and ironic than Brecht's own sign placards and indeed border on Camp. This blurred effect, together with the distraction of Darth Vader-like guards bearing flaming torches, caused one to lose the funeral elegy of Paul Ackermann and indeed the *Fall Mahagonnys*. The handling of the Bad Hersfelder extras, townsfolk for the most part, also left something to be desired. Either there were just not enough of them or they were just not trained enough in anything gestic to make an impact in that immense space. This reviewer was reminded of a pathetically small and limp Roman Carnival scene in the Festspiele's 1980 *Galileo*. Like the stage signs, the *Mahagonny* extras needed a presence that was just not there.

One radical adjustment to the massive *Stiftsruine* space was more successful. The actors sang live to taped Weill music, the experiment under the direction of Jürgen Osswald. To this untrained musical ear, at least, the experiment worked. There were good voices to work with, the chief value of most Bad Hersfeld productions being the performers themselves. The respectable work by Michael Bukowsky as Paul and Jaroslav Kachel as Willy were outshone by some highpowered playing from veteran Gerd Braese as Moses and the female leads. Both Astrid Jacob (Jenny) and Ingrid Ohlenschläger (Begbick) have strong backgrounds in cabaret (Ohlenschläger with 12 years in Berlin), and it certainly showed. But through the first half especially one got the distinct impression that these seasoned performers were having an uphill struggle -- not with poor material, or a hostile audience, but with empty Space. Even with a large, sputtering, junked-up van on stage, it was nearly impossible to create the effect of a *Netzstadt* under a soaring Romanesque arch. One began to realize that certain theatre spaces are just not Brecht spaces. The '84 Festspiele also featured Dürrenmatt's adaptation of Shakespeare's *King John*, and it took to the space quite nicely. With Brecht's early pieces, especially those in which on-stage constructions are of the dramatic essence, an intimate space is crucial. Even Puntilla's Mt. Hatelma would fail to register in the *Stiftsruine*. Not surprisingly, the strongest scenes visually in this production were those involving the construction of actual stages within the stage space, particularly the boxing ring and the billiard table "ship." These precisely demarcated playing areas helped blot out the vast space, whereas other constructs, Begbick's "Hotel" and the "Court Room" were simply overwhelmed, and the players with them. Thank Gott in *Mahagonny* that a hot *cabarettiste* like Astrid Jacob was at least allowed

down to the stage's edge to belt out her songs.

In Summer '86 the Bad Hersfelder Festspiele will be putting on *Mutter Courage*, continuing its tradition of Brecht every other year. One hopes that with a healthy budget and a more imaginative sculpting of space, a Seven Years' War ruin will not win out over a Thirty Years' War masterpiece.

*MOTHER COURAGE*, The Royal Shakespeare Company, London  
and

*MAN EQUALS MAN*, Almeida Theatre, London  
'84-'85 Winter Season

by John W. M. Willett

The English theatre has one or two unfortunate habits which somewhat handicap it in its dealings with Brecht. One is its belief that Brecht's language can be strengthened and made more realistic by inserting words like "fuck" and "shit". Another is its use of artificial cockney or Irish accents for his more down-to-earth characters. A third is its current preoccupation with "energy", which too often leads to hyperactivity of a frenzied kind. A fourth is its obsession with comedy at all costs. The compound effect is variously visible (or audible) in two serious and in many ways impressive productions now running in London: the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Mother Courage* and the Almeida Theatre's *Man equals Man*. Both these contain some fine acting performances, and particularly in the former there are carefully rehearsed flashes of sheer virtuosity which would have delighted Bertolt Brecht. Both however are flawed by our bad habits, and in each case the director has got some of the basics wrong.

In *Courage* the scale is too big, the setting (a kind of creaking carousel à la Tinguely) gimmicky and obtrusive. Dessau's music has been scrapped, the "lyrics" are mostly unintelligible; the new music provides more or less atmospheric accompaniment for the scene changes, for which there is no curtain; the lighting too is atmospheric, expressive. Since Brecht's scene titles are not used (they aren't even printed in the programme), there is no progression of distinct episodes. The duration of *Courage*'s story seems to be about six months, from spring to winter, not Brecht's twelve years. Nobody gets much older, though lots of blood is spilt. (In BB's production, so far as I recall, there was virtually none.) Judy Dench's solid red-headed synthetically cockney *Courage* is a clear and authoritative creation, and one bearing no relation to Weigel's. How far then does it coincide with Brecht's? Certainly it is a remarkable performance that dominates the large Barbican Theatre. But it is not finally satisfying, perhaps because this *Courage* emerges as a relatively young one, more like some elder sister of Yvette's than a mother to the three children.

In *Man equals Man* there were some special problems: first the acoustics of the lovely old theatre with its curved back wall of untreated brick, and secondly a change of director only a week before the opening. What is very good is the transformation of Galy Gay in the second half, and Timothy

Spall's delivery of his difficult big speeches, though the actual ending (and much of the scene in the train preceding it) seems rather uncertainly put together. In the first half however, intelligibility is sacrificed to knockabout farce, and the costuming of Wang the bonze as a flashy Westernized con-man and Galy Gay as an old-style railway porter hardly makes the story clearer. The interlude speech ("Tonight you are going to see a man reassembled like a car") was cut, though it is in every sense central to the play. Indeed the concept of montage seems not to have been fully grasped, to judge from the way some of the verse gets blended into the dialogue.

As for the translations, that of *Courage* was newly written by Hanif Kureishi from a "literal translation" by Sue Davies, the director's wife. That of *Man equals Man* was Gerhard Nellhaus's, as edited for the Methuen series by Willett and Manheim.

### MACKIE PUÑALES IN QUITO

By Herbert Knust

In a recent book, *Von Apu Ollantay bis Brecht: Theater als Waffe im Klassenkampf Lateinamerikas* (Berlin: Henschelverlag 1983), Ricardo Blanco mentions among the difficulties of the reception of Brecht in South America a lack of understanding for Brecht's theories (especially among those who favored Stanislavsky); a lack of practical experience in adopting his techniques (even among those who grasped the translated theories); and, of course, the resistance of a bourgeois audience that only tolerated Brecht performances as long as they clearly referred back to another time, another society, and did not endanger their own class privileges (hence "fashionable" -- i.e. bad -- imitations of "historical" European stagings of certain Brecht plays seemed quite safe and unprovocative). Blanco then describes "progressive theater" of different kinds, by various groups, country by country, in socio-political context. Not much is recorded for the development in Ecuador (pp. 66-69), which did not have a theater tradition of its own, imported bad commercial theater, including operettas, from Spain, and the worst opera companies from Italy doing Verdi, Puccini and others. The State did support innovative trends towards a national culture (benefitting e.g. the "Teatro Ensayo") in the sixties; but despite the new revolutionary anti-imperialist impetus in Latin America that also affected Ecuadorian theater in the seventies, the bourgeois ideology of the ruling class kept a damper on "operative" progressiveness. Blanco does not mention Brecht in Ecuador.

Against this briefly sketched background it may be interesting to note that in early November 1984, *The Threepenny Opera* made quite a splash in Quito, but under circumstances that suggest some of the complexities -- even paradoxes -- of Brechts' reception in Latin America, judging by the somewhat cautious press release in Quito's *El Comercio* of 9 November 84. The Spanish director Ramón Pareja had been invited to conduct an open workshop at "la Escuela de Teatro de la Universidad Central." After two months of practice a team of students, professors, and alumni, supported by professional singers and actors (Erica von Lippke and Jaime Bonelli as Mrs. and Mr. Peachum) as well as a music ensemble which in the last minute had to be replaced by another, produced "La Opera de 3 Centavos" in the "Teatro Nacional Sucre" for a highly appreciative audience.

In an interview Pareja mentioned his experience on European stages, especially his affiliation with the Piccolo Teatro in Milano, and recalled that in his early years, under Franco, he was the first to bring Brecht surreptitiously to Spain. Although convinced of Brecht's great impact on twentieth century dramaturgy, Pareja does not consider Brecht a "saint" nor "Brechtianismo" a dogma. Rather, he chose *Threepenny Opera* as "one of the most important works of world literature" for its epochmaking, revolutionizing theatricality. Contrary to the opinion of many that the Latin American theater should be "pamphletic," Pareja preferred for Quito the good spectacle ("bell espectáculo") -- not imitating the political character of the original but nevertheless addressing "certain anxieties" and "implying certain social questions" as any art work would. A "substantial innovation" (plausible from the South American point of view) was his change of scene from London at the end of the century (?) to the North American economic recession of the thirties, with gangsterism and all, but with a new technique. Said Pareja: "I believe Brecht would have liked it."

That may well be, especially if one saw how before the threatening backdrop of a distinctly North American looking gangster boss there moved on stage his distinctly South American looking counterpart. Even the adaptation left no doubt that where there are exploiters there are also the exploited, regardless of the country. Remarkably, the event was sponsored by the "Banco Central" in cooperation with the "Ministerio de Education" and the "Casa de la cultura." But then: Berlin businessmen supported the political theater of the twenties and got a good laugh from Macheath's lines: "It's only a question of weeks before I switch to banking exclusively." . . . "We bourgeois artisans, who work with honest jimmies on the cashboxes of small shopkeepers, are being swallowed up by large concerns backed by banks. What is a picklock to a bank share? What is the burgling of a bank to the founding of a bank?" Whether or not Mackie Puñales had similar lines and laughs in Quito: the performance appears to have been "momentous" for the Ecuadorian theater -- in the opinion of the director, who hopes that the fruits of the difficult labor will not be lost, as well as in the comments of the ensemble, to whom the experience was a "revelation" both in terms of acting and in their perception of reality, and finally also in the judgment of the audience that responded with great enthusiasm.

*THREEPENNY OPERA*  
Eureka Theatre, San Francisco, June 1985  
(Review and Interview)  
by Janelle Reinelt

The Eureka Theatre mounted an ambitious first season in their new home in San Francisco's warehouse district, culminating in June with the *Threepenny Opera*. This Bay Area company has been active for thirteen years, doing politically stimulating work and building a talented and committed company. After a fire destroyed their previous theatre in 1981, the Eureka struggled to find a new space and raise the funds to support it as a major regional theatre. The opening of the 10,600 square foot theatre in January represented a major realization of their goals.

The artistic staff cites Brecht as an important influence on the thinking and artistry of the theatre. Richard Seyd, co-director of *Threepenny Opera*, worked for eight years with Red Ladder, a British company which often used Brechtian techniques to develop scripts for performance within the labor community (cf. interview following this review). Oskar Eustis, co-director of *Threepenny* and company dramaturg, acknowledges the importance of Brecht for the company's ideas of dramaturgy and direction. His experiences working in theatre in Switzerland and Germany consolidated his admiration for Brecht. While heretofore the company has produced relatively new works by a cross section of European and American dramatists (Dario Fo, Caryl Churchill, Emily Mann, Franz Xavier Kroetz), the production of *Threepenny* marks a place in their repertory reserved for the "reappropriation" of classics to be followed next year by Trevor Griffith's adaptation of *The Cherry Orchard*.

This production of *Threepenny* takes place in what appears to be a deserted parking garage or perhaps a freeway underpass. Concrete columns and platforms create a flexible post-modern playing space -- it changes immediately into plausible locations for the wedding scene (an abandoned warehouse?) the prison, and Peachum's rehearsal hall for beggars. It helps locate the play in close proximity to contemporary urban experience, as do the costumes which span the ages but mostly create a sense of San Francisco itself, complete with all styles of theatrical street wear. When the police appear in familiar riot gear, looking like a cross between riot patrol and Darth Vader, the audience both laughs and uncomfortably shifts in their seats.

Eustis and Seyd assembled a multiracial cast, reflecting the range of ethnic experience in San Francisco as well as elsewhere. The company has a policy of actively seeking to integrate the company and to cast color blind in any script where race is not an explicit issue. *Threepenny* afforded a particularly good chance to explore this possibility. The range of experience represented on the stage did much to enrich and vivify the production, strengthening its modern urban references in the process. The memorable duet between Lucy and Polly became extremely funny and pointed through the contrast between a powerful black woman and a fiery white woman. Mack the Knife looks on from his captive position in what, during the song, began to look more and more like a high-chair.

The opening scene is one of the most satisfying of the production. A spotlight shines on the face of a seemingly suffering woman, barely able to make her pitiable cries for help heard. Suddenly a shape appears and approaches, stoops into the light and rearranges her face into what becomes a grossly distorted expression. What looked as if it might conceivably be a gesture of help or at least compassion turns out to be Peachum giving a client a more effective mien. The woman's voice drops into a loud, harsh sound, and Peachum walks on laughing over the sounds of the overture as the rest of the school for beggars are revealed practicing their trade, reaching out to the audience with insistent demands. The lights develop the faces and bodies, grotesque, pressing forward, while at the same time Peachum and his wife correct, modify and enhance the effectiveness of their "performances." The audience has been tricked -- appropriately, since this production is about having sympathies or "weak" feelings or vulnerabilities exploited by those who know how.



Essential to this theme is the portrayal of Jenny, who appears in a pool of light at the beginning of the second act cloaked in a long cape and hood. Initially she watches the action from a removed, almost transcendental position. She is perhaps Mack's nemesis, dark angel, oncoming doom. This melodramatic treatment has its corrective, however, in the knowing and deliberate betrayal of Mack which stems from her knowledge of the world and her circumstances. She becomes the one person in the production who is constantly aware of the interaction between bourgeois ideology and human needs, even as she herself acts in predictably venal ways. Sigrid Wirschmidt is both haunting and tough as Jenny, and her clear and biting rendition of The Solomon Song is a high point.

Unfortunately, the cast was not uniformly equal to the task at hand, and the production suffered from weak acting in a number of principal roles. Peachum (Jack Shearer) confused attitude with gestus, producing a stereotyped villain, while Mack the Knife (Mark Petrakis) evoked neither the authority nor the intelligence to provide a formidable subject for the audience's inquiry. The surety of direction was also uneven. Sometimes a loose, improvisatory quality or an unfocused theatricality marred an otherwise interesting and original conception. The scene between Mack and Tiger Brown culminating in The Cannon Song is a case in point. The sequence examines the basis for friendship between the two men and their sentimentalizing of past experience. The edges of this critique of "respectable" old boys' networks were lost in a whirl of musical comedy turns.

In the final analysis, the production suffered from the lack of a consistent edge and follow-through on the immensely theatrical and fruitful ideas which flashed sporadically throughout. S.F. Chronical reviewer Steven Winn remarked that the production was too nice. That may be too simple an explanation for the production's inability to gell, but it's close to the mark. The Eureka has taken on the difficult task of trying to bridge the mainstream and the cultural left; it is possible that they inadvertently leaned too far towards the mainstream this time.

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Richard Seyd is one of the Resident Directors at the Eureka Theatre Company of San Francisco. He directed their production of *Cloud Nine* last year, which was enormously successful, transferring to two commercial theatres and playing to over 60,000 people. Richard worked with Red Ladder, a socialist theatre, in England for ten years before coming to the United States in 1974. Red Ladder used Brechtian dramaturgy both as method and model for many of their collective creations. In June, Richard will co-direct *Threepenny Opera* with Oscar Eustis at the Eureka. I recently interviewed Richard about Brecht and his work.

Question: What do you consider the chief influences of Brecht on your work as a director?

Richard: The key influence on me has been the enjoyment factor -- the sense that however naturalistically something is being done, it must be a performance. Also, a clarity of choices. I, as a director, go always for the cleanest possible, simplest possible choice that can encompass the complexity of any given moment or idea. I always ask what is the simplest way of doing it that doesn't over-simplify. He also gave me the understanding of the theatre as a total form, so the

importance of lighting and costume and props and set -- and not thinking of any element in isolation from any other. Right from the beginning of when I work on a play, I'm thinking about the set and lights and everything as a whole. It's almost like a mixture of Brecht and Hitchcock. It's not that I lay it out, it's that I have a sense in my mind of where I want to go while trying to keep that sense as open as possible. And, of course, what Brecht wanted his theatre to do is a strong influence, although I don't know if much of what he says about that is what happens in practice.

Question: Do you mean in terms of changing people's perceptions of the world?

Richard: Yes, I'm not sure that I think that it can happen. You can certainly work with the idea of wanting that to happen, but I think it's kind of dangerous if you overemphasize it to yourself because it makes you self-important.

Question: Did it happen with *Cloud Nine*? Did it change people's perceptions?

Richard: Some people it did, some people wanted to rush out and call their mothers, some it didn't. I now don't think about that as much as I did. My goal is to do the best possible work. I don't think about my work as consciously as I used to. It has a lot to do with the fact that I have found that my best work happens when I trust myself and trust that the choices I am going to make are not choices that I am going to ideologically regret later. And if I do, then it's better to have made them and look at them and think about it afterwards.

### "BRECHT ON FILM"

Chicago Filmmakers, Chicago, April 25-28, 1985

by Bruce Berg

If the audiences attending the Chicago Filmmakers four day "Brecht on Film" festival were any indication, the German playwright is enjoying a revival. Co-produced by writer/director Warren Leming, the event featured Lemings detailed production notes, which provided some excellent new material about Brecht's politics and theory.

The program opened, appropriately enough, with film journal *Jump Cut's* Chuck Kleinhans talking on Godard, followed by the only clinker in the four-day event, Godard's *Wind from the East* (*Vent d'est*). The film was dated and precious, whatever its debts to Brecht. *Kuhle Wampe*, Brechts only major European work, followed, and here Leming provided a detailed account of the production and history of the film. The following evening's program began with Roswitha Mueller's (Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) talk on Brecht and the New German cinema and continued with a showing of *Germany in Autumn* with its chilling Fassbinder segment. Pabst's *The Three Penny Opera* rounded out the day. A longer program on Saturday included Bob Brown's (Univ. of Michigan) talk on the Ann Arbor, Michigan, Brecht Company; Ann Gadon's energetic production of Brecht's early play *Lux in*

*Tenebris*; and Charles Wilding-White's ensemble doing Brecht/Eisler song material. Saturday's events closed with *A Good Example*, a dramatic staging on film, of Brecht's HUAC testimony. The Festival closed on Sunday with repeats of the Eisler material, a second *Lux in Tenebris*, and evening showings of Losey's *Galileo*; Lang's *Hangman also Die*, and Carol Reed's interesting *Man in Between* -- featuring a German speaking James Mason. The Filmmakers' lobby featured a poster and picture display with texts, provided by the Embassy of the GDR, and political video from the Chicago based Media Process Group.

It is surprising that nothing of this scope had previously been attempted in Chicago. Leming's comment that there is now much new Brecht material would suggest that there is more to be gleaned from future programs of this kind. "Brecht on Film" was, from beginning to end, a tribute to the savvy and energy of Chicago Filmmakers staff, and to their capacity for collaboration with activist-artists. The only question it posed was: why isn't more work of this calibre being done?

*DON JUAN*, directed by Bob Brown  
Brecht Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan, March 1985

by Christopher Potter (reprinted from *The Ann Arbor News*, March 29, 1985)

Want to see a masterwork in progress? Then hustle yourself over to Residential College Auditorium (at the University of Michigan's East Quad) at 8 p.m. tonight, and watch the normally thick line between Broadway and small town theater magically vanish. The play is Molière's *Dom Juan* by way of Bertolt Brecht. Ann Arbor's Brecht Company is performing it, and it's the funniest, the nastiest, the most energetic, the best acted - oh hell, it's the best production to grace Ann Arbor this year, stage or screen.

Theatrical heresy might have proved the name of the game here, but happily doesn't. Molière's 1665 original painted Western lit's most celebrated libertine as a spunky free-thinker tearing down the hypocrisy of his time. Brecht's 1954 adaptation eschewed sympathy for Don Juan, casting him as an archaic, parasitic egomaniac running roughshod over upper and lower-classes alike. Though some scholars have put the knock on the German playwright for this crucial alteration, director Bob Brown's Brechtians blithely take the ball and run with it. As we follow the rake's progress through a bevy of betrayed damsels and outraged gentlemen, Brown and Company let their creativity run blissfully amuck in period-blasting frenzy. Thus, it's no surprise to watch Don Juan (Martin Walsh) and his fellow aristos strut in Louis XIV costume while servant Sganarelle (David Isaacson) and fellow underlings cavort in the garb of the 20th century proletariat. Indeed, there's simply nothing out of kilter in this free-flung yet stunningly professional production, a staging that'll leave you helpless with laughter even as it savagely scores points against the divine-right selfishness of Don Juan and the servility of Sganarelle, who preaches reform to his master ("How dare you make a mockery of all that man holds sacred?") yet fails to back up his words with action.

For better or worse, sober politics takes a back seat to satirical elation. Watch sexist pig Don Juan weasel his way out of marriage to the beautiful Donna Elvira (Susan Savage) with mind-bending rationality: Since he no longer loves his wife, "To continue living with you would be a sin." Watch two fisherwomen (Barbara Thorne and Deborah Allen) stage a bruising fight (with real fish, folks) over the love of our duplicitous hero (who, of course, has compromised them both). There's so much more going on in this feast for the eyes and intellect that you may have to visit *Dom Juan* twice simply to catch it all. Maintaining a vaudevillian pace, director Brown has painted Brecht-Molière in the slapstick hue of a Marx Brothers' movie. Dialogue is rattled off like a string of rifle shots, characters hurtle on and off the stage with Looney-Tunes rapidity. And what performances! There isn't a weak link in Brown's dozen-member cast, an ensemble so supercharged you'd swear they could jump to Broadway intact. Martin Walsh is precisely right as a gorgeously balanced Don Juan, whose powdered egomania never slips into foppish burlesque -- and remains deliciously funny as a result. David Isaacson's Sganarelle is a different theatrical animal entirely: deliberately overbearing and declamatory, given to addled harangues on everything from sexual morality to the joys of cocaine ("Snort snow, my friend -- be a philosopher!"). Garbed in beret and sunglasses (he looks like a bedraggled François Truffaut), Isaacson remains gloriously in the groove while posturing his way through an exhausting, ultra-stylized alter ego. Yet everyone contributes to this theatrical wonderment -- from Barbara Thorne's Reubenesque Fisherwoman to Susan Savage's angelic Donna Elvira to Geoff Safron and Mickle Maher (as Donna Elvira's avenging brothers) to H. D. Cameron as Don Juan's stern, despairing father ("Have you forgotten how to blush?" he admonishes his wayward son). Even small roles are made memorable by players the likes of Jeff Dorchen, who sports one of the most glorious full beards you'll ever see. A four-piece orchestra wraps it all up in a bow with Levin Maloney's sleek musical score, that appropriately ranges in mode from baroque to Kurt Weill. It's a crucial link in a show that's so good no one would blame you if you ran all the way to the theater.

#### EKKEHARD SCHALL

Harold Clurman Theatre, New York City, March 1985

by Paul Berman (reprinted from *The Nation*, March 16, 1985)

Ekkehard Schall, who began his East Coast American tour two weeks ago in New York City, is said to be East Germany's greatest actor. He is also Bertolt Brecht's son-in-law, and he and his wife are the leading figures in Brecht's old company, the Berliner Ensemble. Neither the ensemble nor any of its members has ever performed in America before. But here is Schall, loose-jointed, supple-faced, close-cropped, clothed in a dapper wide-striped suit, looking as if he'd stepped from a drawing by George Grosz. He exudes energy. He leaps on chairs, dances a scimitar dance. And the program he presents is exactly what one would like to see: poems and songs by Brecht himself, performed in German, sometimes to piano accompaniment. (Semiliterate printed translations are available.)

The selection, though, is odd. Brecht's work contains, from a certain point of view, two aspects, which we might call the hammer and the sickle. Americans generally prefer the sickle -- the Brechtian quick thrust, the deviousness and ambiguity, the ability to see around corners, the morality that goes in curves rather than straight up and down. The sickle aspect persuades us that Brecht possessed one of the great modern visions. It makes him a master in our eyes. Schall, however, emphasizes the hammer. There are poems and songs of oppression, of resistance, of revolution, of solidarity. Pound! Pound! Pound! You could march to some of them. He recites a speech from *Arturo Ui*. It is a fascist rant, meant satirically, of course. "Murder!" he cries. "Extortion! Highway robbery!" He sells "protection" to vegetable dealers. He is an American gangster, but the tiny Hitler mustache gives him away. Then he turns to Brecht's "The Manifesto." It is a communist rant. No satire here. His face and eyes are expressive, and as the spotlights beam on him, spit shoots from his mouth in a silvery mist. First the spit explodes around his head and then the German words explode in the center of the spit, like fireworks within fireworks. He sits forward on his chair. There's no question this George Grosz figure despises the bourgeoisie. He hates communism's other enemies, too. "He who stands against [communism]," he says, "is not somebody who thinks differently, / But a nonthinker or one who thinks only of himself. / An enemy of humanity / Terrible / Evil / Insensitive." I tell you, it's frightening to see.

Schall's performance at the Harold Clurman Theatre consists of two separate evenings. I was glad to attend evening number one, but by evening number two I was a political refugee and quietly kept away.

*ROUNDHEADS AND THE POINTHEADS*, directed by Jerry Roth  
Classic Theatre, New York City, April 1985

by Mel Gussow (reprinted from *New York Times*, April 14, 1985)

As a great admirer of *Measure for Measure*, Bertolt Brecht borrowed the plot as the basis for *Roundheads and the Pointheads*, a pre-Holocaust parable about Hitler's racial policies. The Brecht version, written in the early 1930's and revised after Hitler's rise to power, was also an exploration of the playwright's theory that the Third Reich and the rich were "birds of a feather." Having chosen his story, the author rearranged it at whim, surrounding Shakespeare's central Angelo-Isabella drama with so much excess Brechtian baggage as to obscure his didactic purpose and to approach self-parody. Seeing the play in Jerry Roth's resourceful production at the Classic Theater, using Michael Feingold's actable new translation, one can fantasize Christopher Durang tuning up a travesty just off stage. We are in the land of Yahoo during the Sickle rebellion and the viceroys have turned his authority over to a demagogue, Angela in the current feminized version. Angela has to mediate between the tenant farmers who have round, bald heads and the landlords who have pointed heads. To add further complications, the sides are alternately identified as Czuchs and Czichs. One would need a scorecard to differentiate the horse thieves from the hat-knockers in a conflict that crawls to a conclusion -- the substitution of the Czuchish tenant's daughter for the

Czichish landlord's sister. Say that twice, measure for measure, without twisting your tongue. Running almost three hours, the play is overlong as well as entangled and would be of interest largely to Brechtian archivists were it not for the score, a sour-sweet melange of Hanns Eisler music and Brecht lyrics, artfully adapted by Mr. Feingold.

The score ranges from a prostitute's lament, sung feelingly by Amy Brentano, to the cynical "See-What-You-Want-Grab-It-Song." The evening is also lightened by the singing of Ellen Boggs as Isabella and Elise Dewsberry doubling in roles as a madam and a mother superior. Additional musical relief is provided by Erich K. Rausch at the piano. The cast's enthusiasm is unflagging and the production takes advantage of clownish masks and makeup by Thomas J. Wilson. As for the play, it vitiates *Measure for Measure* while sidestepping the racial issues that it raises.

#### HAPPY END

Pacific Theatre Ensemble, Santa Monica, June/July 1985

by Robert Koehler (reprinted from *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 1985)

Artists, it seems, can extend their creative will even to legal contracts. So it is that any production of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill's musical, *Happy End*, must give credit to a certain Dorothy Lane as playwright of "the original German play." In the context of this curious work, requiring mention of the fictitious Lane is more of a quirk than an act of modesty on Brecht and Weill's part. The press notes for this Pacific Theatre Ensemble production at the Powerhouse inform us that after a disastrous Berlin premiere, Brecht disowned all but the songs of "Happy End." Weill's reaction remains a mystery. From what we saw Friday night, it's safe to say Brecht probably overreacted.

Not that the play -- the Michael Feingold adaptation that was such a hit in the '60s -- and Julia Fletcher's staging aren't without unhappy problems. The cast, largely veterans of the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts, does a generally crackerjack job -- in the last half. It takes them quite a while to get a head of steam, with the early action in Bill's Beer Hall -- a den of South Side Chicago gangsters -- not sending out the enticing salvoes it should. And Sally Smythe as Lieutenant Lillian, out to save the world for the Salvation army, can't quite maneuver her long, difficult tunes.

The deepest problem with Feingold's text is that it's never as electric or interesting as the songs, like "Song of Mandalay" or "Bilbao." Nor do we ever accept the singing band of soldiers for Jesus marching right into Bill's, nor the Christian combo playing melodies that sound suspiciously like Kurt Weill, nor Lillian falling for the toughest thug of all, Bill Cracker (Michael Tulin). But . . . to counter this tepidity, we're treated to strong ensemble singing, supported by the slyly dark accents of Will Barrett's synthesizer (Alan Darnell's piano is more of the Al Capone period, but more conventional). More crucially, a bushel of portrayals eventually do come into sharp focus: Tulin's Cracker, who would be ideal for a hip version of *Guys and Dolls*, John DeMita as a clever survivor called the

Governor; J. Steven Markus' Baby Face; Sarah Zinsser as the gang's wily boss, the Fly; Catherine Telford's stiff-upper-lipped Major Stone and the unforgettably absurd Casey Daly as Brother Ben Owens.

The final, happy message -- that both Army and hoodlums can be part of "the army of the poor" -- is one of the few moments here when the larger social context is out on the table. *The Threepenny Opera*, the success of which *Happy End* was meant to cash in on, is more insistent, more daring. This turn with Brecht-Weill is just not as hard, as bitter, as funny or as political as their best work. Benicia Martinez's set convinces more as the Army's shelter than the hoods' den, but Ilya Mindlin uses the Powerhouse's lighting grid to full effect.

MANN IST MANN directed by ROBERT WOODRUFF  
La Jolla Playhouse, July 1985

by Jonathan Saville (reprinted from *The Reader* (San Diego), Aug. 1, 1985, pp. 32-33)

... It is in *A Man's a Man* that Brecht first discovers what was to become his habitual mode of dramatic presentation: the parable with a serious social message, the flat, clownlike characters who undergo tragic experiences, the type of theater (like vaudeville) that calls attention to its artificiality and theatricality, yet at the same time penetrates deeply into the problem of human suffering.

Such a theater requires a new kind of staging and a new kind of acting, and what is most striking about the current production of *A Man's a Man* at the La Jolla Playhouse is the brilliance with which it re-creates the Brechtian style. One of the big influences on Brecht at that stage of his career was silent film comedy, and particularly the films of Charlie Chaplin. Actor Bill Irwin, who plays Galy Gay in this production, is in a sense Chaplin *redivivus*: a master of physical comedy who also commands a compelling emotional power. To see Mr. Irwin leaping backward onto a chair is to enjoy the delights of acrobatic virtuosity. But in Galy Gay's intense speech over the coffin that supposedly contains the body of his former identity, Mr. Irwin goes far beyond farce and acrobatics, revealing himself as one of the most astonishingly accomplished actors of our age. This is a speech which -- according to Brecht's instructions and his description of Peter Lorre's performance in the 1931 Berlin production -- must be spoken very rapidly, in a nonnaturalistic manner, and with none of the internal motivation for each phrase that is the aim of naturalistic acting, yet the actor must convey the basic attitudes of the speech so that the audience can understand just what ideas and feelings Galy Gay is expressing, even if they cannot grasp the content of any individual sentence. To bring off such a tour de force requires immense skill, since the aims are so self-contradictory (intelligibility growing out of unintelligibility).

If Mr. Irwin had managed to do just this with the speech, he would have deserved high praise. But he does even more: he makes Galy Gay's contemplation of his own death (or rather of the death of his

identity, now to be replaced by another) deeply moving. We feel this loss of the self, under the pressure of a selfish and indifferent society, to be both shocking and pathetic -- more than that, an appalling threat to our existence as autonomous persons. But Mr. Irwin communicates these feelings without the slightest touch of sentimentality, and in a way that is somehow impersonal and authoritative; he is at once a victim we can identify with, a disinterested commentator on that victim's plight, and a performer of verbal music hypnotically absorbing in itself. This is precisely the *Verfremdungseffekt* ("Alienation Effect") Brecht desired from his actors' mode of acting, that I have often read about but never believed feasible until Mr. Irwin proved it could really be done. It makes sense of Brecht's new dramaturgy as the intentional or inadvertent infusion of naturalism never does in the usual productions of Brecht's plays and it uses feeling as a means of enhancing our understanding of the situation and its implications, rather than as an invitation to uncritical identification and emotional wallowing. Mr. Irwin's performance must be seen not only for its own sake, as a stunning example of this actor's art, but also as a model for the way Brecht ought to be played.

This is by no means to imply that the other actors in the Playhouse's amazing cast are inferior to Mr. Irwin in their talents or their command of "alienated" acting; the script simply requires more of Galy Gay, who goes through much more conflict, much greater suffering, and much more comprehensive changes of personality than do any of the other characters. A play like this requires flat characterization; any suggestion of a complex inner life, comparable to that of a character in Chekhov, Ibsen, or Freud, would be thoroughly out of place. Thus the four soldiers are played as four simple theatrical types (actor Ebbe Roe Smith's soldier is cunning; Maury Chaykin's is stupid, Geoff Hoyle's is a music-hall comedian, and John Vickery's -- surprisingly, for those who know this fine actor's work in more romantic roles -- is a harsh bully). Ray Barry, who plays Sergeant Fairchild, has two strings to his bow: bloodthirstiness and satyriasis. Brandis Kemp, as the widow Begbick, is a languid sexpot without moral scruples. Felton Perry, as the *bonze* of the robbed Buddhist temple, is a smooth conniver. Gloria Mann, who played Galy Gay's wife on opening night, is a nag with an Indian accent.

When the characters are so narrow, shallow, and cartoonlike, subtlety of the sort the naturalistic actor strives for is excluded. What is needed is something in many ways harder to achieve: vividness, sharpness of contour, projective power, stage presence. It is in this that the Playhouse cast excels. Every one of the main actors has a clear, strong, personal coloration, a unified, idiosyncratic style, a personal, immediately identifiable lilt of language, a sense of absolute external solidity, even if deep inside these characters there is nothing but a single mechanical trait. The energy and concentration of these performances are so great that, within the context of the production, Brecht's quite unlikelike caricatures seem more real, more undeniably *there*, than the ambiguous and polyvalent characters of the realistic drama, with their intricate psychology, their multiplicity of motivation, their nuances, and their evanescent, constantly developing and transmuting selves.

Director Robert Woodruff seems to have had two aims in his realization of the script. The first was to enhance that energy and concentration of the actors by helping them to invent stage business that



is farcical, character-defining, and theme-revealing, all at the same time. The second was to prevent the audience from following their usual inclination, developed through a lifetime of attending more or less realistic plays and movies, to swim emotionally and intellectually into the whirlpool of the play, to internalize the action, to participate vicariously in the experiences of the characters, to confuse theater with life, to allow their powers of perceiving, judging, criticizing, and interpreting to fall into a dreamy slumber, and so to miss the point. To keep the audience's minds awake, Mr. Woodruff, abetted by the superb production team of Doug Stein (sets), Susan Denison (costumes), and Richard Riddell (lighting), has deployed his extraordinary powers of theatrical invention, devising a seemingly endless series of witty, trenchant, disconcerting, and "alienating" effect, by which the audience is constantly reminded that this is theater, not reality, and that all the entertaining antics are in the service of a serious critique of what modern society does to human values and to individuality. On one or two occasions, for example, the actors briefly stop speaking the lines of Gerhard Nellhaus's marvelously idiomatic translation and break into Brecht's original German (spoken in an exemplary accent), as though Mr. Woodruff, in his campaign to undermine all theatrical illusionism, will not even allow us to take the play's language for granted, or to forget that we are being treated to a version -- and hence an interpretation -- of Brecht's script, and not to the real thing.

Mr. Woodruff is also fond of intentional anachronisms, designed to make us see the present relevance of Brecht's ideas, but also to underline the fictive and playful quality of a theater that wishes to make us think, and hence renounces photography, consistency, and other lulling elements of realism. When one of the soldiers, imprisoned by the *bonze*, is declared to be a new Buddhist deity and consequently a potential source of revenue from pilgrimages, Mr. Woodruff and his designer bring down over the face of the gigantic Buddha statue in the "pagoda" a line-up of gigantic soft-drink cans with labels advertising "New God" -- by which we are told that the marketing of religion is like the marketing of Coca-Cola (a very Brechtian notion), that the playwright's contempt for the commercialization of values is completely up to date, and that Mr. Woodruff's staging of this sixty-year-old play is far too exuberant to give a fig for archaeological accuracy. Attention to historical facts would in any case be ridiculous in the staging of a script in which Queen Victoria is still on the British throne in 1925.

Instead, Mr. Woodruff devotes himself to the facts of the play, and here his accuracy is impeccable, for he is keenly sensitive to the dramatic shape of *A Man's a Man* and brings it out with tremendous force. In this production, as in Brecht's script, the tone of the play gradually darkens, moving from the Keystone Cops antics of the early scenes, through the harrowing brutality of the assault on Galy Gay's identity in the scenes of his brainwashing, his mock execution by a firing squad, and his "funeral oration" (scenes in which Brecht, Mr. Woodruff, and Mr. Irwin all attain the peak of their art), to the grim militarization of the human soul in the final scene, the artillery grotesquely sputtering, Galy Gay dehumanized, the castrated sergeant and the soldier whose identity Galy Gay has appropriated suspended in air, and the stench of battle and of a rotting civilization precisely translated into light and sound. The farcical devices and the self-directed theatricality are still there, but this is "tragic farce" (in the phrase Ionesco has used to describe his own plays), and the supreme achievement of Mr. Woodruff's staging is that it embodies both elements of that definition in their fullness.

This is great theater. What in the world did we do in San Diego before the advent of the La Jolla Playhouse? Suddenly, instead of being on the provincial periphery of theatrical creativity, we find ourselves right in the center. For those who, in spite of all the modern evidence to the contrary, still consider the theater to be the greatest of all the arts, *A Man's a Man* is not to be missed.

*Die Kleinbürgerhochzeit*  
Theater 36, Berlin, July 1985

by Reinhard Bauer (reprinted from *Zitty*, 5 July 1985)

...Brecht does not regard the future very optimistically in his first play (*Die Hochzeit*, 1919); why he later decided to narrow down the title to the petty-bourgeois milieu is not clear. In any case, it can hardly be compared to his later plays. no trace of alienation effects or epic theater. Direct naturalism full of situational comedy, stretching from slapstick to farce; folk theater in broad strokes, so to speak, without heavy symbolism. I know of no other Brecht play where I have laughed so much.

This is an ideal play for a newly formed group because all members are more or less equally involved: no soloists emerge, a real group performance evolves. They pulled together three months ago and discovered around the corner from Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin-Kreuzberg) an incredible courtyard loft, not too large but flexible enough so that environmental theater will be possible.

In this play it is less a question of refined psychology than gross typification. The group's actorial nuances are well developed. Beate Bauer was able to stage a compact, gripping and, most importantly, entertaining performance. After this somewhat loud evening a completely different, psychoanalytical play is planned, T. Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959). The group's debut with Brecht's rather simple play was very successful; I am optimistic that it will prove itself equally successful with more difficult texts.

## notate

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

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Galileo: in Buenos Aires 1984, in Manila 1980, in Prague 1984, and at the Berlin Ensemble 1984

Excerpts from taped discussions during Brecht's Galileo rehearsals 1955/56

Werner Hecht on Brecht in New Delhi

Michael Grabek on Brecht and Gramsci

### No. 2/1985

Reports from the international Brecht-Tage 1985 held at the Brecht-Zentrum in February

Reviews of Mother Courage in Magdeburg, Dessau and Prague

Rudolf Vapeník on Brecht and Emil František Burian

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Heinz-Uwe Haus interviewed about his Ui adaptation in Greece

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Plus additional production and book reviews

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Frank Wagner on the Chinese Brecht Symposium held in Peking (April 1985)

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Jürgen Schebera on recent Kurt Weill performances in the GDR

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Bio-bibliographies for the editors of the 30-volume edition, forthcoming in Aufbau Verlag and Suhrkamp Verlag, 1987-1990

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

Summary by Marc Silberman

# reports

## AMERICAN THEATRE ASSOCIATION

### BRECHT'S LEGACY

August 4, 1985

#### Abstracts

John Rouse (Tulane University): "Brecht and the West German Theatre: Production Dramaturgy and Directorial Interpretation"

The German theatre has explored with unusual thoroughness the dialectical interpretation of dramatic texts that is the hallmark of Brecht's theatre work. To demonstrate this thesis, the paper begins by sketching in the salient features of Brecht's dramaturgy: that interpretation must be carried through into all aspects of a production, including work on the text itself; that it must be undertaken by a team of artists united by a shared dramaturgical understanding of the text; and that any and all techniques can and should be used to enable the spectator to recognize his or her own reality as changeable by comparing -- across the historical distance that separates them -- present social reality with a dramatic text's mediation of a past out of which it has evolved but from which it is distant. The paper goes on to discuss Peter Stein's production of Goethe's Torquato Tasso. Goethe used details from the Renaissance Italian poet's life to mediate his own historical situation as bourgeois artist at the service of aristocratic power. However, this mediation is at once embodied and negated by the closure of the play's five-act structure and the perfection of its verse form. Stein and his team reworked the text into an episodic progression of self-contained scenes. They also developed an exaggerated performance style that revealed the interplay between the characters' real emotions and motivations and their socially dictated physical vocabulary.

Johannes Birringer (Yale University): "Repetition and Revolution: Theatre Anthropology After Brecht"

This essay takes its inspiration from Augusto Boal's concept of "rehearsal of revolution" (in Theatre of the Oppressed) and uses examples of cultural struggle and political theatre in Brazil and Nicaragua as a point of departure for the question of whether theatre in the Western world has missed its chance to be a medium of political intervention, not just in the Brechtian sense of Bewusstmachung but also in concrete terms of action towards a continual Wirklichkeitsprobe that can test particular, if limited possibilities of social change and transformation. The difficulty of imagining such a mediation in the context of Western capitalism's deve-

loped economy and technocratic culture industry is addressed mainly in reference to new sociological theories of cultural production which confront the growing impact of new media/information technologies and electronic engineering on our perception of reality and, indirectly, on our conception of the theatre as a social space. The belatedness of the contemporary Western theatre after Brecht (and after Artaud) is then theorized precisely at those radical junctures of contemporary practice (identified in the historical pessimism of Heiner Müller's recent plays, in the anthropological research of the Odin Teatret, and in the expressionistic dance pieces of Pina Bausch's Wuppertaler Tanztheater) where a new concern for a subjective experience of the "culture of the body," its inscriptions and conditioned reflexes, is seen to emerge in opposition to the achieved technification of art works under changed historical conditions for which Brecht's Lehrstücke and Versuche can no longer serve as models. The essay continues to suggest that such research into the dead weight and the repetitions of the cultural body -- and the process of learning how to create a different dialectic between physiological and social organisms -- offers a space of experimentation in which acting and human behavior are not pre-determined by master texts and master dramaturgies, but where the "quotable gestures" of a post-Brechtian theatre can be made to dance against the grain of inherited ideas of cultural authority and enlightened rationality.

Loren Kruger (Cornell University): "Bertolt Brecht by Roland Barthes - The Double Legacy"

Brecht's legacy in post-war France can be seen not only in his influence on playwrights and (theatre and film) directors but also in the critical response to his strategic combination of innovative, self-reflexive theatrical forms and a commitment to the accurate representation of the contradictions and complexities of social life in a way that makes it finally more comprehensible. This response took the form, on the one hand, of an appropriation of Brecht as an authoritative point of reference against which to judge other theatrical attempts to foster both political and aesthetic awareness and, on the other, a (more recent) association of Verfremdung with critical practices that claim to distance and defer the univocal representation of meaning in the interests of the "play of the signifier," which may not be quite consistent with Brecht's conception. Roland Barthes' readings of Brecht are exemplary in this context. From the polemical defense of Brecht in Théâtre populaire in the fifties through the association of Verfremdung's estrangement of ideological meaning with an "ethics of the signifier" that seeks to set adrift the ideology in all attempts -- including that of political commitment -- to represent a univocal signified, to the mise en scène in Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes of a dramatic conflict between an "aesthetic Brecht" who arrives only indirectly, cunningly, playfully (if at all) at a critique of ideology, and the politically committed writer who reminds us that even the deferral of politics is a political act, Barthes traces a series of attempts to map Brecht's strategy of

Verfremdung (which remains a strategy of representation) on to post-structuralist critiques of the ideological nature of all representation. In Roland Barthes Barthes confronts his double inheritance -- the militant 'Political Father' who reproaches him for trying to avoid a political position and the cunning metteur en jeu whose subtle procedure exposes the ideological content of accepted conventions while refusing a dogmatic assertion of counter-ideology. The importance of Barthes' representation of Brecht thus arises finally out of his refusal to separate the playful from the political subject and thus also in his reminder that the value of Brecht's legacy lies in our recognition that every encounter with that legacy is as yet undecided; we have ourselves to decide and to continually assess our ways of inheriting Brecht.

Darko Suvin (McGill University): "Brechtian or Post-Brechtian: The Berliner Ensemble Adaptation of Coriolanus"

Central traits of the Berliner Ensemble (BE) performance of Coriolanus from 1964 are identified by confronting the most pertinent aspects in the Wekwerth/Tenschert re-adaptation text (WT) and in its performance with Brecht's original adaptation from the fifties. The horizons of Brecht's adaptation are recalled from Chapter 7 of my book To Brecht and Beyond and found to encompass a balanced view of the conflict between the asocial Hero and the growing lineaments of a Utopian City, which is finally victorious. On one significant level this was a wish-dream, a counter-project of Brecht's to "really existing socialism" and Stalin in the early fifties. On the contrary, WT is characterized by a disbelief in the possibility of an integral plebeian democracy, and it returns to an updated version of Shakespeare's stress on the Hero, the great man, somewhat contaminated by Brechtian remnants. This is argued by an examination of, first, the quantitative and axiological upgrading of Coriolanus and of his individualistic antagonist, Aufidius, and the corresponding downplaying of the citizens in the WT, and second, the BE performance use of space: intensively, in the rhythm of the battle scenes, consciously oriented toward ritual; extensively, in the use of the revolving gate / arch to signify war in a general, abstract, almost Nietzschean sense (comprising equally armed clashes between nations, ideological conflicts between classes, and the war in the Sun Hero's breast). The BE Modellbuch, critical material from the BE (mainly from the exemplarily articulate Wekwerth), and from critics such as Dort, Dieckmann, Tynan, and Brustein, as well as personal memories of the performance, are used. It is found that, while the BE performance had splendid moments and aspects of technique and artistry in no way inferior to other performances at the time (eg. Brook), it is regressing from cognitive to magical estrangement (Verfremdung). It is thus what Brecht called "Murxist." Finally, a hypothesis is proposed about the probable ideological and socio-political reasons for the differences between the two adaptations, with due caution about the need for richer intertexts -- that the "events behind these events" are a change from Brecht's ori-

ginal Leninist confidence in the plebeian masses to the GDR top intellectuals' "hardnosed" revision of Marxism in view of the people's behavior at the time of the GDR "revolution imposed from above" leading up to the Berlin Wall. In a final irony of unconcluded history, Brechtian documentation of a BE performance permits it to be documented as pseudo-Brechtian.

### Summary of Discussion (Gene Burk, University of Washington):

The first joint session of the International Brecht Society and the American Theatre Association was presented at the 1985 ATA convention in Toronto and chaired by Janelle Reinelt (California State University, Sacramento). After presentation of the papers, discussion focused on the following: 1) A common interest was expressed in coming to terms with the current socio-cultural / political moment and its subsequent effects on the political assessment of Brecht. It was noted that all panelists cited European examples of contemporary Brechtian praxis without similarly citing American examples. Problems were also noted in the limited impact of theatre to effect change in the US and the difficulties of applying post-industrial understandings of Brechtian praxis to Third World cultures. 2) Semiotic and post-structuralist/deconstructive analyses of Brecht's dramaturgy and aesthetic principles have provided important insights into his work, but there is concern that such analyses run the risk of de-politicizing Brecht. Of central concern was the question of how to formulate a Brechtian semiotics which constitutes a semiotics of choice.

It was announced that the topic for the 1986 IBS-ATA Brecht panel will be "Brecht and Performance." (See 'Notes' in this issue for details.)



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The response to the announcement of the 7th International Symposium, to be held in Hong Kong from 8-13 December 1986, has been encouraging, both in respect to quality and quantity. We have so far received over thirty firm offers of papers and many other indications of interest. Money remains an organizational headache. No foundation has been willing to assist, but there are grounds for hoping we can yet secure a viable level of support. Needless to add that I would welcome suggestions of any likely source of support. When the organizational details are in place, and after the November 1985 deadline which, as we indicated, still leaves room for later adjustments, a separate circular will go out to those who have shown interest.

The China Youth Arts Theatre of Beijing wishes to bring its production of the Caucasian Chalk Circle. I saw the opening performance last April. For a number of reasons I had been encouraging them to do this play, so I may be naturally predisposed to value the result. It was obvious that the Beijing audience was amazed and delighted by the production. I was also encouraged to hear this unsolicited comment during the recent IVG Congress in Göttingen. Someone approached me to say: "I saw a videotape of the Beijing Caucasian Chalk Circle. Now that is something really worth seeing!" It was Walter Hinck.

I should like to comment briefly on that first Brecht Seminar in China, also reported in notate 4 (1985). It needs a much fuller commentary, but I would like to single out not the academic contributions, though they too were interesting, but an aspect of the accompanying performances. During this Seminar, held for one week in Beijing and continued in Shanghai for another, three full performances took place: The Caucasian Chalk Circle by the China Youth Arts Theatre, an accomplished, fully professional ensemble; The Good Person of Szechuan by the students of the Beijing Drama Academy; The Petit-Bourgeois Wedding by a group of teachers from the Shanghai Drama Academy. Some of the acting was outstanding, but we can assume such competence. In addition, excerpts from three further plays were also performed: from Puntila, Schweyk, and the Chalk Cross scene from Fear and Misery in the Third Reich. But apart from the 'local' significance, if we can use such a term for so large a nation, there was a quality in those productions that should stimulate us all to think about what we can do with Brecht's plays.

The context for any such rethinking is not that of a particularized East Asian reception of Brecht but one marked out by the now obvious readiness among imaginative Western practitioners to engage seriously with East Asian aesthetic prin-



ciples. The quality of Mnouchkine's and Brook's work offers sufficient evidence, though we will not find much in the boulevard English or the state-subsidized German theatres. But precisely the quality of their work effects the dimensions of these questions. If we do not take these dynamics into account, we risk continuing to marginalize Brecht by sticking with the reductive reading of his work, as sanctioned by earlier practice -- itself the product of different receptive conditions.

Such proposals do not seek to adjust Brecht to Brook's or Mnouchkine's perspectives, let alone accomodate him to any form of modish irrationalism. Quite the reverse, for we are looking for a Brechtian dimension in this process of assimilation and development. Some of this Chinese acting draws upon traditional techniques, which Brecht himself admired, and so brings together a Brechtian dramaturgy and an East Asian style. One consequence is the communication of a sense of doubleness, not by means of the simple 'showing' to which Brecht referred but in a way that does greater justice to the complexity of the relationships which are at stake. For historical reasons Brecht sometimes simplified in order to convey the new, strange and fundamental point. But we now understand his intentions and hence need to de-simplify the practice in order to do justice to those texts. Such doubleness, which was of course not always realized in the Chinese performances, separates the character from himself, though not in the simplistic know-all manner so often associated with Brecht; the sophistication of the aesthetic practice, and that is partly why Brecht admired it, inhibits such reductionism. What happens is rather that the acting distinguishes between the character's empirical self and that character as a function of the psycho-social forces which the empirical self cannot countenance. Such an underlying, governing, doubled self furnishes a gestural subtext for the surface perceptions. At its best, Chinese acting offers a marvelous opportunity for opening up this gap between those inseparably linked selves until they confront each other in their often comic irreconcilability. It is not a question of simply 'emotionalizing' Brecht, but of devising means for making memorably evident the tensions that knot into the otherwise enigmatic self. Mnouchkine's radical externalizations do something similar, though they have a tendency to succumb to their own physical exhuberance. But if we do not begin to think about such methods, we abandon the whole project to the irrationalists. That must not happen; political theatre must reconsider its paradigms.

In Beijing the scene with Schweyk and the dog in the snow was played with the help of Chinese opera techniques, though not in a formalized stylization. Schweyk evoked the dog, there it was, but when he turned to walk with it, he did not mime walking with a dog but the satisfaction of having a dog to walk with. That opened up the kind of observational space which Brecht rightly perceived as a possibility in Chinese acting, because you could not help seeing Schweyk in this double way: winning and losing at the same time. One way forward may lie through adapting and

developing the principles of East Asian acting techniques, provided these are used to create such observational space and as part of our rethinking the whole Brechtian project. This is not necessarily the perspective the Chinese actors would themselves single out, or discuss in these terms, but that is why a dialogue with them can prove so fruitful.

Antony Tatlow

### SECRETARY/TREASURER'S REPORT

The most important news is that Volume 12 of the Yearbook is now published and being shipped to members who have paid their dues. If you are in good standing, you should have received (or receive shortly) the volume. Please let me know in case there are problems.

The dues increase of \$5.00 in each category was approved by the overwhelming majority of voters. This will help our budget and cover expenses. Current dues:

Student (up to 3 years), retirees, low income. . . . .	\$15.00
Regular members (earning less than US\$20,000). . . . .	20.00
Regular members (earning more than US\$20,000). . . . .	25.00
Institutional members. . . . .	30.00
Sustaining members . . . . .	30.00

We realize, of course, that our dues structure presents problems for IBS members in countries with non-convertible currencies or very low income. Those members should pay what they can and/or order through libraries as much as possible. To the extent possible we will try to absorb costs for IBS members in those countries.

The problem with standing orders from libraries and agencies is still not completely solved; they continue to ask for the 1981 Yearbook, not realizing that the volume numbers are consecutive and they really did not miss any issues. Due to the switch from Suhrkamp to Wayne State Press, Volume 10 was published in 1980 while Volume 11 (the first from Wayne State) is the yearbook for 1982 (published in 1983). Volumes 11 and 12 should be considered double volumes. With the expanded Communications we feel, therefore, that all members got their money's worth -- besides supporting a worthy cause.

But now to the budget:

## 68 Communications

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<u>Credit</u>		<u>Debit</u>	
Checking account (9-13-85)	\$3,423.80	Communications Vol. 15/1	\$ 600.00
Savings account (7-1-85)	352.58	155 copies of <u>Yearbook</u>	2,232.75
		Postage/Photocopies	100.00
TOTALS			
	<u>\$3,776.38</u>		<u>\$2,932.75</u>
Checking account		Credit:	\$3,776.38
(Deutsche Bank Düsseldorf) DM 600,45		Debit:	<u>2,932.75</u>
		Balance:	\$ 833.63

The IBS still owes Wayne State Press \$171.71 for "cost of corrections exceeding 5% of the typesetting costs," ie. changes made by authors in their printer's proofs to Volume 11. The stipulation in the Yearbook contract with the Press that the IBS absorb those costs should perhaps be changed so that the authors themselves will be charged for any substantial revisions. I realize that no royalties are paid to the authors, but to my knowledge other yearbooks and journals in North America pay no royalties and charge authors for excessive alternations. The IBS budget simply cannot absorb those costs. The limited amount of royalties we received from sales of Volume 11 have all gone into operating costs.

Finally, I would like to announce my resignation as Secretary/Treasurer of the IBS, effective June 1986. Six or seven years in office are enough, I feel. Besides I have a sabbatical leave coming which I hope to spend abroad, at least a good portion of it. Moreover, after weathering some storms (many already announced, prematurely, the death of the IBS), the Society is now pretty much on track again with two attractive publications. Please send me nominations for Secretary/Treasurer at your earliest convenience. The job entails record keeping, announcing publication of the Yearbook, collecting membership dues and sending address labels to Wayne State Press (they ship the Yearbook) and to the editor of Communications. In addition, there is occasional correspondence with IBS members, agencies and mail order houses. Please volunteer, if you possibly can -- IBS needs you!

Karl H. Schoeps

## notices

### BRECHT YEARBOOK (Volume 12)

Paid up members should have received the current volume of the Yearbook, Brecht: Women and Politics. The delay, it should be noted, was caused by the printer and not the editors. Volume 13 (Brecht and Performance) is now in the final editing process. John Fuegi reports, however, that manuscripts received through January 15, 1986, will still be considered for inclusion in that volume. Please note: in the interest of reducing decision time and editorial costs, it is requested that copies of manuscripts be sent to all three editors with an indication that copies have been sent to each:

John Fuegi, Comparative Literature Program, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 (USA)

Gisela Bahr, German Department, Miami University, Oxford, OH 45056 (USA)

John Willett, Volta House, Windmill Road, London NW3 6J, England

If any questions arise, contact John Fuegi, the Managing Editor of the Brecht Yearbook.

### Information from the Brecht-Zentrum (Berlin/GDR)

This year's Brecht Tage, under the title "Brecht's Aesthetics", took place at the Brecht-Zentrum from February 10-13. International participants included: Jan Knopf, Klaus-Detlef Müller, Blanco Olivares, Milan Lukes, Paolo Chiarini, Ileana Berloghea, Ilja Fradkin, and Reinhold Grimm, as well as several GDR Brecht scholars. Future topics for the Brecht Tage at the Brecht-Zentrum are: 1986 -- The New Brecht Edition, a working and information session for the 12 editors; 1987 -- Brecht and Pedagogy.

Special events at the Brecht-Zentrum this Fall include:

November 28 - An introduction to the Berlin/Frankfurt Brecht edition by editors and assistants;

December 12 - "Mysterien eines Friseursalons" (Germany, 1922), a film written and directed by Bertolt Brecht, Erich Engel and Karl Valentin;

December 19 - "Kinobuch", a one-person performance with Gina Pietsch and music by Lutz Glandien (directed by H.E. Wenzel/S. Mensching).

For more information, contact Werner Hecht, Brecht-Zentrum der DDR, 1040 Berlin, Chausseest. 125, GDR.

### Brecht Tours in the GDR

In June and September, 1985, the Reisebüro der DDR offered the tour "Bertolt Brecht - A Name Associated With Berlin". The four-day tour includes excursions to Buckow (the Brecht/Weigel House), behind the stage at the Berlin Ensemble, the Brecht

House in Berlin, Brecht's gravesite, as well as a Brecht performance and dinner at the "Brecht-Keller". For more information on future Brecht tours, contact Reisebüro der DDR, 1026 Berlin, Alexanderplatz 5, PSF 77, GDR. In the USA, contact Koch Overseas Co., 157-161 E. 86 St., New York, NY 10028.

### China Brecht Symposium

Liang Lili reports in the China Daily (Hong Kong) of 16 April 1985 (p.5):

After being neglected in China for 30 years, Bertolt Brecht suddenly became a hit on stage in Beijing last week. Brecht borrowed from Chinese traditional art and at last his subsequent influence on Chinese theatre is being recognized. In the minds of many Chinese dramatists, Brecht was considered a great master, but they did not put his dramatic theories into practice. . . Director Huang Zuolin made one attempt in 1959 to stage Brecht. But he failed to win over the audience with his presentation of Mother Courage and Her Children in Shanghai. The play only ran three days. "Now comes a new period" of Brecht in Chinese theatre, said Antony Tatlow, a professor at Hongkong University and president of the International Brecht Society. "It is a surprise that Brecht is also emotional and even exciting," said Yang Qing, one of the cast of the Caucasian Chalk Circle, in describing her experience on stage. "With the masks, I felt it was easier to enter the inner world of other people. I became free and relaxed." In two of the three plays presented during the Brecht Week Symposium, actors wore masks. "We wanted our play to be distinct," said Chen Rong, director of the Caucasian Chalk Circle. Her production is a mixture of humour and Brecht philosophy, presented both in a stylized and creative way that often borrows from Chinese traditional operas. The wife of the viceroy cries out in a tune that sounds like one long syllable and the next voice sings on a chromatic scale higher. It is a device often used in Peking opera to portray young women crying. . . The other two plays also had strong Chinese styles. In "Schweik Going to the Front in Siberia," Han Shanxu, an actor from Beijing People's Art Theatre, combined miming techniques from Western and Peking opera in his mini-drama. He whispered as the shrill wind and told the audience how Schweik was suffering -- the latter is much like a prologue in Peking opera. . . "the moment of realizing has come now," said Tatlow, "they are studying and interested in Brecht's theory and practice. They are anxious to know." Discussions during the week-long seminar covered an introduction of the German dramatist who died in 1956, his relationship with his contemporaries in drama and literature; Brecht and Lao She; Brecht's influence on Chinese pingtan, a kind of story-telling and ballad-singing style in the Suzhou dialect; and his influence on the set design of Chinese stage. "If we say the moment of understanding has arrived," said Tong Daoming, another researcher, "that means his approach has come home to the audience." Before the "cultural revolution," people could not understand Brecht deeply. After the tumultuous decades, they seemed better able to grasp the many facets, he said.

### Brecht Exhibit in London

An exhibit of theatre paintings inspired by Brecht's Threepenny Opera opened at the Artlink Gallery on August 14, 1985, as part of the Edinburgh Festival events. The exhibit was the result of a seminar-workshop directed by GDR director Heinz Uwe Haus and British painter Glyn Hughes held in London and organized by the European Theatre Coordinate and the youth theatre group NYTD. Thirteen large canvasses (2 X 3 meters) translate the director's and artist's conceptual plans for the major literary and scenic song metaphors into visual images and represent a contemporary reading of the gangster story. In part completed by the seminar participants themselves, the works use batik, spray paint, acrylics and application techniques.

### Information from the Bert-Brecht-Förderkreis Augsburg

The Augsburg Förderkreis was pleased to have three guest performances of Brecht plays included in the Third Bayerische Theatertage in Augsburg (June 1985). Visiting theatres were Stadttheater Würzburg (Mutter Courage), Volkstheater München (Schwejk im 2. Weltkrieg), and Residenztheater München (Leben des Galilei).

The Second Bertolt-Brecht-Filmtage took place in Augsburg on October 3-4, 1985. Werner Hecht from the Brecht-Zentrum der DDR lead discussions after each of the four film presentations.

In commemoration of Brecht's 90th birthday in 1988, the Förderkreis is beginning to make plans for a Bert-Brecht-Symposium in Augsburg.

The Brecht Museum in Augsburg -- Brecht Gedenkstätte, Auf dem Rain 7 -- is now open to the public daily, except Monday, from 10 AM to 4 PM. Exhibits in five rooms include documents and photos about Brecht's youth in Augsburg, his theater reviews written for the Augsburger Volkswillen, as well as material on Brecht's reception in Augsburg. Horst Jesse's recently published guidebook Spaziergang mit Bertolt Brecht durch Augsburg (Brigg Verlag, 1985) provides an orientation to the museum and its collection.

### Brecht in South Africa

Arnold Blumer writes that two papers on Brecht were delivered at the 11th Congress of the South African Association for German Studies, 11-13 April 1985 in Pietermaritzburg/Natal:

Ulrich Klingmann (University of Cape Town): "Das Denken und das Gedachte." Zur Problematik des dialektischen Denkens in Brechts Geschichten vom Herrn Keuner"

Wolfgang Pasche (University of Cape Town): "Die Funktion des Rollenspiels im Brechtschen Lehrstück"

### GDR Brecht Director in the USA

Prof. Klaus M. Schmidt announces that director Heinz-Uwe Haus (Berlin/GDR) will be spending Spring Semester at Bowling Green State University. During his stay from February 2 to June 30, Mr. Haus will be available for lectures on a variety of topics

and workshops in English and German. For information, contact Prof. Schmidt, Dept. of German, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403-0219.

### Forthcoming Books

Joel Schechter: Durov's Pig: Clowns, Politics and Theatre (Fall 1985), treats the works of Bertolt Brecht, Dario Fo, Peter Handke, the Théâtre du Soleil, Lotte Goslar, El Teatro Campesino, the Bread and Puppet Theater and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, among others. The author considers politics as a form of satiric theatre, as exemplified by America's Yuppies and Germany's Green Party, paying special attention to anti-war satire as it has evolved over this century, particularly Brecht's anti-war writings and their influence on other authors. Available from Theatre Communications Group, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (244 pages, \$10.95, ISBN 51-8).

James K. Lyon: Bertolt Brechts Gedichte. Eine Chronologie. (Suhrkamp, September 1986), is a chronological listing of every Brecht poem, a surprising and revealing sourcebook.

James K. Lyon, ed.: Brecht in Amerika. Eine Dokumentation (Suhrkamp, September 1986), is a documentary volume of little-known (or unknown) documents of Brecht in America. It will include printed newspaper interviews with BB (3), unpublished film stories by Brecht, reviews of his plays produced while in America, copies of publishers' and performance contracts with Brecht, a generous excerpt from his FBI file, etc.

### Brecht and Jazz

Le Nouvelle Observateur reported recently that internationally renowned jazz singer Nina Simone has now added Brecht/Weill songs to her repertory.

### Brecht Underground

Warren Leming reports that two issues of a new underground political journal have appeared in Chicago under the title Kuhle Wampe. Contents focus on American imperialism and capitalism, not on Brecht (yet). Editorial address: Box 578476, Chicago, IL 60657.

### Brecht Society of America

The first issue of Gestus, the new, independent Brecht quarterly published by the Brecht Society of America, appeared this summer. Editorial address: Dwight Steward, 59 S. New Street, Dover, DE 19901.

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### CALL FOR PAPERS

The International Brecht Society announces a call for papers for the second annual

ATA/IBS Brecht Session at the 1986 American Theatre Association Convention, August 17-20, 1986, in New York City.

The panel, entitled "Brecht and Performance," will explore the degree to which Brecht's theory and practice has provided and can still provide viable models for modern and postmodern performance. The answer to this question is far from clear, in part because the standard criteria for evaluating Brecht's contribution have been rendered conservative by the continuing evolution of contemporary performance and its theoretical and social contexts. Papers are encouraged, therefore, that reevaluate the criteria for analyzing Brechtian theory and practice or reassess Brecht's contribution in light of contemporary developments. Examples may be drawn from the full range of contemporary performance: theatrical, performance art, mixed media, film and video, etc. All points of view on Brecht's contribution are encouraged -- supportive, critical, despairing, or derogatory.

Finished papers should not exceed twenty minutes presentation time. Submit abstracts by December 31, 1985, to:

John Rouse, Department of Theatre, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA 70118

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#### CONFERENCE CALL

Brecht 30 Years After: Brecht and the Contemporary Theatre

October 22-25, 1986

University of Toronto

On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Bertolt Brecht, the University of Toronto intends to sponsor a conference on Brecht and the contemporary theatre. The moment seems appropriate for a fundamental reappraisal of Brecht's work for the theatre, and for an assessment of his influence upon the theatre today. The conference committee will solicit the participation of individuals involved in every aspect of the theatre: scholars, playwrights, performers, and designers. The format of the conference will allow for a diversity of presentations: invitation papers in primary sessions, solicited short papers, theatre performances, films and videotapes, workshops and exhibitions. Short papers (approximately 20 minutes) dealing with some aspect of Brecht's contribution to the theatre, or with aspects of the contemporary theatre that seem relevant to Brecht, are being solicited. Send two copies of abstracts (1 page) and direct all questions or suggestions to:

Colin Visser / Pia Kleber, University College Drama Programme, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1A1, Canada



### mla

Programs arranged by the International Brecht Society  
at the Convention of the Modern Language Association (Chicago 1985)

Session 179. Brecht and Latin America

December 28, 12:00 noon - 1:15, Marriott Hotel (Illinois Room)

Presiding: Marina Pianca (St. Lawrence University)

Bernardo Baycroft (Stanford University): "The 'Gran Teatro' in the New Theater of Colombia"

Fernando de Torro (Carlton University): "The Epic Latin American Theatre: Structures of Convergence"

Maria H. Lima (University of Maryland): "The Brazilian Version of the Threepenny Opera"

Heidrun Adler (University of Hamburg): "'El Monumento', a Lehrstück by Buenaventura"

Session 440. Brecht and Poetry

December 29, 12:00 noon - 1:15, Marriott Hotel (Denver Room)

Presiding: Johannes Maczewski (University of Victoria)

Dagmar C.G. Lorenz (Ohio State University): "Liebe in Brechts Gedichten - welche Liebe?"

Michael Gilbert (Valparaiso University): "The Musical Dimensions of Brecht's Work as a Poet"

Reinhold Grimm (University of Wisconsin, Madison): "Bertolt Brecht and Carl Sandburg: Kindred Poets"

Lane Jennings (World Future Society): "Carriers of Knowledge: Brecht, Graves, and Ginsberg as Model Poets for the Twenty-First Century"

This year we will be soliciting and voting on proposals for IBS sessions to be held at the 1986 and 1987 MLA conventions (four all together). Please come prepared!

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