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COMMUNICATIONS

EDITOR: NORMAN KOESSLER

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY 40 / 2011

HASA

DIGA

GUTER MENSCH

GAM

Brecht

Book of Mormon

WAY - OH

Theater

University



EDITOR

NORMAN ROESSLER

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

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FRIEDEMANN WEIDAUER

UNIVERSITY OF

CONNECTICUT

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR,

BRECHT YEARBOOK

MARC SILBERMAN

UNIVERSITY OF

WISCONSIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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IF YOU DON'T LIKE WHAT WE SAY,
TRY LIVING HERE A COUPLE DAYS.

DERGUTER HAS A DIGA LEEERCHTOWAI

2.0

©Joan Marcus

GAMING

I stole this idea from John Cage, Lecture on Nothing / Composition As Process... also with a little help from my friends: Gilgamesh, The German Language, Gertrude Stein, Roland Barthes, Bob Dylan, Friedrich Nietzsche, Bertolt Brecht, Sigmund Freud, Book of Mormon Broadway Musical, John Coltrane...

This category is entitled Gaming but it could also be called Dialectics. Auseinandersetzungen, Ludological Alienations, Magical Fuck Frogs...

BJ (Brechtjob)? Cage, BoM, Brecht... Together? You're kidding, right?

Writing is love; reading is sex... by other means!

Aphoristic...Alienation...
Lacunae...Symptoms...Detective
Story...GameReading...
FuckWriting

The Cover Story will not be covered. It is whole but only as pieces. It is a Mad Magazine Fold-In as Text.

Silence: 2:59

Did you ever write an essay when you looked up from the page of another essay that you were writing?

Why a white cover ?

THESES

1. Can one review a performance without writing it? *Good Person of Sezuon*

GP

2. Can you write a review without seeing the production? The Book of Mormon Broadway Musical.

BoM

3. Can one deconstruct (redeem?) the teleological university (and its priesthood) by destroying the academic journal? Can one salvage the university by turning it into a video game? Can the ludological and the brechtological be combined to rewrite the university complex?

MMORPG

4. Brecht is Dead and We (Professors & Artists) killed him? The writing, teaching, performing, production, reading of Brecht is no longer ludological alienation but teleological death?

CIBS40

*Don't let me stop your great self-destruction!
I wash my hands of your demolition! Die if you must! You innocent puppet!*
JC Superstar; 1970

FABLES

BoM

GP

MMORPG

CIBS40

This category could also be designated Options, Interventions, Lies, Auswege, Spiele, Masks, Hasa Diga Eebowai, Theses

Thesis #5: Writing as Editing. Start with a Cover Story and make it work. Keep redacting until you discover the puzzle. Text follows design.

Thesis #6: Make sure you resolve with laughter. Only the comic aesthetic will make this writing work. As long as they think you are a Good Person you can get away with anything. Sweetness. Happy Happy End! But if you are angry or mean-spirited they will ... resist you.

Thesis #7: Chekov's Gun (CG): "One must not put a loaded rifle on the stage, if no one is thinking of firing it."

Thesis #8: If I like many seemingly different things, must they have some common, unseen DNA? Is Brecht Dylan? Is BoM 3p0?

WARNING: THIS PERFORMANCE CONTAINS EXPLICIT CONTENT & LYRICS. SIDE EFFECTS INCLUDE: (BR)EREC(H)TILE DYSFUNCTION, DIALECTICAL ORGASM, TELEOLOGICAL PROFANITY DISORDER (TPD), BAD FAITH, HAGLUND'S DEFORMATIONS. THE READING / WRITING / STARING / SEEING / GAMING OF THIS PERFORMANCE IS MEANT FOR REPRODUCTION, YET DOES NOT REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE IBS. ANY SIMILARITY TO PERSONS OR EVENTS IS ENTIRELY COINCIDENTAL.

GAMING

**Brechtian Minimalism; or,
The White Album. Why not
black or pink?**

**I think; therefore, I am
I alienate; therefore, I
adapt
I alienate; therefore, I is
I am alienated; therefore,
I learn
I alienate; therefore, I
evolve
I alienate; therefore I
gAME.**

**Alienation (Symptomology)
is how we learn, adapt,
survive, evolve, revolve.**

**The Brechtian is the
Darwinian, the Freudian,
the Socratic;**

**The Aristotelian is the
Matrix; The Brechtian is
the Mosaic.**

**Brecht is Black Power:
Morpheus/Fishburne.**

**But you can't perform or
game the university, the
professor, the essay, the
seminar, the text. Ernst
ist die Uni; heiter ist die
Kunst, gell?**

Ich will nur einen Ausweg.

Text for Sex Anyone?

FABLES

CIBS40

From the outset Stone and Wright's adaptation creates a hermetically-sealed and monocultural world. Propelled both by their artistic vision and the exigencies of funding within a commercial theatre model, these artists replace the relatively diverse and large German community represented in all Brecht's versions of Baal, with a tight focus on an Australian Generation Y scene. This culture is vividly depicted through the use of a vernacular language, finely tuned during rehearsals by a cast of three males and six females.

As Brown notes in the foreword, "In this book I record every time I paid for sex up to the end of 2003 and every prostitute I've had sex with since then." The fullness of that "every time" lends both a sense of authority and a sense of the cold-blooded to the whole undertaking. But it also lends credence to the philosophy, grounding the episodes in a meticulous, academic sort of procedural. Some of the sex scenes are compelling in the salacious, voyeuristic way you might expect, and you will want to file some of them under "Too Much Informa-

BoM

2011

March 19, 2011: Norman Roessler finishes watching *Battlestar Galactica* (Reimagined) on Netflix online video streaming service. Roessler conducts various Guitar Prophet Treatments (GPT) of the signature song in the series, Jimi Hendrix's adaptation of Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower." Guitar Prophet is a Brecht-Dylan App in which a song is reimagined and reproduced on the acoustic guitar, harmonica, and (hopefully) bad voice. One must play against the epic teleology that has been inscribed on the song in order to liberate both the song and the singer. One alienates the song by playing it small where it is usually played big, interprets it in a counter-ideological way, and sings in-out-between the rhymes and the rhythms of the song. When the song is rediscovered in its plasticity (Rubber Soul) and is understood to be infinitely adaptable (Humboldt: "Infinite Use of Finite Media") one has achieved dialectic catharsis and contentment. Roessler's GPT is successful. By the next day he has no memory of the event.

March 24: The Book of Mormon written by Trey Parker, Matt Stone (South Park) and Robert Lopez (Avenue Q) premieres on Broadway at

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CIBS40

BoM

CIBS40

tion.” But that’s part of Brown’s point, to not shy away from the disgusting bits. In this scene of a return visit to the “incall” prostitute who turns out later, to Brown’s surprise, to be a non-English speaker, there is the loaded detail of the spent tube of lubricant.

AS A WRITER AND AS A TEACHER I EMPLOY BRECHTIAN ALIENATION TECHNIQUES. FOR EXAMPLE, OFTEN WHILE TEACHING AN INTRODUCTORY LEVEL INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COURSE, I MAKE USE OF THE DISCUSSION BOARD WHICH IS PROVIDED ON THE UNIVERSITY E-LEARNING PROGRAM. DURING A RECENT SEMESTER, I BEGAN THE FIRST TWO DISCUSSION TOPICS BY COPYING AND PASTING NEWS ARTICLES FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS IN THE SPACE PROVIDED FOR THE INSTRUCTOR TO ILLICIT RESPONSES. FOR THE SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION, I PROVIDED MY STUDENTS WITH A JOURNALIST ACCOUNT OF A BIBLICAL PASSAGE THAT I PREPARED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE PURPOSE. IT WENT AS FOLLOWS:

Well, perhaps. If the selections manifested a theme, it might be phrased as “over-it-ness” – or *post-post*. Maybe it’s too soon to classify the return of the theatrically repressed as a post-postdramatic turn, but

the Eugene O’Neill Theater in New York City, USA.

March 31: Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo written by Rajiv Joseph premieres on Broadway at the Richard Rodgers Theater. Roessler considers submitting a request for review tickets, but doesn’t feel like begging the Broadway-Military-Industrial Complex for one peanut gallery ticket in order to see what probably will be little better than Harry Potter aesthetics. He considers a new idea: why not just read the fucking playscript? It’s a cheaper and more useful ticket and seems like a fitting Bb alienation. He orders Gruesome Playground Injuries (which contains Bengal Tiger) as well as Lynn Nottage’s Ruined. Ruined will play in Philadelphia in June. Hedging one’s bet? The proof of the pudding lies in the eating?

April 2: Roessler reads Jane McGonigal’s Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World (2011) and uses it as the basis to secure a small university grant in which he will examine the potential use of games for the development of Online Learning Courses. For the first time, Roessler cannot imagine the future of the university. He makes plans for both internal and external exile.

there was plenty of text-based and classical (or classical modern) theatre by Schiller, Ibsen, Chekhov, Hauptmann, and Miller on display, all led off by Elfriede Jelinek’s furious and torrential reclaiming of the spoken (sung, shouted) word in *Das Werk/Im Bus/ Ein Sturz*. Herbert Fritsch, the festival’s surprising double nominee, was clearly over the self-regarding pieties of *Regietheater*, breaking all unwritten rules of stringent interpretation and careful dramaturgy with a trippy, trashy, post-postfeminist *Nora*. Berlin performance collective She She Pop did a post-post-generational take on *King Lear* in their piece *Testament* by pulling perhaps the most hazardous and gutsy feat anyone attempted at the festival, bringing their own fathers on stage.

BUTOH’S ORIGINS IN A WAY HAVE A COMMONALITY WITH GROUP MOTION’S, COMING INTO BEING IN JAPAN IN THE WAKE OF WORLD WAR II AND STUDENT RIOTS. AND OF COURSE OHNO KAZUO STUDIED WITH EGUCHI RAKAYA WHO HAD STUDIED WITH MARY WIGMAN, AND HIJIKATA TATSUMI STUDIED WITH EGUCHI’S STUDENT, ANDO MITSUKO, THROUGH WHOM HE MET OHNO, AND IT WAS THROUGH THEIR MEETING THAT BUTOH WAS BORN. HOW DID GROUP MOTION RECONNECT WITH THIS OTHER OFFSHOOT OF THE MARY WIGMAN TRADITION?

DYSFUNCTION. DIALECTICAL ORGASM, TELEOLOGICAL PROFANITY DISORDER (TPD), BAD FAITH, HAGLUND’S HUMAN REPRODUCTION AND DOES NOT REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THE IBS. ANY SIMILARITY TO PERSONS OR COINCIDENTAL.

GpS

GOOD PERSON OF SEZUAN SYMPTOMATIC REVIEWS (FREUD)

REHEARSALS ARE
SYMPTOMS; SYMPTOMS ARE
REHEARSALS.

I ATTEND REHEARSALS OF
GPS ON THE FOLLOWING
DATES: OCTOBER 4, 2011
AND OCTOBER 12, 2011.

I SEE THE PRODUCTION
ON NOVEMBER 11, 2011
(or 11/11/11)

FIRST OFFICIAL REHEARSAL:
WEDNESDAY, 10/4
UWE HAUS: "NOTHING
IS MORE BORING THAN A
HUMAN FACE ONSTAGE"

HOW TO BUILD AN
ENSEMBLE IN THE CONTEXT
OF (YET AGAINST THE
COMPLEX OF) BROADWAY
/ HOLLYWOOD/ WALL
STREET? IS COMMUNAL
CONSCIOUSNESS EVEN
POSSIBLE? SHOULD WE
RENAME IT THE GOOD
MATRIX OF PHILADELPHIA?

THE ENSEMBLE REHEARSES
"THE SONG OF THE EIGHTH
ELEPHANT." THIS IS FROM
SCENE 8, "SHUI TA'S
TOBACCO FACTORY,"

THEY HAVE REHEARSED
THE SONG AS A GROUP,
WITH THE MUSIC DIRECTOR,
LINDA HENDERSON,
AND HAVE CREATED
IMPROVISATIONAL MUSICAL
/ CHOREOGRAPHICAL
SKETCHES AROUND THE
NUMBER.

CIBS40

Rehearsal #4: We improvise and create the prologue. One actor stomps his feet slowly—left, right. Others join in, and they come from all parts of the room to the center. How to know when it's over? Bob will shout "Huh!" on the penultimate stomp. Next, the opening words of the play, "But... what would you...suggest?" It is barked at the audience in unison, with breaks between the words. They have read more about Brecht's ideas by this time, and are beginning to realize how Verfremdungseffekt works.

Rehearsal #5: The hated wool coats. They're hot, they de-humanize; everyone looks the same. Oh, realizes the cast. It's like we're one organism. Oh. Uwe wants us to take the coats off and fold them in unison. It's a mess, until John invents an efficient way of doing it. He teaches the rest, and we practice doing it every day.

Rehearsal #6: The cast has been instructed to bring in soft masks. We get a collection of ski masks, pantyhose and Macbook covers. Cut holes for eyes and mouth, okay, nose too if you must. Now we're hot, can't see, and can't breathe.

Like this entire production, he was no fun whatsoever. I am not trying to sound glib. In his essay, "Three Cheers for Shaw," Brecht acknowledges that "fun" and "cheerfulness" are crucial attributes of

GpS

A CURIOUS INTERVENTION.
WHY START REHEARSALS
HERE? WHAT IS UWE HAUS
TRYING TO TELL ME? THE
ENSEMBLE? US?

FAST FORWARD CUT
SCENE, PT. 1: I READ THE
GPS; I REREAD SCENE 8:

AHA! CLEVER. AN
IDEATIONAL AND
STRUCTURAL ORIGIN
STORY. IDEATIONAL:
ALMOST STRAIGHT FROM
MARX, CAPITAL, FACTORY
CHAPTER. STRUCTURAL:
ENSEMBLE SCENE, PAR
EXCELLENCE. GREAT
PHYSICAL THEATER WITH
MUSIC AND A BEAT.
DIALECTICS: MONETIZE
EXISTENCE, OBJECTIFY
HUMANITY; FETISHIZE
THROUGH MUSIC.

PEDAGOGICALLY
SPEAKING, THIS IS ELEGANT
DESIGN: WORKING
THE TEXT, WORKING
AGAINST BROADWAY
TOTALITARIANISM - ALL
WITHIN FOUR WEEKS.

FAST FORWARD CUT
SCENE, PT. 2: THIS MODEL
SCENE EVENTUALLY
PROVIDES THE BASIS FOR
THE PROLOGUE TO THE
FIRST ACT, SECOND ACT

BoM

December 17: Begins editorial work on CIBS 40. Starts with a retro cover design (only black and white) and early leitmotif articles, Ralf Remshardt, Theater-treffen; Anthony Squiers, Interview.

December 18: Increasing success mixing BoM with Joe's Garage and Jesus Christ Superstar. Perhaps underappreciated is the heavy dose of Jazz music he listens to during this period: Coltrane, Monk, Roach.

December 19: Starts to read the actual Book of Mormon on his IPAD. Watches South Park authors' earlier movie: Team America: World Police. Hilarious puppet version of the debauched American dream. Loves the kinky puppet sex scene and the application of the Chekovean prop rule in relation to the well-made play: "If in Act I you have a blow job offer on the table, then it must fire in the last act." But is probably most impressed with the Puking Scene as it fulfills Brechtian principles of play the intimate as epic. Idea slowly dawns that visual / spatial element of the cartoon / puppet show is crucial to the Brechtian success of the South Park project. The closer they get to live action, a.k.a, the musical, the more their subversion is totalized into sweetness.

December 20: Although highly entertained and cognitively engaged with material, he still feels no compulsion to see the show. Content with his dialectical rehearsals, he begins an intense musical analysis of the BoM soundtrack. He decides to concentrate a model analysis on the song, Hasa Diga Eebowai.

Gps

(AFTER INTERMISSION)
SCENE 8, AND THE
EPILOGUE.

REHEARSAL, WEDNESDAY,
10/12:

ENSEMBLE IS LYING ON
FLOOR. THEY WEAR
HEAVY WINTER ARMY
COATS AS WELL AS WINTER
BOOTS AND VARIETIES OF
SKI MASKS? KINKY! WHAT
THE FUCK IS THIS ALL
ABOUT? AFTER A WHILE IT
SMELLS A BIT.

REHEARSAL MOVES
TO LAST SCENE AND
EPILOGUE. GPS
ABANDONED, GODS
LAUGHING. THE WHOLE
ENSEMBLE WALKS TOWARD
THE FRONT OF THE
REHEARSAL SPACE, GROUPS
TOGETHER, TAKES OFF
MASKS AND IN CHORAL
UNISON INTONE ELEMENTS
OF THE EPILOGUE:

WHAT WOULD YOU
SUGGEST? SHOULD THE
WORLD BE CHANGED?
SHOULD THE GODS BE
CHANGED?

the theatre, especially as it pertains to a drama's hero, who is "not a [model] of good conduct...but consists of an impenetrable but exceedingly lively hotchpotch of the most contradictory qualities."¹⁴ Arguably, Macheath is Brecht's most "lively" and "contradictory" (anti) hero, which is the very point to the epic theatre's use of dialectics. This contradictoriness is apparent in the juxtaposition between Brecht's lyrics and Kurt Weill's musical language as demonstrated by the opera's signature ballads.

Although the production nailed the comedic aspect of Brecht's work, it certainly did not do this at the expense of the didactic potential of it. To the contrary, this production demonstrated *The Wedding* continues to be a timely polemic. This fact is not only a testament to the skill of the cast and director but also to the enduring relevance of Brecht. In a time when people are still suffering from the effects of the recent collapse in the housing and financial markets and unemployment rates hover over 11% in Illinois one can clearly see that like the furniture in Brecht's play the bourgeois system continues to be coming loose at the joints.

This panel, co-organized by Kristopher Imbrigotta (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Henning Wrage (Haverford College), was conceived as an opportunity to examine Brecht's visual and radio theories. "Multimediated Brecht" covered three areas in relation to Brecht's works: theater, film, and radio.

CIBS40

**REPORT FROM THE IBS
SECRETARY/TREASURER**
PAULA HANSSEN
FINANCIAL REPORT 2010 - 2011

Memberships are coming in slowly and we expect to maintain last year's numbers with ongoing renewals. The following report indicates, as last year, that we have covered our expenses for 2011.

Due to the rising costs of printing and shipping, and the fees we pay to maintain a Euro account, we discussed raising our membership fees at the IBS business meeting at our Symposium in May 2010.

SUMMARY OF EXPENSES AND ASSETS IN USD

Cost for eCIBS web host "Dream Host"	\$124.00
Brecht Yearbook 35(2011)	\$5,195.39
Shipping	\$1,840.23
Communications + Shipping 39 (2010)	\$3,931.16
Reception: Silvia Schlenstedt Memorial	\$60.00
Wild Apricot Database	\$270.00
TOTAL EXPENSES =	-\$11,420.78

IBS ASSETS AFTER EXPENSES PAID

Yearbook Royalties, Back Orders,	
Memberships 2011	+\$13,506.06
Euro Checking (8836 Euro)	+\$11,552.00
TOTAL ASSETS =	+\$25,058.06

Money Market Savings	+\$11,000
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PROJECTED EXPENSES IN THE COMING YEAR 2012

Communications 40 + Shipping	\$3,400
Brecht Yearbook 36 (2012)	\$5,300
BY Shipping	\$1,900
Brecht Symposium 2013	\$5,000

PROJECTED EXPENSES = \$11,100

Discussion at Business Meeting of IBS Symposium in Honolulu: It was agreed that we'll have new rates for regular and student/emeritus subscribers. We agreed upon \$45 per volume for regular membership / \$30 for students and emeritus. We've not asked for the raise in dues this year and will change the membership page to reflect that new amount.

SYNOPSIS OF IBS MEMBERSHIP

Year	Individual	Institutional	Total
2000	107	89	196
2001	100	83	183
2002	97	90	187
2003	133	84	217
2004	98	88	186
2005	90	79	169
2006	109	75	184
2007	53	72	170
2008	76	84	160
2009	84	86	170
2010	68	83	151
2011	85	90	175

SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 2011, 12:00PM - 1:15PM

PRESIDING: JANINE LUDWIG, DICKINSON COLLEGE / UNIVERSITY OF BREMEN

MLA CONFERENCE
LOS ANGELES, CA
JANUARY 2011

Speakers: Helen Fehervary, Ohio State University, Columbus; Robert George Kaufman, University of California, Berkeley; Kenneth Marcus, University of La Verne; Theodore Franks Rippey, Bowling Green State University; Helga Schreckenberger, University of Vermont

SESSION 777
ROUNDTABLE PANEL:
BRECHT IN EXILE

JANINE LUDWIG

Inspired by the conference site of Los Angeles, the session focused attention on the German émigré Bertolt Brecht in exile. Panelists discussed the "Brecht Circle," focusing on his and his wife Helene Weigel's encounters in Los Angeles and their written correspondence with other exiles from Central Europe, including Arnold Schoenberg, Salka Viertel, Fritz Lang, and Anna Seghers. The roundtable aimed to explore how the frustrating, tense experience of prolonged exile shaped not only Brecht's thinking about the connections between art and politics but also had a lasting impact on his American hosts and cultural environment (Text by Marc Silberman).

NORTH AND SOUTH OF THE BORDER: BRECHT, WEIGEL, AND SEGHERS IN AMERICAN EXILE
HELEN FEHENVARY, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

The renowned Seghers expert Helen Fehervary traced the lifelong friendship between Brecht and Helene Weigel and Anna Seghers, starting with their close communication in the 1930s and ending with an outlook on their continued relations later in East Germany. Seghers achieved much greater mainstream success in the United States than Brecht ever could, especially with her famous novel *The Seventh Cross*. Weigel played a tiny, yet impressive mute role in the similarly successful Hollywood adaptation directed by the Austrian native Fred Zinnemann. Focusing on their years in exile, Helen Fehervary drew comparisons between émigré life in Los Angeles and Mexico City and revealed reasons for why the well organized and extremely active émigré community in Mexico City was so successful - especially compared to Brecht's difficulties and disappointments in Los Angeles as an author, a screenwriter, a theater practitioner, and as an anti-fascist who wanted to have a political impact. She also explained how communication among émigrés across borders was difficult and often went via third parties, since letters were intercepted by the FBI whose surveillance was as active in Mexico City as it was in Los Angeles.

BRECHT AND AMERICAN POETRY
GEORGE KAUFMAN, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Georg Kaufman put most of the post-1948 emphasis on how Brecht's exile had a well-known crucial effect on American Theatre, but a less well-known, though arguably at least as important, effect on American *poetry* - from the Popular Fronters, to the Black Mountain experimental poets, to the Beats, the San Francisco Renaissance, The New York School, and beyond. Referring to the *Selected Poems: Bertolt Brecht* collection translated by H.R. Hays, he particularly mentioned the influence that Brecht's *Hollywood Elegies* had on Allen Ginsberg's poetry and Paul Celan's *A leaf, treeless*, dedicated to Brecht as a reference to his poem, *An die Nachgeborenen*. George Kaufman also pointed to the reverse influence that this Brecht-influenced American poetry then came to have, and exerts until this day, on German, French, and Latin American poetry from the late 1950s onward. He showed the specificity of how Bertolt Brecht's familiar-to-a-Germanistik audience "American Exile Period" poems become part of - and still generate dynamic developments in - American poetry (and American poetry's place in the ongoing conversation that considers international poetry, poetics, aesthetics, and critical theory).

BRECHT, SCHOENBERG, AND EISLER

KENNETH MARCUS, UNIVERSITY OF LAVERNE, CA

Brecht met Arnold Schönberg once. The meeting was initiated by Hanns Eisler despite his trepidation that his ailing teacher, Schönberg, with his aversion to socialism, might provoke Brecht to start a heated discussion, while also knowing that Brecht rejected Schönberg's music as "too melodious," "too sweet." However, the meeting seems to have gone surprisingly well. Kenneth Marcus elaborated on the fact that Brecht was charmed by Schönberg's anecdote of how he learned from a donkey to climb a hill in a zigzag - a point that Brecht was willing to turn into a cantata in honor of Arnold Schönberg's seventieth birthday: "Ich habe von einem Esel gelernt" (The text was, unfortunately, lost). Furthermore, Kenneth Marcus placed Brecht's poems in the context of exile modernism in Los Angeles.

BRECHT BREATHED

THEODORE FRANKS RIPPEY, BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Theodore Rippey's main topic was aesthetic exposure. He employed the concept of aesthetics both broadly defined (the range of sensory experience) and narrowly (art, poetics). In doing so, he focused primarily on Brecht's exile in Scandinavia, before he moved to the United States in 1941. Examining Brecht's poems and entries in the *Arbeitsjournal/Work Journal*, Theodore Rippey talked about the poetic use of elements and substances such as air, water, building materials, and sounds.

BRECHT AND SALKA VIERTTEL

HELGA SCHRECKENBERGER, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

Helga Schreckenberger gave an overview on the connection between Brecht and Salka Viertel, the Polish-Viennese actress who was so instrumental in bringing together almost the whole European intellectual émigré elite in a "Sunday salon" at her house in Mabery Road, Santa Monica. Viertel, herself established in Hollywood through her close contact with Greta Garbo as the "Garbo specialist," seemed to be Brecht's entry ticket to the film scene and to commercial success. She agreed to collaborate with him on a film script called "Silent Witnesses," which yet was never produced. Helga Schreckenberger expanded upon this rather complex collaboration and generally on Brecht's (failed) attempts to achieve success in the film business.

The subsequent lively debate with the roughly 20 audience members went further into some matters such as collaborative projects between Brecht and Eisler, Brecht's views on music, Helene Weigel's role as a housewife, female exile, and more.

THE EPIC AND ETHICS
IN THE BRECHTIAN
MODE

DOROTHEE OSTMEIER

On behalf of the IBS, Dorothee Ostmeier (University of Oregon) initiated and co-organized this year's collaboration with the MLA Division of Twentieth-Century German Literature. The session on "The Epic and Ethics in the Brechtian Mode," moderated by Claudia Breger (Indiana University), drew more than forty MLA members and stimulated fascinating discussions with Ostmeier as commentator and the audience in general. The session examined how Brecht's Marxist philosophy of epics – which he develops at the intersection of theatrical and narrative practices – could be linked to that of ethics in fascist theater, in the appropriation of Chaplin's slapstick humor, and in psychoanalysis.

The first paper, "Developing a Theater of the Collective: Brecht's *Lehrstücke* and the Nazi *Thingspiele*" delivered by David Pan (University of California, Irvine), examined the critical relation between the ideologies that inform Brecht's *Lehrstücke* and fascist *Thingspiele*. Because his *Lehrstücke* were written as political tools designed to develop and maintain a new relation between performers and audience within a context of communist struggle, Brecht abandoned the *Lehrstück* model once the immediate political struggle within the Weimar Republic ended with the establishment of Nazi power. Yet the techniques that Brecht developed did not remain unused. Though they were developed for a Marxist audience, Erika Fischer-Lichte has shown that the Nazis also used them in the design of the *Thingspiel* performances they supported in the years immediately after coming to power. Like the *Lehrstück*, the *Thingspiel* was developed as a way to merge spectators and performers into a unity within mass performances in which large choruses created the link. Both forms were conceived as ways to build a collective through a process of political representation.

In the second paper, "The Marx Brothers: Brecht, Chaplin, and the Comic Inheritance of Marxism," Paul Flaig (Cornell University) revealed Brecht's humor as it was inspired by his fascination with Chaplin and his figures of the *Lumpenproletariat*. While many critics have alluded to the influence of Charlie Chaplin on the theory and practice of Brecht's epic theater, Flaig examined the broader political ramifications of this interaction. That such interaction spanned Brecht's entire career – from his avid movie-going in the teens to his theoretical and narrative adoption of Chaplinian *Gestus* (*Mann ist Mann*) and narrative form (*Pantaleone*) in the twenties and thirties right up to Brecht's friendship with the star in Hollywood – should already suggest the importance of reciprocally reading these two figures, especially in light of the broader politico-ethical concern they inherit from their nineteenth-century forerunner Marx. If Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* is farcically forced into comedy by the contingent interruption of the *Lumpenproletariat*, Chaplin and Brecht make this discontinuous, distracted, and trampish figure the central object of their various narrative strategies, strategies unified by a radically ambiguous humor. Beyond the teleology of Marxist science, the *Lumpen*, as the figure appears in various guises and forms in Chaplin's films and Brecht's plays, comically performs the political by exposing the repressed nonsense of reified social relations and by doing so, produces their historicity and alterability. Arguing for an essential humor at the heart of Brechtian aesthetics, this paper proposes that epic theater screens these relations in a Chaplin-inflected montage of gestures, positions, and attitudes, finding a means, to paraphrase Marx, to separate from the past joyfully.

The third paper, "Brechtian *Verfremdung* and Freud's *Unheimliche*: The Uncanny Ethics of the Split Subject in Postwar German Narrative," investigated the links between two key terms of modernity and asked how they inform the ethics of the split subject in Brecht's texts. Eva Revesz (Denison University) read Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* in line with Freud's notion of the *Unheimliche* and pointed towards the dialectical relationship between the strange and the familiar, in which two contrary meanings "develop in the direction of an ambivalence where the one term coincides with its opposite" ("The Uncanny"). This type of chiasmic *Aufhebung* is what Brecht also has in mind. By showing how this dialectic intersects with the dialectic between self and other, Revesz problematized the general view

that the salient difference between Brecht and Freud is that the former concerned himself with political and historical processes while the latter with the inner psychic life of the individual subject. She argued that Brechtian *Verfremdung* involves a psycho-therapeutic dimension that distances the spectator from the actors on stage through a split in the ego very much in the Freudian sense. Thus, the figure of the double, which Freud designates as a paradigm of the uncanny, is also a staple of Brecht's work. Such a doubled and defamiliarized subject manifests itself on the narrative level in a discursive split between first and third person in Freud's notion of the *Unheimliche* no less than in Brechtian *Verfremdung*. There is hence a therapeutic process in play here that reaches beyond the uncanny shock of estrangement: the schizophrenic characters on stage activate a split also in the spectator, a dialectical process that leads the spectator, in contrast to the characters on stage, to a higher level of understanding. Revesz concluded her paper by pointing to the myriad split and multiple personalities that populate postwar German literature, arguing that both Freud's and Brecht's technique of discursive splitting and distancing influenced the narrative strategies of an entire generation of postwar authors in their attempts to come to terms with the fascist past.

MLA CONFERENCE
SEATTLE, WA
JANUARY 2012

MARC SILBERMAN

BRECHT READING /
READING BRECHT

MLA SESSION #373, JANUARY 6, 2012
BRECHT READING / READING BRECHT

This well-attended collaborative session (30+ in the audience) between the IBS and MLA Division of Drama focused on distinct issues of adaptation in three works of Brecht, as detailed in the abstracts below. The response by Paula Hanssen (Webster University, St. Louis) led to several questions for the speakers: on the distinction of refunctioning (Umfunktionieren) and remediating (Powell); on the inherently dramatic quality of court room scenes, including in early plays and prose texts by Brecht (Baker); and on the more general pertinence of the body inscribed in Brecht's plays, as demonstrated in the comparative reading of Eduard the Second.

LARSON POWELL (UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI, KANSAS CITY)

THE ARCHIVE OF ANTIQUITY: BRECHT'S TRIAL OF LUCULLUS

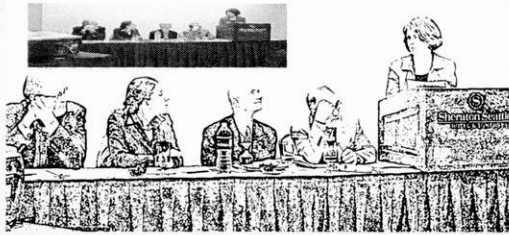
This paper considers Brecht's radio play *Das Verhör des Lukullus* (1939) in light of its relation to classical antiquity. Recent theories of the archive are referred to in order to separate out the play's various medial levels or strands. These include its radiophonic aspects and its allusions not only to classical historiography, but also to older forms of storage media and their use of rhetoric. Brecht's "archive of antiquity" is contrasted to Freud's, since it points not to "archaic" origins but to the historical contingencies of Roman imperial power. For Brecht, antiquity allows both a glimpse of the archaic past, of more "primitive" forms of power and politics, and a productive estrangement and distancing from the immediate historical present. Yet every archive, including Brecht's, institutionalizes and conserves, is revolutionary and traditional, founds an authority and undermines it. Brecht's radio play paradoxically calls up a great Roman general from the dead only to undo his historical record and consign him to oblivion. Death and forgetting are the democratic levelers at the end of the play. The paper examines the kind of remembering of antiquity Brecht proposes in place of the traditional narrative of military grandeur his play condemns in the person of the general Lucullus.

SCOTT BAKER (UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI, KANSAS CITY)

THE THEATER OF LEGAL OPINION: BRECHT'S ADAPTATION OF SHAKESPEARE'S MEASURE FOR MEASURE

This paper argues that Brecht specifically adapts the informal staging of a courtroom in the fifth act of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* into both formal and informal courtroom scenes in the first published version of *Die Spitzköpfe und die Rundköpfe* (1933).

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courtroom scenes in plays such as *Die Maßnahme* and *Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe*, also written at this time; the alternative courtrooms consistently show how representatives of disempowered social classes appropriate judicial decisions from social elites in order to communicate an alternative definition of justice. The formal, institutionalized courtroom scenes in *Die Spitzköpfe* und *die Rundköpfe* are a new development for Brecht. Although they also function to expose the ideological assumptions of social elites, the decisions made in these courtrooms enact unjust legal interpretations. Brecht's adaptation thus shows distinct differences between the courtroom as a theatrical, performative trope, and the courtroom as an ideological state apparatus.

KRISTINA MENDICINO (YALE UNIVERSITY)

THE WORK OF READING: MARLOWE'S AND BRECHT'S EDUARD THE SECOND

This paper examines how Bertolt Brecht and Lion Feuchtwanger's 1924 adaptation of Christopher Marlowe's history play, *Edward the Second*, accents and amplifies the work of reading in two senses. The drama above all consists of readings as well as a dramatization of reading and its work. This work of reading, however, differs significantly from the "work" the texts of the two dramas seem to set in motion, especially in Brecht's version. In fact, encounters with texts and language as such forestall, if not "unwork" not only the acts of politics and private vengeance that drive the drama, but also the chronological-factual organization of history. Instead, the work of reading involves a logic of "surfeit"—to borrow a word from Marlowe's *Gaveston*—in the most literal sense: a logic that is over and above (*sur*) that which is made or done (*factum*). The paper pursues the surfeits of reading that Brecht's *Leben Eduards des Zweiten von England* presents—over and above those of Marlowe's drama—in conjunction with Brecht's poetological writings, where the surfeits of reading become the key to understanding his assertion that the best dramas are neither under-finished *nor* finished, but "Mehr-als-Fertig," a "Stoff" that admits many construals and exceeds any single one.

IBS BUSINESS MEETING JANUARY 6, 2012; 7 PM - 9 PM, TANGO RESTAURANT, SEATTLE, WA / USA

Marc Silberman presided at the IBS business meeting held at the Modern Language Convention in Seattle. Thirteen people attended the meeting. After introductions the first and most important order of business, the selection of two topics for IBS sessions at the 2013 MLA convention in Boston, proceeded. Of four suggestions, the following were selected:

MARC SILBERMAN

1) Brecht – Müller – Poems – Language (in conjunction with the International Heiner Müller Gesellschaft, IHMG), proposed by Janine Ludwig (Dickinson College in Bremen, Germany), possibly a collaboration with the MLA Division of Poetry.

2) Brecht and Celan, proposed by Elena Pnevmonidou (University of Victoria) and Paul Peters (McGill University), a collaborative special session with the MLA Division of 20th Century German.

Both calls for papers will be posted at the MLA website, the IBS website, the IBS Facebook page, and other relevant listservs. Deadline for submission of abstracts will be approximately mid-March.

Other IBS business included: announcements about the Brecht-Tage 2012 in Berlin (Brecht-Haus) and the 14th IBS Symposium being organized in Porto Alegre (Brazil) for May 20-23, 2013 (call for papers expected in late March 2012); and reports by treasurer, Paula Hansen, Brecht Yearbook editor, Friedemann Weidauer (submissions still being accepted for BY 37/2012 through March 2012), and Communications editor, Norm Roessler.

MULTIMEDIATED BRECHT

KRISTOPHER IMBRIGOTTA

This panel, co-organized by Kristopher Imbrigotta (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Henning Wrage (Haverford College), was conceived as an opportunity to examine Brecht's visual and radio theories. "Multimediated Brecht" covered three areas in relation to Brecht's works: theater, film, and radio. Michael Shane Boyle began with a look at "literarization" in Brecht's Epic

Theater. Marc Silberman followed with a discussion of how we might situate Brecht's "Threepenny Opera Lawsuit" as a contribution to both new media history and the role of the artist in a capitalist society. Michael Ryan ended the panel with a reassessment of Brecht's radio theory as a popular means for communication. Around 20 people attended the panel on Friday, January 5 at the Sheraton Hotel. Kristopher Imbrigotta presided over the session as moderator and Henning Wrage delivered the response, which summarized the presentations and provided both the panelists and the audience with thought provoking questions.

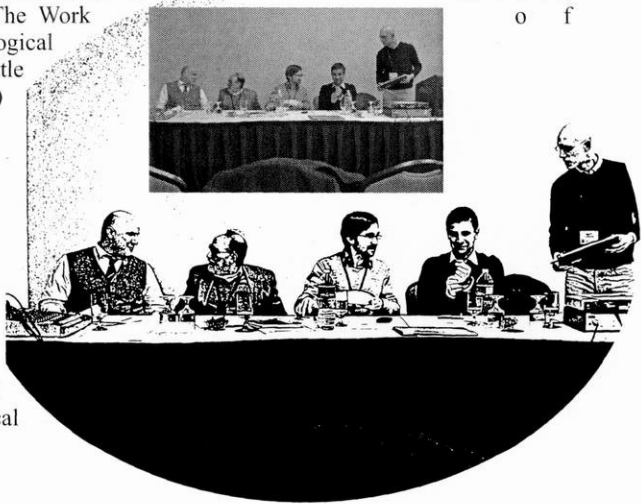
MICHAEL SHANE BOYLE

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

"LITERARIZATION" AND THE RADICAL POTENTIAL OF MEDIA
IN BRECHT, BENJAMIN, AND ENZENSBERGER

This paper offers a critical exegesis of Bertolt Brecht's concept of "literarization" in the work of Walter Benjamin and Hans-Magnus Enzensberger. For Brecht, literarization was one tactic in his project of amalgamating and functionally transforming (Umfunktionierung) theater. He hoped that the addition of text onstage in the form of projected slogans, captions, and signs, etc. could rupture the continuity of the action, thus preventing the play from becoming an object of passive contemplation. More than simply a formal concern, however, Brecht envisioned literarization as a strategy for generating revolutionary class consciousness. While Brecht's experiments with literarization yielded mixed results on

the stage, I argue that his theory of literarization played a profound role in the materialist aesthetics of both his friend Walter Benjamin and, a generation later, Hans-Magnus Enzensberger. My paper offers a careful discussion of Brecht's theory along with examples of his practical attempts at literarizing theater. I then trace the significance of literarization in foundational texts of theory by Benjamin (e.g., "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility" and "Little History of Photography") and Enzensberger (e.g., "Constituents of a Theory of the Media"). Given the crucial influence Benjamin and Enzensberger have had on critical and new media theory, what can the theoretical potential and practical perils Brecht encountered in literarizing theater offer our own analyses of and experiments with the radical potentiality of media?



MARC SILBERMAN

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

BRECHT'S "THREEPENNY OPERA LAWSUIT": A CONTRIBUTION TO NEW MEDIA HISTORY

This paper situates Brecht's book-length essay *Der Dreigroschenprozess* (1932) within the larger metamorphosis of the "Three penny material" in its metamorphosis from the most successful stage production of the Weimar Republic in 1928, to the film scenario commissioned for a commercial film adaptation, to the film directed by Georg Wilhelm Pabst, to the *Dreigroschenroman* that Brecht wrote in 1934 during his first year of exile in Denmark. The lawsuit text formulated his most extended theoretical reflection on the cinema as well as his most incisive contribution to a new kind of media history that explored, on the one hand, the competition unleashed by capitalist production practices between the theater and the cinema, and on the other hand, artists' rights to control their ideas when they encounter new mass media. Brecht and Weill filed suit in October 1930 on the grounds that the production company, Nero-Film, had not fulfilled its contractual obligation of "protecting" the original work's integrity. The subsequent trial generated an unusually large press response owing both to Brecht's notoriety and to the fact that the case had a signal function in articulating the contradictory positions both of literary intellectuals and the stakeholders in the entertainment industry. He shows that, contrary to what many artists would like to believe, the work of art, like other commodities, is subject to market forces and goes on to demonstrate brilliantly the implications of this insight for the significant media shift taking place during the interwar period.

MICHAEL P. RYAN

DUKE UNIVERSITY

BERTOLT BRECHT'S RADIO THEORY: A POPULAR RE-ASSESSMENT

According to radio and film scholars alike, prior to 1929 Weimar cinema basically ignored public broadcast. Carsten Lenk reports that Rundfunk was deployed as a "Sujet" in "nur wenigen [deutschen] Filmen." Mühl-Benninghaus concurs announcing that "inhaltlich Hörfunk und Film vor 1929 kaum aufeinander Bezug [nahmen]." In contrast, my research

evidences that the German film industry was eager to see the acoustic marvel on screen. In fact, by the time Brecht's *Der Flug der Lindberghs* had premiered in 1929, a wave of "Radio-Filme," i.e., feature films with plot lines driven by radio culture, had already been released. For example, *Radiofimmel* (1925), the silent era's only restored radio-film, depicts the new medium's "conquest" of a middle-class German family. Crucial here is that *Radiofimmel* does not simply deploy the sound juggernaut but transforms it into something unexpected: a two-way system of communication. According to the film, "so siegte das Radio." In other words, given that the idea of reciprocal communication is crucial to Brecht's "Rundfunk als Kommunikationsapparat" (1931/32), my paper assesses the likely impact of the popular imaginary on his media theory. At stake here is the introduction of newly-discovered cultural artifacts which recast Brecht's seminal radio theory within its popular context and problematize the pride of place his theory is often afforded.

MLA CONFERENCE
BOSTON, MA
JANUARY 2013

The IBS is sponsoring two sessions at the Modern Language Association Convention planned for January 3-6, 2013 in Boston. Presenters must become members of the Modern Language Association by April 1, 2012 to participate in the IBS convention sessions (www.mla.org)

MARC SILBERMAN

BRECHT AND CELAN

The session aims to uncover the profound affinities between the two poets by challenging certain myths about them: Celan's poetry is inaccessible, far removed from concrete material and political space, residing instead in some realm of pure language; Brecht's poetry is derivative of his dramas, overtly political and deliberately anti-aesthetical in language. Yet there is a common ground. Celan was a careful reader of Brecht's poetry and much less hermetic and interested in constructs of pure language than one might assume, while there is in Brecht's poetry a layer of subtle, poetic language. In addition to a linguistic and aesthetic kinship between Brecht and Celan, there are also significant thematic overlaps, such as the concept of kindness, the invocation of a non-metaphysical yet sacred presence of an "other," etc.

Send 200 word abstracts by March 9 to: Marc Silberman (mdsilber@wisc.edu)

BRECHT - MÜLLER - POETRY - LANGUAGE

Collaborative session sponsored by the International Brecht Society and Division of 20th-Century German Literature at the suggestion of the Internationale Heiner Müller Gesellschaft. There are many connections between Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller: Müller emulated Brecht as a role model, he extended his work through adaptations or with alternative projects, and as a young lyric poet he also positioned himself vis-à-vis this mentor. We seek papers that examine how Müller's poetry "translates" Brecht's poetic language as a mode of textual expression / expansion. Brecht advised those who read his poetry that one should "not forget his main work was in the theater"; this holds equally for Müller. If we take the advice seriously, it suggests that as poets both were attracted to a spoken German that had for centuries drifted apart from the written language. Beyond thematic connections, here we suggest a new way to focus on Müller's continuation of Brecht's work.

Send 200 word abstracts by March 9 to: Marc Silberman (mdsilber@wisc.edu) and Leslie Morris (morri074@umn.edu)

NEWS

Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus

Dienstag 11. 10. 2011
Beginn 20 Uhr

Zwischen
 Literaturforschung
 und Poesie
 Das Beispiel
 Silvia Schlenstedt

Gerhard Bauer,
 Volker Braun,
 Steffen Mensching,
 Kerstin Schoor und
 Hans-Eckardt Wenzel
 im Gespräch mit
 Frank Hörnigk

L Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus
 Chausseestr. 125 | 10115 Berlin
www.lfbrecht.de
www.facebook.com/lfbrechthaus

Einlass ab 19 Uhr.



GESPRÄCH

Am 16. März dieses Jahres verstarb die Literaturwissenschaftlerin Silvia Schlenstedt. Mit ihren Forschungen zur Geschichte der sozialistischen Literatur und zum literarischen Exil fand sie international Beachtung und prägte das Bild einer kritischen Germanistik in der DDR entscheidend mit. Zugleich stand sie als Intellektuelle beratend in engem literarischen Austausch mit Künstlerfreunden. Dieses besondere Rollenverständnis einer Wissenschaftlerin zwischen Forschung und Poesie genauer zu konturieren, ist Anliegen des Gesprächs, an dem sich Weggefährten, Arbeitskollegen und Freunde beteiligen.

Mit freundlicher Unterstützung der
 Anna Seghers Gesellschaft und
 der International Brecht Society



Dear CIBS:

I am very pleased to report about Bertolt Brecht in Perú. His name graces four schools in our country. Three of the schools are located in the capital, Lima; and the fourth is located in Huancaayo, a city located at 3,250m above sea level. ¿What would have said Brecht at so high an altitude?

The schools are not dedicated to theater, or any kind of art, but rather are normal schools dedicated to teaching the formal curriculum for young people in primary and secondary studies. For CIBS readers interested in this phenomenon they just have to search "Colegio Bertolt Brecht" in Google and they will find full information about their actual development.

There is also a teacher who I would like to bring to your attention. His name is Rafael Hernández and he has fully dedicated himself to presenting Brecht's plays at the schools in Lima. When he was younger he directed many Brecht plays with both professional and student actors while he was at the National School of Dramatic Art. He generally works with students from the ages of 12 to 16. Since 2008 he has produced and directed *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* and *Señora Carrar's Rifles*. Furthermore, he has created the Bertolt Brecht Study Center for Theatrical Research (BBCEIT). He has a lot of plans and hopes to further develop a pedagogical and performance praxis with Brecht's Theater. So, please let IBS members know that they can contact him about his work (and dreams).

Rafael Hernández
Jr 28 de Julio 302
Dpto 403, Lima 17
Perú
Cell: 995764419
bbceit04@hotmail.com

Gracias por la gentileza de publicar este resumen que tiene la intención de propiciar el contacto y el conocimiento entre gente que admira y respeta lo que Brecht ha significado en el teatro mundial. Para cualquier información adicional que deseen sobre BRECHT EN EL PERÚ estoy a sus órdenes en mi mail: sarajoffré@yahoo.es

Gracias otra vez y hasta pronto,

Sara Joffré

Bertolt Brecht-Archiv
Sankt-Nikolaus-Str. 125 # 4857

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4857

COMMUNICATIONS

from the

INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

December, 1971

Dear Friends,

This is the launching of a new project of the International Brecht Society, the Newsletter. The format is not definite as yet, and neither is the name but it seemed urgent to get the backlog of information to you without further delay.

It is my hope, as editor, that you will send me your reports and announcements, as well as your suggestions and criticism so that together we can make this new publication a useful tool for the exchange of ideas and information pertinent to our "common cause".

With my best wishes for a happy and successful New Year,

Sincerely yours,

Gisela E. Bahr
Gisela E. Bahr

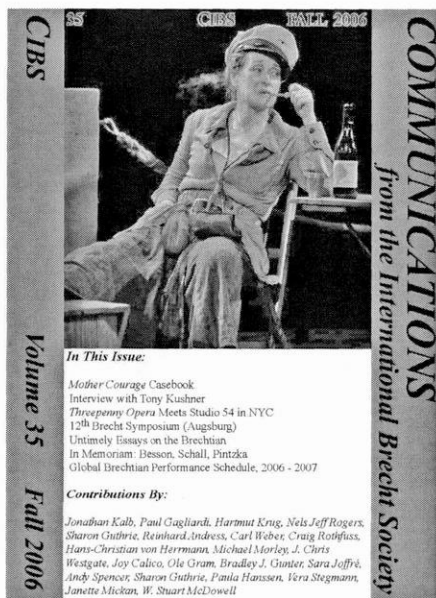
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40TH ANNIVERSARY CIBS ARCHIVE: 1971-2011: COVERS & POSTER ART

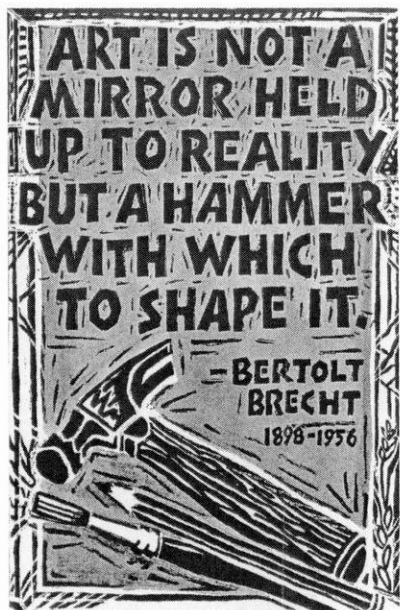


COMMUNICATIONS

from the International
Brecht Society

VOL. 20 No. 1, 2

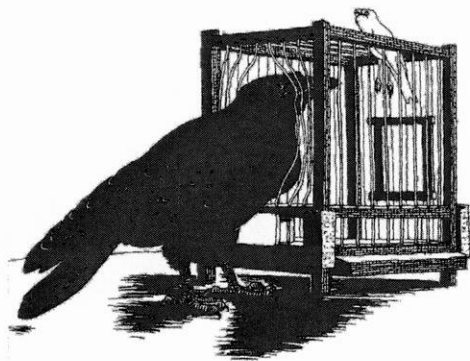




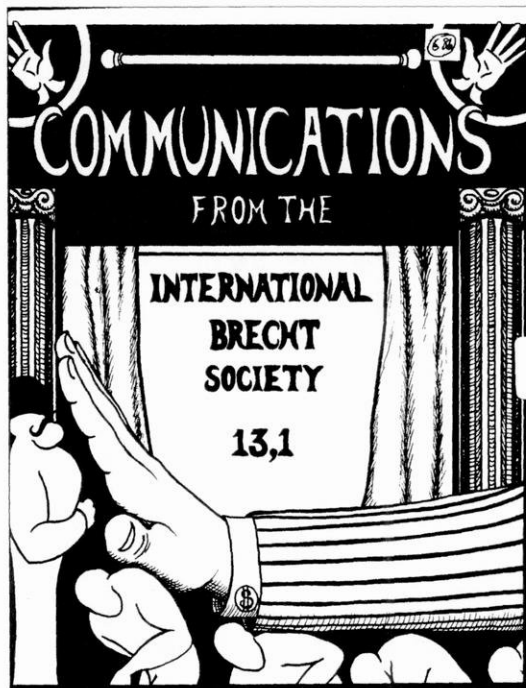
COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society

Volume 15, Number 1

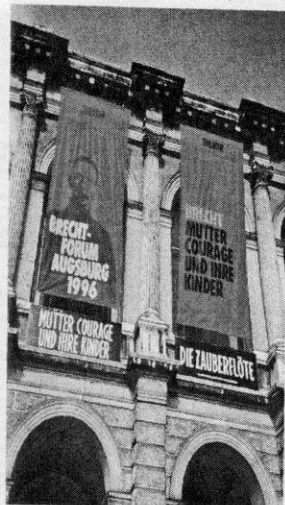


Wenn du nicht singen könntest
Wärest du so frei wie ich.



COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society



Volume 25 No. 1

June 1996

COMMUNICATIONS

from the International Brecht Society



slightly

Volume 17, No. 2

CIBS 36 FALL 2007

MACH
SCHAU!

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY

COMMUNICATIONS

CIBS 36 FALL 2007

DIE GLASMENAGERIE. TENNESSEE WILLIAMS.
 DIRECTION: MATHIAS KASCHIG. ADAPTATION: JÖRN
 VAN DYCK. SET/COSTUME DESIGN: JÜRGEN HÖTH.
 MUSIC: TOBIAS VETHAKE. ENSEMBLE: THEATER
 BREMEN. REVIEWED: FEBRUARY 12, 2011

As the audience entered Theater Bremen's Neues Schauspielhaus in Bremen, Germany, an American eagle - which was permanently nailed to a post with its wings majestically unfurled over the stage - welcomed them. I have no clue to how the German audience felt about the symbol. To them, did the eagle symbolize the United States' nationalism or self-righteousness? As a first generation Filipino-American, a son of naturalized American citizens, I was constantly reminded of my own fears of never achieving the so-called "American Dream." Like

GAVEN D. TRINIDAD

Tom Wingfield, the play's protagonist, the eagle was in a state of paralysis, the greatest threat to ever achieving that dream.

What originally enticed me to attend a performance of the classic American play *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams was the fact that it was a German production performed completely "auf Deutsch." Having been raised in New York City, my exposure to theater has mostly been the multi-million dollar musical monsters, such as *Miss Saigon* or *Spring Awakening*, and the rare dramatic diamonds that would transfer from London's West End, such as the lauded 2008 Broadway transfer of the Royal Court Theater's production of Chekov's *The Seagull*.

My first introduction to German Theater was the 2006 Roundabout Theater Production of *The Threepenny Opera* (using Wallace Shawn's adaptation and starring Alan Cummings) when I was sixteen. Though the production was scorned by many Brechtian purists

for its lack of emphasis on Marxist politics and its overly sexualized staging, at the end when MacHeath calls for mercy from execution, people from the audience still cheered and screamed as he bemoaned the unjustly burdens

that had been placed on him by the upper-class. That direct political rally to the audience was what mesmerized me (and became my reason for studying the German language in college). By attending a performance of this German production of *The Glass Menagerie*, I was hoping to see once again that German "directness" and emphasis on the aesthetic that had once overwhelmed me back in New York.

Helmed by Matthias Kaschig, *The Glass Menagerie*, translated into German by Jörn van Dyck, shines brightly without heavily editing the text. The production somehow accomplishes what seemed to be the impossible: the director and his entire creative team and cast bring this American classic into the 21st Century. Often as I try to describe mainstream American theater to Europeans, I use the words "safe," "conservative," "polished," and "commercial." Though contemporary American playwrights push the boundaries of American theater with controversial subject matter (which to some like myself may not be controversial), such as the Iraq war, depression, and queer and gender issues, the concern of having to entertain audiences overpowers the concept of striving to challenge audiences politically and emotionally. With Broadway productions now costing tens of millions of dollars and some tickets now reaching heights of more than \$130 each, I don't blame producers for their decision to simply entertain and ensure a good night for high payers.

In this production, the traditional 1950s American set is absent, replaced

with Jürgen Höth's simple wood polished design and only a single set piece: a projection screen placed center on a pole and above it a massive statue of the American Eagle with its wings stretched open. Already the play is taken out of its traditional realistic staging (even though the piece is ironically a memory play, and thus naturally calls for abstraction). This untraditional staging establishes distance between the audience and the characters presented on stage. When the play begins, Tom Wingfield (Thomas Hatzmann) has been well worn from his emotionally-draining mother and sister, Amanda (Eva Gosciejewicz) and Laura (Ulrike Beerbaum), respectively, as evidenced by the deep bags under his eyes. He approaches the audience and lays a German translation of the play on the stage. The constant presence of the manuscript reminds us that what we see performed is simply a play.

The production doesn't create a new standard or a "definitive" staging of the play; however, its simple staging and use of presentational acting (e.g. describing the stage directions, use of pantomime in substitute of props) further pushes the concept of the "memory play" and allows the cast to put needed emphasis on a mostly forgotten essential theme of the play: hindered sexuality. When I was 15 and was battling the decision of coming out of the closet to my Catholic family, I read Williams' *Memoirs*, from which any reader will

understand Williams' battle with drug use was deeply rooted in his sense of loneliness. Gosciejewicz, Hatzmann, and Beerbaum, like Chekov characters, deprived of attention, fight for the sympathy of the audience.

Hatzmann's Tom exemplifies justified and genuine anger as he struts across the stage. Gosciejewicz, more youthful looking than the usual Amanda, is



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overbearing and brings a sense of sexuality that is not usually exhibited by the character (but should). Beerbaum delicately treats her Laura like one of the animals of her glass menagerie, which, between the two extremely talented Hatzmann and Gosciejewicz, perfectly complements the internally conflicted family. Jim O'Connor (Jan Byl) dons a mustache and leather jacket and comes off as sly and subtly sexy. Jim, like the other characters, is on the surface happy with life, but internally conflicted with the uncertainty of the future; uncertain whether or not he will ever achieve the mythical "American Dream" of family, money, and happiness.

Theater Bremen's *The Glass Menagerie* stands gorgeously on its own, inciting laughter, sympathy, and audible re-

actions from its audience. In the scene in which Amanda wears a dress that she had once frequently worn for her gentleman-callers, Gosciejewicz gets catcalls and reactions of admiration and surprise from audience members when she enters the stage with such vibrant sexuality. Also what helps with this energized and lively production is the music provided by Tobias Vethake, who creates atmospheric emotions that range from sounds of childlike playfulness to the head banging rhythm of a dance club.

Frankly I am a sucker for sentimentality, and there is a beautifully staged scene that has been forever ingrained in my memory: in the play, there exists a scene in which Tom enters the family's living room after a night of binge drinking. Normally, Tom spouts

are projected against the bare set. Tom and Laura then begin to play "airplane," running across the stage with their arms wide open. This short opportunity to be children again, innocent and optimistic, was the compensation for their lives "that passed like [theirs], without any change or adventure." It was then that I truly understood the play.

The production originally premiered more than a year ago in the 2009 / 2010 theater season and is now featured as a part of the company's repertory. Though the production has been performed a handful of occasions in the past year, it didn't seem stale, but simply fresh when I attended a performance. As an American theatergoer, it was odd not to see infused into the story the "American Southern charm," but luckily that German directness and theatricality grabbed hold of what was essential in the telling of Tennessee William's delicate play: a sense of loneliness and the need to fulfill dreams.

The Glass Menagerie was the first German production I had ever attended. Since last February, I've had a great share of experimental German theater, and for me, a young bright eyed 20-year-old college student, this idea of artistic freedom in theater (that seems less limited than in the United States) is quite overwhelming. I'm looking forward to leaving American theater for a little bit as an intern (Hospitant) at Theater Bremen. I'll be assisting in a new production of Henrik Ibsen's *Ein Volksfeind* (*An Enemy of the People*) at Theater Bremen, which was described to me by the assistant director as a Brechtian experimental staging of the play. It's quite difficult for me to say that my life is as stagnant as Tom Wingfield's when I'm now off on an adventure through German theater.

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a story about having gone to a magician's show to his sister Laura and the scene comes off as a bizarre comedic moment that purposefully softens and slows down the dramatic process of the play. Instead, Kaschig treats the scene with such sensitivity, and though the humor is still present, he worked with Hatzmann and Beerbaum to produce an arrestingly gorgeous scene. As Laura asks Tom where he had spent the night, meditative music begins to play. Against stage lights, their shadows

Choosing to avoid discussion of a thing such as death does not make it disappear. Anna Deavere Smith brings the concept of mortality to the forefront of her latest production of *Let Me Down Easy*, being performed at the Susan Roberts Theatre through April 10th. Smith delivers twenty different, powerful commentaries, each derived from interviews she conducted, on death, dying, and mortality; concepts that everyone must deal with eventually. Each of the commentaries beautifully illuminates a new aspect of mortality and death, while giving life to each character. One person portraying twenty different roles is

LET ME DOWN EASY. WRITTEN AND PERFORMED: ANNA DEAVERE SMITH. DIRECTION: LEONARD FOGLIA. LOCATION: SUSAN ROBERTS THEATRE, PHILADELPHIA, PA / USA. REVIEWED: MARCH 25, 2011

the stage. The set consisted of a couch, a coffee table, and a dining room table with three chairs, all in a matching light beech color. What was most interesting about the

SARAH JAGIELA

set was the backdrop of 5 or 6 large mirrors. These mirrors allowed the audience a 360 degree-view of Smith throughout the entirety of the play. Located above the stage was a display announcing the character's name and occupation or brief description. The transitions between characters were virtu-



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quite a sight to behold. Though some of the characters Smith portrays are nearing death, she infuses passionate life into each and everyone. Human mortality and the stage go hand-in-hand, and Smith couples them perfectly in this latest rendition of *Let Me Down Easy*.

Though the set never changes throughout the entire play, each character is perfectly at home in their space on

ally seamless. Accompanied by a quick musical, usually jazzy, phrase and a subtle lighting change, Smith flowed from one character to the next, picking up a new prop, be it a suit jacket, plate of food, hospital gown, or lab coat, and discarding the old prop along the way. By the final character, the stage was littered with remnants of each previous character, creating a sort of char-

acter mosaic. It was amazing to watch a single person flow so easily through twenty different portrayals and for each character to have as much personality as they did.

The characters themselves ranged from supermodels, to athletes, to priests, to patients and doctors, those who are well known, to the unknown. I feel that the assortment of characters was very diverse, but I would have preferred a greater variety of lesser-known individuals as opposed to some of the superstar athletes and models. While these superstar characters offer the extreme opposite view of the unknowns, I felt for some reason they overpowered the unknown's voices in the play. A remarkable note about the production is the way that Smith develops each character's quirks and accent. Smith is able to embody her interviewees with only the use of her voice and minimal props. Each character had a different accent or drawl, adding depth and personality to each new persona. I am still baffled by Smith's ability to distinguish between characters so simply and successfully.

While some of the character play was comical, the overarching theme of mortality is anything but light. Many of the characters spoke of cancers, health risks and dangers, and doctors. Though depressing and largely focused on death, the interviews also addressed life and how imperative it is to appreciate what each and every one of us is given. One of the characters explains how many of us see death as defeat. Death is not defeat; it happens to everyone, no matter one's status in life. Everyone has an expiration date. Lance Armstrong describes how "being present" is the best way to live life. Living in the moment and being there, he says, are keys to enjoying life and not letting it slip by. Smith weaves between stories of near death experiences and rejuvenation of life. I feel that this medium is very ap-

propriate for such topics since theater basically is of the moment. Movies and recordings can be played over and over again and remain the same, but performance and theater are only once. Like a moment, they are fleeting; like a life, they cannot last forever. You can only experience that moment or performance once, and it can really only be shared with those who were there for it. You cannot return to a moment without a recording, just like you cannot return to the exact same performance without a recording, at which point it has changed mediums and is no longer truly a performance. Smith couples this concept of performance with the content of mortality to create a piece that can only truly be appreciated in the moment.

I honestly was not sure what to expect from the performance, but I was quite pleasantly surprised by it. Though dialogue is really the only action within the play, I stayed quite intrigued throughout the entire performance. The simple set design and use of props made it easy to follow the progression through the characters. Though the subject matter was not the lightest possible topic, I was not left with a sense of dread or depression. I felt the topics were handled very tactfully and overall, it was a great experience.

THEATERTREFFEN. BERLIN / GERMANY
MAY 6 - 23, 2011

Spring in Berlin means blossoming chestnut trees and irises, crowded outdoor cafes, and a surge of cultural events. The annual Theatertreffen, now in its 48th year, is among the most frequented and debated, and it's generally taken as a gauge of local as well as

RALF REMSHARDT larger performance trends, given the

German theatre's longstanding role as an aesthetic touchstone for the continent. In this iteration the festival tried hard to counter its institutional bias of giving imprimatur to the tried and tested by featuring a younger and hipper jury and tapping into bloggers and other exponents of social networking. The organizers announced their embrace of atypical, out-of-the-ordinary productions: "*Böse Überraschungen!*" trumpeted the program book, and gloated that this year's festival had the "courage to be truthful and impolite."

Well, perhaps. If the selections manifested a theme, it might be phrased as "over-it-ness" – or *post-post*. Maybe it's too soon to classify the return of the theatrically repressed as a post-postdramatic turn, but there was plenty of text-based and classical (or classical modern) theatre by Schiller, Ibsen, Chekhov, Hauptmann, and Miller on display, all led off by Elfriede Jelinek's furious and torrential reclaiming of the spoken (sung, shouted) word in *Das Werk/Im Bus/Ein Sturz*. Herbert Fritsch, the festival's surprising double nominee, was clearly over the self-regarding pieties of *Regietheater*, breaking all unwritten rules of stringent interpretation and careful dramaturgy with a trippy, trashy, post-postfeminist *Nora*. Berlin performance collective She She Pop did a post-postgenerational take on *King Lear* in their piece *Testament* by pulling perhaps the most hazardous

DAS WERK / IM BUS / EIN STURZ
AUTHOR: ELFRIEDE JELINEK
DIRECTIONS: KARIN BEIER
ENSEMBLE: SCHAUSPIELHAUS KÖLN

DIE BETEILIGTEN
AUTHOR: KATHRIN RÖGGLA
DIRECTION: STEFAN BACHMANN
ENSEMBLE: AKADEMIETHEATER WIEN

VERRÜCKTES BLUT
AUTHOR: NURKAN ERPULAT / JENS HILLJE
DIRECTION: NURKAN ERPULAT
ENSEMBLE: BALLHAUS NAUNYNSTRASSE

DON CARLOS
AUTHOR: FRIEDRICH SCHILLER
DIRECTION: KLAUS VONTOBEL
ENSEMBLE: STAATSSCHAUSPIEL DRESDEN

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
AUTHOR: ANTON CHEKOV
DIRECTION: KARIN HENKEL
ENSEMBLE: SCHAUSPIELHAUS KÖLN

TOD EINES HANDLUNGSREISENDEN
AUTHOR: ARTHUR MILLER
DIRECTION: STEFAN PUCHER
ENSEMBLE: SCHAUSPIELHAUS ZÜRICH

VIA INTOLLERANZA II
AUTHOR: CHRISTOPH SCHLINGENSIEF

TESTAMENT
ADAPTATION: SHAKESPEARE / KING LEAR
ENSEMBLE: SHE SHE POP

NORA ODER EIN PUPPENHAUS
AUTHOR: HENRIK IBSEN
DIRECTION: HERBERT FRITSCH
ENSEMBLE: THEATER OBERHAUSEN

DER BIBERPELZ
AUTHOR: GERHART HAUPTMANN
DIRECTION: HERBERT FRITSCH
ENSEMBLE: MECKLENBURGISCHES
STAATSTHEATER SCHWERIN



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and gutsy feat anyone attempted at the festival, bringing their own fathers on stage. Following some briefer reviews, I will give these three productions special consideration below.

The aftermath of media frenzy (post-postpaparazzi, if you will) was the theme of *Die Beteiligten* (Akademietheater Wien), playwright Kathrin Röggla's response to the response to the most notorious Austrian kidnapping in recent memory, the case of Natascha Kampusch. Having escaped her captor, Kampusch is held hostage anew by the squawking machinery of public scrutiny, victim worship, and yellow journalism. In Röggla's somewhat precious text, Kampusch is present only as a rhetorical device, being quoted as indirectly quoting her tormentors, which is as dramaturgically poignant as it is theatrically exhausting. Director Stefan Bachmann padded the play with surreal visuals – video images of threatening hominids, flying Nazis belting Falco songs, slashing samurai in anatomically correct body suits – that seemed to emanate from the overheated subconscious of Austrian pop culture. I had the impression I was looking at a theatrical rebus, thrilling and disturbing, but frequently illegible.

In *Verrücktes Blut* (Ballhaus Nau-

nynstrasse, Berlin), an uptight, gun-toting teacher levels the double barrel of German *Leitkultur*, Kantian reason and Schillerian beauty, at her classroom full of rebellious Turkish teens. Nuran Erpulat and Jens Hillje's acerbic schoolhouse showdown gave a rude post-postracial finger to the failed pedagogies attempting to integrate Germany's growing populations with "migration background" (thus the euphemism). But although it twisted uncomfortably some of the favorite stereotypes of German public discourse, the play also suffered from a transparent didacticism and overwrought performances.

Don Carlos, Schiller's passionate drama of erotic and political freedom doubly constrained by tyranny, received a handsome and subtle rendition by the young American-trained director Klaus Vontobel (Staatsschauspiel Dresden). Contemporary in style and lean in casting, Vontobel's production was itself freed from the buzzing surfeit of overpopulated history plays, and focused instead on the intricate interplay of power, sex, and ideas at the (rather corporate-looking) court of Philip II, whom the eminent Burghart Klaussner played as a weary imperial titan trapped in his own mechanisms of control. Set on a vast stage where the Robert-Wilsonesque verticals of the set dwarfed the players, the production's primary virtue was not its conceptual boldness, but its sensitivity to Schiller's soaring language, which it managed to endow with an almost colloquial ease and clarity, paired with first-rate acting.

Karin Henkel of Schauspielhaus Köln left no doubt she was over melancholy, brooding approaches to Chekhov, directing *The Cherry Orchard* at high pitch and top speed as an assembly of circus freaks and geeks. In a feverish whirl of antic dispositions to the off-key strains of a brass band, the frenzy

of the big top allowed Madame Ranevskaya's addled and ADD family to avoid the big topic, the threatening sale of their estate. In this painful clown comedy of the newly cashless classes, Chekhov's oblivious creatures flitted like butterflies between denial and desire while Lopakhin (the swarthy pink-shirted avatar of a simultaneously brutal and sentimental rising Russian oligarchy) looked on perplexed. Thus the production was also an allegory (through a glass, clearly) of our ongoing global fiduciary excesses.

Anyway, capitalism as the psychodrama of the wounded self; economic struggle as social tragedy? Stefan Pucher's *Tod eines Handlungsreisenden* from Schauspielhaus Zürich was very much over that. Dressed up with ubiquitous TV cameras and multiple sets, blue-screen, and cinematic production values (including a genuine Ford Thunderbird), this American classic played more like "The Real Lomans of Brooklyn." But on the one hand the production was too much in love with its own intermedial conceits, and with its high-gloss, funky 1950s *moderne* decor (which was only the most obvious instance of a clearly deliberate but ultimately puzzling disregard of any of the play's social markers), and on the other hand so anxious to avoid anything that reeked of sentimentality, that it mostly bypassed true emotion and, despite the strained efforts of the otherwise marvelous Robert Hunger-Bühler as Willy, came to naught. While we can credit Pucher with exorcizing the dank naturalism that often sticks to the play, he replaced it with a grab-bag of visual clichés (road movies, Westerns, Busby Berkeley), teetering somewhere uncertainly between *homage* and derision. Seen from Zürich, America is a B-movie brimming with shabby glam-

our, fake attitudes, and ambling archetypes. What was apparently meant as a trenchant critique of American values came across as a montage of arbitrary Americana (what are we to make of the life-size statue of a baseball player?).



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Pucher didn't feel that "attention must be paid" to the subtleties of Miller's psychology, or indeed elementary logic; in the final scene he had the entire Loman clan (dead Willy included) form a band, cacophonously singing, "I'm set free..."

Lastly, Christoph Schlingensief's messy, dense, self-lacerating "artaction" *Via Intolleranza II* arrived as a grand (guignol) post-postcolonial spectacle, a grotesque and sadly comical reckoning with all of the well-intentioned interventions in Africa's intractable crises. It is fitting that Schlingensief, the German theatre's favorite *enfant terrible* who died last year of cancer, had the festival's final word; like his illness, against which he so publicly raged, his quixotic African venture – he wanted to build an "opera village" in Burkina Faso – grew somewhere in one of the unmapped (unmappable?) intersections

between life and art.

That delicate intersection was most effectively navigated by She She Pop, an ensemble of young Berlin-based performers whose devised piece *Testament* took *King Lear* as a palimpsest on which to inscribe the anxieties and (often comical) indignities of generational change. Where convention tends to read Shakespeare's play as the tragedy of age and a rumination on metaphysical homelessness, She She Pop reads it as a botched inheritance case

they made the evening immediately relevant and were rewarded with the kind of rapt attention purely aesthetic experience rarely generates. And by persuading their own fathers to join them on stage, they showed that the (sometimes painfully) personal, framed and shaped through performance, is finally the political as well.

The setting was the campy mock-up of a living room, the paternal habitat marked by three large throne-like easy chairs with cameras trained on

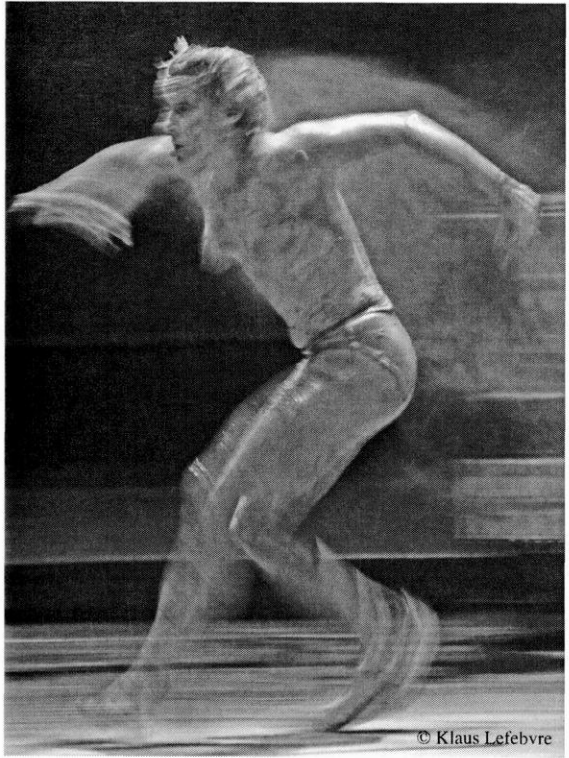


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and a really dodgy pension plan. Writing in their program note that “of all the exchanges in which we’re involved, the one between generations is the most complicated and least transparent,” they powerfully tapped the worried collective subconscious of their boomer and gen X audiences, bringing the seemingly ordinary (insurance policies, heirlooms, grandchildren) and the associated feelings of gratitude and guilt into play. By declaring the theatre “a space of negotiation for the utopian process of reconciling the generations,”

them. The performers picked their way through passages of *Lear*, pausing to comment, to pursue a thought experiment (what would the equivalent of Lear’s 100 knights be today?), to monologize, discuss, or, yes, break into a Dolly Parton song. As much as to the surface plot, I found myself paying attention to the performers’ small revelatory accidents, glances, the flushes of pique or pleasure, those places where the studious, perilous balance of fiction and reality began to shudder with unmanageable subtexts. The brilliance

of She She Pop's production was that although everything was rehearsed – the accusations (“You gave my sister a rug I wanted!”), the awkwardnesses (“When I first saw you performing, I wanted to die of shame.”), the rituals and reconciliations – it never denied that interactions between aging parents and their grown-up offspring, so fraught with longing for approbation on both sides, are finally unrehearsable, incommensurable to the theatre. Even on display, the wounds remain. And yet, it made vivid theatrical use of exactly this cycle of wounding by having the performers repeat, verbatim, excerpts from the contentious debates leading up to the production itself. In openly thematizing its own problematic genesis in this way (can you ever freely “play yourself” on stage?), the production dodged any appearance of exploitation. In fact, the three fathers, all of them in their seventies and thus part of the transitional *Achtundsechziger* generation, had little difficulty holding their own on stage against their children. As “Experten des Alltags” (a term the group Rimini Protokoll uses for their amateur performers), they knew how slyly to turn their putative lack of experience to their own advantage, whether approaching Lear's dilemma with a physicist's differential equations or climbing into a coffin to rehearse their own funeral. Paradoxically, the more they danced, sang, stripped, the more they surrendered to the madness of the theatre as Lear had surrendered to the chaos of the heath, the more they made a magnificent public defense of their dignity. When at the end of this fractured ritual, this pleasurable exor-



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cism of silence, shame, and guilt, fathers and children lay piled in a heap on the stage floor, it was difficult to decide what to call it. Documentary theatre? Performance art?

Three fulminating stream-of-consciousness prose pieces by the redoubtable Nobel laureate Elfriede Jelinek, mixed and mashed into a three-hour evening, would seem an unlikely breakout event for Theatertreffen, but *Das Werk/Im Bus/Ein Sturz* made for some of the most compelling viewing and listening of the festival, a riotous, railing performative *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Karin Beier, the artistic director of the highly touted Schauspielhaus Köln where this production originated, not only adapted and orchestrated (the term is appropriate) Jelinek's alternately brittle and bombastic, hypertrophying and hypotactic verbal monstrosities, but teased them out, tamed them, bod-

ied them forth, and set them free to take the stage. Jelinek's texts sometimes have the weight of Aeschylean odes, and indeed at issue in all three pieces is the terrible (and sometimes terribly funny) price to be paid for human hubris. *Das Werk* refers to a forgotten episode of Austrian history, the building of an Alpine power station that cost many (forced labor) workers their lives under the Nazis. *Im Bus* cites an incident of a municipal bus in Munich that fell into a construction sinkhole. *Ein Sturz* riffs on a recent occurrence in Cologne where the city archives collapsed catastrophically due to faulty subway construction.

Jelinek's texts take aim at plenty of political skullduggery, bureaucratic negligence, and sheer stupidity and malfeasance, gleefully recycling the murky self-exonerating language of public officialdom (One of the laugh lines of the play is a recording of Cologne's mayor, grimly asserting that there are situations "where every office has done everything right, and yet the result is wrong"). But Jelinek is not a journalist; she is a moralist, and her dense, spiraling, cascading, breathless disquisitions, shot through with puns and wordplay, with rapid rhythmic and tonal shifts, with self-ironic meta-theatrical moments (at one point the cast demands, in unison, "author, please let me shut up!"), are themselves linguistic construction sites, finally transposing these instances of megalomania, civic failure and misplaced ambition into poetic parables of humanity's unsettled and unsettling rivalry with nature and the elements.

Challenged to find a voice and vision that was equally elemental, Karin Beier produced a directorial tour-de-force. Her stage too, became a construction site of theatrical semiosis, unleashing the forces of a large (and largely fearless) cast and every conceivable

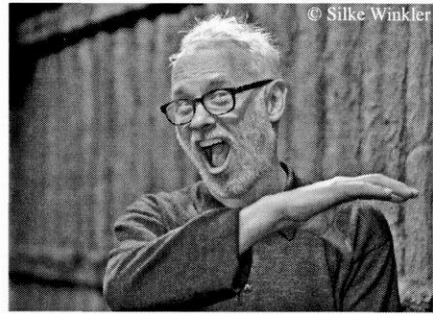
aspect of the material theatre to produce strange and startling images with anime-inspired masks, enigmatic rituals involving water bottles or buckets, *bruitistic* soundscapes with jackhammers, and idiosyncratic choreographies, never just illustrating, but exploring and counterpointing the text with moments of stasis that might dissolve into playful chaos or emotional instants swept away by ironic bathos. Most of the text was delivered *ad spectatores* into downstage microphones, but the unrelenting simultaneity of action occupied all planes of the stage. At the climax of *Das Werk*, the Cologne gay men's choir delivered a ravishing, extended oratorio in the personae of the dead workers – stomping, declaiming, exhaling in a feat of rhythmic and linguistic endurance that seemed to channel both the mesmeric quality of ancient choruses and their ethical authority.

Less successfully, *Im Bus* treated its narrative in the manner of a comedia interlude, with three demented clown figures haplessly commenting on the fate of the doomed city bus. Taking up the hour after intermission, *Ein Sturz*, Jelinek's satirical take on corrupt hometown politics, is written in a lighter tone, as a taunting and cajoling, flattering and threatening address to Earth (*Erde*). Beier gleefully juxtaposed the arrogant and oblivious bureaucrats, hasting officiously to and fro, porting laptops and ring binders, with a natural world whose powers they tried in vain to control. Kathrin Wehlisch, as a mud-smeared chthonic sprite, flitted among them, at one point engaging in a *pas-de-deux* with Water (a dancer) so erotic that it must be the first instance of eco-sex I've seen on stage. In the furious and farcical finale, Beier let loose the forces of entropy, swamping the stage with cascades of water in a palpable parallel to Jelinek's verbal deluge. Earth and water have united, the

world has become incontinent, and the bureaucrats danced one last polka in a carnival of catastrophe. This *coup-de-théâtre* about human arrogance was a reminder not just of our fragile relationship with nature but also, on a meta-level, of the marvelous, defiant profligacy of the tax-subsidized theatre that can afford to engulf its stage and bite (drown?) the very hand that feeds it.

Taking his sarcastic bow at the curtain call of *Nora oder Ein Puppenhaus*, Herbert Fritsch let his actors slap him playfully on the backside, a gesture that resonantly characterized this maverick director's insouciant attitude towards both the texts he stages and the cultural industry at large. A longtime actor at Frank Castorf's Berlin Volksbühne – the theatre that in the 90s defined a kind of grubby anti-classicism but has fallen from critical grace of late – Fritsch now works at provincial theatres like Schwerin and Oberhausen, and was unexpectedly invited with two productions, a triumph for any director. Positioned far from the fishbowl of the capital, he defies the expectations placed on directorial technique rooted in careful dramaturgy. "I work without intentions, I don't pursue anything," he said in an interview. "The most important thing to me is pleasure, the pleasure of playing with characters and images."

Fritsch's pleasure – which is clearly shared by his actors – manifests itself as a kind of rip-roaring, take-no-prisoners approach to some of the sacrosanct plays of the classical modern canon. (One imagines he pops the texts into the spin cycle, adds garish colors and manic energy, and punches the button repeatedly until all philological residue is gone.) Gerhart Hauptmann's *Der Biberpelz* and Ibsen's *Doll House* both came in for the Fritsch treatment, with decidedly divergent results. Hauptmann's is one of the great German folk

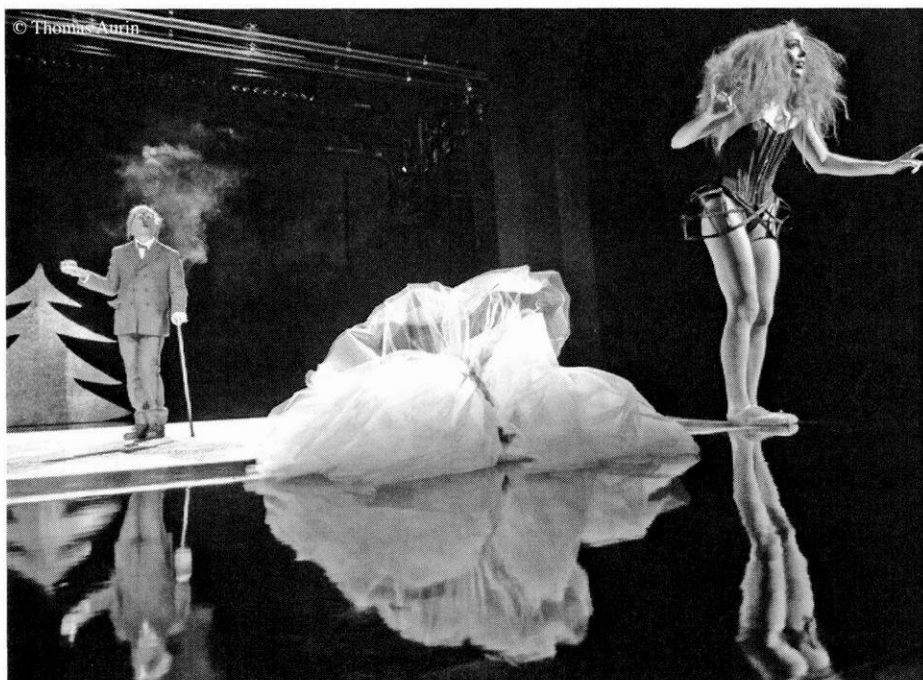


comedies (there are few enough), but in this Fritsch-fried version it mutated into a grotesque, screeching hyperkinetic kabuki slapstick, turned up to the proverbial Spinal-Tap "11"; the handful of inspired moments couldn't come up for air amid the sound and fury. Outraged, the venerable Claus Peymann (*intendant* of the Berliner Ensemble) shouted at the premiere that Fritsch was mocking his audience and should stick to acting, thus giving the festival its instant *éclat*.

Nora was similarly uncompromising, but here the trick worked. What Fritsch proposed is that Ibsen is the undead of the modern theatre, a kind of dramaturgical zombie, a high priest of high moral seriousness impossible to kill or to endure. Putting a stake through the heart of solemn Ibsenism (and this, his most iconic play in particular) meant not so much to parody it – we are post-parodic now – as to turn it inside out and against itself, exploding all of the coy nuances and shadings of subtext until it cried uncle and admitted to being the flagrantly melodramatic, polymorphously perverse piece we always suspected it of being. Played on a black mirror surface with nothing but the glaringly green cartoon cutout of a Christmas tree for scenery, this was a 100-minute *Doll House* as hell house. The actors cheerfully shunted all subtlety aside for a kind of overt Meyerholdian physicality, delivering most lines with a knowing wink. All of the

men – Helmer, Krogstad, the Doctor – appeared like figures of generic male-ness in advancing stages of decomposition. White-faced and with a few wispy strands of hair stuck to his skull, Torsten Bauer as Helmer resembled an escapee from *Nosferatu*; Jürgen Sarkiss' Krogstad was a spooky leisure-suited

wide-eyed equanimity. Like her friend Mrs. Linde (Nora Buzalka as a voluptuous Hitchcockian *femme fatale*), she knew the world was bad, and (sort of) liked it that way. By the time she delivered her famous emancipatory tirade, the cartoon tree had burst spontaneously into flames, Helmer had noncha-



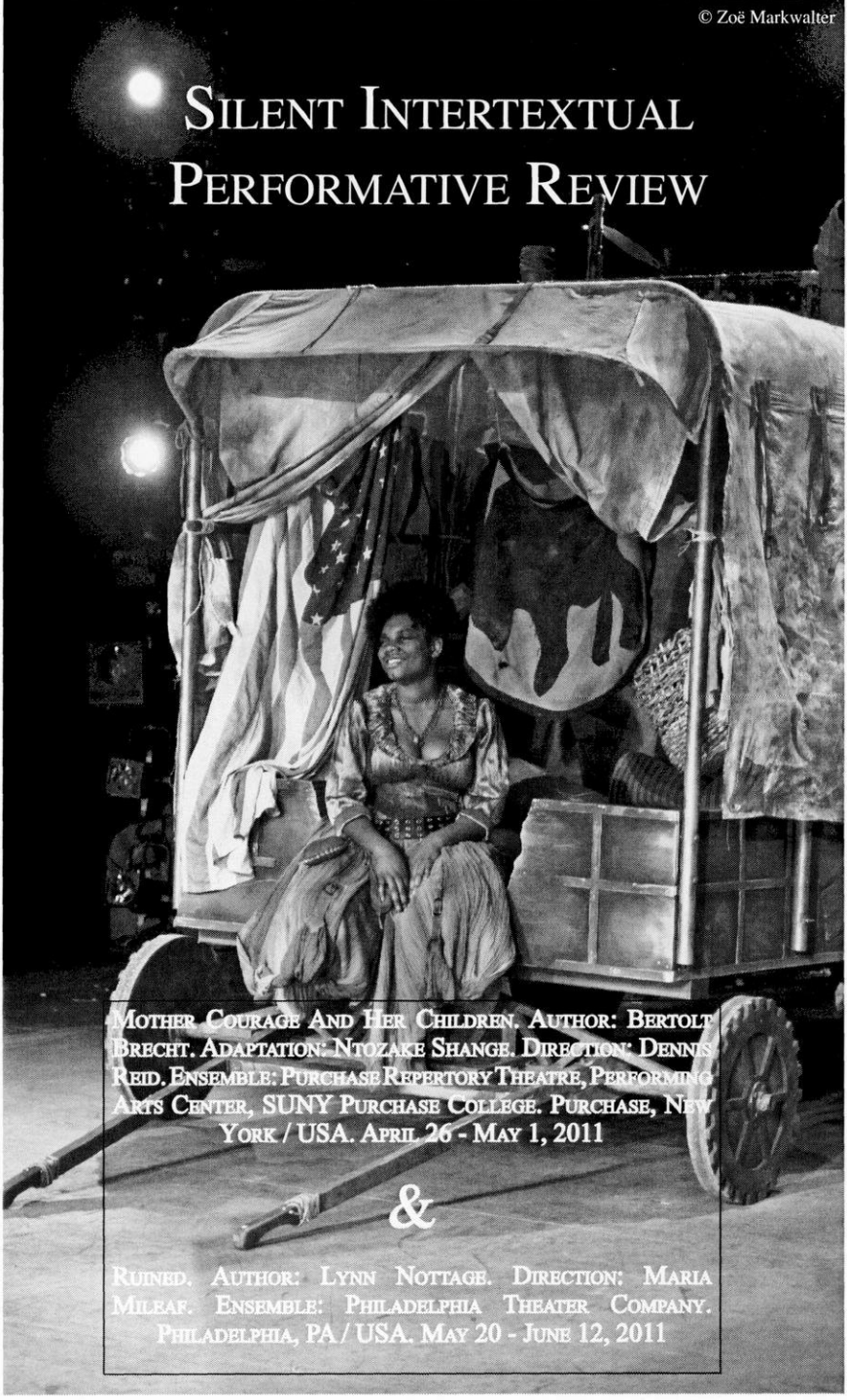
creep; Henry Meyer, as if in perpetual ambulatory expiration, played Doktor Krank's (!) spasmodic eccentricity to the hilt. No need anymore for the sly self-revelation of the patriarchy; it was all in the open. Indeed, in the final tableau, the men were hanging from the flies like wilting insects. In marked contrast, Nora (the terrific Manja Kuhl), enveloped in a baby doll dress and sporting a red wig, was an impish, devil-may-care child-woman who took all of the indignities doled out to her – Krogstad's vulpine familiarity, Krank's slobbering erotomania, Helmer's literal treatment of her as a sex object – with a

lantly sauntered off stage, and she was rehearsing it all to herself, the deathless words of suffrage merely undead. This wasn't Ibsen, of course, it was a kind of Ibscenity, but it was the freshest *Doll House* I've seen in a while.

The Theatertreffen may not yet be sufficiently impolite to presage any great changes of theatrical aesthetics or politics. But, these three productions in mind, I think it may be on the right track.

© Zoë Markwalter

SILENT INTERTEXTUAL PERFORMATIVE REVIEW



MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN. AUTHOR: BERTOLT
BRECHT. ADAPTATION: NTOZAKE SHANGE. DIRECTION: DENNIS
REID. ENSEMBLE: PURCHASE REPERTORY THEATRE, PERFORMING
ARTS CENTER, SUNY PURCHASE COLLEGE. PURCHASE, NEW
YORK / USA. APRIL 26 - MAY 1, 2011

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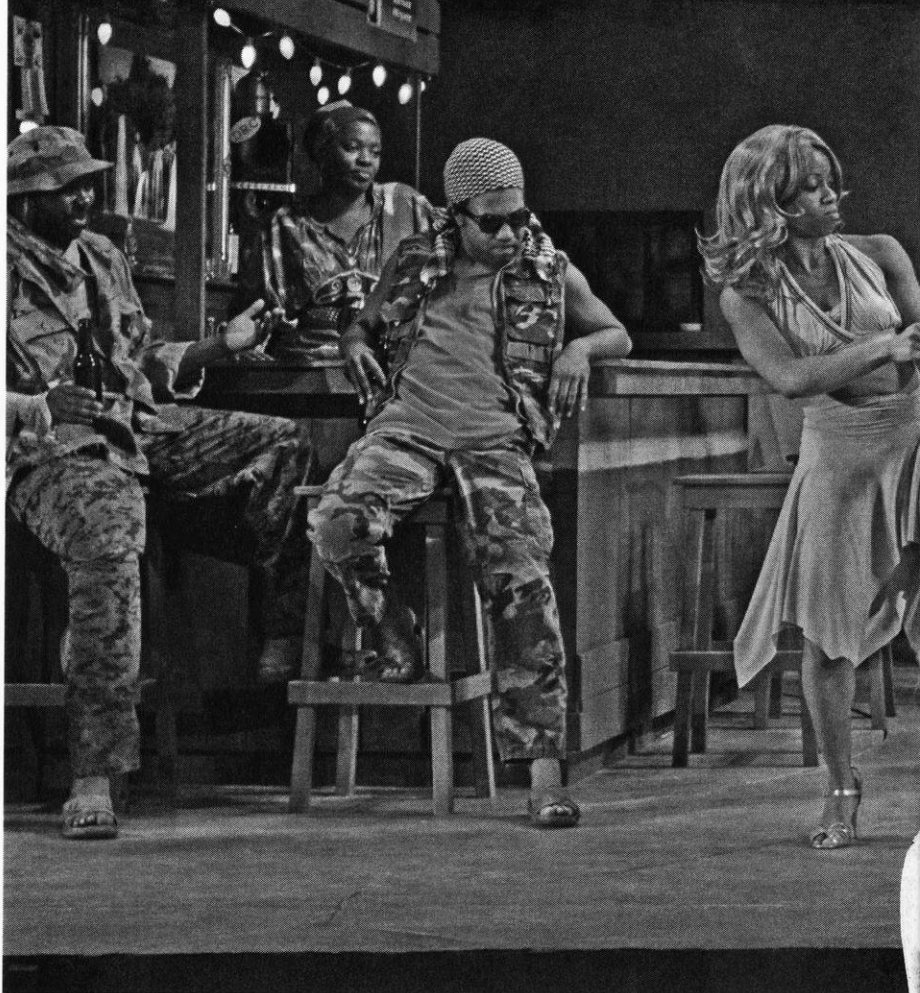
RUINED. AUTHOR: LYNN NOTTAGE. DIRECTION: MARIA
MILEAF. ENSEMBLE: PHILADELPHIA THEATER COMPANY.
PHILADELPHIA, PA / USA. MAY 20 - JUNE 12, 2011

SHOW! DON'T TELL!

ODER WÄRE BESSER....

SAG! NICHT ZEIG!

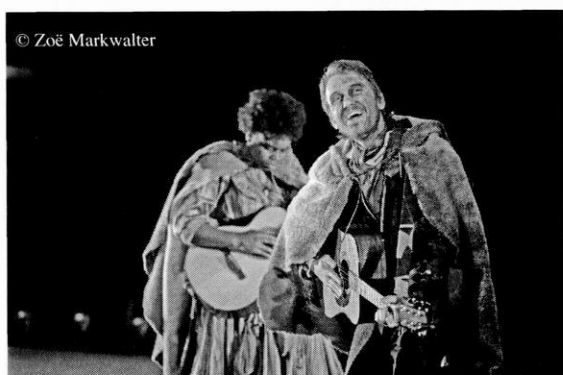
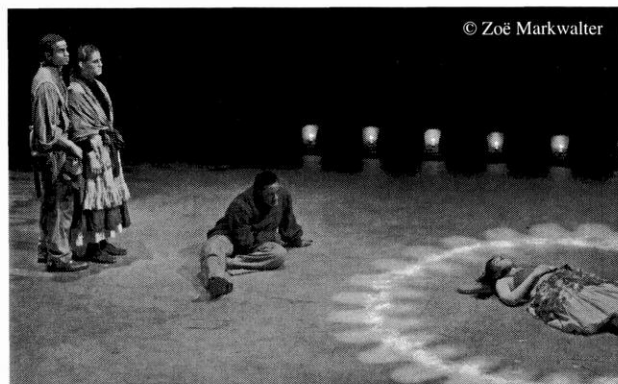
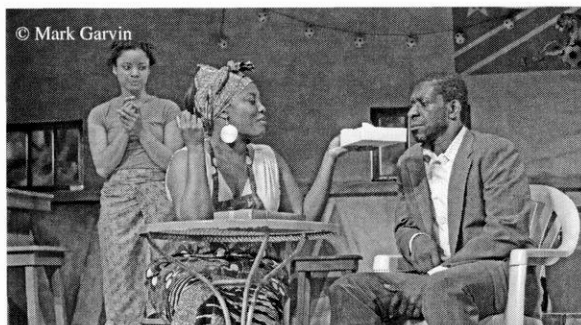
WHAT IS THE
RESPONSIBILITY OF THE
REVIEWER, READER,
WRITER, SPECTATOR,
ACTOR?





MOTHER COURAGE ADAPTED TO THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND TO THE
CONTEMPORARY REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO. DOES ANYTHING MORE NEED TO BE
SAID? DO WE NEED THE AUTHOR, ADAPTOR, TEXT, PRODUCTION, THE REVIEWER
TO REIMAGINE THE DETAILS? WHAT IS THE LINE BETWEEN CONSECRATION AND
DESECRATION?

© Mark Garvin



The Kneehigh Theatre Company of Cornwall, England has been a staple of the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina for the past two decades. First featured at Spoleto in 2005 with *Tristan and Yseult* and later in 2009 with its landmark production of *Don John*, this company has been consistent in its presentation of extraordinarily imaginative and provocative work. Having lived in the company's repertory since 2004, *The Red Shoes* remains a company-developed adaptation of the famous Hans Christian Anderson tale presented in an unmistakably Brechtian style. Guided by Kneehigh's joint Artistic director Emma Rice, the seven-person cast (two were musicians) utilized a blend of music, movement, humor, references to contemporary society and presentationalism to tell the classic tale of seduction, obsession and guilt. This production figures heavily into the history of Kneehigh as a company, and its success throughout the United Kingdom and Europe is well documented. Spoleto USA's 2011 production of *The Red Shoes* was presented in the recently renovated and well-equipped Memminger Auditorium in downtown Charleston, South Carolina.

Anderson's classic tale has been realized in many versions since it was written in 1845. In contrast to many traditional versions of the story in which the young girl is punished for her obsession with the shoes, Rice felt that the *The Red Shoes* could tell a more important story rich with "possibilities and hope." Kneehigh's production was told from the standpoint of Lady Lydia, an omnipotent narrator played by Giles King who, in the context of telling the story,

THE RED SHOES. DEVELOPED BY KNEEHIGH THEATRE COMPANY FROM A STORY BY HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSON. DIRECTED BY EMMA RICE. MEMMINGER AUDITORIUM. CHARLESTON, SC / USA. REVIEWED: JUNE 5, 2011

STEVE EARNST

"cast" the characters from the company members, all dressed in their underwear, as the story progressed. Having moved throughout the audience in their skimpy briefs prior to the show with great hilarity, the actors – three middle aged men and a girl – were selected by Lady Lydia to play roles such as the girl, the old lady, the shoemaker, the preacher and his wife and the butcher. With no regard for type or gender (Lady Lydia herself was played by a man) the company members vied for the roles then, once selected, moved upstage where they added various costumes and properties to their white underwear clad bodies. Each of the characters played multiple roles, dropping in and out of the vari-



ous characters with amazing ease and versatility – the one consistent character was Patrycja Kujawska, selected first by Lydia to play the role of the girl. The narrator and all characters maintained direct contact with the audience both in the sense of their delivery as well as their many activities. For example on one occasion they threatened to soak the audience members

with buckets of water in which they had washed their feet. Lady Lydia utilized a hand held microphone throughout the production as an alienating device and on certain occasions took part in musical selections that halted the action of the play while commenting on the many actions and happenings in this highly episodic work. The extraordinary physical nature of this work, which

included numerous styles of dance, combat, and breakneck physical comedy, revealed the nature of the total immersion into the theatre process that is characteristic of Kneehigh Theatre Company. Living in a collective atmosphere on the coast of Cornwall, England, the company lives, trains and performs together on a year round basis, making it one of the true theatre ensembles in the United Kingdom.

The central visual metaphor for *The Red Shoes* was a multi-hinged upstage door that aided in the telling of the story in numerous ways. On a literal level it designated the place for a number of entrances and exits, but in a more figurative sense it became a barrier to entrap or, conversely, to exclude or shut out. Hinged to allow both complete or half opening of the upper or lower panels, the door also served to mask certain actions, like the cutting off of the girls feet by an electric saw, and masked character quick changes as needed. Creative staging on the simple two-level stage was marked by the use of a series of labeled suitcases,

each holding significant items such as the pair of red shoes. This device was reminiscent of Brechtian subtitling in that it allowed certain scenic properties to engage in the literal telling of the story. Remaining on a raised upstage platform for most of the play, Lady Lydia presided over the action of the

play, controlling and commenting on the stage activities from her powerful vantage point. Kneehigh's production explored the loss of youth, of creativity, and of self as the young girl traded her shoes and feet for more sensible, practical items in order to claim a legitimate place in society. While this loss resulted, in director Rice's approach, in a positive outcome from a practical point of view, the loss of creativity and frivolity balanced the move from youth

to maturity.

The partnership between the City of Charleston, the College of Charleston, and numerous entities of support keep the Spoleto USA Festival at the forefront of America's festivals of the visual and performing arts. The festival's commitment to providing quality international productions, such as Kneehigh Theatre Company's *The Red Shoes*, as well as its newly renovated venues, is

commendable, especially considering the struggling economy that marked 2011. Nevertheless, ticket sales were higher during this season than any of the previous ten, making it one of the most

successful ever in terms of production quality and financial viability.



© Kneehigh Theatre Company



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Theater is a heartbreaker / mindfucker. Just when you are ready to give up on the old girl, muttering to oneself "Theater (God) is Dead" it pulls you back in *Godfather III*-style. Such was the case on a dreary, rain-soaked evening - four days before the 10th anniversary of 9/11 - where I found myself at the Crane Arts Building in the Northern Liberties section of Philadelphia for a Fringe Festival event. A production of Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* in the old Ice Box Warehouse space seemed a perfect place to bury my resignation with the conservative, subscription-friendly, geriatric-oriented, fringe-fried Philly Theater scene and its moribund theater review tradition. Yet, Homunculus, Inc.'s production was so painfully good that I might have to reconsider my discontent and give the old girl another chance.

"Fortune favors the bold" goes the old saying and director Zach Trebino and the Homunculus, Inc. ensemble boldly went where no right-thinking theater artists have gone before: combining the fragmentary, syncretic, existential masterpiece of *Woyzeck* with the cavernous, post-industrial, existential space of the Ice Box. But it worked. And it worked

WOYZECK. GEORG BÜCHNER. ADAPTATION: GREGORY MOTTON. DIRECTION: ZACH TREBINO. SET DESIGN: EMILY BALDASARRA & ZACH TREBINO. ENSEMBLE: HOMUNCULUS, INC. LOCATION: CRANE ARTS BUILDING. PHILADELPHIA LIVE ARTS / FRINGE FESTIVAL. PHILADELPHIA, PA / USA. REVIEWED: SEPTEMBER 7, 2011

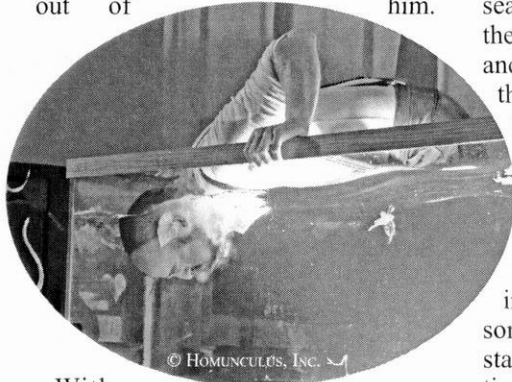
exquisitely.

Trebino set the prologue in the foyer outside of the Ice Box room, where everyone can't avoid feeling just a little bit homeless. The actors (soldiers dressed in vaguely WWI-era, expressionist inspired costumes; others in carnivalesque, post-industrial, impoverished tatters) and audience members aimlessly milled about the empty darkened space, which was broken up by four central concrete pillars (indicating a type of theater-in-the-round stage) and ominous steel doors leading into the Ice Box. When the prologue began, the audience was introduced to poor, abused Woyzeck (Paul Bayley). Woyzeck can't please anyone: his captain (Eleonore Condo) who continuously browbeats him; his "doctor" (Sara Newman & Samantha Turret) who experiments on him by making him eat only peas and then castigates him when he can't uri-

NORMAN ROESSLER



nate on the spot; his best friend, Andres (Matt Austin), who doesn't listen to the voices in Woyzeck's head telling him to kill his girlfriend; his girlfriend, Marie (Louisa Debutts), who sleeps with a studly drum major; and the drum major (John Wentworth) who beats the shit out of him.



With

the exception of the musical element, the prologue effectively mediated the text and the interpretative complex that surrounds the text in concentric fashion. Written in 1836/37 shortly before his untimely death at age 23, Büchner's text was never finished and remained a series of fragments until it was first published in 1879. Its publication was a major influence on the Naturalist dramatists of the day, but it would not be produced onstage until 1913, where it would exert a tremendous influence on the Expressionist generation and the Epic Theater of Bertolt Brecht. In 1925, Alban Berg set the material to music in his opera, *Wozzeck*, which famously mediated the atonal techniques of Schoenberg. Werner Herzog and Klaus Kinski would team up in 1979 to serve up a gritty, realistic, New German Cinema version. And in 2002, Robert Wilson and Tom Waits (See *Blood Money*, 2002 and *Orphans: Brawlers, Bawlers, and Bastards*, 2006 for the full material) would team up for an operatic, natural-time production.

As the prologue ended, the ac-

tors led the audience into the Ice Box Project Space in a maneuver that was reminiscent of Weiss' *Marat / Sade* or LaMaMa's 1970s production of *The Trojan Women*. The spectators were confronted with a similar spatial design as that of the foyer: stage props and seating created a permeable theater-in-the-round space. The stage design was anchored by an elevated stage opposite the Ice Box doors that was surrounded by various pieces of debris: old TV sets (whose screens intermittently were turned on), car tires, and a large aquarium filled with water. Directly opposite the elevated stage was another debris field that included more TV sets, as well as some broken chairs. Between these two stage areas lay a smaller debris field of tires and an aquarium tank. This stage design proved to be for the most part an effective adaptation of the Ice Box space. It allowed the actors to constantly move the visual field of the audience, creating a nice dynamic, but at the same time wherever the scene had been moved onstage, the large white walls of the space effectively framed the scene in a tableau-like moment. In short, the cavernous space did not swallow the staging, but rather really made it "pop out."

The same cannot be said, however, for the acoustic quality of the production. Some of the dialogue was lost, especially when vocalized at higher, passionate registers. This was most noticeable in scenes with the doctor character. Assayed by two actors (similar to the 2002 Wilson production) the doctor character is a mad scientist constantly spouting out technobabble. Although the language is patently absurd, one still wants to hear the absurdity, but the acoustics of the room as well as the theatre-in-the round kinesthetics really muddled the transmission.

It was obvious that the ensemble had

wrestled with the problem, but had not quite resolved the difficulties therein. Yet, at the same, I wondered whether the failure was on my end (the spectator) and not that of the acting ensemble or

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was beautifully choreographed and enacted. It had a savage operatic quality to it and was enhanced by the other actors who formed a circle around the battle, barking in ferocious delight; 3)

the theater space. Even when one reads *Woyzeck* and can clearly hear, see, feel the text in intimate precision, it still comes across as an opaque experience. The scenes are episodic and the text is aphoristic: it works as bits and pieces but nowhere near a cohesive whole. Perhaps this is why Berg's atonal opera and Wilson's use of Tom Waits' music were so successful in mediating the turgid opacity of Büchner's text.

The acting was noticeable for its ensemble cohesiveness that equally shared the work and rejected the usual corporate, star-driven, cinematic acting that is found in both Hollywood and University Theater Departments. Some of the more memorable scenes to speak of: 1) The Shaving Scene: Since the captain was played by a woman (Eleonore Condo), *Woyzeck* (Paul Bayley) had to shave her legs and not her chin. This was choreographed well and acted with excellent timing, and, at the same time, required a rethinking of traditional power dynamics; 2) The Fight Scene: The fight between the drum major and *Woyzeck*

The Peas & Piss Scene. Despite my criticism of the vocal quality of this scene, it was spot on in terms of visual effect. The doctors (Sara Newman & Samantha Turret) were a well-dressed, two-headed monster, alternating between red robes, carnival masks, and dominatrix outfits. Moreover, the climactic moment of the scene in which they disrobed *Woyzeck* to full frontal nudity and waited for him to provide a urine specimen was a great tableau shot of ritualualized medical humiliation; 4) Marie's Death. This was the iconic scene in the play. Just take a quick gander at internet images of *Woyzeck* productions (an interesting analysis in itself) and you get a wide variety of approaches to this scene from the close

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up, realistic Kinski one to the operatic, bathed-in-red, Wilson one. I thought Homunculus, Inc. played this one a little flat. I'm not sure if this was intentional because they wanted to make the next scene pop out, or if they were just running out of gas. The latter third of the production did seem to teeter a bit from fatigue as if all the stunning ideas of the first part of the production were hard to live up to; 5) Grandmother's Negative Fairytale and Woyzeck's Death. If they did underplay Marie's death in order to do this scene right, then they nailed it spot on. Juxtaposing the two scenes of the Grandmother's (Maren Lord) telling of the depressing fairy tale with Woyzeck's suicide in the large aquarium tank was a wonderful bit of theater. I would have liked a larger vocal projection of the fairy tale, perhaps something like a voice-over through speakers, but I just used my imagination and popped the Tom Waits version into my head to augment the actor's voice.

Faced with perhaps the most important yet most difficult work of modern theater, Homunculus, Inc. not only survived but flourished. They trusted Büchner's work, their own skill, but most importantly they trusted the audi-

ence – inviting it to embrace the Gilgamesh-like lacunae and the fragments of Büchner's text and co-author / co-act a dialectic interpretation of it. One can only hope that Homunculus, Inc.'s production will inspire Philly Theater to stir from its slumbers, eat its peas, piss out its middle-class mediocrity, and embrace a bit of avant-garde, Germanic Theater.



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After recently attending the opening night performance of the University Theatre, Western Michigan University/ Miller Auditorium joint production of *The Rocky Horror Show*, directed by Jay Berkow, I was struck with a notion that I'd like to entertain. Let's ignore for a moment the impulse to dismiss outright the *Rocky Horror Show* as just campy melodrama or the crude, pop psychological Jungian interpretation it may very well be. Instead, I would like to propose that *Rocky Horror* is, at least potentially, a radical bit of social commentary, especially when viewed against the backdrop of the social antagonism revolving around the issue of sexuality. This antagonism, of course, has been ongoing, manifesting itself in various forms for decades in this country, and we have witnessed its rather embittered resurgence within the last ten years or so. Recently, within what has been labeled under the (admittedly rather amorphous) heading of the "culture wars," we have witnessed the Right's attempts to further marginalize homosexuality, suppress the free expression of sexuality, and relegate sexual and gender identity to an either/or binary which inhibits many in their struggle for recognition.

Seeing *Rocky Horror* as a radical piece of social commentary is no great leap if we view its protagonists, Brad and Janet, as representing the reactionary forces at play in late modern bourgeois society. They are prudish. They are sexually reserved. They adhere to bourgeois morality, and they share the collective, bourgeois anxiety that this moral order will collapse. Yet, they also hold within them the elements necessary for progressive social change. When taken out of their equilibrium (i.e.

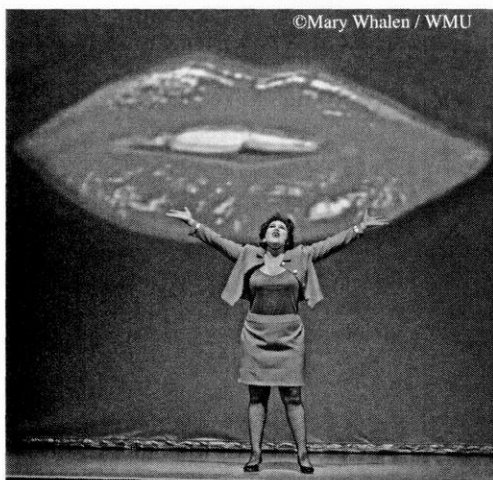
THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW. AUTHOR: RICHARD O'BRIEN
DIRECTION: JAY BERKOW. ENSEMBLE: THE UNIVERSITY
THEATRE. MILLER AUDITORIUM, WESTERN MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY. KALAMAZOO, MI / USA. REVIEWED:
OCTOBER 28TH, 2011

when they encounter Frank 'n Furter), they demonstrate

ANTHONY SQUIERS

(albeit reluctantly) an ability to embrace the licentiousness they are confronted with. In the University Theatre production, Benjamin Maters (Brad) and Meredith Keller (Janet) were deft in presenting this. Keller was especially adroit in portraying the fragility of the bourgeois system of morality, offering the audience more than a stereotype of petit-bourgeois prudishness completely devoid of this potentiality. Instead she displayed a realistic depth which nailed precisely the contradiction between the totem of chastity and the taboo of carnal desire: in the number "Rose Tint My World" she expressed with stunning genuineness the ecstasy of liberation one can know when released from the fetters of bourgeois morality.

While Brad and Janet are the protagonists of the *Rocky* tale, the story really stars their antagonist, Frank 'n Furter (Zachary McConnell). Indeed, the role is so central, this show neces-



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sitates a star or the whole thing would fall apart. This production surely found one in McConnell. This is a tricky role, more so than it appears on the surface. Frank 'n Furter seems to be an antagonist, but also has to go through his own character arch. He is both protagonist and antagonist. As antagonist he violates the bourgeois equilibrium. But as protagonist what is his goal? Quite simply it is recognition. Unable to find recognition in the confines of bourgeois society, he must become a late-modern Prometheus. He must reshape, refashion, recreate (wo)man - a new subject for a new age. But ultimately he fails. He is a tragic hero-villain, at once liberator and disrupter, a Jesus figure. His hubris, longing for recognition, is sung by his Judas Riff Raff (Nick Graffigna) - "Your mission is a failure/ Your lifestyle's too extreme." McConnell, who is already starting to establish his professional career, demonstrated this with profound sophistication. In McConnell's performance, this struggle, this longing for recognition both in the character's creative tendencies and in the destructive ones flares for all to see. McConnell was aware that Frank 'n Furter's violence, for example, is not sadistic but a lashing out, an explosion

of frustration targeted at a world that will not or cannot or simply refuses to recognize him. With McConnell's performance we see a truly tragic character and we become aware that Frank 'n Furter is us, his frustration really ours. McConnell did a fantastic job showing us that it is Frank 'n Furter's position, his environment, that creates and recreates him, and he did this in a way which didn't lose sight of the comic elements required of the role. McConnell gave us a slutty, jealous, angry, lovable, sexy, dare I say "sweet" transvestite, who had enough poise not to take the role over the top but to show us the nuances and expose the liberating potential of the play. And, moreover, he did this with the kind of voice that can both shock and penetrate.

That this sort of social commentary came out so cleanly, so neatly, so seamlessly is a feather that perhaps should be placed in the cap of Berkow, who is the Director of Music Theatre Performance at Western Michigan. In fact, when speaking with him, he talked specifically to this, saying that *Rocky Horror* is "this kind of gender bending, iconic breaking of sexual barriers" and "the banner for a whole generation of disenfranchised young people who

were feeling sexually inhibited by society, particularly gay people, particularly transgender people...not just that portion of society but all young people who were feeling that society was sexually repressive."

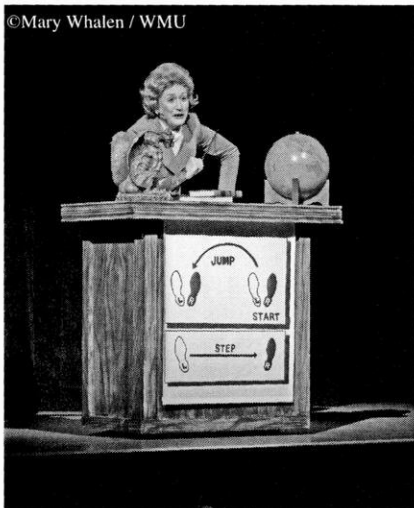
Because of this attentiveness to its social implications we can overlook that in this production the costumes were unimaginative, that there were minor technical difficulties, or that some of the dance numbers were perhaps a little too predictable. The bawdy, sexual, raunchy, tawdry elements were there for us; and they were properly contextualized - that is, confined by but at the same time transgressing the boundaries of bourgeois mortality. Thus, it was one hell of a show. The audience was without question fully engaged and fully aware - and if a theatre filled with cross-dressing, drunken maniacs screaming about seeing "Janet's twat" is not a theatre full of revolutionaries, then maybe such a theatre doesn't exist. By the final curtain they stood ready to be set loose, to defy the shackles of bourgeois morality, ready to fornicate, eager to sodomize, an army in fishnets marching steadfast toward the inevitable, headlong toward freedom.

MERCEDES. AUTHOR: THOMAS BRASCH. DIRECTION: PHILIP TIEDEMANN. SET DESIGN & COSTUMES: NORBERT BELLEN. MUSIC: OLE SCHMIDT. ENSEMBLE: BERLINER ENSEMBLE. BERLIN/GERMANY. REVIEWED: NOVEMBER 22, 2011

MARGARET SETJE-EILERS

To commemorate the tenth anniversary of Thomas Brasch's death on 3 November 2001, the Berliner Ensemble put together a comprehensive retrospective of his works, including Philip Tiedemann's production of *Mercedes*, an oddly apolitical play, considering what we know about Brasch's subversive critical action against the Prague Spring in 1968. Instead of injecting overtly political reference, Tiedemann offers a study of many sorts of absence - of meaningful relationships, orientation, and work that segments time and place - in short namely of time and the "lessness" of our time ("Zeit und Losigkeit"). In Tiedemann's focus on the kinds of absence produced by today's rules-driven economy, we view the characters Oi and Sakko through a series of recessed gray-blue windows. As Oi and Sakko come closer in new constellations, only to move apart again and reconfigure anew, an unseen (blind?) third figure - if he exists at all - plays chess offstage. Indeed, much as the figures we might imagine in his chess game (against whom?), Oi and Sakko speak in strongly rhythmical textual blocks and move according to undisclosed rules that they appear to abandon. The casting is brilliant: Svetlana Schönfeld as Oi, whose name recalls Yiddish exclamations ranging from disgust to astonishment; Dieter Montag as Sakko, a splash of color like a male cardinal in a bright red sports coat; and Manfred Karge, a voice from offstage, whose sudden protesting tirade is almost muffled by

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Oi's and Sakko's loud, crucifixion-like hammering.

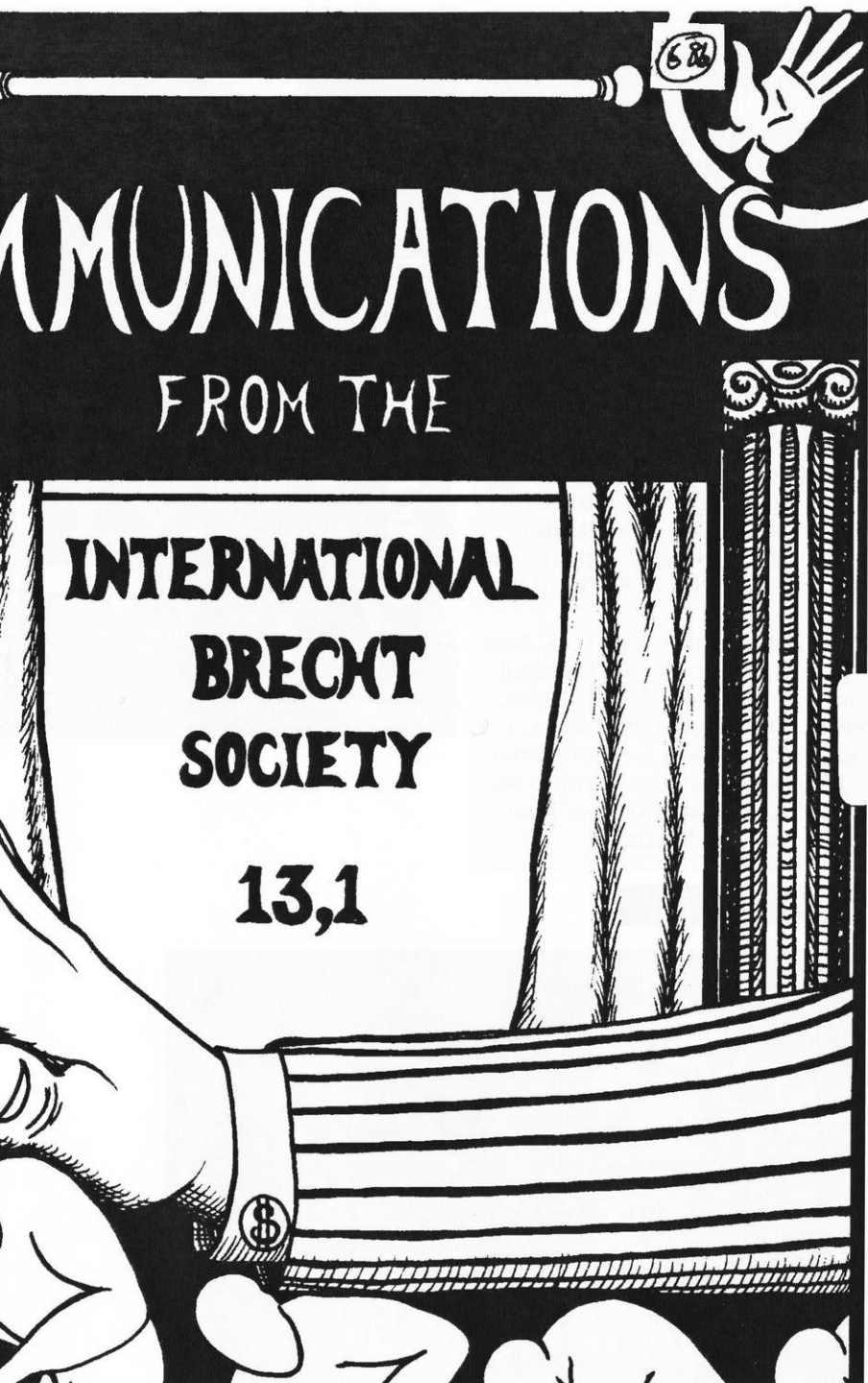
In the first production of *Mercedes*, under the direction of Matthias Langhoff in Zurich (7 Nov. 1983), Brasch's longtime partner Katharina Thalbach and Christoph Waltz played Oi and Sakko, and the language seems to be written for two young people ("WegdahabichgesagtOderichfahrdrüber"). Against projections of an undefined city skyline in Tiedemann's production, the generational difference of the actors only increases the poignancy of unemployment as a theme, more so than in the FRG of the 80s, where Brasch went to live shortly after Wolf Biermann's 1976 expatriation.

Sakko and Oi tell each other different versions of the truth in their attempts to approach each other. He tells her that he used to drive new cars from the factory to their final destinations for owners who paid for the service. We doubt it (why?). Now he gazes at the stream of traffic and counts how many Mercedes cars pass every hour. She confides that she exists by stealing money and objects that people leave in the sauna, but later announces that she is a whore, and between these sections of text, she dances with admirable agility and offers him a hallucinogenic love potion of wine with thorn apple leaves. Their positions remain uncertain, and all reference vague. Each calls the other Mercedes. As Mercedes (a Spanish name that means "Our Lady of Mercy"), Oi claims she saves imprisoned thieves, but soon takes it back. In a new approach, devoid of memory, he offers her a love potion with thorn apple, speaks roughly what her text has been, and seems to be called for work toward the end of the performance. We never find out if the chess player is actually blind, if he is physically present or who his partner is, and what rules - if any - he follows, but his single diatribe startles with its pow-

erful patriarchal vehemence and situates us quickly in the landscape of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

As Schiller reminds us in the fifteenth letter in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, "man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays" (Wilkinson 107). Brasch suggests that playing helps to free us from imposed rules, even if his game is hauntingly inconclusive. To honor Brasch, the Berliner Ensemble compiled an impressive portfolio of programs, by far the best they have ever produced. Each individual program folder contains loose documents meticulously assembled from archives, including facsimiles of fliers produced and distributed by Brasch and six others to protest the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968, small squares of orange paper that resulted in a 27-month prison sentence for Brasch at age twenty-three. The back of the *Mercedes* program hints of Brasch's textual explosiveness: "Undwennduirwaswünschenkönntest" In Tiedemann's production we see, through the negative space of "lessness," all that we desire.





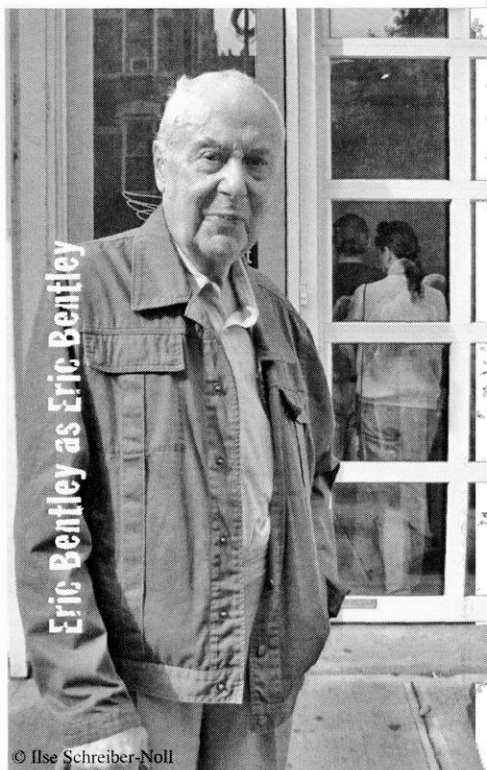
BRECHT BY BENTLEY: STAGED READINGS.
ENSEMBLE: PHOENIX THEATRE ENSEMBLE.
THEATER: WILD PROJECT. NEW YORK /USA

A MAN'S A MAN. AUTHOR: BERTOLT
BRECHT. ADAPTATION: ERIC BENTLEY.
DIRECTION: AMY WAGNER MUSIC: ARNOLD
BLACK. STAGED READINGS: NOVEMBER 16,
20, & 21, 2010

SILENT PARTNERS. AUTHOR: CHARLES
MAROWITZ. BASED ON THE BRECHT
MEMOIR BY ERIC BENTLEY. DIRECTION:
SCOTT SHATTUCK. STAGED READINGS:
FEBRUARY 22, 26, & 27, 2011

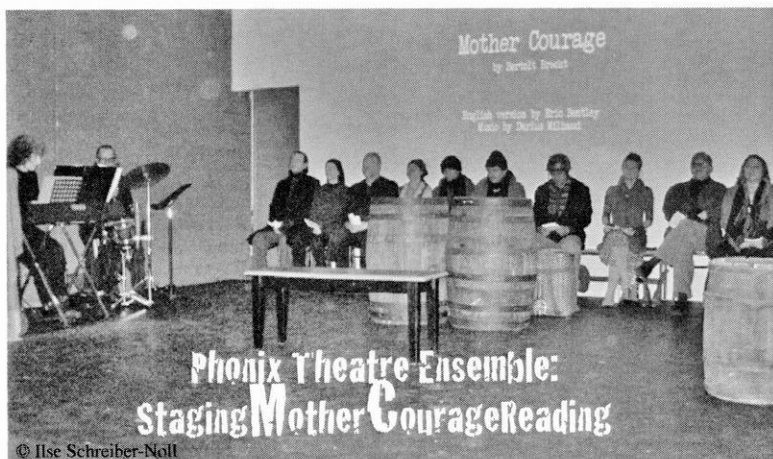
MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN.
AUTHOR: BERTOLT BRECHT. ADAPTATION:
ERIC BENTLEY. DIRECTION: ROBERT
HUPP. MUSIC: DARIUS MILHAUD. STAGED
READINGS: MAY 10, 14 & 15, 2011

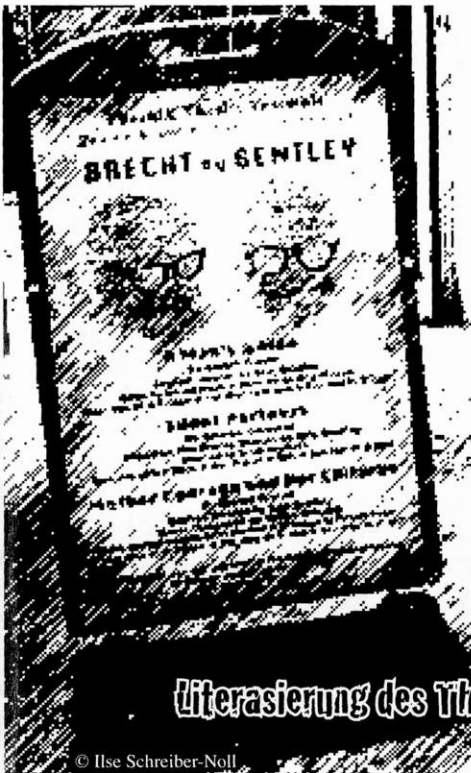
CASTS INCLUDE: BRIAN A. COSTELLO, ARIEL
ESTRADA, AMY FITTS, KELLI HOLSOPPLE,
LEEANNE HUTCHISON, RUDY LAWLESS,
JOHN LENARTZ, DAN MATISA, JOSEPH J.
MENINO, GRANT NEALE, LAURA PIQUADO,
DAVID REGELMANN, CRAIG SMITH, ELISE
STONE, MICHAEL SURABIAN, JOSH TYSON,
ANTHONY WILLIS, JR.



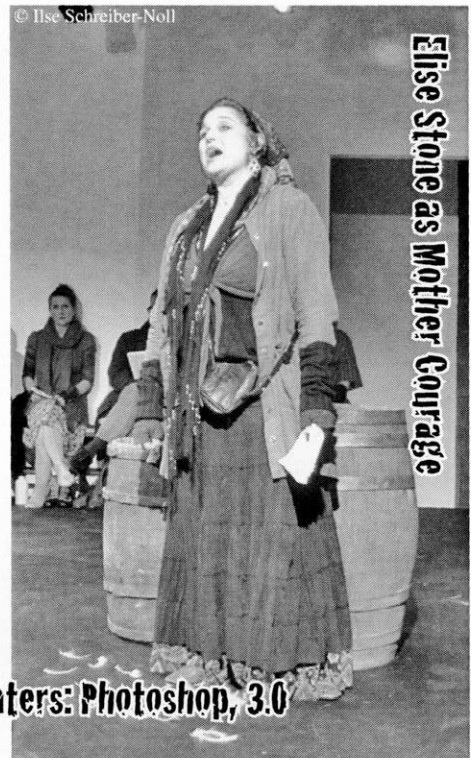
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ILSE SCHREIBER-NOLL





Literarisierung des Theaters: Photoshop, 3.0



THE WEDDING. AUTHOR: BERTOLT BRECHT. ADAPTATION: MARTIN AND ROSE KASTNER. DIRECTION: ZELJKO DJUKIC. ENSEMBLE: TUTA THEATRE COMPANY THEATRE: THE CHOPIN STUDIO THEATRE, CHICAGO, IL PREMIERE: JANUARY 14, 2010 (REMOUNT OPENING: FEBRUARY 5, 2011). REVIEWED: MARCH 5, 2011

Although the work is perhaps better known to Euro-

ANTHONY SQUIERS

pean audiences, under the direction of Serbian-born, Chicago transplant Zeljko Djukic a Midwestern audience was offered a chance to see what is, arguably, Brecht's only true comedy, *The Wedding*. Djukica, who was a student of renowned and controversial Brechtian scholar John Fuegi at the University of Maryland is no stranger to Brecht's work. Just this season his company, TUTA, also presented *Baal*, which was well received by all accounts, and in 1996 they performed a series of Brecht's one acts plays featuring *The Beggar*, *The Wedding*, and *The Chalk Cross* on the same bill. Following the success of this season's production of *Baal*, Djukica decided to remount last season's production of *The Wedding* and has continued his string of accessible yet cerebral successes with a production which was funny, timely, full of didactic energy and featured a talented cast.

Perhaps the best achievement of the production was its comedic effects. While the jokes, which were written

nearly a century ago, could easily become kitschy and lack the bawdiness of Brecht's intent, to a modern audience, they were presented with a fantastic comedic sensibility that maintained every bit of the raunchy, burlesque quality that the play's subtext demands. This was particularly true of Andy

Hager's rendition of "Ballad of Chastity in Major" to the accompaniment of the guitar, played by Trey Maclin, who performed the role of the bridegroom. With nicely timed pelvic thrusts and a mustache that could have been the envy

of any 1970's adult film

star, Hager's per-

formance man-

aged to force

a chuckle

from even

the most

prudish

of au-

dience

mem-

bers.

Similar-

ly, Jaime-

lyn Gray's

performance

of the coquett-

ish sister of the bride

was filled with impish sex-

uality and a pronounced puckish cheek,

which fit well with the overall playful

tone of the play and provided several

humorous moments throughout.

Although the production nailed the comedic aspect of Brecht's work, it certainly did not do this at the expense of the didactic potential of it. To the contrary, this production demonstrated *The Wedding* continues to be a timely polemic. This fact is not only a testament to the skill of the cast and director but also to the enduring relevance of Brecht. In a time when people are still



suffering from the effects of the recent collapse in the housing and financial markets and unemployment rates hover over 11% in Illinois, one can clearly see that, like the furniture in Brecht's play, the bourgeois system continues to be coming loose at the joints.

In an interview with Djukica after the performance, he alluded to the current economic situation as being one of the impetuses for putting on *The Wedding* at this time. As he quite pithily put it, "Brecht is always welcome in shitty times." More than simply shitty times, Djukica also stressed the unraveling of bourgeois values, especially the perceived value of letting the market run wild, as being a reason for presenting this particular play now. Although the connection between the present situation and Brecht's theme of the dissolution of the bourgeois mythos is by no means obscure, Djukica's decision to have Brecht's poem "Of Poor B.B." set to original music by Jesse Terrill to open the show makes this connection unequivocally clear and was perhaps Djukica's most important creative addition to Brecht's original.

While this production did a wonderful job relating the thematic elements to a contemporary audience, it was not without some vulnerability. Most prominent of these shortcomings was found in the failed attempt to relate the treatment of the wife by her husband, played by Sean Ewert, to the violence that boils under the surface of bourgeois society. Though a minor role, Ewert had the opportunity to make a pronounced impact on the audience, but his performance was uninspired and neutered of its thematic capacity. Still, this was a minor flaw and did little to detract from the overall quality of the show.

There were also some aesthetic limi-

tations of the production as well. Most notable of these was the obstruction of the audience's vision by giant support pillars holding up the floor above the basement level theatre area where the performance was staged. Though the ensemble did their best to work around



these impediments, everyone was not always able to see all of the action including, at times, the players who were speaking lines.

Nevertheless, this production of *The Wedding* exhibited a great deal of thoughtful study, comedic timing and sense of its political ramifications. In total, Djukica, his cast and crew presented a wonderful show that left the audience with something to think about and thoroughly entertained.

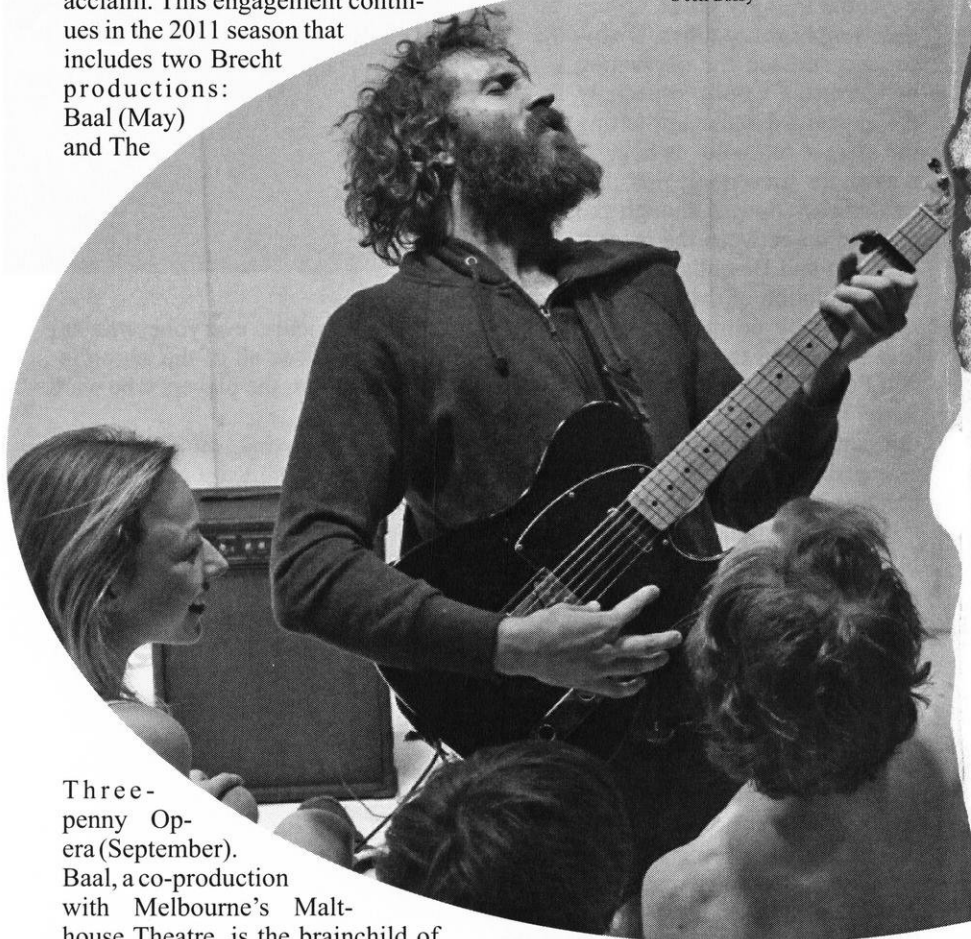
BAAL. AUTHOR: BERTOLT BRECHT. ADAPTATION: SIMON STONE & TOM WRIGHT. DIRECTION: SIMON STONE. ENSEMBLE: CO-PRODUCTION OF SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY & MALTHOUSE MELBOURNE. WHARF 1 THEATER / SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY. MELBOURNE / AUSTRALIA. REVIEWED: MAY 11 & MAY 23, 2011

ANDREAS AURIN &
MEG MUMFORD

In recent years Sydney Theatre Company, the city's flagship venue, has showcased a serious engagement with playtexts and staging practices from Germany, often to critical acclaim. This engagement continues in the 2011 season that includes two Brecht productions: *Baal* (May) and *The*

ons of German theatre, dramatist Tom Wright. Together they have produced an adaptation (inspired by Brecht's 1922 version of *Baal* in particular) that has sparked an unusually large volume of print media and online commentary from professional critics and theatre-goers alike. The outpouring has been characterized by widely divergent responses to its bleak depiction of a contemporary artist and his milieu. One of the main is-

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Three-penny Opera (September). *Baal*, a co-production with Melbourne's Malthouse Theatre, is the brainchild of emergent director Simon Stone, and one of Australia's most prominent champi-

ones at stake has been the question of wheth-

er this Baal provides a meaningful experience of a self-destructive society or simply a clichéd reiteration.

From the outset Stone and Wright's adaptation creates a hermetically-sealed and monocultural world. Propelled both by their artistic vision and the exigencies of funding within a commercial theatre model, these artists replace the relatively diverse and large German community represented in all Brecht's versions of Baal, with a tight focus on an Australian Generation Y scene. This culture is vividly depicted through the use of a vernacular language, finely tuned during rehearsals

by a cast of three males and six females. The performers appear to be in their twenties and thirties, all white, all able and seemingly healthy,

a l l trained i n Australian tertiary o r the-atre institutions.

The world they create is denuded of both bodies and characters from

older or younger generations, a stage of figures concerned with the here and

now and their merging with one another, rather than their relation to the past, the future, or a broader community. The closed off and inward-looking na-

ture of this youth culture – one fostered across the affluent parts of the globe – is heightened by three main elements: a performance style that maintains the fourth wall convention; a blinding form of lighting that makes it difficult for the performers to see each other let alone the audience; and a rainfall effect that, together with a frequent positioning of actors with their back to the audience, often frustrates attempts to negotiate faces and words.

The complexity of Brecht's dionysian, creator-destroyer Baal, half god and half semi-autobiographical mortal, is also reduced. By contrast, the adaptation's protagonist (played by Thomas M. Wright) is clearly a mere mortal who appears as a fragile rock poet bad boy. Brandishing a phallic electric guitar, and constantly zipping and unzipping his skinny jeans, this stringy Baal spends more time displaying his penchant for sexual and sensual intercourse with women, men, and Woodstock bourbon and cola (a popular drink for locals in the 18-25 demographic) than he does for lyrics and music. Admittedly, Wright's creation of haunting spherical sounds does generate some sense of his protagonist's status as an underground cult figure. However, the truncation, partially audible delivery, and in some cases elimination of Baal's many verses (including the opening "Hymn of Baal the Great") contributes to a general downplaying of Baal's creative potential, a potential Stone devotes more time to in the program notes where he praises Baal's "courage to question every restraint we've put in place to protect our society."

This production weights the portrayal of Baal and his retinue in favour of the destructive energies, in keeping with Stone's interpretation (according to the program) of the play as "a nightmare catharsis of the anti-social instinct." Not only does Baal murder his male



lover, Ekart, out of a sense of jealousy and betrayal, but in the production (unlike Brecht's versions) he is presented as murderously steeped in the blood of a woman. Thanks to role doubling, this woman recalls the earlier character Johanna, whose relationship with Baal drives her to suicide. In a bid to achieve the desired catharsis of the anti-social, Stone and Wright's adaptation draws on the ending in Brecht's 1955 edition, a rein-statement of an un-

sided indictment. At its finale, a young male and female adult approach the naked wasted body of the rock poet, sprawled on a soiled and rain-soaked mattress. Forcefully, they indicate their displeasure at having to bury him: "Bugger it. Fucking artists." The narcissist with an inborn death wish, who

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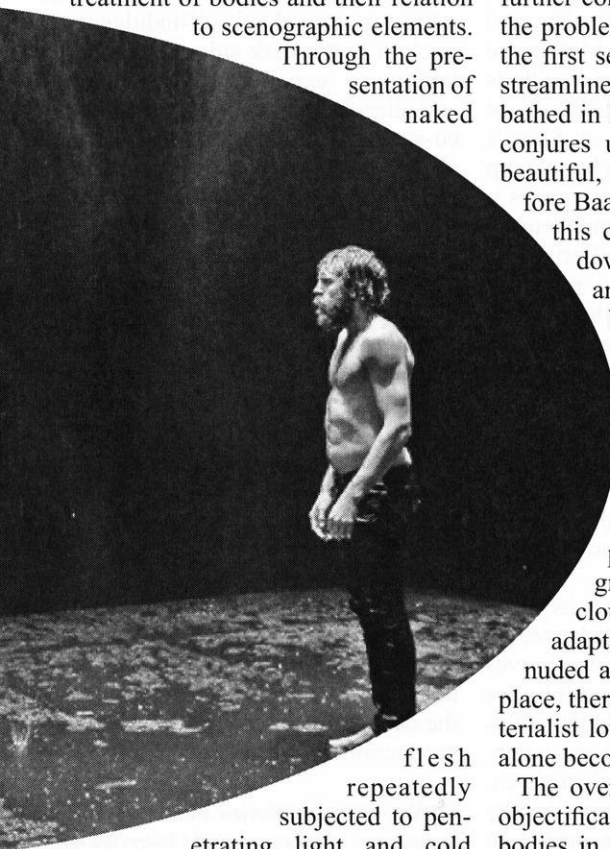
published scene from 1920, one that removes any uncertainty about Baal's future through its depiction of a chorus of woodcutters who comment on his selfish deathbed hunger, haunting connection with nature, and ultimate demise. While this relatively closed scene arguably still maintains a dialectical tension between, on the one hand, a sympathetic understanding of Baal's pursuit of his material needs and sensual pleasures; and on the other hand, a condemnation of his naked egoism, the Australian adaptation seems to present a more one-

has abandoned his social obligations, gets his come-uppance. Does this ending, and the production as a whole, run the risk of positioning Baal as a scapegoat whose archetypal fall from grace hinders the audience from pursuing the social reasons for Baal's ultimate inability to be productive?

Well, it's true the production does offer social critique of a decadent culture

whose imminent implosion is linked to a rampantly consumptive and orgiastic culture. In Brecht's play the act of consuming that can both nourish and destroy, is a central image. In the Australian adaptation it is the destructive aspects of consumption that are foregrounded, particularly thanks to the treatment of bodies and their relation to scenographic elements.

Through the presentation of naked



flesh

repeatedly

subjected to pen-

etrating light and cold

water (which makes the performers appear blanched and contributes to an increasing sense of both their and the characters' misery), we the voyeuristic spectators are reminded of the destructive aspects of our desire to consume images. These bodies' constant relationship with fluids also conjures up the threats that excessive consumption can pose to our natural environment. As well as constant drinking, accompanied

by an abundance of Woodstock cartons and cans, the show releases 500mL of stage blood, and 2000 litres of water used to create a sustained rain effect. In a country often blighted by drought, such use of water is a particularly resonant image of wasteful consumption. Nick Schlieper's lighting and set design further contributes to a narrative about the problems of such consumption. In the first section of the production, his streamlined, white, two-wall structure bathed in harsh yellow and white light conjures up an overheated, if coldly beautiful, urban environment. Just before Baal and his clique exit the city,

this construction literally crashes down, morphing into a dark rectangular platform hammered

by rain, at once an asphalt remnant from the jungle of the cities and a death bed.

Whereas in Brecht's play versions, Baal's entry into a rural landscape is marked by a semi-pantheistic engagement with a variety of phenomena from nature – green fields, plum trees, white clouds, wind, rain, sun – in this adaptation the landscape is denuded and post-apocalyptic. In this place, there is no chance for Baal's materialist love of nature to be heard, let alone become productive.

The overt and seemingly self-aware objectification of both male and female bodies in the production also contributes to a critique of a self-indulgent and misogynistic orgiastic culture. Ultimately the numerous and diverse (dry-sex) bodily exchanges between individuals and groups does not lead to productivity, either in the sense of desired offspring, artistic breakthroughs and outputs, or just plain happiness. However, while this culture is acknowledged as deeply misanthropic, it is its misogynistic tendencies that

are most prominent. In terms of a body count, in both the play and the production it is predominantly women who are sexually objectified, either by Baal and his lover, or by themselves as part of their bid for attention. Arguably, the production attempts to avoid reasserting the very patriarchal raunch culture it challenges by, for example, also presenting sustained male nudity and a sexualized drag queen. Melbourne theatre critic Alison Croggon also finds traces of this attempt to counterbalance the subjection of females in Stone's use of a chorus of women who take up multiple roles, a chorus that creates a collective body with voice and weight.¹ In addition some of the authority figures in Baal, including the powerful businessman Mech who initially offers then withdraws his patronage for the poet, are turned into female characters played by female performers. Stone himself has indicated that through allowing women destroyed in the first half of the production to return in the second he has actively sought to create a situation where "The machinery of femininity takes revenge."²

While the production wears its resistance to raunch culture on its sleeve, the women's revenge nevertheless proves neither convincing nor successful. For example, in the case of the Johanna figure, she returns only to die yet again, and this time in a more violent death. The moment when feminine machinery literally takes to the stage is during an episode where Baal is haunted by the figure of Sophie, a woman who gives birth to his child and whom he abandons. Sophie returns through the female chorus who, dressed like Sophie replicas – in teenage-mum hoodies, T-shirts and red underpants – line up in a squadron that silently faces Baal, spearheaded by a three-wheeler pram with a protective rain cover. Shortly after this moment, the haunting image of the si-

lently demanding mothers, both signs and enforcers of social responsibility and regulation, is summarily dismissed when Wright violently flings the pram (and its imaginary inhabitant) off the asphalt platform.

This tightly focused adaptation, where numerous scenes, characters, and locations are deleted in order to create an intense portrayal of self-indulgent attraction to the dark side, unrelentingly creates an experience of destruction and alienation. For some, including the co-author of this review, Andreas Aurin, the images of egoism, consumption and misogyny remained clichés, failing to penetrate the relationship between Baal and his (or our) society in any way that could, for example, stop today's Baal groupies in their tracks, or move non-plussed audience members beyond indifference. For others, including the second co-author of this review, Meg Mumford, it created an experience of an individualist and fatalist culture that was strong enough to engender a resistant counter-action. That is, a renewed call for a more dialectical and multi-vocal theatre and world, one where the participants could be liberated to generate modes of social life that transcended the isolation of solipsism, the decadence of über-consumerism, and the devaluing of human and artistic reproduction.

¹ Alison Croggon, 'Review: Baal', 8/04/11, <http://theatrenotes.blogspot.com/2011/04/review-baal.html> (accessed 24/04/11).

² Stone as quoted in Robin Usher, 'Early Brecht play hits modern note', *The Age*, 29/03/11, p. 17, http://newsstore.fairfax.com.au/apps/viewDocument.ac?jsessionid=BEB4E11A97C72803EC171AEDABBA815?sy=af&pb=all_ffx&dt=selectRange&dr=1month&so=relevance&sf=text&sf=headline&rc=10&rm=200&sp=brs&cls=18883&clsPage=1&docID=AGE110329PIUK2D85N G (accessed 25/04/11).

The last production of the 2010/2011 season commissioned by the Brown/Trinity Rep M.F.A. programs was to be *The Threepenny Opera* by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill, which had gathered enormous interest among the theatre community of Providence throughout the year, due to the scale of the piece and thus the ambitious work of the team. Kristan Seemel, who had among other fine productions directed a remarkable interpretation of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, selected this play as his final directing effort in the program.

The script of the play, in the translation by Ralph Manheim and John Willet, was left greatly untouched by Seemel and his team, which resulted in a running time of approximately three hours. The songs were presented with all of their verses and even more unpopular dialogues as those between Polly Peachum and Lucy Brown were left in their entirety, while the pace of the scenes themselves may be defined as laggard. This often resulted in a sluggish atmosphere as the different subplots were thoroughly played out. The songs thus worked as interrupting the envisioned narrative flow of the scenes, just as the set offered a stark and restless antipole to the wholesome interpretation of the play.

The astonishing set, designed by Jarrod Bray, is conceived as a V-shape pointing towards the audience and splitting the house in two. Using the entire site of the performance space, it is intriguingly structured with multiple tiers while establishing various entry and exit points for the actors, who appeared above the stage, behind the audience, and from below the stage. Furthermore, Bray has designed several freestanding beams in geometrical structures, which are reminiscent of gallows. As they end

THE THREEPENNY OPERA. AUTHOR: BRECHT / WEILL / HAUPTMANN / GAY. ADAPTATION: WILLET & MANHEIM. DIRECTION: KRISTAN SEEMEL. SET DESIGN: JARROD BRAY. COSTUME DESIGN: LARA DE BRUIJN. LIGHTING DESIGN: NICK SOLYOM. ENSEMBLE: BROWN UNIVERSITY / TRINITY REP. PELL CHAFEE PERFORMANCE CENTER IN PROVIDENCE, RI / USA. MAY 12 – 22, 2011

in mid-air, they leave the set uncannily unfinished and unpredictable, retaining the notion of an over-powering sovereignty that hands out death at any moment, foreshadowing the end of Macheath.

KATRIN DETTMER

The costumes, designed by Lara de Bruijn, leave less room for interpretation. While the costumes for the lowest of the low are of a rather rough nature, incorporating fascinating bandage constructions to simulate missing limbs, the general costume design is a polished and romanticized version of a late Victorian phantasy, similar to the aesthetic of *Moulin Rouge* by Baz Luhrmann or *Sweeney Todd* by Tim Burton. There is a lot of lace, brocade, and embroidery, which give the notion of a Variété rather than the slums of Soho, establishing a striking image of theatricality, also since a number of costumes are changed and amended on stage.

Unfortunately, neither the unfinished set nor the Variété character of the costumes are taken up or problematized by the production as a whole to reflect on its own theatrical nature. The V of the stage here is not a sign for *Verfremdung*, which is dryly alluded at by the use of signs with song titles that are shown by the actors or displayed on the stage - as requested by the stage directions. While the huge canvases with, for example, „What keeps mankind alive?“ are very effectful in the moment, they do diminish within a production that has no desire to investigate the epic theatre tradition of Brecht's - whether it is through affirmation, deconstruction,

or critique – but rather strives to establish a dramatic arc and develop intact characters. Thus, the production seems undecided programmatically, which is also largely due to the questionable efforts of the actors.

Whereas the performances of the ensemble are wisely edited in terms of voice and gestures, the performances of the principal actors seem unbridled. The grand display of emotion and the desire to make the person „whole“ and „real“

nity to actually put these markers under scrutiny is lost. The most problematic of all performances is Richard Williams' as Mac The Knife: while he rarely exudes the terror that can be connected to this character, the last scenes in jail are performed by Williams in an outburst of despair and regret. He falls to his knees, beats his chest, and asks for mercy and forgiveness – in all seriousness – while most of the ensemble offers him compassionate looks. Now,



suggests that suffering is a personal and private part of the biography and not due to an economically and socially determined frame. On the other hand, there is a display of virtuosity in voice and gesture that serves the individual actor, not the production. Chris Berry plays Mr. Peachum as a Dickensian character but is in that neither threatening nor cold nor socially determined. Macheath's women, played by Jaselyn Blanchard as Polly, Tiffany Nichole Greene as Lucy, and Charlotte Graham as Jenny, are indistinguishable as to the way they employ the markers of determination and suffering – yet, the great opportu-

at the latest, the production gives up on „showing“ but invites the audience to „feel“ with the actors. The only commendable performance of a principal actor, which kept its distance to both play and audience, was given by Zarina Shea as Mrs. Peachum. Her over-accentuated gestures put theatricality itself on the spot and opened up – for a few moments – the possibility of an informed interpretation of what it is to act. Her voice and movements in their surplus never once tried to emulate something like reality. Instead, the performance managed to pierce the reality of the audience by attacking prefigured

notions of character-formation. Similar but all too few attacks were also delivered by members of the ensemble like Ricky Oliver as Dreary Walt, who continuously singled out members of the audience for threateningly ambivalent eye-contact.

This piercing sensation was also accomplished by the songs which were the actual source of theatrical energy in this production. In the sparse yet extremely powerful and excellent arrangement by Alex Tirrell (Piano/Harmonium; Reed; Trumpet; Banjo/Guitar; Percussion/Trumpet), the drive of the compositions became palpable. Especially during the ensemble scenes, when the songs were presented towards the audience, the energy of the Brechtian setup was finally tapped into. Unfortunately, these moments were limited to only some of the musical numbers. Thus, the „Solomon Song“ was delivered by Graham rather as a soliloquy than a commentary.

Finally, the production interpreted the end of the play in a different yet problematic fashion. After the messenger delivers the reprieve of Mac heath, who had been led off-stage some moments ago, it is Tiger Brown who sings the „Reprieved!“ lines, while a dummy dressed up like Mac is being thrown from the ceiling upstage, hung and dead, thus watering down the intercession on behalf of the audience. Brecht's dialectic move to make clear the separation between theatre and reality and by doing so to bring them into contact with each other again, exposing the artificiality of circumstance both on- and off-stage, was here eradicated by presenting self-indulgent fatality that added nothing to the play or epic theatre as such. In fact, the death of Macheath in this way re-established a tragic moment in the theatre with no repercussions for the play or the production. Instead, the finale was once again presented in Brechtian fashion as

if nothing had occurred at all.

Thus, the Trinity production ventured to produce a musical with an alibi of social-economic relevance. Given the current situation in the US, the production was surprisingly negligent of investigating economic structures and their effect on society. Sentences like „What is the robbing of a bank compared to the founding of a bank?“ seem to have been without relevance to this production as they remained without impact in the scene. Especially in comparison to Robert Wilson's *Dreigroschenoper* at the Berliner Ensemble (2007), the failures become more apparent. Although Wilson's production is highly designed, the abstract setting of light and space opens up the room for the text to be actually heard. The stylized and exact performances by the actors in their directed use of gesture and mimicry avoid an emotionalization and thus enable and request the audience to investigate the relations between the characters and the world they are thrown into. While making the *Dreigroschenoper* his own, Wilson also pays homage to Brecht's theatre by citing the final scene of the original production at Schiffbauerdamm in 1928 in his last image – the gallows still function as the stark sign of the sovereign's power. This is unfortunately completely lost in the Trinity production, which does not make any use of its wonderful set and its implications.

All in all, Seemel's direction, while being ambitious and successful in a number of smaller instances, misses out on some great opportunities to thoroughly investigate the possibilities of epic theatre today, whether Seemel's attitude towards it is positive or negative. Thereby, he also dismisses *The Threepenny Opera* as being simply a musical and not the strangely relevant piece of anarchic theatre it actually is.

THE THREEPENNY OPERA. AUTHOR: BECHT / WEILL /
HAUPTMANN / GAY. DIRECTION & LIGHTING CONCEPT:
BY ROBERT WILSON. ENSEMBLE: BERLINER ENSEMBLE.
BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC. BROOKLYN, NY /
USA. REVIEWED: OCTOBER 5, 2011

Brecht esteemed
his popular work
The Threepenny

PETER ZAZZALI

Opera to be a “play [that] showed the close relationship between the emotional life of the bourgeois and that of the criminal world.”¹ The piece’s antihero, Macheath, forges a bond with Soho’s middleclass thereby supporting Brecht’s contention: “Mackey’s” two wives (Polly and Lucy), his former lover (Jenny), and the Chief of Police (Tiger Brown) are all “close” confidants offering the reader/theatergoer a bourgeois complement to his criminal activities. In the cases of the women, he is literally in “bed” with them at one point or another, and Brown is an army buddy from the Indian War who repeatedly assists his comrade in averting the law. Furthermore, nearly the entire city laments what appears to be Macheath’s imminent execution only to become overjoyed by the news of his pardon. All is fair game in Soho, so long as one can get away with his criminal acts. Macheath is a killer, a thief, a cheat, a liar, an extortionist, and a first-rate villain, yet paradoxically, he is much beloved by the *dramatis personae* and audience alike for his charm and good looks. He is one of the most appealing “bad guys” in all of western drama.

This criminal/bourgeois connection is of course intended to cause the spectator to question a hegemonic social order that privileges capitalist greed at the expense of the disenfranchised majority. Brecht’s epic theatre gives the spectator a “chance to criticize human behavior from a social point of view.”² The scholar Martin Esslin refers to this aesthetic as a “commitment” de-

signed to engage the spectator’s critical thinking to the point of “overthrowing the existing social order.”³ Given this logic, one can assume that a current production of *Threepenny* would directly and indirectly address the ongoing economic crisis in Europe and the US by

challenging capitalist greed in the face of an increasing disparity of the possession of material goods between the wealthiest one percent of society and everyone else. Unfortunately, Robert Wilson’s version of the work that performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) this past fall failed to evoke any of these issues. Instead of a production that was critically engaging, the audience partook in a visual spectacle that relied on elements of tone and mood at the expense of storytelling. The action of the epic drama was lost in a production beset with gothic dreariness. The actors’ facial makeup was lime green and therein gave an artful nod to what one can only assume is the director’s idea of “Brechtian.” It did not in any way illuminate the characters or develop the plot. Additionally, the characters were replete in black velvet - with the exception of Polly (a white wedding gown) and the *deux ex machina* rendering messenger of the Queen (a lavish red robe) - thereby underscoring Wilson’s macabre conceptualization of *ThreePenny*.

The general tone of gloom and doom overtook the work of the talented cast as well. The exceptional skills of the Berliner Ensemble went underused, as the performances - like the story - were vaguely experimental and dull. Axel Werner’s Brown, for example, bore little difference from Jürgen Holtz’s Peachum insofar as both actors were attired in black velvet (Werner had a top hat, however, and Holtz adorned something resembling a yarmulke), em-

ployed lanky movements, spoke with deep voices (Werner's was particularly basso), and rendered performances that relied on suggestive attitudes instead of committing to their character's action; and no, the latter was not in my view an example of Brechtian Gestus. The most disappointing performance, however, was Ulrich Brandhoff's indis-

no fun whatsoever. I am not trying to sound glib. In his essay, "Three Cheers for Shaw," Brecht acknowledges that "fun" and "cheerfulness" are crucial attributes of the theatre, especially as it pertains to a drama's hero, who is "not a [model] of good conduct...but con-

sists of an impenetrable but exceedingly lively hotch-potch of the most

©Lesley Leslie-Spinks



cern-ible portrayal of Macheath. With a crop of red hair and white makeup (this was an exception to the rest of the cast), Brandhoff eerily resembled the Joker figure from DC Comics' Batman series. Brandhoff laboriously plodded his way through songs, failed to find the humor in the role, and didn't possess any of Mackey's needed charm and suave.

Like this entire production, he was

con-
tra-
dictory
qualities."⁴

Arguably, Macheath is Brecht's most "lively" and

"contradictory" (anti) hero, which is the very point to the epic theatre's use of dialectics. This contradictoriness is apparent in the juxtaposition between Brecht's lyrics and Kurt Weill's musical language as demonstrated by the opera's signature ballads. In the opening number, "The Ballad of Mack the Knife," a Street Singer regales the

audience with Weill's jazzy composition while mouthing lyrics that cast Macheath for the scoundrel that he is - Wilson's production, on the other hand, began as if we were about to watch a horror film. A musical dialectic is likewise demonstrated in the "Ballad of Immoral Earnings," in which a lullaby melody contradicts lyrics that depict Macheath as a physically and emotionally abusive lout who "flushed" an unborn fetus "down the sewer."⁵ The idea is to find some sense of playfulness in locating these dialectic components in performing Brecht. Esslin eloquently refers to Brechtian acting as a "parody" that simultaneously "mocks and imitates," thereby lending credence to Brecht's directive that a cast "comments" on its performances or acts in "quotation marks."⁶ If *Threepenny* is written and musically composed in the key of parody, Wilson's production sorely overlooked this conceit.

In fairness, Wilson is a trained visual artist who famously spends weeks working on the technical elements of his productions, most especially the lighting design. His *Threepenny* was indeed visually stunning. In fact, the most compelling part of the evening came with the rising of the curtain between scenes to reveal a new setting that was always a fascinating image marked by a unique mix of lighting hues, tones, levels, and locations. However, images cannot define a character or advance a plot. While they can certainly complement these elements, they are an auxiliary to the epic theatre not its foundation. Moreover, Wilson's visual adeptness was limited to the lighting, as his staging was remarkably flat - the first diagonal grouping didn't occur until Macheath and Polly were alone for the "Moon Over Soho" duet. The lighting notwithstanding, there was very little about this production that could be described as "theatrical," as the pace

plodded along, the story lacked clarity, mood stunted dramatic action, and a general malaise offset any chance that this *Threepenny* would be cheerful and fun. About the only ironic part of the evening was the prominent placement of an American Express logo in the program proudly recognizing the corporation's financial support of this production. So much for beggars...

1 Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht On Theatre*, trans. John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 85.

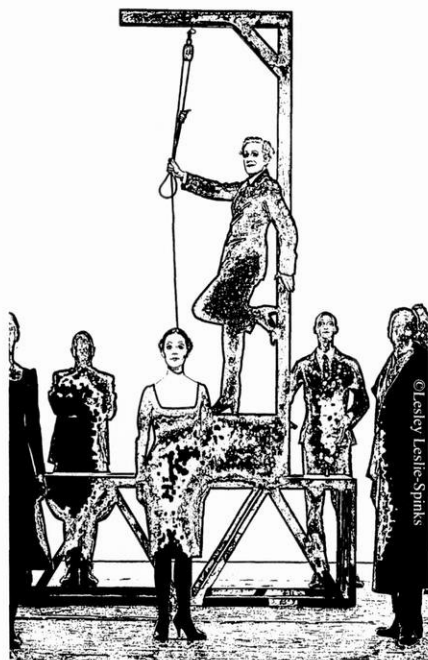
2 Ibid., 86.

3 Martin Esslin, *Brecht: The Man and His Work* (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 227.

4 Brecht, *Brecht On Theatre*, 11-12.

5 Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*, trans. Ralph Manheim and John Willet (New York: Arcade, 1994), 44.

6 Esslin, *Brecht: The Man and His Work*, 249; Brecht, *Brecht On Theatre*, 138.



GOOD PERSON OF SEZUAN
IN
NIETZSCHEAN
APHORISMSGPS AS STREET SCENE
WRIT LARGE

REWRITING GENESIS 18 -
23: SODOM & GOMORRAH
NEGOTIATION SCENE, LOT
COMPLEX, SARA / HAGAR,
ISAAC VS ISHMAEL,
BINDING OF ISAAC, DEATH
/ BURIAL OF SARAH

OCCUPY WALL STREET:
TO BE GOOD, YET LIVE?

REWRITING TRIAL &
DEATH DIALOGUES
OF PLATO / SOCRATES
(PLATOCRATES)?

TO LIVE BY IDEAS. TO
LIVE CONSISTENTLY
BETWEEN BODY AND MIND,
CONTENT AND FORM.
TO BE GOOD, YET LIVE.
CAN ONE LIVE, AND BE
UTTERLY, HUMAN YET
STILL LIVE ACCORDING TO
IDEAS?

SEX FOR TEXT? DOES
BB REWRITE DEAD,
WHITE, MALE CANON
WITH THE FEMININE? IS
THIS EMPOWERMENT OR
EXPLOITATION?

GPS VS APOLOGY
GPS - A DEFENSE THAT
ENDS WITH LIFE BUT SHE
MUST CORRUPT HERSELF,
NO RESOLUTION AND LEFT
WITH CONTRADICTIONS.

APHORISMEN AUS DER
GBFA
(ALSO ZEIGT BRECHT)GBFA 26
JOURNALE 1:

DÄNEMARK

12.9.1938: IN DER
DEUTSCHEN ZENTRAL-
ZEITUNG EINIGES ÜBER
DEN HEUER VERSTORBENEN
STANISLAWSKI. SEIN ORDEN
IST EIN SAMMELBECKEN
FÜR ALLES PFÄFFISCHE
IN DER THEATERKUNST...
DER TUISMUS SELBER...
ALS OB DIE EMOTIONEN
NICHT MINDESTENS
SO KORRUMPIERT
WERDEN WÄREN ALS DIE
VERSTANDESFUNKTIONEN!
...DAS IST "ECHTER"
NATURALISMUS, DIE
NATUR IST DER GROSSE
UNBEKANNTE, ER WIRD
IMITIERT, INDEM MAN
SEINEN FALSCHEN BART
IMITIERT. (324-325)

7.10.1938: DER
UNTERGANG DER
TSCHECHOSLOWAKEI
IST, IN DER PROZEDUR,
BEMERKENSWERT. (326)

23.11.1938: DAS
LEBEN DES GALILEI
ABGESCHLOSSEN....ÄHNLICH
WIE IN DER JOHANNA
BRAUCHTE ICH AM SCHLUSS
EINEN KUNSTGRIFF, UM
AUF JEDEN FALL DEM
ZUSCHAUER DEN NÖTIGEN
ABSTAND ZU SICHERN.
SELBST DER UNBEDENKLICH
SICH EINFÜHLENDE MUSS

APOLOGY: A DEFENSE
THAT ENDS WITH DEATH
YET CONTENTMENT,
DEATH YET DIALECTIC,
RESOLUTION WITHOUT
CONTRADICTION, YET
DEATH.

THE GOOD MATRIX OF
PHILADELPHIA
TO BE GOOD, YET LIVE.
TO MAKE MONEY, YET BE
GOOD
TO OCCUPY, YET TO ACT
TO ACT, YET TO THINK
TO LOSE THE BATTLE, YET
WIN THE WAR
TO BE THE PUDDING, YET
EAT THE PUDDING
TO BE A PROSTITUTE,
YET BE A CABBAGE PATCH
DOLL
TO HAVE COOL BOOTS
THAT SMELL
TO ACT WITH THE MIND,
YET THINK WITH THE
BODY

GPS IS THE ULTIMATE IN
MINIMALIST ELEGANT
DESIGN. IT IS THE
EQUIVALENT OF A KILLER
APP, A SUPER REDUCTIVE
TECHNOLOGY EQUIVALENT
TO PLATO'S APOLOGY.

SHOULD GPS BE PLAYED
AS A COMEDY AGAINST
THE TRAGIC / EPIC GRAIN?

GPS = DOUBLE
CONSCIOUSNESS,
BORDERLANDS
CONSCIOUSNESS?

SHOULD AN ACTOR BE A
BETTER SHEN TEH
THAN SHUI TA?

ZUMINDEST JETZT,
AUF DEM WEG DER
EINFÜHLUNG SELBER
IN DEN GALILEI, DEN
V-EFFEKT VERSPÜREN.
BEI STRENG EPISCHER
DARSTELLUNG KOMMT
EINE EINFÜHLUNG
ERLAUBTER ART
ZUSTANDE. (326)

15.3.1939: VOR EIN
PAAR TAGEN HABE ICH
DEN ALTEN ENTWURF
VON DER GUTE MENSCH
VON SEZUAN WIEDER
HERVORGEZOGEN...
ICH KANN ABER DABEI
DIE EPISCHE TECHNIK
ENTWICKELN UND SO
ENDLICH WIEDER AUF
DEN STANDARD KOMMEN.
FÜR DIE SCHUBLADE
BRAUCHT MAN KEINE
KONZESSIONEN.
INTERESSANT, WIE SICH
BEI DIESEN DÜNNEN
STAHLKONSTRUKTIONEN
JEDER KLEINSTE
RECHENFEHLER RÄCHT.
DA IST KEINE MASSE,
DIE UNGENAUIGKEITEN
AUSGLEICHT. DAS REICH
VERGRÖßERT SICH. DER
ANSTREICHER SITZT IM
HRADSCHIN. (332)

SCHWEDEN

23.4.1939: REISE
NACH STOCKHOLM, DER
KRIEGSGEFAHR WEGEN.
(337)

4.5.1939: VORTRAG IN
DER STUDENTENBÜHNE
"EXPERIMENTELLES
THEATER." ... DIE

EPISCHEN ELEMENTE
BRACHTE ICH SCHON
MIT "INS GESCHÄFT."
VOM KARL-VALENTIN-
THEATER, DEM
FREILUFTZIRKUS,
UND DEM PLÄRRER,
DANN WAR DA DER
FILM, BESONDERS
DER STUMMFILM DER
FRÜHZEIT, DER NOCH
NICHT VOM THEATER DIE
DRRRRRAMATIK KOPIERTE
(CHAPLIN). (337).

MAI 1939: GRÜBELEI
ÜBER DEN GUTEN
MENSCHEN. WIE KANN
DIE PARABEL LUXUS
BEKOMMEN? ... DAS
HANDICAP IST: ZUVIEL
HANDLUNG. KEIN PLATZ
FÜR ABSCHWEIFUNG UND
UMWEG ... VIELLEICHT
SOLL DER LIEBHABER EIN
ARBEITSLOSER FLIEGER
SEIN? (338)

FINNLAND

17.4.1940: UNTER
HINTERLASSUNG DER
MÖBEL, BÜCHER, USW.
NACH FINNLAND MIT
SCHIFF. DER SCHLOSSER,
DER DIE BÜCHER NIMMT,
DIE NIEMAND ANDERS
HABEN WILL. (371)

11.6.1940: ICH GEHE
JETZT ZUM X-TEN MALE
DEN GUTEN MENSCHEN
VON SEZUAN DURCH,
WORT FÜR WORT MIT
GRETE. (377)

20.6.1940: IM GROSSEN
UND GANZEN FERTIG MIT

DEM *GUTEN MENSCHEN*
VON SEZUAN. DER
STOFF BOT GROSSE
SCHWIERIGKEITEN, UND
MEHRERE VERSUCHE,
IHN ZU MEISTERN, SEIT
ICH IHN VOR ETWA
ZEHN JAHREN ANGRIFF,
SCHLUGEN FEHL. (392)

28.6.1940:
FRANKREICHS
FALL, STURZ EINES
WELTREICHS IN DREI
WOCHEN! (393)

30.6.1940. ES IST
UNMÖGLICH, OHNE DIE
BÜHNE EIN STÜCK
FERTIG ZU MACHEN.
THE PROOF OF THE
PUDDING... NUR DIE
BÜHNE ENTSCHIEDET
ÜBER DEM MÖGLICHEN
VARIANTEN. AUSSER
MUTTER UND
RUNDKÖPFE IST SEIT
DER *JOHANNA ALLES*,
WAS ICH SCHRIEB,
UNGETESTET. (395)

1.7.1940: DIE WELT
ÄNDERT SICH JETZT
STÜNDLICH. ICH
ERINNERE MICH, WIE
NACH UND NACH IMMER
MEHR VERSCHWAND.
(396)

2.7.1940: WIR
GRÜBELN NOCH ÜBER
DIE FRAGE: BROT UND
MILCH ODER REIS UND
TEE FÜR DIE *SEZUAN*-
PARABEL... LEIDER
KANN ICH MIR HIER IN
HELSINGFORS AUCH
KEINE AUFLÄRUNG

VERSCHAFFEN. (397).

2.8.1940: DEN
MESSINGKAUF
DURCHFLOGEN... DER
V-EFFEKT IST EIN ALTES
KUNSTMITTEL, BEKANNT
AUS DER KOMÖDIE,
GEWISSEN ZWEIGEN DER
VOLKSKUNST UND DER
PRAXIS DES ASIATISCHEN
THEATERS. (403-404)

GBFA 22.1
SCHRIFTEN 2

1938/39

ICH HABE IMMER
NUR WIDERSPRUCH
ERTRAGEN. (447)

MEINE LIEBE ZUR
KLARHEIT KOMMT
VON MEINER SO
UNKLAREN DENKEN...
MEINE GEDANKEN
VERWIRREN SICH LEICHT,
DAS AUSZUSPRECHEN
BEUNRUHIGT MICH GAR
NICHT, DIE VERWIRRUNG
BEUNRUHIGT MICH.
WENN ICH ETWAS
GEFUNDEN HABE,
WIDERSPRECHE ICH
SOGLEICH HEFTIG UND
STELLE UNTER KUMMER
GLEICH WIEDER ALLES IN
FRAGE. (448)

DIE REALITÄT IST NICHT
NUR ALLES, WAS WIRD.
SIE IST EIN PROZESS.
ER VERLÄUFT IN
WIDERSPRÜCHEN. WIRD
ER NICHT IN SEINEM
WIDERSPRÜCHLICHEN
CHARAKTER ERKANNT,

SHOULD SHUI TA BE
PLAYED LIKE STEVE JOBS?
EXCUSE ME, SAINT
STEPHEN JOBS?

EPIC ALIENATION: THE
BASIC FORMULA FOR
BB - CRAFT BIG, BUT
PLAY SMALL. IS GPS A
CONUNDRUM? IS IT TOO
INTIMATE?

GPS VS. PHAEDO
DOES BB BLOW IT WITH
THE ENDING? DOES BB
COMMIT AN ARISTOTELIAN
SIN? DO WE FEEL SORRY
FOR SHEN TEH? IN THE
PHAEDO, SOCRATES SHOWS
AND TELLS US NOT TO FEEL
SORRY.

WIRD ER ÜBERHAUPT
NICHT ERKANNT. (457)

LERNEN, EIN AKT DES
AUFNEHMENS UND
ZUGLEICH ABSTOSSENS.
EIN AKT DER KRITIK.
EBENSO GUT MACHEN
UND BESSER MACHEN.
MICH ÄNDERN UND
ZUGLEICH EIN ICH
BLEIBEN. (487)

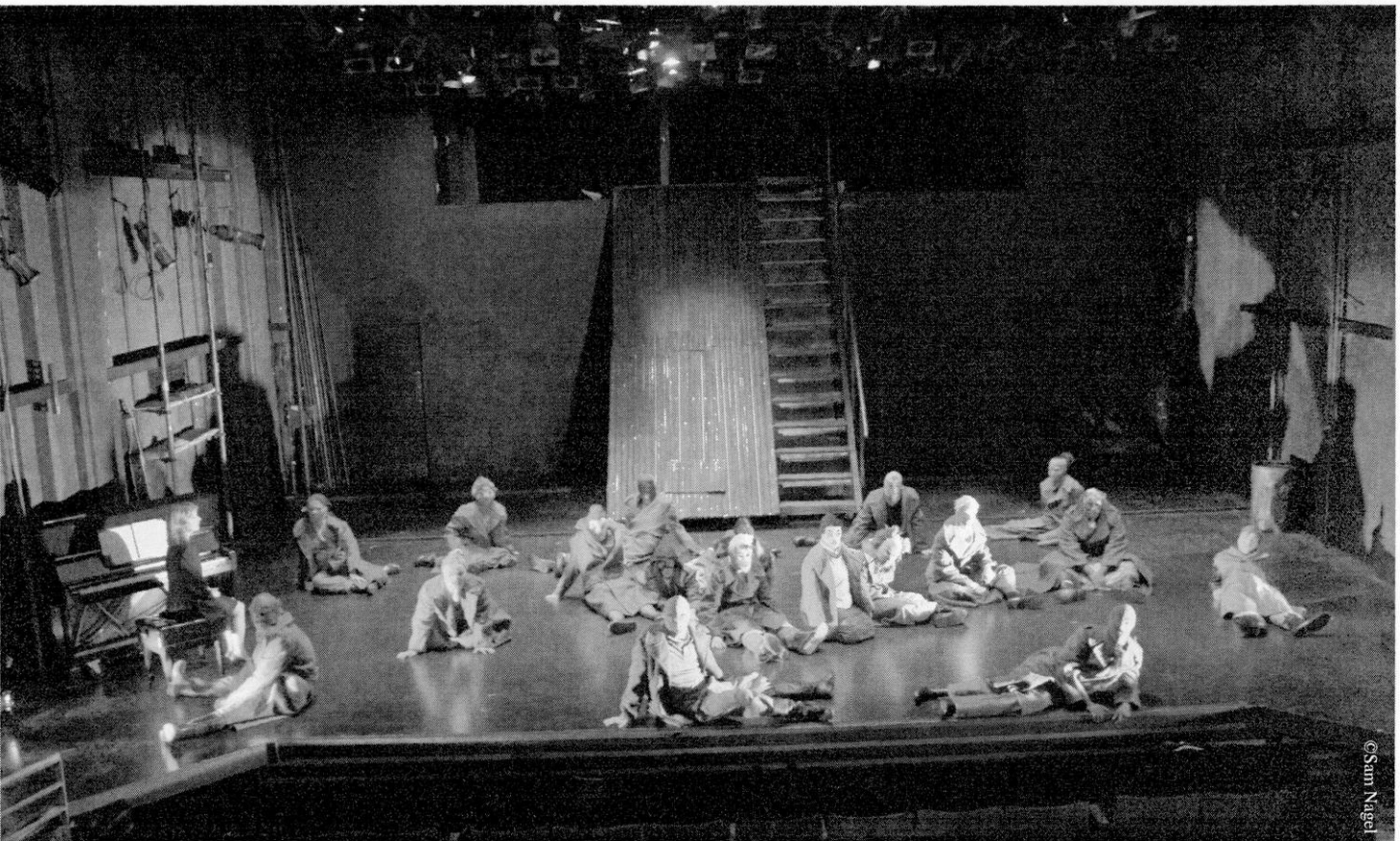
DIE EMOTIONEN SIND
KEINESWEGS ALLGEMEIN
MENSCHLICH UND
ZEITLOS (501).



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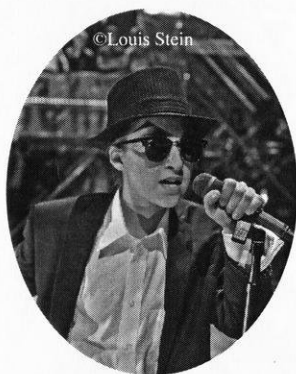
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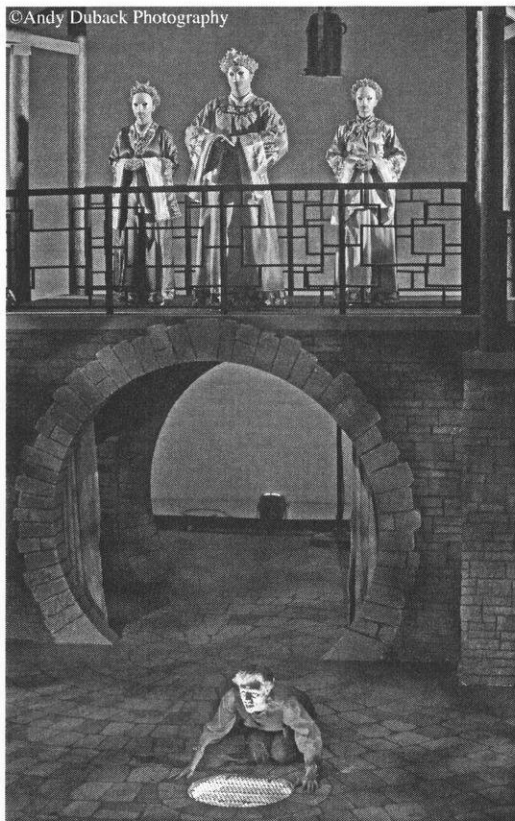


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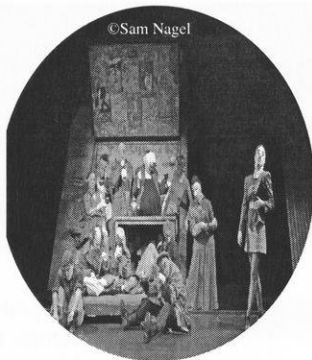
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THE GOOD PERSON OF SETZUAN. ADAPTATION: TONY KUSHNER / TRANSLATION: WENDY ARONS. DIRECTION: PETER KLEINERT. MUSIC: THOMAS J. BEYER (WRITTEN, CONDUCTED, PERFORMED). ENSEMBLE: CARNEGIE MELLON THEATER DEPARTMENT. PHILIP CHOSKY THEATER. CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY. PITTSBURGH, PA / USA. OCTOBER 6-15, 2011. REVIEWED: OCTOBER 7&11, 2011

The German director Peter Kleinert - who teaches at the Ernst Busch Academy for Performing Arts in Berlin, one of Germany's premier drama schools - traveled to Pittsburgh in the late summer and fall of 2011 to direct Bertolt Brecht's *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, staged using the 1994

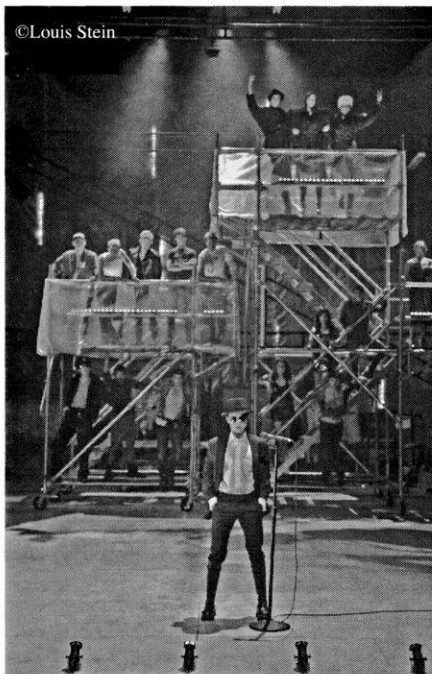
STEPHEN BROCKMANN

adaptation by Tony Kushner based on a translation by Wendy Arons (now a professor of dramaturgy at Carnegie Mellon University). This

is a version of the play first produced at the La Jolla Playhouse in 1994 and since then performed in many venues throughout the United States. *The Good Person of Setzuan* (as Kushner calls the play) at Carnegie Mellon was performed with music written, conducted, and played by Thomas J. Beyer (also from Germany), who also played the piano in the four-person band. The band also included a guitar, percussion, and keyboard. I saw *The Good Person of Setzuan* twice, once on Friday, October 7 and then a second time on Tuesday, October 11 - the latter production followed by a "talk-back" in which audience members, including myself, got the chance to ask questions and make comments to the cast members.

This was a pleasant production with good music, good acting, and good staging - an entirely enjoyable evening of theater. From the moment the audience entered the Philip Chosky Theater in Carnegie Mellon's Purnell Center for the Arts, it was clear that one should not expect a normal performance. Members of the cast were already on stage performing warm-up exercises as the audience entered (slightly different warm-up exercises each time I saw the show), and audience members were free to either pay attention to what the actors were doing or not to pay attention (to read the program or talk to a friend, for instance).

The action of the play does not get going until one cast member comes to the front of the stage, welcomes the audience to the theater, asks them to notice where the exits are, tells them that the making of photographs and recordings from the show is forbidden, and then asks the actor Corey Cott (the stand-out performer of the water-seller Wang) whether he is ready to begin. Cott announces that he is indeed ready and then proceeds to interact with the audience, telling them that he



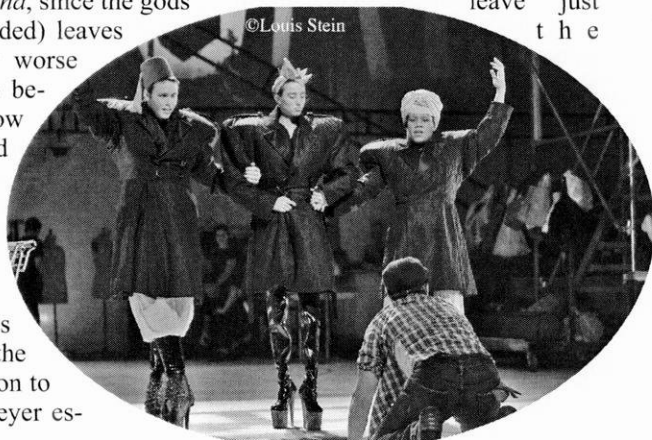
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will be playing Wang but moving seamlessly between his Corey Cott persona and his Wang persona. As Wang, he implores the audience to offer the three high-level gods who are coming to Setzuan some hospitality. On the first evening that I saw the performance no one volunteered; the second evening an audience member sitting in front of me offered the gods a cot, an offer which Wang proceeded to treat with disdain (a mere cot for the gods?!). It was clear from this that the actors were relatively ready for and comfortable with improvisation, and the two times that I saw the performance there were slightly different variants on some of this improvisational material. Again and again, when first appearing in a role, actors would introduce both themselves and the characters they were playing. This interrupted the action, of course, but it also preserved a sense of performativity and playfulness.

The role of Shen Te / Shui Ta was played by Ava DeLuca-Verley, also in a stand-out performance. Shen Te first appears dressed in the professional outfit of a prostitute, and when Wang asks where she has disappeared to, the audience can vaguely make out the fact that she is servicing a customer sexually behind a slightly transparent curtain. Ava DeLuca-Verley is particularly effective as Shui Ta, and even though the audience is often able to see the transformation from woman to man (since all of the costume changes occur on stage), her sudden appearance in a tight business suit and with a much deeper voice comes as a surprise, not just to the freeloaders in the play's diegesis but also to the audience. DeLuca-Verley effectively plays the role of a person struggling to survive in a difficult world, and when her character falls in love with the pilot Yang Sun (played with brash macho charm by Marrick Smith in the two performances I saw), the audience can easily feel that love is indeed the greatest catastrophe that can befall a woman, a valid reason for vultures (as one song puts it) to circle.

The three gods are dressed in extraordinary costumes that look rather like trench coats that are trying to be zoot suits with incredibly padded shoulders, and they wear shoes that give them an extra six inches or so of height, making them tower over the mere mortals in the show. They walk in a stylized way and generally make their appearances to the tune of (melo-)dramatic music. Just as Brecht intended, the gods become more and more exhausted as the show (and the world's wickedness) goes on. The three actors skillfully negotiate the gods' refusal to talk about economic reality, and their disappearance at the end of the show (the opposite of a *deus ex machina*, since the gods leave just when they are most needed) leaves poor Shen Te arguably worse off than she was in the beginning, since she is now about to have a baby and has made a considerable number of enemies.

Previous performances of *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* that I have seen did not include music this prominently, and hence the music came as a revelation to me. It was written by Beyer es-



pecially for this show, and I found it to be quite enjoyable; in fact even many days after the last performance I found myself humming some of the music in my head. The music, too, interrupts the action, slowing everything down, but it is performed well and effectively integrated into the action of the play. The key song, at least to my mind, is "The Song of the Smoke," probably the most philosophical and least political/economic of all the songs in the show. It is positively meditative in its emphasis on breathing in and breathing out and, ultimately, on letting go. To me this meditative emphasis is part of the whole play: it is about breathing in and breathing out, sucking in what is happening and letting it go again. The actors, singers, and musicians achieve this effect even though (as they are quick to inform us) the theater's regulations do not actually allow them to smoke on stage.

There was no attempt in this staging to indicate anything even remotely "Chinese" in the play. None of the actors looked Chinese, no one was wearing Chinese costumes, and none of the props seemed particularly Chinese. In fact the setting was, more or less, exactly what it really was: the Philip Chosky Theater at Carnegie Mellon's Purnell Center. Some of the actors took on notable accents. Dylan Putas, for instance, who played the sheriff (and also percussion) at the performances I saw, talked like an oversexed southern cop (who at one point seems to be putting the same-sex moves on Shui Ta) who has escaped from a 1950s television show, while Mrs. Yang, Yang Sun's mother, becomes a Jewish mother wishing people "Shalom"; she seems to have escaped from a New York stage comedy of the 1960s onto the Pittsburgh stage. At first the disregard for any attempt at theatrical realism bothered me (striking me as a caricature of Brecht rather than what Brecht really wanted) but in the end I was won over to it and started enjoying it. At a minimum these strange, out-of-place accents add humor to the play, and - like so much else in the staging - they contribute to the sense of performativity and playfulness.

In any undergraduate production most of the actors on stage will be the same age (between eighteen and twenty-one), and this was the case with this production as well, of course. No matter how good they are as actors, people this age have a hard time portraying older people, such as Mrs. Yang or Shu Fu, the rich man who admires Shen Te. This did not matter quite as much in this production, because of the continuing emphasis on theatricality and performativity throughout; in other words, the actors did not have to become old - they simply had to be young people performing the role of older people. Although the play is in large part about grinding poverty and its negative impact on human life, it was difficult to believe that anyone on stage had ever actually experienced such poverty. A number of the actors, however, such as Annie Heise, who played Mrs. Shin, effectively mastered body ticks that suggested problems with alcohol or drug withdrawal; Mrs. Shin seemed to have the "dt's" from the moment she walked on stage, although her condition gradually improved as her economic prospects looked up.

My major criticisms of the performance would be that it could have been speeded up somewhat. As it was, the performance clocked in at almost three hours. As amusing as almost all of it was, and as much as I enjoyed the theatricality involved, I found myself tired at the end of each show. The frequent interruptions of the plot had the effect of slowing things down - but since Peter Kleinert had already cut significant chunks from the play (as the audience is reminded quite explicitly more than once), it would have been possible to cut even more and achieve a production that only slightly exceeded two hours (perhaps two hours



and fifteen minutes would have been ideal). I also would have enjoyed a bit more audience interaction in the play; Corey Cott nicely interacts with the audience at the beginning of the show, but then that aspect of Brechtian dramaturgy is more or less dropped for the rest of the evening, and this struck me as rather strange, especially after Cott had gone to such trouble to get the audience involved at the beginning. The action of the play was also interrupted about six or seven times by an actress walking onto stage and explaining various things to the audience or the other actors, and while this device was initially amusing, I found myself growing tired of it at the end. Finally, I noticed that the actors would frequently drive points home, almost as if they did not trust the audience to get the points they were making otherwise. Yang Sun, for instance, does not just tell Shui Ta that he “touched” Shen Te; he also makes a gesture indicating sexual foreplay. Such theatrical gestures are fine in and of themselves, but in sum they suggested to me that the actors did not necessarily expect the audience to get their points without having to drive them home forcefully. The actors may well be right about this much of the time, but here too I would urge following the advice of “The Song of the Smoke” and being willing to let go (not bad advice for teachers like myself occasionally, either). Audiences do not need to get every single point, and it’s perfectly all right for them to be a little confused occasionally. The insistence on driving everything home struck me as strangely un-Brechtian in an otherwise thoroughly Brechtian performance.

It was clear in the talk-back that, in spite of their study of Brecht, not all of the actors had completely grasped some basic aspects of Brecht’s life and work (let alone his ideas about theater). One actress, for instance, suggested that Brecht had located the play in China in order not to offend the Nazi authorities in Germany; I pointed out that Brecht’s play *Furcht und Elend des Dritten Reiches* (part of which happened to have been presented in a student production at Carnegie Mellon only a few weeks earlier, although, alas, I missed that production) was clearly set in Nazi Germany and aimed to offend the Nazi rulers. Another actor claimed that intermissions were unknown in Germany. Exactly where such mis-

conceptions came from, I have no idea. I asked how students in training at one of the premier undergraduate drama programs in the United States felt about being asked to perform in a relatively non-commercial, anti-mainstream way by a visiting German director (from the eastern, i.e. formerly socialist part of Germany, no less!), and the actors responded that it had been a lot of fun. So evidently not all young American actors react negatively to Brecht. And this, in spite or perhaps even because of its Brechtian and political emphasis, was a fun evening of the theater for both the audience and the actors. I look forward to many more such productions in the future.



The phrase “no good deed goes unpunished” will probably pop into your head before one of the characters in Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Woman of Setzuan* paraphrases it toward the end of the play.

That cliché certainly stands out as a theme of the script by the German playwright who was known for poking the conventions of politics, government and religion in the eye with a sharp stick.

BRENT HALLENBECK

THE GOOD WOMAN OF SETZUAN. ADAPTATION: ERIC BENTLEY. MUSIC: PAUL DESSAU. DIRECTION: PETER JACK TKATCH. SCENIC DESIGN: HANNAH BEAN BROSNAN. COSTUME DESIGN: KATE FULOP. LIGHTING DESIGN: JOHN B. FORBES. NOVEMBER 3-13, 2011.

REVIEWED: NOVEMBER 3, 2011



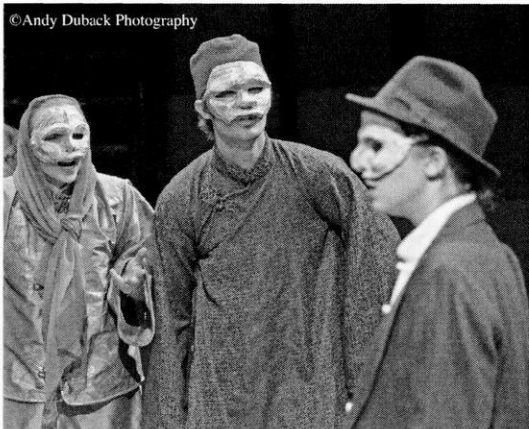
The Good Woman of Setzuan, which the University of Vermont Department of Theatre is presenting in a powerful production directed by Peter Jack Tkatch, shows what happens when a person’s good intentions are left at the whims of capricious gods, corrupting financial interests and even the petulant demands of the truly needy. What it shows about those good intentions, not surprisingly, isn’t so good.

The Good Woman of Setzuan, which opened Thursday, is one of UVM’s most sumptuous visual productions in recent years, which is a bit surprising considering the play is set primarily in a setting of bleak poverty. (Credit goes especially to lighting designer John B. Forbes as well as a couple of UVM seniors, scenic designer Hannah Bean Brosnan and costume designer Kate Fulop.) That setting includes Shen Te (played by Elinor Reina), a prostitute who takes in three peripatetic gods after

others in the little town of Setzuan turn them down (“She can’t say no,” a court-jester-like water boy named Wong, played by Brett Pellegrino, tells the gods with a wink).

The gods reward Shen Te well enough for her generosity that she can leave the world’s oldest profession for something at least vaguely more honorable – tobacco-shop owner. She’s not much of a business-woman, however, because her heart takes over her pocketbook. She leaves bowls of rice for the town’s less fortunate citizens, some of whom avail themselves of her tobacco in the process.

With her landlady and a carpenter who built shelves for her shop coming down on her for the cash they’re owed, Shen Te begins to feel the pressure. It’s only after



her more bullish “cousin” comes to town – we’re not telling tales out of school here to note that the male cousin is really just Shen Te in disguise – that her business begins to take off.

“My cousin has the worst reputation possible – that of being poor,” the “cousin” tells the landlady, who’s among those in town left impressed by the newcomer’s forceful nature and business acumen. But Shen Te then faces a conundrum – can she still be the “Angel of the Slums” that she strives to be and that many see her as if her “cousin” runs such a tight, ethically challenged business that allows Shen Te to continue her well-intentioned work? Is it possible, Shen Te asks herself, to be good and moral yet be able to live well in a world where money and prestige dictate so much?

The beauty of the UVM production of *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (based on an English translation by Eric Bentley) is that so many people working in front



©Andy Duback Photography

of and behind the scenes contribute to it becoming such a strong effort. It starts with Reina, who is terrific as the title character, giving her charm and strength and vulnerability in equal doses.

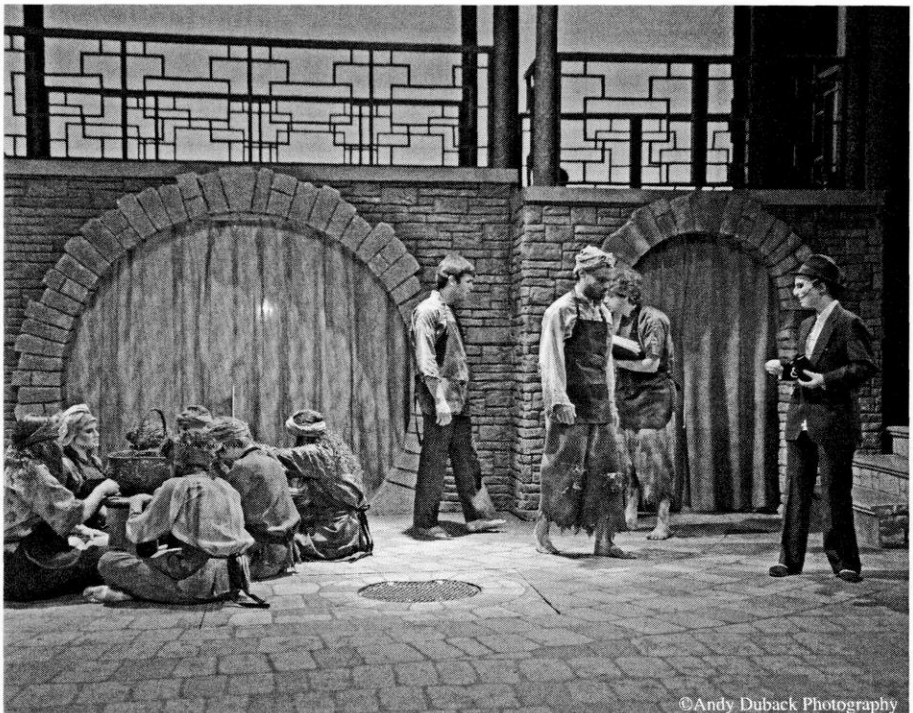
Andrew Friedland plays her primary love interest, a shiftless wannabe pilot named Yang Sun, whose presence leads Shen Te to make some of her less well-thought-out decisions. The breezy personality Friedland gives Yang Sun at first provides no indication of the other faces he’ll reveal, yet when he does so the transition is seamless, natural and wholly and appropriately upsetting. Other actors among the two dozen in the ensemble are equally impressive, including the energetic Pellegrino and the always stellar Alex Koch, the Barre senior whose turn as one of the trio of pompous gods takes hold with his stentorian persona and amusing lines (“I find business quite unintelligible myself, yet everybody’s

doing it”).

The trio of Forbes, Brosnan and Fulop turn an often ugly story into a beautiful one to look at. Forbes’ intricate, always changing lighting sets a mood of atmospheric mystery. Brosnan’s half-Asian, half-Frank Lloyd Wright all-American two-tiered set design puts the audience in a world that’s not theirs and very much theirs at the same time. Fulop helps tell the tale with costumes that are grand when the largess of the gods is on display and street-urchin drab when Brecht wants to remind us of the connections between poverty and oppression.

Audiences familiar with Vermont musician Anais Mitchell’s folk opera, *Hadestown*, will recognize some stylistic similarities to her heavy depiction of a company-created hell. The live band pushes that idea even further. Tom Cleary leads a musical enterprise that carries Brecht’s lyrics and the music of Stefan Wolpe in a direction that’s somehow sprightly with the air of optimism and humor yet sodden with the weight of reality and despair, something theatergoers familiar with Brecht’s work with Kurt Weill on *The Threepenny Opera* will instantly recognize. The jauntiness of some of the tunes gives way to harsh cacophony at times when the world the play depicts truly seems to be coming apart.

All of those contributions helps Brecht’s message get through loud and clear to an audience seven decades removed from the World War II-era crowd he wrote it for. *The Good Woman of Setzuan* has more than a few echoes of the Occupy Wall Street phenomenon that’s been occupying the world’s interest for the past couple of months. Brecht’s play doesn’t just look at the questionable morality of government and religion, but through its Everywoman character of Shen Te forces people to look closely at a morality they should recognize quite clearly. Their own.



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Handwritten musical score for the opera *Good Person of Sezuan*. The score is written on multiple staves, with various instruments and vocal parts indicated by handwritten labels.

Handwritten Labels:

- Shen Te* (written vertically on the left)
- Klavier* (written vertically on the left)
- Flöte* (written vertically on the left)
- Klarinette* (written vertically on the left)
- Corn V* (written vertically on the left)
- Trompete* (written vertically on the left)
- Klavier* (written vertically on the left)

Handwritten Text:

- Compagny* (written above the first staff)
- In der Gesellschaft der Wolken den großen* (written above the second staff)
- With clouds for company* (written below the second staff)
- Deing* (written below the second staff)
- 8ia-basso* (written below the second staff)
- PLAY THIS* (written across the third staff)
- use this* (written below the third staff)
- 1 2* (written below the third staff)
- f* (written below the third staff)
- Reggierto* (written below the third staff)

Handwritten Notes:

- de* (written above the third staff)
- mf* (written below the third staff)
- mf* (written below the fourth staff)

Handwritten Circles:

- A circle containing the number *21* (written at the bottom left)

THE GOOD PERSON OF SZECHWAN. ADAPTATION: JOHN WILLETT & RALPH MANNHEIM. MUSIC: PAUL DESSAU. DIRECTION: HEINZ-UWE HAUS. MUSICAL DIRECTION: LINDA HENDERSON. ENSEMBLE: UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS ENSEMBLE. ARTS BANK THEATER. PHILADELPHIA, PA / USA. NOVEMBER 11-19, 2011. REVIEWED: NOVEMBER 11, 2011

BUILDING THE ENSEMBLE FOR
GOOD PERSON OF SZECHWAN
(FROM SLEEPING FLOWERS TO
PERSIAN NIGHTMARES)

For the November 2011 production of Good Person of Szechwan at the University of the Arts' Ira

LINDA HENDERSON

Brind School of Theater Arts, director Heinz-Uwe Haus and I began the process of creating an ensemble of actors during the callback auditions the previous April. Dr. Haus instructed me, as music director, to teach the undergraduate students who would become our cast "The Song of the Eighth Elephant," and then we proceeded to

have a most unorthodox callback evening. He talked to the students about the play and observed their behavior and attitude, but did not select very many people to read or sing solo. This is not the usual procedure, and they were confused.

Flash ahead to October. Rehearsal #1: I teach the entire ensemble "The Song of the Eighth Elephant," which will be sung in the factory scene. Because there are four verses, I split the students into groups and have them create an improvised scene based on their assigned verse. In that way, they all become familiar with it and can see how the other groups interpret each verse. At this point they have had very little exposure to Brecht and don't know how to play this song. We find the main idea of each verse and then explore ways to demonstrate it through the ensemble. Now we are ready for the arrival of the director, or are we?

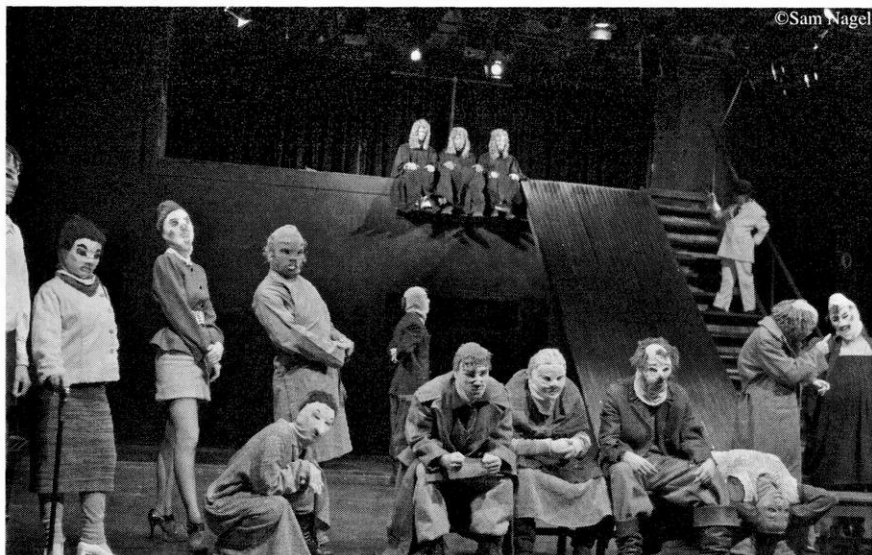
The students selected to be in the cast have read the script and have

learned all the songs except Shen Te's, and have no idea which part they will play. Many of their classmates had just completed a production of High Fidelity, a contemporary musical about young people and relationships. The young actors in that show identified with the characters, the music was pop rock and amplified. The cast members of Good Person don't even know how they were selected to be in the play. They've never been with a director who isn't aware of their school-day responsibilities and which classes they are taking. He seems more interested in

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"If you've got to sit there and stop me from hanging myself you might at least say something."



body type and “groupings,” something they don’t yet understand. Our rehearsals take on a very different format from what people expect.

Rehearsal #2: We begin with a half hour of aerobic and strength building exercise, as well as soft-focus group work, to improve awareness of each other onstage. Uwe starts us off with 120 push-ups, and the distress is obvious. The students prefer a series of stretches, gradually increased aerobics, and strength training. They select members of the ensemble to lead each of these aspects at every rehearsal, and they feel a bit more comfortable. But why are we doing this, they ask?

Rehearsal #3: Each member of the ensemble gets a pair of boots and an army surplus long wool coat. It’s hot and they’re not used to being uncomfortable. We begin to use the music to improvise interludes, which is easy because they learned it before Uwe’s arrival. Rhythmic ostinatos are explored, simulating the tobacco factory assembly line. We are starting to move as an ensemble to tell the story of faceless workers.

Rehearsal #4: We improvise and create the prologue. One actor stomps his feet slowly – left, right. Others join in, and they come from all parts of the room to the center. How to know when it’s over? Bob will shout “Huh!” on the penultimate stomp. Next, the opening words of the play, “But... what would you...suggest?” It is barked at the audience in unison, with breaks between the words. They have read more about Brecht’s ideas by this time, and are beginning to realize how *Verfremdungseffekt* works.

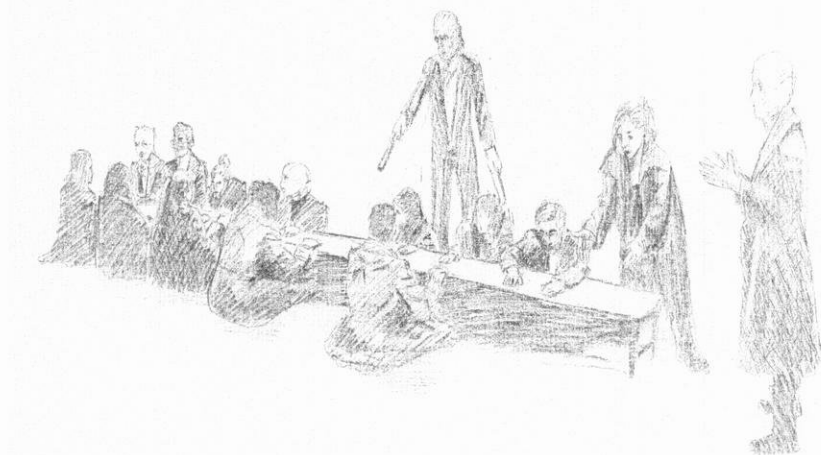
Rehearsal #5: The hated wool coats. They’re hot, they de-humanize; everyone looks the same. Oh, realizes the cast. It’s like we’re one organism. Oh. Uwe wants us to take the coats off and fold them in unison. It’s a mess, until John invents an efficient way of doing it. He teaches the rest, and we practice doing it every day.

Rehearsal #6: The cast has been instructed to bring in soft masks. We get a collection of ski masks, pantyhose and Macbook covers. Cut holes for eyes and mouth, okay, nose too if you must. Now we’re hot, can’t see, and can’t breathe. Time for push-ups! How can the audience relate to our characters if they can’t see our faces? We don’t even know who’s playing what yet! Oh, wait, isn’t there

something in Brecht about the audience NOT relating to the characters? Is that the V-Effekt?

Rehearsal #7: A deputy is appointed to act as a liaison between the production team and the cast. Complaints about the heat and exercise now go through this channel. There is a discussion, based on a homework assignment from Uwe. Everyone was asked to bring in a newspaper article where there was a contradiction between what was expected and what happened. We start to understand how to think about this play. One improvisation becomes something we name “Sleeping Flowers.” Everyone starts by lying on the floor with eyes shut. One by one, they half-rise to sitting or squatting positions as they gradually join a single singer in the “Song of the Eighth Elephant,” a capella, with extended silences between phrases. It is a thin, pure sound, all faces forward, so increased awareness of each other is imperative. No conductor, no accompaniment. We breathe as one, and silently count to five on the final syllable of “understood” so the final “D” will

©Molly Barron



“Keep Moving! Keep Moving! Major Chung owns a wood/ See it’s cleared before tonight/ that’s orders understood”

be together. The scene explodes when one actor comes to his feet with a growl, breaks the trance, and they launch into an aggressive version of the fourth verse of the song. We are getting a better sense of what it means to work and create as an ensemble, and the anxiety about who plays which part is lessened.

Rehearsal #8: Finally, we have assigned roles! Every rehearsal starts with 20 minutes of physical warm-up, vocal warm-up, and our ensemble pieces. The wedding scene includes “The Song of Green Cheese,” written as a solo for Yang Sun, but a big number for everyone in our version. Couples pair up to dance during the choruses, unlikely pairs doing unlikely dances – a tango, a waltz, a hooker’s provocative dance.

The other favorite improvisation is something we call “Persian Nightmare.” Dessau wrote strophic songs, through-composed songs, and instrumental inter-

ludes for the play. One of the the wedding scene, and that moves between a duet between cast is made up and acting of them play substituted flute and tar, and visation included to the dealer. was two m a l e i n g s y n - m o v e - looked a strength w h i l e paraded by carpets hung complexity of rial vanished after the music was in ev-time. We added their routine. At some point we re-



©Sam Nagel

instrumental pieces comes before is a poly-metered piece 5/16, 2/4, 3/4, and 3/16, flute and guitar. Our of musical theater majors, and some instruments. We mandolin for violin for gui-the impro-we wrote a reference c a r p e t The result shirtless actors do-chronized ments that lot like our training, four women with Persian on poles. The the musical mate-a day or two, because eryone's blood by this nasal singing voices to the alized there wasn't a place in the

play to insert "Persian Nightmare" (the word "nightmare" evolved naturally after enough repetitions). So we let it go, until the final week of rehearsal. There was a need for scene change music to cover the creating of Shen Te's yard and clothes-line, and someone shouted "Persian Nightmare!" All the weird choreography materialized instantly, and our beloved music was back in the production.

This kind of collaboration could not have happened without all the groundwork in ensemble creation. The cast was gradually learning what it means to act in a style that was completely foreign to them, with a director unlike any they had previously experienced. They, like our audiences, were forced to confront the contradictions in what they expected versus what they experienced. When they finally had parts assigned, they couldn't feel as connected to their assigned character as they would have in a different school show. The masks forced them to demonstrate a story in a different way, with big gestures and obvious postures. But by then they were equipped to tell the story the way Dr. Haus demanded that it be told, without sentimentality or sympathy. Without quite understanding a "Brechtian" style of acting, they ultimately presented the play the way Dr. Haus wanted, because of the ensemble work.

Rehearsal #23: Bumps and hiccups, but steady progress. New details include the tightening of musical work. We've added instruments whenever a point can be underscored by adding a different color. For example, the show begins with a tutti fanfare, but we only had horn and gong available, in addition to the music

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“O gods, for your vast project I, poor human, was too small.”

director's piano. Still, it was a reference point whenever the audience heard it, because it was used sparingly. The sound of the recorder became associated with any interlude involving the water seller Wang and the gods. Mandolin and violin were used to accompany solos like "The Song of Smoke" and "The Song of Green Cheese."

Opening night: Members of the audience include family, fellow students, and faculty. Reaction varies from enjoyment to discomfort, but people who haven't seen this kind of Brecht performance are not bored. They are forced to confront what they see, both the story being told, and the way our ensemble has learned to tell it.

The Good Person of Szechwan

DAILY REHEARSAL REPORT

Rehearsal #5	Terra 203	Date: 10/6/11	Stage Manager: Elaina Di Monaco
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PRESENT:

- Cast:** Emily Alexander, Joey Bermudez, John Calabrese, Erin Carney, Francesca Chappius, Erin Fleming, Dana Habern, Jessie Holder, David Hutchison, Matt Jones, Zach Kononov, Brittany Kvitko, Aaron Lofton, Jarrod Markman, Bob McMahon, David Miller, Claudia Newland, Nick Parker, Merri Rashoyan, Meghan Seaman, William Swanwick, Michael Tannenbaum.
- Production Team:** Uwe Haus (Director), Linda Henderson (Music Director), Stephen Smith (Costume Designer), Leigh Bicca (Asst. Director), Cheyenne Barboza (Dramaturge), Elaina Di Monaco (Stage Manager), Molly Barron (ASM).

ABSENT:

- None.

LATE:

- None.

REHEARSAL TASKS:	START: 7:00	END: 11:00
New coats were distributed and assigned to all cast members.	7:00	7:23
Uwe introduces ideas of costumes to the cast.	7:23	7:37
Vocal warm-ups with Linda Henderson.	7:37	7:40
Worked Factory Scene (Sc. 8) with "The Song of the Eighth Elephant."	7:40	8:14
BREAK	8:14	8:24
Label coats	8:24	8:30
Uwe teaches cast to fold and remove coats as an ensemble. Jon Calabrese will lead the group in folding their coats.	8:30	8:45
Work Interlude on pg. 60 into Wedding Scene.	8:45	9:50
BREAK	9:50	10:05

GOOD PERSON OF SEZUAN
SYMPTOMATIC
REVIEWS (FREUD)

REHEARSALS ARE SYMPTOMS;
SYMPTOMS ARE REHEARSALS.
I ATTEND REHEARSALS OF GPS
ON THE FOLLOWING DATES:
10/4 AND 10/12. I SEE THE
PRODUCTION ON 11/11.

FIRST OFFICIAL REHEARSAL:
WEDNESDAY, 10/4

UWE HAUS: "NOTHING IS
MORE BORING THAN A HUMAN
FACE ONSTAGE"

HOW TO BUILD AN ENSEMBLE
IN THE CONTEXT OF (YET
AGAINST THE COMPLEX OF)
OF BROADWAY/HOLLYWOOD/
WALL STREET? IS COMMUNAL
CONSCIOUSNESS EVEN
POSSIBLE? SHOULD WE RENAME
IT THE GOOD MATRIX OF
SEZUAN / PHILADELPHIA?

THE ENSEMBLE REHEARSES

"THE SONG OF THE EIGHTH ELEPHANT." THIS IS
FROM SCENE 8, "SHUI TA'S TOBACCO FACTORY,"

THEY HAVE REHEARSED THE SONG AS A GROUP,
WITH THE MUSIC DIRECTOR, LINDA HENDERSON,
AND HAVE CREATED IMPROVISATIONAL MUSICAL /
CHOREOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES AROUND THE NUMBER.

A CURIOUS INTERVENTION. WHY START REHEARSALS
HERE? WHAT IS UWE HAUS TRYING TO TELL ME? THE
ENSEMBLE? US?

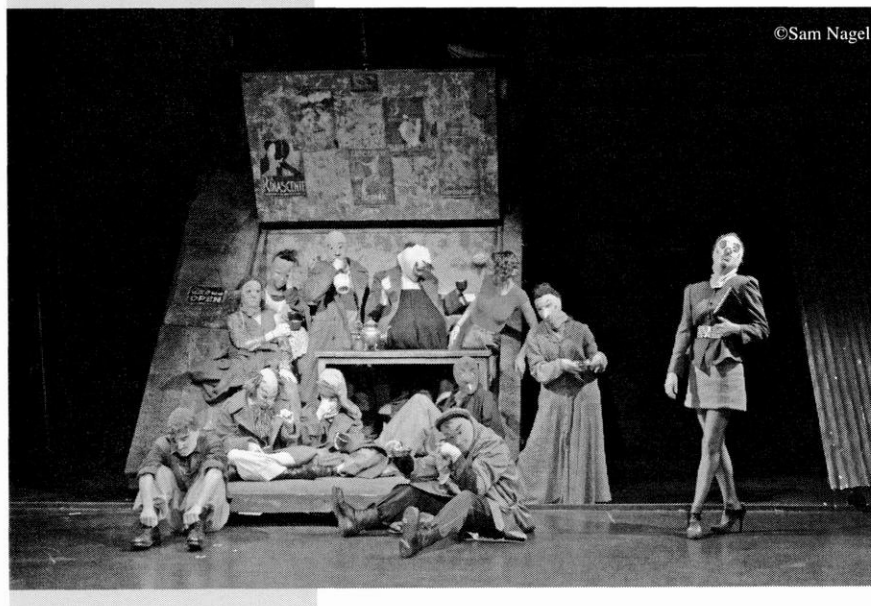
FAST FORWARD CUT SCENE, PT. 1: I READ THE GPS;
I REREAD SCENE 8:

AHA! CLEVER. AN IDEATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL
ORIGIN STORY. IDEATIONAL: ALMOST STRAIGHT FROM
MARX, CAPITAL, FACTORY CHAPTER. STRUCTURAL:
ENSEMBLE SCENE, PAR EXCELLENCE. GREAT PHYSICAL
THEATER WITH MUSIC AND A BEAT.

DIALECTICS: MONETIZE EXISTENCE, OBJECTIFY
HUMANITY; FETISIHIZE THROUGH MUSIC.

PEDAGOGICALLY SPEAKING, THIS IS ELEGANT DESIGN:
WORKING THE TEXT, WORKING AGAINST BROADWAY
TOTALITARIANISM - ALL WITHIN FOUR WEEKS.

FAST FORWARD CUT SCENE, PT. 2: THIS MODEL SCENE
EVENTUALLY PROVIDES THE BASIS FOR THE PROLOGUE



TO THE FIRST ACT, SECOND ACT
(AFTER INTERMISSION),
SCENE 8, AND
THE

PREMIERE,

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EPILOGUE.

REHEARSAL, WEDNESDAY, 10/12:

ENSEMBLE IS LYING ON FLOOR. THEY WEAR
HEAVY WINTER ARMY COATS AS WELL AS
WINTER BOOTS AND VARIETIES OF SKI MASKS?
KINKY! WHAT THE FUCK IS THIS ALL ABOUT?
AFTER A WHILE IT SMELLS A BIT.

REHEARSAL MOVES TO LAST SCENE AND
EPILOGUE. GPS ABANDONED, GODS LAUGHING.
THE WHOLE ENSEMBLE WALKS TOWARD THE
FRONT OF THE REHEARSAL SPACE, GROUPS
TOGETHER, TAKES OFF MASKS AND IN CHORAL
UNISON INTONE ELEMENTS OF THE EPILOGUE:
WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST? SHOULD THE
WORLD BE CHANGED? SHOULD THE GODS BE
CHANGED?

THE MASKS ARRIVE DURING THE REHEARSAL
IN A PLASTIC BAG. STUDENTS RESPOND WITH
GLEE. THEY APPEAR HEAVY AND HOT. FOUR
MASKS ARE DEMO-ED.

“YOU LOOK LIKE A PROSTITUTE SOCK
PUPPET!”

“YOU LOOK LIKE A CABBAGE-PATCH WHORE!”

“MY FEET SMELL”

STUDENTS PREPARE TO BLOCK THE FIRST
SCENE IN THE TOBACCO SHOP. THEY CHANGE
INTO BOOTS. A WHOLE ARRAY OF BOOKS AND
ARMY COATS ARE ASSEMBLED IN A CORNER.

PREMIERE FRIDAY, 11/11

BANNER HANGS ON THE SIDE WALL,
“BUT WHAT WOULD YOU SUGGEST?”

LINDA HENDERSON, THE MUSIC
DIRECTOR SITS AT A PIANO ONSTAGE,
STAGE RIGHT. SEVERAL OTHER
INSTRUMENTS ARE LOCATED NEARBY.
SHE SITS TURNED AWAY FROM THE
PIANO. SHE WAITS QUIETLY.

THE ENSEMBLE ENTERS FROM FOUR
CORNERS OF STAGE AND HOUSE.
THEY MARCH IN MILITARY STEP
AND ALL ARE DRESSED IN HEAVY
MILITARY COATS AND BOOTS.

AS THE FOUR LINES CONGREGATE
ONSTAGE, A VOCAL SIGNAL SENDS
THE ENSEMBLE INTO SINGING A
VERSE OF THE SONG OF THE EIGHTH
ELEPHANT. THEY FINISH, TAKE A
MOMENT TO STARE AT THE AUDIENCE,
PUT ON THEIR MASKS AND DISPERSE.

THE STAGE STARTS TO SPEAK.

STEPS AND SHED ARE PUSHED APART.

THE WATER SELLER APPEARS FROM
UNDERNEATH THE STAGE.

THE GODS APPEAR ABOVE ON THE
PLATFORM AND WALK DOWN THE
STEPS.

SHEN TEH APPEARS IN THE AUDIENCE.
HER APARTMENT PRESENTED AS A
TERRACE IN THE CHEAP SEATS.

SHEN TEH NEGOTIATES WITH THE
GODS.

FAITH IS BASED ON DOUBT - FOR
GODS AND HUMANS ALIKE.

GODS ARE CONTENT WITH THE
LEAST COMMON DENOMINATOR: "TO
CHECK UP WAS THE MAIN OBJECT
OF OUR JOURNEY. WE ARE NOW
HAPPY TO CONTINUE IT, FOR WE
HAVE SUCCEEDED IN FINDING ONE.
FAREWELL.

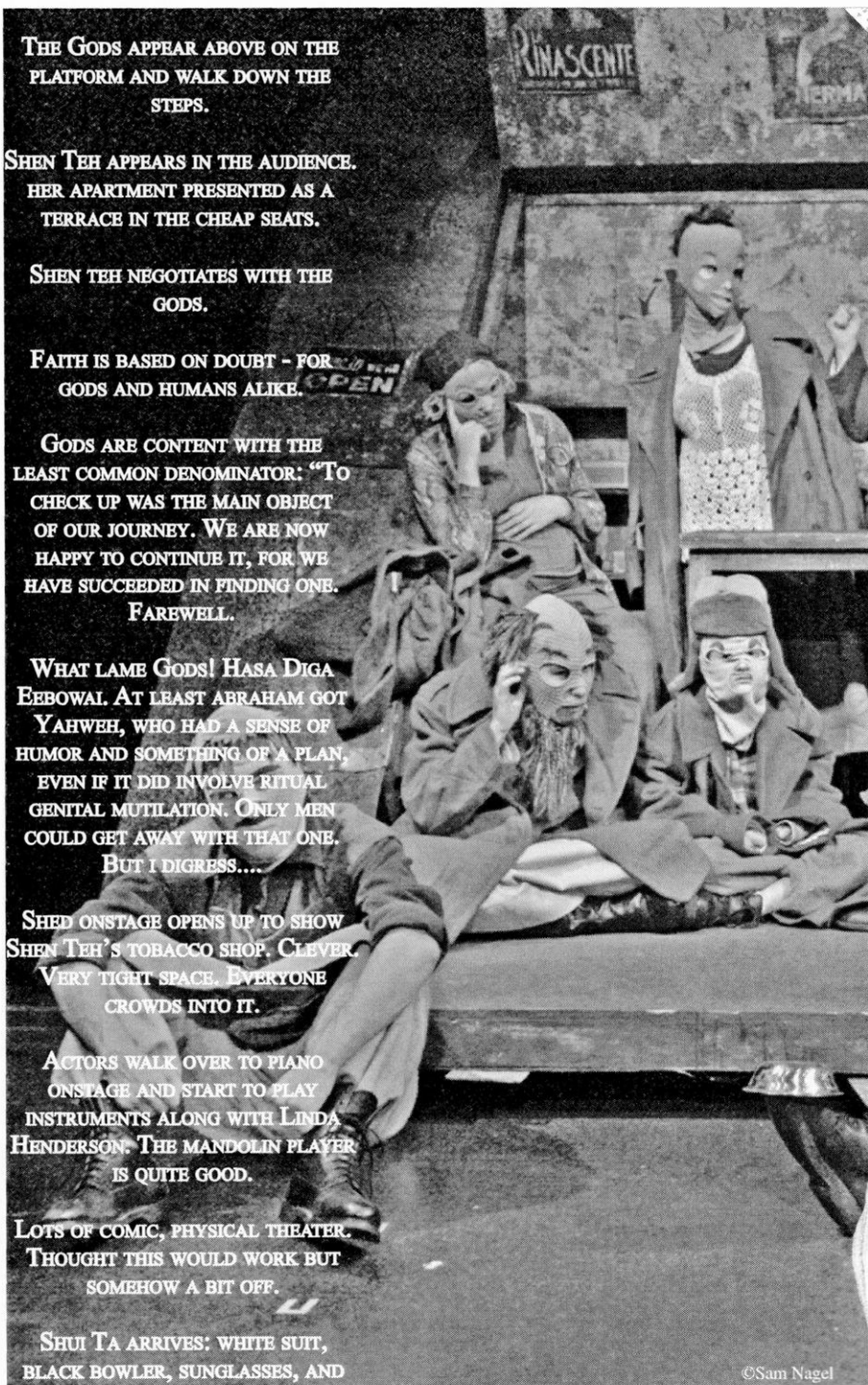
WHAT LAME GODS! HASA DIGA
EEBOWAL. AT LEAST ABRAHAM GOT
YAHWEH, WHO HAD A SENSE OF
HUMOR AND SOMETHING OF A PLAN,
EVEN IF IT DID INVOLVE RITUAL
GENITAL MUTILATION. ONLY MEN
COULD GET AWAY WITH THAT ONE.
BUT I DIGRESS....

SHED ONSTAGE OPENS UP TO SHOW
SHEN TEH'S TOBACCO SHOP. CLEVER.
VERY TIGHT SPACE. EVERYONE
CROWDS INTO IT.

ACTORS WALK OVER TO PIANO
ONSTAGE AND START TO PLAY
INSTRUMENTS ALONG WITH LINDA
HENDERSON. THE MANDOLIN PLAYER
IS QUITE GOOD.

LOTS OF COMIC, PHYSICAL THEATER.
THOUGHT THIS WOULD WORK BUT
SOMEHOW A BIT OFF.

SHUI TA ARRIVES: WHITE SUIT,
BLACK BOWLER, SUNGLASSES, AND



©Sam Nagel

CIGAR.

THE FIRST ACT NEARS ITS END. THE
STUPID BEAUTY OF LOVE MEETS THE
RUTHLESSNESS OF CAPITALISM.

THE GOOD PERSON DIVIDES HERSELF
IN FRONT OF OUR EYES AS SHE SINGS
THE SONG OF THE DEFENCELESSNESS
OF THE GOOD AND THE GODS.

SECOND ACT OPENS WITH ACTORS ON
STAGE FLOOR AS AUDIENCE RE-ENTERS.
THEY START SINGING THE SONG OF
THE EIGHTH ELEPHANT AND THEN A
RAUCOUS BREAK, THEY DISPERSE AND
WE ARE BACK IN THE TOBACCO SHOP.

SCENE 8: SHUI TA'S TOBACCO
FACTORY - WHERE THE SHIT HITS THE
FAN FOR ANY GPS PRODUCTION. AND
ESPECIALLY FOR THIS PRODUCTION -
THIS SCENE IS THE MODEL SCENE FOR
THE WHOLE PRODUCTION - THE SCENE
THEY HAVE WORKED ON THE MOST.

KEEP MOVING!

MAJOR CHUNG OWNS A WOOD
SEE IT'S CLEARED BEFORE TONIGHT/
THAT'S ORDERS. UNDERSTOOD?

EXCELLENT CHOREOGRAPHY AND
PACING. GOOD PHYSICAL THEATER
- REMINISCENT OF BERLINER
ENSEMBLE'S PLATE TOSsing SCENE IN
DIE MUTTER.

NOW THE TRIAL SCENE. WHAT
RESTRAINT THEY SHOW WITH THEIR
LIMITED PARODY OF THE GODS. IT
WOULD BE SO EASY TO BLAME THEM.

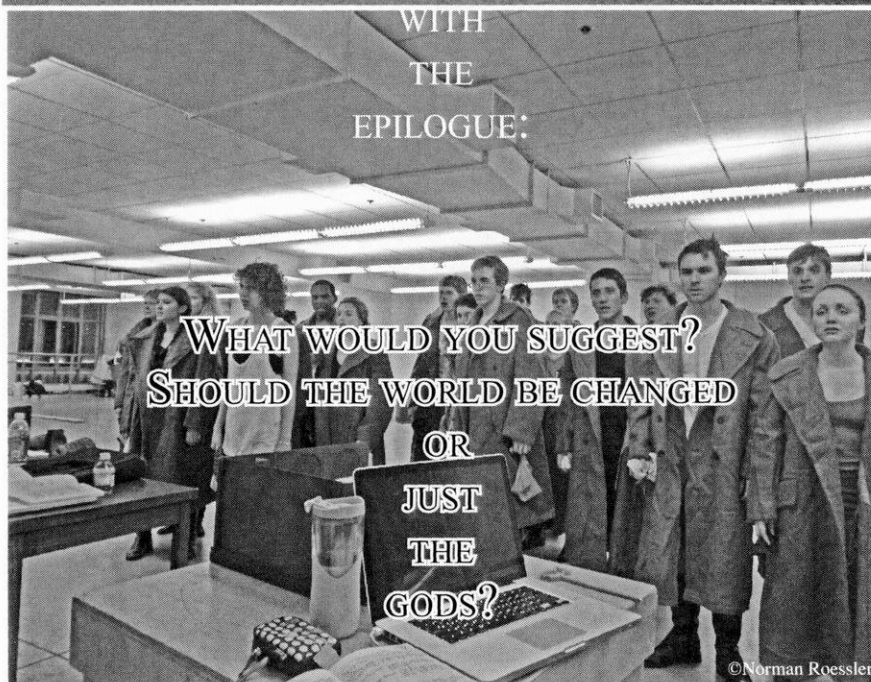
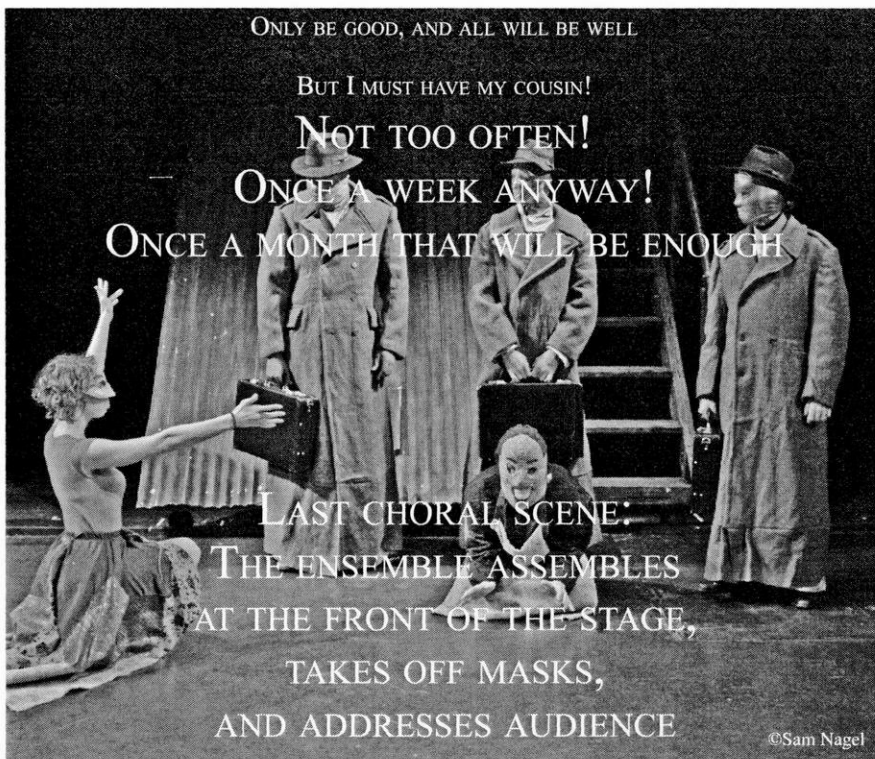
GOOD DEEDS ARE THE ROAD TO RUIN!

YOU WERE HER MORTAL ENEMY!
I WAS HER ONLY FRIEND!
YOU WERE TEARING HER TO BITS!

TO BE GOOD YET SURVIVE SPLIT ME
LIKE LIGHTNING INTO TWO PEOPLE

ARE WE TO ADMIT THAT OUR
COMMANDMENTS ARE FATAL?

IS THE WORLD TO BE ALTERED? HOW?
BY WHOM? NO, EVERYTHING IS AS IT
SHOULD BE.



SH (Scott Higgins): *I have learned, that, prior to rehearsals, actors - as well as students in the stage management and technical production programs of the PTTP - study Brechtian acting and staging techniques with Director Haus. He encourages them to improvise and experiment during the rehearsal process, to see the play as "telling a story," to recognize the contradictions in the characters behavior and in their surroundings, to trust one another and develop a teamwork approach. They learn to see the theatre as a "laboratory, a place for investigation [and] analysis," as Carl Weber described Brecht's own rehearsal process. How did this method change your view of the theatre?*

WB: (WILLIAM BROWNING): Well, that's interesting because I design one way when I'm working with Uwe and I design other ways when I'm working with anyone else. So whenever I work on a Brecht production with Professor Haus, it's in a particular way. He's always interested in narrating the story effectively; he's not interested in putting decorations up on stage and physical barriers to the space. Uwe is very interested in finding a way to find the space as an instrument of narration. He typically likes weird and unusual spaces: he's not a big fan of the American proscenium standard stage. All of Brecht's plays are episodic in nature; that is, there is at least a dozen scenes in or in the neighborhood of a dozen scenes or more in all of his plays. You go from place to place to place and it would be completely idiotic, in my view, to try to create a representation of any of those places.

Typically what we do is find some way to physically decide where it's located on the stage and provide only the elements that are essential in having that scene narrated. That often involves just utilizing a door in a middle-frame-work or something that's there as a part of the theatre, or maybe its taking a couple of benches with a board across it to create a counter perhaps, or whatever is sufficient to describe and then allow the actors to then play the scene. Of course, they do a lot of experiment in trial and error in the rehearsal process. What often happens is you happen to leave something in the rehearsal hall during this rehearsal period while the actors are working, and if an actor goes and picks something up and uses it and likes the way it's used, that suddenly is now in the play. So, you have to be careful what you leave in the rehearsal hall for him.

SP (Steven Polinski): As far as the approach to Uwe's work, I've worked with Uwe once before in Greece as well as other directors such as JoAnne Akalaitis in other locations. Both deal with the abstract Brechtian devices in all of their work, so this wasn't something new to me. I've dipped my toes in these waters before. What's unique in a professional capacity is how quickly Uwe was able to mold an ensemble. We had masters, MFAs, and seasoned professionals working together and learning at the same pace - something that he achieved in very short order. That was the improvisational nature of the work. Any idea was a good idea. We went down many paths, some of them were not

SCOTT HIGGINS

IN
CONVERSATION
WITH

WILLIAM
BROWNING
STAGE &
LIGHTING
DESIGN

STEVEN POLINSKI
ACTOR

THE RESISTIBLE
RISE OF ARTURO
UI

PTTP
UNIVERSITY
OF DELAWARE,
NEWARK, DE
APRIL 29 -
MAY 16, 2010

so good and we tossed them out; other ones you wouldn't even think would work in a production of Arturo Ui and all of the sudden: Boom! He's going to actually use this material that was from today's headlines.

This was a surprising approach and very refreshing. It's, like I said, something that I've worked with before. I don't know that it changes my view of the theatre. That kind of collaboration is something I'm passionate about, something I've missed when it hasn't been apparent in rehearsals. Certain directors are very dictatorial; Uwe and JoAnne Akalaitis are not. They are directors who allow the actors' contribution to actually create the piece and then bring in the audience as a continued improvisation. So I think it's helpful and I think it's what is missing in other pieces that are "well-made" plays - in the historical sense of a "well-made" play - you usually don't have that kind of a improvisational quality to the rehearsal process.

SH: *According to Charles Helmetag, in the wrong hands, Arturo Ui can be strident, painfully didactic, heavy-handed and boring. The play requires a genuine sense of ensemble, which Director Haus has achieved in rehearsals and in the pre-rehearsal training. He has invested it with an invigorating physicality. The actors use every inch of the playing area and much of the audience space from the moment the entire troupe enters through the audience and rushes on stage like an unruly mob or a pack of jackals. What was it like for you encompassing this sense of ensemble and physicality?*

WB: Well, having now done 6 or 8 Brecht projects with Uwe, you know you're going to be working in an ensemble fashion, that you have a group of actors. Obviously some of those actors are going to be designated as certain principle characters. For instance, Arturo Ui is a principle character and then there are a number of other major characters within that play, and those actors tend to get assigned to those but they still function as the ensemble. Uwe's very fond, as Brecht was, of doing interludes between each scene. He usually, early on in the rehearsal process, will slowly take the music that the ensemble is planning to use for the interludes and have them create a little interlude that will have some music associated with it. These are completely stepping outside of the story line of the play: they have to do with themes of the play, but they aren't part of the story of the play and serve as a break/bridge between one scene and the next.

It's not hard to distinguish between the interludes and the play because they're quite different. We'll use one kind of lighting for the actual scenes of the play and we'll use another kind of lighting, usually more flashy stuff and color for the interludes so it almost has a musical kind of feel to it to some degree. The ensemble is an important aspect: the ensemble creates those interludes and therefore moves the play from scene to scene with a great deal of energy. So, creating spaces that don't try to reference the locations of the scenes with architecture but rather create what Uwe likes to refer to as "groupings." With the Arturo Ui rehearsal, we created ten to fifteen different combinations using various platforms and things that gave us a lot of different places and ways of staging each scene. So, we could see one scene here and then bring a different prop out, move that

platform over and stage another scene right there. For example, using interludes to actually move wagons across as you bring in a platform that contains thirteen chairs for a particular scene. None of the things have a scenic reference, but by virtue of having the certain necessary props and just the shape of the thing, it's very clear what kind of a space you're in.

SP: One of the most difficult things for an aging actor is the 20 minutes prior to the curtain where Uwe has the ensemble on stage, frozen on stage. As a seasoned veteran, I found myself in a very comfortable position; others, not so much. The younger actors unfortunately didn't realize that we were going to be frozen on stage, not live at all. The audience would come in at 20 minutes until the performance and they'd see a sculpture of 20 actors in overcoats in various positions. So we said, "Uwe, you're going to actually have us sitting, laying, standing or bending over for 20 minutes without moving and then erupt into the opening of the piece? Can we make it five, ten minutes?" I was bargaining with him. He wanted us to be out there for 30 minutes. The marriage between American theatre and European sensibilities sometimes is a difficult one as we found out.

For me, regarding the sense of physicality, I remember one rehearsal in which I was trying to find a key to the character that I was playing and I said: "I've got these teeth, false teeth." Uwe replied: "Teeth! Yes teeth!" And I said: "Really? They're really kind of outrageous Billy Bob Thornton, big teeth." And he replied: "Yes! Yes! Teeth! Teeth!" All of the sudden that physicality was infused by a small prop. So, as we're working, another surprise that he pulls is that, you're going to be made up. Were working pretty psychologically as actors, the physicality isn't terribly overblown, it's pretty much contemporary acting style. He shows us the Edward Munch drawings as well as the impressionistic paintings and expressionistic paintings that he wants us to mirror in our make-up. All of the sudden the actors become just grotesque in their makeup and that infused their physicality, working kind of from the outside-in. After weeks and weeks working from the inside-out in a more traditional approach, getting the physical makeup, the teeth, all of the sudden there was a difference in the playing. I hate to say, "style" because I don't like the word style. Style, to me, is given circumstances of a specific project, and they change, so styles change all the time. But it became much more of a presentational approach given the makeup, and it infused our physicality.

SH: *In my studies of Brecht (and Uwe Haus' directing approach), I discovered that Brecht in one of the Arturo Ui drafts added "chronologies" to the titles in order to provide connections between events portrayed in the play and contemporaneous events in Germany and Austria. He did this for an American audience unfamiliar with events in Europe. Director Haus has replaced the visual titles with songs developed by the actors during rehearsals through improvisation. The actors in Arturo Ui were urged to develop songs and movements out of an American context, from their own personal experience. What personal experience(s) did you recall to develop songs and movements out of an American context?*

WB: Well, as I said earlier, I'm the designer of the scenery, my job is to work with Dr. Haus in creating defining a space that can be used very flexibly, so that it gives a lot of options to the actors in terms of these interludes, and what they develop through improvisation. In fact, Arturo Ui probably was the farthest out Haus has ever gone, at least on the projects I've worked on with him, in terms of generating those interludes because in many cases they started with nothing. The ensemble developed entire interludes out of everyday, trivial news: "What about the theme of what we read in the newspapers?" and "Events of the day" were constant refrains I heard from Uwe during the interlude rehearsals. With Arturo Ui we did a lot of moving platforms side to side and some moving up and down stage so that those were intended to be able to be used sort of within the interludes as a means of getting from one scene to the next.

SH: *What personal experience did you use to develop not necessarily songs and movements but stationary placement of a certain object in a certain area of the stage?*

WB: Well, actually what we found works pretty well for us is that in the design process, which takes place well before the first rehearsal, we'll sit-and-talk about the kind of things we want or maybe a particular material we want to use. For instance, Galileo was all wood and the last time we did *The Good Person of Szechwan* up here in Hartshorne Theatre it was all metal: completely metal, and everything had to be made of out metal, which then gave rise to various kinds of things. We had a lot of chain-link-looking objects but none of it, again, had a particular scenic reference in that particular play. You have to at least provide some kind of space that can function as a tobacco shop, for instance, but the factory doesn't have to be anything more than a space in which you've got a table or where you can have your ensemble of actors around that doing things that look like they're making cigars.

I usually take the play, read it, and then do a synopsis of the scenes in English that are short, just short descriptions of each scene, and I give it to Uwe. He always likes to have those because it allows him to go into which scene he wants, very quickly and easily, without having to work through the text of the play as we're discussing the various things. What we'll do is walk through, come up with our ideas so that we can use a particular thing. For instance, we had a raked platform that was somewhat offset to the stage-right side of the stage for Arturo Ui, and then a part of the stage was flat on stage-left, and then there were two platforms that came out of the wings left and right just upstage of the raked platforms and it would line up with the platform, and then there was another platform way upstage that could come up and down stage. And we treated that a couple of different ways, for instance, one scene was for the conference room, the city council room, and another scene was for a funeral. So, we used it in a couple of different ways.

So what we'll do is walk through every scene and decide where and how we're going to stage that scene before Uwe ever goes into rehearsal so he knows where we intend to do it. This doesn't mean he's locked into that. He's always free to decide, "Well, it makes more sense to stage it over here," but he does very little

of that. After we've come up with a plan he tends to stick with it. What I will do is usually develop and give Uwe floor plans for each scene so that we know exactly where on the stage we're going to stage each scene, and then he allows the actors to go to work, improvising and doing the narration of the story once we've decided how the space would be used from a staging point of view.

SP: Unfortunately for the professional actors, the rehearsal process started with the MFAs months before the actual date of first rehearsal. They were in the process of doing a lot of the improvisations themselves and drawing from daily headlines. They were pulling ideas from all over the place. That really was up to the MFAs because they did all the interludes between the scenes, so when we joined them, there were only a couple of interludes that hadn't been crafted. I remember one - I think it was one of the first ones. Ben Charles was playing a little tough guy and we pulled his hat off his head and just started a game of keep-away. The hat went all over the stage, sometimes it went into the audience, but it went all over the place. No one knew who would pick up the hat, how it would end, until we knew that we had to find an ending and somebody tossed it up in the air. Ben was on somebody's shoulders, grabbed the hat, and then the ensemble melted to the ground almost in a kneeling abeyance to the king who was on the shoulders of another actor. No one directed that, it wasn't scripted, it was something that evolved out of working together in improvisation. That was the only one that I recall being a part of. Most of them were pretty well in-the-can and iced before I came on the scene.

SH: *Brecht also uses a contrast between form and content as an alienation device to provoke the critical reflection of the audience. For example: 1) The barker promises a production "in the grand style."; 2) The brutal actions of Ui and his henchmen clash with their speeches in blank verse as well as passages and situations borrowed from Richard III, Julius Caesar, Faust and Walenstein; 3) The allusions to dramas of Shakespeare and German Classicism are inserted in such a way as to relativize or deflate Ui's power and suggest to the audience that they have the power to stop such demagogues. What contrast between form and content as an alienation device did you use to provoke the critical reflection of the audience? What allusions did you assert in such a way to alienate Ui's power and suggest to the audience that they had the power to stop such demagogues?*

WB: There were a number of scenes that we chose to do a place on; for instance, the largest space on that set for Ui was the raked platform, the right platform being the one that slanted towards the audience. Typically, it could be slanted in any direction but this platform was tipped so if you were on a wheelchair you would roll right down and off into the audience. We played his hotel room there and all we needed for that was that platform and a chair. Ui had an arm chair that he could sit in, placed far up in the upper right corner, so that he had this long diagonal to work with when we brought in the other actor. His character was a really stereotypical actor, doing the Shakespearian teaching and showing Ui various acting devices so that he could do his speeches more effectively. The diagonal path allowed the Ui character to work from the inside of this

space, creating a very interesting movement.

Another instance was when we used the same platform for the flower shop. We ended up getting rid of all of the props and scenery associated with a flower shop, and instead we had a bunch of the actors just come out and strike poses with flowers. This created a space for Ui and the other characters to move about - completely wonderful and very alienating. We constantly look for ways of using the scenery in ways that really are surprising and perhaps - weird.

SP: That's a great question for a director because as an actor, going into the project, I knew that the main focus was provocation. It wasn't about telling a nice story so that the audience would relax in their seats and be hypnotized by storytelling: it was to provoke them. This is uncomfortable for audience members and actors alike, but that provocation was forefront in my mind as we were working on it. From an actor's point of view, I've got to be true to the text in the scene in which I'm playing, the given circumstances that surround the relationships that the author has created. There's a meta-game going on: it's not just one thing; there are many different layers that Uwe is the master of; he brings those threads together and he's able to create what the piece is saying for an audience.

There were times when the actors confronted and/or yelled at the audience. I hate, as an audience member, being part of an audience when that happens, I think, "Stay on the stage, don't touch me. I want to be comfortable. I just want to watch. I don't want to participate." It is a form of a participatory theatre that provokes a response. I like to be on the actor's side of the footlights when that happens.

SH: *Quoting from Charles Helmetag's review: "In the final scene, at the convention hall in Chicago, Ui's supporters emerged from the audience and distributed red-and-black Ui flags. Ui himself entered from the rear of the bleachers, shaking hands with members of the audience before he took the platform to claim victory. As balloons descended from the ceiling and Ui pledged to spread his protection to Washington, Philadelphia, Little Rock and New York, the audience had been transported to the middle of the grotesque political rally." This final scene was my favorite in regards to its illumination of Brechtian Theory. Did you have a particular, favorite scene in this regard as well?*

WB: Actually, I do have a favorite scene, but from a production of *Mother Courage* that I did with Uwe. The way we created the space for *Mother Courage* was to create a semi-circle surrounding the stage with the curve going back upstage, composed of a series of Chinese silk panels about six to eight feet wide. By overlapping the panels you made a large, semi-circular curtain that the actors could go through at any juncture. So, you could have the stage completely empty and then, in two seconds, you could have a full ensemble standing on stage if you had them come through the various intersections. That was kind of neat. It created the world of *Mother Courage* for the scenes and allowed us a lot of opportunity for lighting effects and things like that during the interludes.

But the very final scene was the most wonderful moment. All the actors were on stage and then disappeared from the stage by going back through the curtain.

Offstage they grabbed the cloth and pulled it down. The curtain dropped to the ground and the whole space was just one big black space where, up to that point, it had been all white. It was an incredibly stunning and visually interesting way to finish the play

As for the ending of Arturo Ui, we wanted to keep the space as narrowed down as possible during the play and then open it up into a grand convention hall for the final scene. The way we accomplished that was to have scenic panels serving as wings that were made a particular way - they could pivot out, open up, and become a flat-side-wall. We could also open up the back wall as well - fly it out so it could have even more depth. We put a podium on the platform that was used for the funeral. The podium was itself very tall, and when the platform/podium was pushed out with Ui on top of it, it was the most dominant thing on the stage. Additionally, we flipped Ui-banners out over the balconies from in the house as we brought up the house lights. As this whole thing unfolded and got larger and larger, suddenly you had this enormous spatial expanse with actors coming out into the side balcony boxes. It really sort of spilled out and got very, very huge.

SP: Whenever you have direct address with an audience and you've broken the fourth-wall, you've broken the convention, and we did that a lot of times throughout the play. All of the interludes were alienating the audience and provoking them with whatever little skits were going on during those interludes. The final scene was quite something to try to get the audience to join in and cheer for Ui, this evil man. So, it was fun as an actor to watch that transaction take place. There were people who were ra-ra cheering, which I couldn't understand, and very much like real history. I'm not sure they were aware of what the dynamic that was happening. Then there were people who flat-out said, "Screw you, screw you." There was something that happened in one of the performances where an audience member shouted at Ui, some derisive language, and in a sense, "Screw you, Ui!" and of course the people who were pro-Ui in the cast had to quell the pre-riot. It was interesting to see, it was a production I would have liked to have seen as a spectator, to be part of the audience, and see how that affected me. But yeah, I would have to concur, the last scene was certainly the most potent in realizing Brecht's theory, but we did have a good time with the interludes. Uwe would say, "Anybody play any instruments?" There was a violin, guitar. There was a real accomplished clarinet player, trumpet player, pianist. We just had a gas as actors rockin'-and-rollin'. That was a lot of fun and a nice highlight.

MARGARET
SETJE-EILERS

IM
GESPRÄCH
MIT

CARMEN-
MAJA
ANTONI

BERLIN

JULY 17, 2010

MSE: *(Margaret Setje-Eilers): Frau Antoni, Sie wissen dass ich mit einigen Frauen am Berliner Ensemble über ihre Aufgaben am BE schon gesprochen habe. Man kann aber behaupten, Sie werden als die Frau am BE betrachtet. Können Sie das erklären?*

CMA: *(Carmen-Maja Antoni):* Sicherlich hängt es auch damit zusammen, ich bin inzwischen am längsten hier am Haus, am BE und die Leute denken an das alte „Berliner Ensemble,“ in dem sie mich auch schon sahen. Ich habe den Bonus, dass sie mich schon lange kennen. Hinzu kommt das große Glück, dass mich das Publikum liebt, vielleicht durch meine Darstellung so vieler Rollen, die komisch, tragisch, proletarisch und anrührend waren. Ich konnte das Publikum einfangen, sie folgten der Figur auf der Bühne und meiner Darstellung, meiner Wärme und meiner großen Herzlichkeit, die ich auch im Privatleben besitze. Ich finde das Leben oft eines Schauspiels ähnlich mit Komik und Tragik, trenne aber doch gerne mein Privatleben von der Bühne. Viele behaupten, das geht nicht, ihr schauspielert doch immer, aber gerade das will ich nicht, auch wenn man die Gabe hat, natürlich private

Geschichten herrlich und amüsant zu erzählen.

Auf der Bühne ist die Arbeit, eine Rolle wird erarbeitet, eine Figur, ein spezifischer Mensch nach den Vorstellungen des Regisseurs und mir, der Ausführenden. Ich habe mit den wunderbarsten und unterschiedlichsten Regisseuren gearbeitet (Peymann, Tabori, Konwitschny, Wekwerth, Kupke, Thiedemann), um nur einige zu nennen an dem Haus. Das waren Arbeitsprozesse über eine lange Zeit, eine künstlerische Diskussion, ein Kräfteressen und ein Ergebnis. Meine Arbeit auf der Bühne verlangt Treue und Disziplin, eine Hingabe und etwas von mir, persönliches und ich glaube, das fühlt das Publikum, wenn ich die Bretter betrete. Jede Vorstellung neu begreife ich die Texte tiefer, spreche sie verändert und bin glücklich über so eine Entdeckung. Die Kollegen bemerken so etwas auch auf der Bühne, reagieren anders oder wundern sich und oft entsteht ein neuer Spaß dadurch.

MSE: *Das ist überraschend für die anderen.*

CMA: Es gibt Stücke, die verlangen eine Form oder eine bestimmte Sprache und doch versuche ich auch da keine Kunstfigur zu machen, sondern einen Menschen darzustellen. Ich mag die Arbeit von Robert Wilson als eine schauspielerische Erfahrung, aber die strengen Arrangements, die vorgeschriebenen Lichtpositionen und der teilweise zerhackte Text fordert von mir zu viel Gehorsam und ich kann meine Individualität nicht genug entfalten durch zu starke Formen. Ich komme mir vor wie eine Kunstfigur, wenn gleich dieses Theater eine wahnsinnige Ästhetik, Wirkung und Attraktivität hat. Für mich ist es, als produziere ich etwas, stelle etwas her. Eigentlich will ich nichts herstellen, meine Bühnenfiguren sind durch mich entstanden, durch meine Arbeit. Sie haben ein Stück von mir, von meiner Wirkung oder Handschrift auf der Bühne. Ich denke, dass es sich so zusammen setzt. Ich bin berührt, wenn

Leute aus Stuttgart nach Berlin kommen und sagen, „nur ihretwegen sind wir hier.“ Im *Schweyk* gab es eine Ansage, dass Frau Antoni krank sei (eine Knieverletzung), oooch kam es aus dem Publikum, aber sie spielt im Sitzen, es kam sofort Applaus und Jubel. Da bin ich so glücklich und spüre, wie sehr mich das Berliner Publikum mag, das ist einfach wunderbar, aber auch gegenseitig.

MSE: *Also liegt es nicht unbedingt an der Inszenierung, es ist ihre Person und die Rolle und auch die neue Komik, die sie jedes mal anders machen z.B. in der Kleinbürgerhochzeit, so viele Jahre lang und immer neue Einfälle.*

CMA: Ja, *Die Kleinbürgerhochzeit*. Das ist natürlich auch ein Stück, das von uns abendlich eine Aufmerksamkeit erfordert. Oft passiert etwas mit den Requisiten, den Möbeln, und eine neue Situation ist auf der Bühne. Man muss extemporieren, wenn was geschieht und es passiert jede Vorstellung etwas Anderes. Das Wachsein, das Erfinden ist gefragt. Ich kann über den Wagen in der Couragevorstellung nichts sagen, ob er fällt, ob die Luft raus geht, ob er umkippt, ob er so fährt, wie ich es will. Sensibel, aufmerksam wie ein Luchs muss ich sein jeden Abend, das hält fit.

MSE: *Und daher kommt die Ausdauer?*

CMA: Die Kraft hole ich mir aus meinem privaten Leben, und ich glaube, man muss in diesem Beruf sehr viele Rituale für sich entwickeln. Das heißt, ich kann mich morgens entscheiden, ob ich Sport mache oder im Bett liegen bleibe, weil ich gern schlafe. Ich kann entscheiden, wie viel ich esse und trinke, ich habe über die Jahre eine Vernunft entwickelt, die mir Freuden und Genüsse zulässt, wenn ich freie Abende habe, ich diszipliniere mich und bin auch mit Disziplin undiszipliniert. Aber wenn man nur undiszipliniert ist und es ist oft so bei jungen Schauspielern, dann ist es schrecklich. Heute verschlafen sie, kommen gar nicht zur Probe, viele Dinge, wo ich sage, das geht nicht. Stellen sie sich vor, ich sage, heute fahre ich dahin, ich habe keine Vorstellung, dann kommt ein Anruf, Spielplanänderung! Man muss also den Tag so beginnen, dass man noch Reserven hat für ihn, erst nach 18 Uhr kannst du an Freizeit denken, da sitzen dann alle in der Maske.....bis dahin brennt immer der Wecker. Zum Beispiel: *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn*. Meine Kollegin Ruth Glöss ist plötzlich krank und ich kriege den Anruf: „Maja kannst du das machen heute Abend?“ Die Vorstellung ist gut verkauft, also ab ins Theater, keine freie Zeit. Alles ist in diesem Beruf eine Frage der Disziplin. Sehen Sie, viele Leute machen Kampfsport. Sie gehen in eine Halle oder ein Dojo, sie ziehen sich die Schuhe aus, ziehen sich einen Anzug an, verneigen sich und lassen den Schmutz des Gehirns und des Körpers draußen. Sie trainieren, schwitzen und gehen wieder nach Hause. So ungefähr ist das mit der abendlichen Vorstellung. Das sind keine heiligen Hallen, aber für mich ein magischer Ort.

MSE: *Sie schauen nach der Vorstellung immer so munter aus.*

CMA: Ja, eine Vorstellung ist ein großer Spaß. Natürlich bin ich müde und erschöpft, aber ich bekomme den Applaus - jeden Abend. Ich meine, wie viele Menschen wünschen sich, dass sie für eine Kleinigkeit gelobt werden am Tag. Aber sie bekommen es nicht. Meine Arbeit wird jeden Abend honoriert vom Publikum.

MSE: *Sie bekommen jedes mal einen besonders langen und begeisterten Applaus. Das Haus ist immer sehr voll, wenn Sie spielen.*

CMA: Ich bin dafür sehr dankbar, aber ich bin natürlich auch die längste Zeit von all meinen Kollegen hier am Haus. Also konnte ich auch die doppelte Anzahl von Rollen spielen, und das Publikum ist mir inzwischen so treu wie ich auch ihm.

MSE: *Wenn man Sie beim ersten Eintritt mit Maske und Frisur sieht, geht durch das Publikum eine spürbare Freude.*

CMA: Wissen Sie, ich habe ein riesiges Vergnügen an der Verwandlung. Ich liebe es, mich verrückt zu kostümieren, in extreme Charaktere zu schlüpfen und immer wieder Neues auszuprobieren, und das selbe Vergnügen empfindet das Publikum.

MSE: *Sie sind schon über 30 Jahre am Berliner Ensemble, aber vorher hatten Sie auch eine lange Karriere an vielen berühmten Theatern, nicht?*

CMA: Ich war am Hans-Otto-Theater in Potsdam, danach an der Volksbühne bei Benno Besson, als Gast am Deutschen Theater und schließlich kam ich zum Berliner Ensemble. In Potsdam begann es mit Brecht, dem *Kaukasischen Kreidekreis*, ich spielte die „Grusche.“ Helene Weigel und Paul Dessau besuchten die Proben und die Aufführung. Das war ein großer Moment für mich, da Helene Weigel mit mir sprach, und Paul Dessau die Lieder mit mir einstudierte. Danach sollte ich dann sofort ans Berliner Ensemble kommen. Warum, weiß ich nicht, ich habe „Nein“ gesagt. Ich bin in Potsdam geblieben, und habe ungefähr 25 große Rollen gespielt. 1970 kam die nächste Anfrage von Helene Weigel, aber vorher kam Benno Besson. So bin ich schließlich an die Volksbühne gegangen. Ich habe Theater gespielt mit Rolf Ludwig, Ursula Karusseit, Hilmar Thate, Armin-Müller Stahl u.a. gespielt - meine schönste Theaterzeit. Helene Weigel hatte mir gesagt, Du kommst eines Tages an unser Haus. Und dann hat mich 1976 Ruth Berghaus geholt. Ich begann mit der Eva im *Puntila*. Leider war Ruth Berghaus nur eine Spielzeit da, fiel in politische Ungnade und Manfred Wekwerth übernahm das Theater.

MSE: *Warum ist Ruth Berghaus in Ungnade gefallen?*

CMA: Das würde jetzt zu weit führen, aber es war ein Politikum. Sie hat mit der Aufführung von *Fräulein Julie* und *Dantons Tod* Tabus gebrochen, die sozusagen in der DDR nicht gewünscht waren, die nicht im Einverständnis mit dem Kulturministerium waren. Man hat sie einfach „abgesägt“, sage ich jetzt mal, vergrault.

MSE: *Gibt es heutzutage am Berliner Ensemble noch ein konventionelles Theater?*

CMA: Konventionelles Theater klingt immer gleich negativ oder bürgerlich. Claus Peymann arbeitet mit Sprache, dem Inhalt, der Konzeption. Er liebt keine Performance, die Stücke müssen eine Dramaturgie haben. Das heißt nicht, dass es keine Extreme gibt, aber die Extreme sind im Spiel und in den Emotionen vorhanden. Die Regisseure Peter Stein und Peter Zadek arbeiten und arbeiteten ähnlich, wobei mir bei Zadek immer zu viele Zustände gespielt wurden. Ich möchte der Arbeit, die ich mache, immer einen Denkpro-

zess anmerken können, denn nur wenn ich etwas begreife, kann ich es auch umsetzen.

MSE: *Sie unterrichten an der Hochschule für Schauspielkunst „Ernst Busch“ in Berlin und drehen viele Filme.*

CMA: Ich unterrichte sehr gerne, um zu wissen, was junge Leute über das Theater heute denken. Ich überprüfe auch, inwieweit bin ich selber am Theater noch vital und agil, um mich mit den jungen Leuten von heute zu identifizieren. Meine Grundlagen kann ich ganz gut vermitteln, weil ich über die Jahre kontinuierlich praktisch am Theater tätig war. Mein Erfahrungswert ist ein wichtiger Faktor für die jungen Leute. Für mich ist eine gute Kommunikation mit angehenden Schauspielern das Interessanteste. Es ist nicht wichtig, ob ich eine gute Inszenierung mit den Studenten mache, wichtig ist nur, dass sie den Ernst und die Schönheit dieses Berufes begreifen lernen. Beim Film zu arbeiten ist etwas ganz anderes. Die Kollegen, mit denen man dort arbeitet, sieht man nur einmal in dieser Konstellation. Der Text und die Szene müssen präzise vorbereitet sein, um sie sofort produzieren zu können, denn man hat am Schluss nur eine Aufnahme und das Arbeitsergebnis sieht man erst Monate später. Auch das Lampenfieber und die Konzentration sind anders beim Film. Ich habe beim Theater spielen eine ganz andere Aufregung. Beim Film ist es ganz nah, ad hoc, jetzt oder nie. Film ist wie eine herrliche Erpressung.

MSE: *Mit den vielen Aufgaben am Theater und beim Drehen haben Sie Ihre Spielweise über die Jahre vielleicht erheblich verändert. Spielen Sie jetzt zum Beispiel die Brechtstücke als episches Theater?*

CMA: Episches Theater spiele ich nicht, aber eine Art Brecht Theater. Wissen Sie, es ist so, als ob Sie fragen, kommen Sie sich komisch vor, wenn Sie die Weigelrolle spielen müssen? Da kann ich nur sagen, ich bin nicht die Weigel. Helene Weigel ist unersetzbar, einzigartig und großartig, in einer Zeit, wo das Theater im Aufbruch war, wo Brecht der Gesellschaft Theaterröcke anzog, damit die Kultur ins Land kommt.

MSE: *Man spricht nicht von Weigel, wenn man Ihre Courage sieht.*

CMA: Meine Courage ist die von der Antoni. Es ist eine andere Zeit, ich bin eine andere Frau, eine neue Schauspielerin. Wichtig ist, dass ich diese Rolle mit meiner ganzen Persönlichkeit fülle. Und ich hatte Glück, die Rollen der Helene Weigel an diesem Theater zu spielen. Dafür bin ich dankbar.

MSE: *In den letzten Jahren haben Sie auch viele Erinnerungen an George Tabori gesammelt?*

CMA: Zu Tabori möchte ich nur sagen, dass es sehr speziell ist, mit ihm zu probieren, weil er aus der Tagesprobe jeweils die Arbeit entwickelt. Aber ich denke, dass ich diese Gedanken der Frau Ursula Höpfner-Tabori im Interview überlassen werde. Ich habe an George nur die besten Erinnerungen. Er hatte einen herrlichen Humor, Güte, Verstand und Schabernack. Schade ist nur, dass er schon sehr alt war, als wir zusammen arbeiteten.

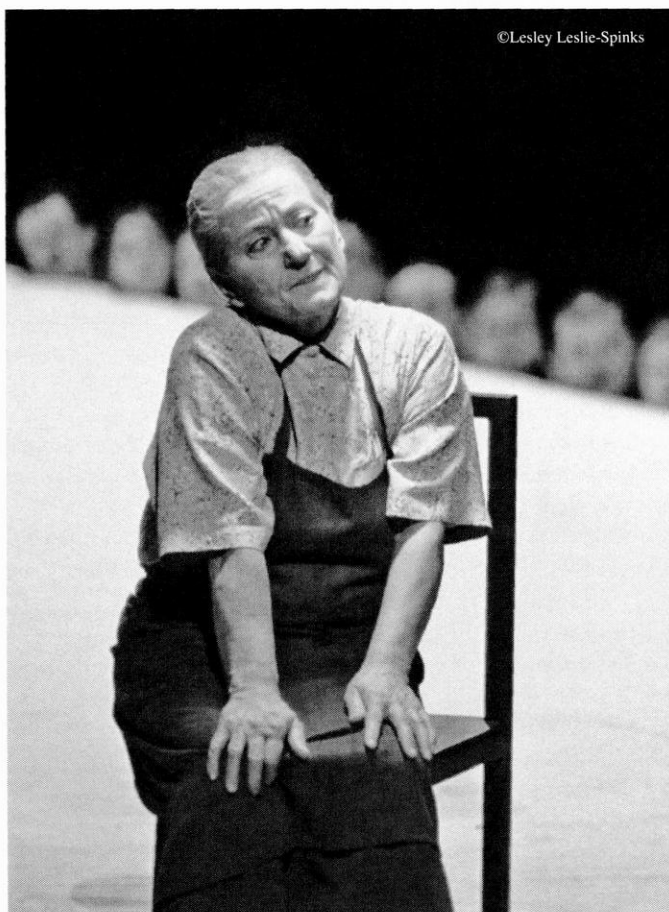
MSE: *Möchten Sie zur letzten Arbeit mit Claus Peymann, Triologie der schönen Ferienzeit, noch was sagen?*

CMA: Ich bin glücklich, dass ich nach so vielen Jahren Peymann ganz gut verstehe. Bei der ersten Probe hat er zu mir gesagt, „Antoni, Sie kommen morgen hoffentlich mit Vollgas!“ Wenn er so eine Umschreibung wählt, verstehe ich was er will, nämlich 100 %. Das heißt: temperamentvoll, schrill und grotesk. Letztendlich ist die Rolle so geworden.

MSE: *Wie war es im Nathan der Weise mit der Daja?*

CMA: Das war eine grandiose Textarbeit mit Peymann, die ich sehr sehr schätze. Diesen Lessing zu sprechen, und ihn zu begreifen, und in unseren Köpfen zu modernisieren - das war ein interessanter Arbeitsprozess. Das war eine wunderbare Arbeit mit neuen Schauspielern und Peymann, die eigentlich eine Lesung am Tisch werden sollte, und die wir jetzt schon über 150 mal gespielt haben.

MSE: *Das ist ein gutes Schlußwort, und ich bedanke mich sehr für dieses Gespräch.*



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MSE (Margaret Setje-Eilers): *Herr Holtz, Sie haben schon zu DDR-Zeiten bedeutende Rollen an den wichtigsten Theatern im ehemaligen Berliner Osten gespielt - an der Volksbühne, am Deutschen Theater und am Berliner Ensemble, wo Sie jetzt seit 2000 wieder spielen. Sie kamen als ganz junger Mann aus dem Westen nach Osten. Was hat Sie dazu gebracht?*

MARGARET
SETJE-EILERS

IM
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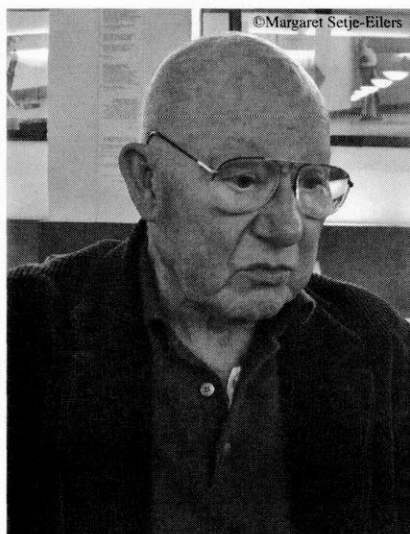
Jürgen Holtz

BERLIN

JUNE 26, 2010

JH (Jürgen Holtz): Das ist eine lange Geschichte. Ich wurde im Krieg, 1944 im Alter von 11 Jahren, durch Goebbels' „totalen Krieg,“ von meinen Eltern getrennt. Meine Eltern lebten weiter in der zerstörten Stadt Berlin und ich war evakuiert, in Franken, also sehr weit südlich, lebte bei irgendwelchen fürchterlichen Leuten, und 1945, gleich nachdem die Amerikaner dieses Gebiet besetzt hatten, gab es ungeheuerere Flüchtlingsströme von Nord nach Süd, von Ost nach West, von West nach Ost, wahnsinnig viele *displaced persons*, die alle irgendwie kreuz und quer durch Europa nach Hause wollten und ich schloss mich dann einem dieser Ströme einfach an. Ich ließ mir von meiner „Pflegetante“ einen Rucksack geben, stopfte ein paar Sachen hinein und bin gegangen. Betteln und Stehlen hatte ich vorher gelernt, angestiftet sogar von diesen sogenannten Pflegeeltern. Das waren Nazis, aber das war nicht allein der Grund wegzugehen, aber sie waren auch böse und ich wollte unbedingt meine Eltern wiederhaben.

Ich war zwölfteinhalb Jahre alt, ein schlimmes Alter für sowas. Und ich bin über die sogenannte grüne Grenze, einen Fluss, die Mulde, wo auf der einen Seite die Amerikaner und auf der anderen Seite die Russen standen, und wenn Leute im Fluss waren, dann wurde da reingeschossen oder Handgranaten hinein geworfen. Die Leichen schwammen den Fluss runter. Ich habe mich dann einer Gruppe angeschlossen und bin mit denen zusammen nach Osten übergeschwommen. Dann bin ich am nächsten Tag weiter und bin, glaube ich, sechzig oder fünfundsechzig Kilometer gelaufen, durch die Mark Brandenburg und quer durch Berlin von Lankwitz bis Tegel, wo meine Eltern wohnten. So kam ich nach Hause und am nächsten oder übernächsten Tag meinte mein Vater, ich müsse wieder zur Schule (die Russen hatten die Schulen in ihrer Zone sofort nach dem Ende des Krieges für die deutschen Schüler wieder geöffnet, auch die Theater, Museen, Bibliotheken). So hat er also die väterliche Gewalt über mich wiedergewonnen. Er hätte lieber erst mal etwas anderes mit



mir machen sollen und mich dann zur Schule schicken.

Die Verhältnisse waren am Anfang sehr schwierig in Berlin. Ich lernte Stehlen, Schieben, Einbrechen - im Gaswerk, die Winter waren kalt, wir hatten Hunger. Man musste sich irgendwie versorgen. Das war kein lustiges Leben, kann ich Ihnen sagen. Und in dieser Zeit Schule machen hieß lügen, weil nichts in Ordnung war. Die Leute, die mit dem Schieben und mit dem Betrügen etwas besser dran waren, denen es gut ging, die schwiegen und haben gelogen. Die Armen konnten nicht lügen, sondern sie mussten stehlen und zwar einfach so, mussten sehen, wie sie durchkamen. Infolgedessen war das Klima an der Schule, an der Oberschule in Berlin Tegel, zerstört und vergiftet.

Was ich 1945 schnell wieder anfang, wild oder organisiert, was das Spielen, Theaterspielen, das machte ich ernst, leidenschaftlich. Meine Eltern schickten mich dann auf eine Internatsschule auf der Insel Scharfenberg im Tegeler See. Es waren dort nur arme Leute, Kinder, die begabt waren, die intellektuell fähig waren, ein Abitur zu machen. Das Abitur war mit einer handwerklichen Ausbildung verbunden, dass man nicht nur Abitur machen konnte, sondern gleichzeitig Geselle für Tischlerei, Schlosserei, Landwirtschaft oder Gartenbau werden konnte.

Es lag in Westberlin und wurde von einem ehemaligen Widerstandskämpfer, Heinrich Scheel, geleitet, der „leider“ Kommunist war. Wir Schüler nannten ihn Pappi. Er war ein außergewöhnlicher Lehrer, der selbst vorher Schüler an diesem Internat gewesen war. Als die Teilung Berlins kam, gab es eine politische Intrige. Pappi Scheel wurde fristlos entlassen und ein anderer Schulleiter eingesetzt. Die Schüler haben protestiert, gestreikt; auch die Lehrer haben protestiert. Wir wurden alle von der Insel gejagt. Wir sollten wiederkommen dürfen, wenn wir uns entschuldigen für das, was wir getan haben. Entschuldigen! Was hatten wir denn getan? Wofür sollten wir uns entschuldigen? Wir weigerten uns. Mein Vater wollte, dass ich mich entschuldige, damit ich dort weiter zur Schule gehe. Ich sagte, aber Vater, warum soll ich mir denn selber das Kreuz brechen, warum soll ich meinen Stolz verlieren. Also, wenn man in diesem Land, in Deutschland, etwas ausrichten will, damit es wieder aufgebaut wird, antifaschistisch und demokratisch, dann fängt es damit an, dass wir uns nicht vor Leuten entschuldigen, die so etwas angerichtet haben und uns irgendjemand vor die Nase setzen, nur weil sie die Kommunisten nicht leiden können. Wir hatten ja einen außerordentlichen Schulleiter, den wir alle sehr liebten. Besser konnten die Verhältnisse in Westberlin, überhaupt in Berlin, nicht ausgedrückt werden. Nun zogen wir in den Ostteil der Stadt. Wir gründeten eine neue Internatsschule, „Ost-Scharfenberg“, außerhalb der Stadt und wurden dann mit Kindern von Funktionären gemischt. Da haben wir unseren Stolz dann doch verloren, denn auch die baten uns, gefälligst das zu machen, was sie uns sagten und nicht unseren eigenen Weg weiterzugehen, der durch die Idee der Schulfarm Scharfenberg vorgegeben war.

Ja, so bin ich in den Osten geraten. Ich bin natürlich auch gegen den Willen meines Vaters dorthin gegangen - er war nicht einverstanden - und habe dort mein Abitur gemacht und habe ohne seine Einwilligung meine Schauspielprü-

fung in Weimar gemacht. Es gab zu Hause dann den endgültigen Krach, weil mein Vater verlangte, dass ich nach Westberlin zurückkehre und dort Architektur oder Malerei oder irgendsowas studiere - das war 1952, da war die Grenze mitten in Deutschland noch nicht zu, auch nicht von Ost- nach Westberlin - und ich habe gesagt, das tue ich nicht. Warum soll ich? Denn es war damals so, dass ich mein Abitur noch einmal in Westberlin hätte machen müssen, weil die Abschlüsse, die es im Osten gab, im Westen nicht anerkannt wurden. Wir waren diskriminiert. Das war wieder derselbe Punkt; ich habe voller Stolz gesagt, wieso? Ich habe ein Abitur, ich bin für eine akademische Laufbahn geeignet. Wieso soll ich wegen politischer Vorbehalte vor den Herrschaften auf den Knien liegen? Das kam für mich nicht in Frage. Also bin ich in der DDR Schauspieler geworden und habe da eine ganz gute Ausbildung gehabt, ich meine, wie man Ausbildung immer so hat. Eigentlich war die Ausbildung nicht so gut. Sie war vielleicht gut, aber für mich nicht, weil ich war ja schon Schauspieler. Jetzt habe ich also von meinem Stolz erzählt und davon, woher ich komme.

MSE: *Sie haben mir einmal gesagt, das Theater ist kein Institut für Konsum.*

JH: Kein Konsum-Tempel. Ja, es ist doch kein Kaufhaus. Unsere Theater sind aber organisiert wie Kaufhäuser. Man beschwört auf der einen Seite den Gedanken des Ensembles. Ein Ensemble kann nicht willkürlich geführt werden. Ein Ensemble besteht darin, dass über eine gewisse Zeit, wie bei einer Jazzband, sich begabte Leute zusammen tun, und unter einem Dirigenten, einem Komponisten oder einem Regisseur gemeinschaftlich etwas betreiben, was ihr gemeinsamer Sens ist, ihre gemeinsame Sache. Alle Inszenierungen, die ich mit Bob Wilson erlebt habe, sind Ensemble. Wir sind damit zu anstrengenden Gastspielen gefahren, Paris, Spoleto, Hongkong, New York, usw... überall hin. Und überall dort gab es ein Gefühl von Gemeinschaft, weil wir zusammen auf unsere Sache stolz sein konnten. Dann ist es ein Ensemble, dass man sozusagen in jeder Situation immer den Ton vom anderen abnimmt, dass man auf einander hört. Das ist, glaube ich, das Wichtigste, wie überhaupt in der Schauspielerei.

“Der Schauspieler,” sagte Brecht, “soll hören.” Er soll dem anderen zuhören und er soll, wenn er spricht, wenn er spielt, wenn er agiert und auch beim Probieren, immer sich selbst zuhören. Und das ist eine wunderbare Idee und die hat auch etwas mit dem Entstehen von Ensemble zu tun. Denn nur, wenn man mit sich selber arbeitet und sich selbst dabei erarbeitet und sich dabei immer wieder neu entdeckt, ist man in der Lage den anderen zuzuhören, die anderen zu akzeptieren und zu achten, zu respektieren und Freude daran zu haben, wenn sie spielen oder singen oder etwas sagen und man sagt, es ist so schön, was sie tun. Also wenigstens mir geht es so. Vor längerer Zeit hat Franz Wittenbrink eine Inszenierung am Berliner Ensemble gemacht, Zigarren. Dieser Abend bestand nur aus Liedern, Songs, Singen. Bei dieser Veranstaltung hatte ich das dringende Gefühl, wenn jemand einen Fehler machte, waren alle traurig. Aber niemand hat einen Vorwurf erhoben, weil jeder wusste, wie schwierig

das ist. Wenn der andere schön gesungen hat und kräftig und lustig war, dann freuten sich alle anderen über ihn und waren stolz auf ihn. Immer wenn das geschieht, spiele ich gerne Theater. Das andere finde ich einfach nur dumm und anstrengend.

Wenn man singt oder spricht oder sich auf eine bestimmte Art und Weise bewegt, d.h. wenn so was entsteht wie der Gestus, dann gibt es ein Schwingen. Dann ist man auf der gleichen Welle sozusagen. Man ist in einer gewissen Übereinstimmung und nicht im Widerspruch zu den Dingen, die in allen sind und die durch uns durchgehen. Das zu feiern ist eine der vornehmsten Aufgaben der Kunst. Die schönste Aufgabe des Schauspielers, des Sängers, des Tänzers, besteht darin, die Menschen zu beschenken, nicht ihnen etwas zu verkaufen. Verkaufen sollen die Theater und die Büros. Was passiert, wenn der Vorhang aufgeht, ist etwas anderes. Das ist eine Voraussetzung, die man nicht mit dem Eigentlichen vermischen darf, nämlich dass im selben Moment, wenn die Zuschauer beisammen sind, wenn man das Geraune hört, dann fängt eine Art Gespräch zwischen den Zuschauern an. Dann geht der Vorhang auf. Es ist Stille, dann kommt eine Musik oder es fällt ein Wort oder jemand kommt und macht "psst" oder was auch immer geschieht, da gibt es eine Einstimmung und wenn man dann anfängt, auf der Bühne zu spielen, zu singen, zu sprechen, dann geht zwischen den Zuschauern, und zwischen der Bühne und den Zuschauern, ein großes inneres Gespräch los, das man nicht hört, aber das da ist. Alles kommuniziert untereinander und tauscht aus.

MSE: *Sie merken, wenn das Publikum mitdenkt. Sie haben mir schon einmal gesagt, Sie geben dem Publikum aber nicht nach.*

JH: Das darf man nicht, wenn die Leute nach einem greifen oder einen nur auf ihren eigenen Quatsch verpflichten wollen, dass man ihnen hinterherläuft, ihnen den Großen Zampano macht, den Hampelmann. Sie kennen den „Jahrmarkt der Eitelkeiten“ von Thackeray. Wir haben eine Gesellschaft, wo alle am liebsten Selbstdarsteller sind, weil ihnen etwas fehlt. Deswegen ist es umso wichtiger, dass alle sich ununterbrochen groß selbst darstellen. Man kann das nur unterbinden, indem man die Führung an einem solchen Abend nicht verliert. Das hat wieder was mit Stolz zu tun. Ich mache denen nicht den Hampelmann, weil dann, wenn ich den Hampelmann mache, ist diese innere Kommunikation, die ich vorher beschrieben habe, zu Ende.

MSE: *In der Dreigroschenoper ist die Tendenz im Publikum da.*

JH: Ja, ich verstehe das auch. Die Leute wollen richtig albern sein, ist doch in Ordnung, aber wir sind die maître de plaisir sozusagen. Wir lenken das. Wir dürfen das Heft nicht aus der Hand geben, weil die Leute uns sonst zerfetzen. Sie machen uns zu nichts. Ich weiß genau, dass es in der Gesellschaft wie in der Familie, wenn etwas Außergewöhnliches ist, die Tendenz gibt, es niederzumachen, es unter die Füße zu kriegen. Die Menschen sind so. Und Theater wird dann finsterste Schmiere.

MSE: *In Ihren grossen Rollen am Berliner Ensemble, strahlen Sie diese Unabhängigkeit aus, zum Beispiel als Schigolch in Lulu, Kreon in Ödipus auf Kolonos, Jonathan Jeremiah Peachum in der Dreigroschenoper, Kön-*

igin Elizabeth in Shakespeares Sonette, Titus Andronicus in der Schändung und Buttler, Chef des Dragonerregiments in Wallenstein. Sie lassen sich nicht klein kriegen und behalten eine Art Freiheit.

JH: Ja, die das nicht erlaubt, die das einfach nicht erlaubt. Ich lasse mich nicht unter die Füße von anderen Leuten kriegen. Dann breche ich ab und gehe, wenn das passiert.

MSE: *Etwas anderes jetzt. Sie haben mir einmal über die ausführliche und ergiebige Probenarbeit mit Jutta Hoffmann zu Fräulein Julie (Schleef/Tragelehn 1975) erzählt. Diese Arbeit hat zu einem besonders tiefen Textverständnis geführt. Wie erleben Sie die Proben heute?*

JH: Es gibt überall auf der Welt lieblose Inszenierungen. Also du kommst mit gelerntem Text, wehe du kannst ihn nicht, dann plapper, plapper, plapper. Dann gehst du mal hier, du mal dahin. Und das wird den Leuten verkauft. Fast durchweg das gesamte deutsche Boulevard, das sich eigentlich nur in Selbstlob wälzt und einfach albern ist. Dazu gehören auch alberne Zuschauer. Damit habe ich nichts zu schaffen. Das heißt aber nicht, dass Spaß nicht sein soll. Mit Bierernst ist ja nichts zu holen. Man muss sagen, dass heutzutage viele Theaterveranstaltungen in Deutschland sich dadurch von Popkonzerten unterscheiden, dass sie humorlos sind. Das ist bedauerlich, weil es neue Tendenzen gibt. Was fällt uns ein, für die Schule zu arbeiten? Die Schule soll gefälligst selber machen, selber Theater spielen und aufführen, was die Schulen viel zu wenig machen, so etwas Gutes und Nützliches, weil es den Unterrichtsbetrieb stört(!). Unsere Traurigkeiten und unsere Freuden und unser Humor haben nichts mit Schule zu tun. Aber das hat man in Deutschland eine ganze Zeitlang geglaubt.

Wenn man sich einer Sache wirklich ernsthaft widmet, kann man von vornherein Schauspiel ausschließen, das auf der ersten Probe fertig ist und Akteure, die auf der ersten Probe fertig sind. Die kann man auf die Bühne schicken und es bleibt immer so. Die sind uninteressant, weil es darum geht, einen Text zu erforschen, einen Text zu erfahren. Es geht überhaupt um Erfahrung und nicht darum, Erfahrung abzuschnüren. Das ganze Leben besteht eigentlich darin, dass man Freude hat, Freude vermittelt, lernt und gibt. Wenn der Mensch aufhört zu lernen, ist er tot. Er kann zwar noch eine Weile rumlaufen, aber er ist tot. Das Lernen entsteht so: Da ist ein Text. Dieser Text ist tausend Jahre alt. Jetzt kommt die Frage, was habe ich mit dem Text überhaupt zu schaffen? Ich habe doch damals nicht gelebt und wenn ich damals, vor 1000 Jahren, gelebt habe, dann bin ich schon längst nicht mehr. Was hat dieser alte Text mit mir zu tun, mit unserem Leben, unseren Fragen, HEUTE? Es gibt von Picasso eine große Zeichenserie, Der Maler und sein Modell. Das Modell sitzt in der Mitte vollkommen still und der Maler zappelt drum herum. Er betet das Modell an. Er macht Figuckchen, er macht sich bemerkbar, er tanzt für das Modell. Das Modell bleibt vollkommen still. Etwa diese blöde Zappelei machen wir auch um den Text herum und dabei entsteht dann so etwas wie Theater.

Wir können nicht so tun, als ob wir den Text selber geschrieben haben. Da sind Zeilen. Es ist tot, es ist Papier. Nun mach daraus Leben, über etwas, was nicht mit uns allein, sondern mit den Zuschauern zu tun hat und in ihnen

schwingt. Wie kommt es dazu, dass Zuschauer plötzlich ihren Horizont erweitern und erleben, dass ein mittelalterliches Gedicht zu ihnen dringt und sie anrührt. Oder, dass es in ihnen eine Saite berührt, die zu klingen anfängt oder sie müssen weinen und sie wissen nicht warum. Das heißt, man muss sowohl üben als auch probieren. Man muss mit beidem seine Kenntnisse vertiefen und mit der Erfahrung, nicht durch akademisches Lernen. Das ist Probieren. Man probiert eigentlich bis zur letzten Vorstellung. Es gibt aber auch Schauspieler, bei denen man zwanzig Vorstellungen lang immer denselben Ton erfährt. Die sind starr. Das sind sogenannte Darstellungsbeamte. Es gibt natürlich auch tote Dramaturgen und tote Regisseure. Kunst machen... Was ist Kunst? Also Kunst zu machen, heißt Kunst zu erfahren. Das kann nicht jeder, aber man kann einige in diesen Prozeß mitnehmen und kann auf Empfindsamkeit stoßen und kann auf diese Weise, sagen wir einmal, in gewisser Weise erziehen oder Dinge lockern, dass ein Mensch sich für die eigenen Erfahrungen öffnet. Das sind manchmal auf Proben und auch in Vorstellungen sehr schmerzhaft Prozesse. Machen wir uns nichts vor, Kunst ist nicht einfach so tralala. Aber die Nöte, die entstehen eben in diesem Prozeß, in dem sich selber kennen und den anderen besser in seinen guten Sachen, in seinen schwachen Sachen kennen lernen, ihn akzeptieren lernen, aber auch den Text akzeptieren lernen, ihn in sich selbst verstehen lernen, also im eigenen Körper verstehen lernen. Ich nehme diese Sachen ernst.

MSE: *Besonders bei den Inszenierungen von Bob Wilson sind in mir alle Sinne erregt, und durch diese Stimulierung bin ich auf eine besondere Weise für den Text offen.*

JH: Ja, weil der Text seine Facetten öffnet und der Schauspieler gebeten wird, auch seine Facetten zu öffnen, d.h. sich einer Vorstellung vollkommen auszuliefern. Er steht wirklich splitterfasernackt da. Jeder kann alle unsere Fehler und Unvollkommenheiten, unsere Schwächen, sehen, der aufmerksame Zuschauer allemal. Wir wollen doch nicht, dass alles so zugapappt wird, dass man nichts mehr sieht und alle sagen geil, toll. Das ist heute umso schwerer, weil wir in einer absolut schicken Gesellschaft leben. Aber Schick gehört nicht dahin. Schick ist etwas, was nicht öffnet, sondern zudeckt. Es ist Mode. Ich habe nichts gegen Schick, da wo er hingehört, wenn wir uns mit Schick amüsieren ...

MSE: *Kommen wir zurück zu Robert Wilson: seine neue Inszenierung von Lulus Death. Welche Fragen stellt Ihnen der Text?*

JH: Die Dekadenz. Frank Wedekind hat den Lulu-Stoff 1892 bis 1894 entwickelt, also etwa um 1900 geschrieben, und er ist nie mit diesem Stoff zu Ende gekommen. Was er beschrieben hat, ist das Fin de Siècle, d.h. eine Phase voller Dekadenz, das sieht man am Jugendstil, vollgefrissen bis oben hin, auch die Arbeiterschaft bereits vollgefrissen. Es ist noch ein anderer Punkt, der Export von Kapitalien und Menschen, der da anfängt. Man hat zu viele Menschen, man hat zu viel Geld. Man muss das irgendwohin exportieren, d.h. der ganze Kolonialismus steht in der Zeit in voller Blüte und überschreitet diese Blüte. Es ist eine Zeit, die sehr hübsch ist und schick. Auf der anderen Seite ist sie voller

MSE: In den USA gibt es sehr wenig Denkmäler.

Jetzt kommen zwei Ideen. Die eine Idee ist die, Lulu nicht von vorne nach hinten dem Stück genau folgend zu machen, sondern in der umgekehrten Reihenfolge. Lulu ist tot. Es ist eine sehr naive Idee. Lulu ist tot, nämlich seit

hundert, zwei-, dreihundert Jahren. Die gibt es nicht mehr. Und Lulu träumt ihre Geschichte bis zu ihrem Tod, ausgehend von der Tatsache, dass sie tot ist. Sie geht wie ein Vögelchen mit ihrem Gesang da durch und erzählt ihre Geschichte, ein Geist. Alle anderen Personen sind ja auch tot, sind also auch Gespenster, was man im letzten Bild sieht. Lauter Tote mit grünen Gesichtern. Lauter Tote, also unsere Vorfahren, kann man so sagen, sitzen dort. Das ist das Theater aber immer. Das Theater erzählt nicht von lebenden Leuten, sondern immer von gestorbenen, auch wenn man ein Gegenwartsstück spielt, geht es eigentlich immer um gestorbene Leute. Es sind doch nicht unsere Nachbarn. Die kann ich nicht spielen, während sie noch leben, das ist unanständig, sondern sie müssen tot sein, damit ich ihr Leben erzählen kann. Das andere macht das Fernsehen. Die kommen einfach durch die Stube ins Schlafzimmer, es bringt den Leuten eine Sache nahe, weil es auch ganz nah herangeht. Das Theater ist immer aus der Ferne, ist immer Distanz. Es ist die andere Auferstehung. Das ist der bedeutende und wichtigste Unterschied zwischen diesen beiden Metiers. Die Kamera kommt uns zu nahe. Im Porno noch viel näher; der Porno ist immer die Konsequenz des Fernsehens, es nimmt uns mehr als es uns gibt; es raubt uns unsere Würde. Das Theater ist dazu nicht imstande; es sei denn, es ist Pornotheater. Hab ich gesehen in Amsterdam. Es ist immer das große Panorama. Die Geschichte von Lulu wird als ein Drama erzählt. Lulu von damals erzählt uns, was ihr geschehen ist und damit ist das Melodram, wenn man so will, nämlich unser eigenes, eröffnet. Das Melodrama wird damit hergestellt, dass wir es mit Lou Reed kreuzen. Lou Reed singt vor fünftausend Leuten und fünftausend Leute machen Pfui oder jubeln, und stehen und tanzen. Diese beiden Elemente zu kreuzen ist eine Hoffnung für das Theater. Die Musik gibt es ja schon, aber heute, folgend dem Brecht, der seine Stücke mit Einschnitten von Musik von Eisler, Dessau und Weill gemacht hat. Damals hat man es lehrhaft gemacht, mit Fragen ans Publikum, was sagt ihr dazu?

M^{SE}: *Mit einer Brechung also.*

JH: Es ist mehr als eine Brechung. Es wird eine große Szene erzählt, dann gibt es eine Zusammenfassung, die die Zuschauer fragt, was meint ihr dazu und möchte gern den Streit zwischen den Leuten. Die Klassengesellschaft verlangt nach politischer Haltung. Die soll durch Brechts Stücke und Dramaturgie erzogen werden. Das hat sich heute verändert, in gewisser Weise auch verwaschen.

M^{SE}: *Die Texte von Lou Reed sind doch auch wunderschöne Gedichte.*

JH: Das sind sie. Aber in der Lulu-Inszenierung sind das nicht schöne Lieder und Gedichte, die dazugesetzt wurden, um das ganze hübscher zu machen, sondern sie sind so eingesetzt, dass sie zu den Szenen gehören, oft den Szenen, den Figuren, dem ganzen Stück erst ihren Sinn geben. Dann sehen die Leute in den Spiegel. Dazu ist Theater da.

M^{SE}: *In der Dreigroschenoper kann man die grossen Kreise aus Lichtern am Anfang als Geldstücke, nicht nur als Rummelplatz, sehen. Der Text kommt später, "Geld regiert die Welt" und das Stück arbeitet dagegen.*

JH: Aber sicher. Brecht hatte doch kein Geld. Er hat mit dem Stück viel Geld gemacht.

MSE: *In Lulu kommen auch konstant Brechungen, Öffnungen in andere Perspektive.*

JH: Es ist bekannt, dass Bob Wilson in seinem eigenen Land kein Glück hat. Er muss in die Welt gehen, überall, und dort wird er gefeiert, aber nicht so in Amerika. Von einigen Kennern, Intellektuellen natürlich abgesehen, vor allem in New York, aber in LA, Memphis? Das hängt auch mit anderen Sachen zusammen. Man hat sich das Republikanische vor zweihundert Jahren nicht so vorgestellt, wie es heute aussieht. Es gibt eine Jugend, die an irgendeinem Punkt vielleicht zu protestieren anfängt. Das ist grossartig. Aber die Gesellschaft selber will nicht sehen. Sie wollen Geld verdienen und meinen, sie können den Traum von Gottes eigenem Land aufrechterhalten. Das können wir alle nicht, sonst schießen wir uns auf den Mond. Wir sind in Europa durch die Erfahrung geschlagen und misstrauisch, wir zweifeln an allem. Dazu muss man Hannah Arendt zum Beispiel lesen. In ihren Bemerkungen zu Europa steht viel über diese Dinge.

MSE: *Was, zum Beispiel?*

JH: Sie sagt, nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg war Europa erledigt. Europa hat seinen eigenen Charakter im Ersten Weltkrieg verloren. Das ist wohl richtig. Wenn nicht eine neue Idee von Europa entsteht, dann weiß ich nicht. Dieses Gequatsche mittelmäßiger Leute, die uns in Europa regieren, während Werte in Abermilliardenhöhe vernichtet werden! Wir werden in Europa, und nicht dort, nur noch enteignet... Sie haben es nicht gewusst! Natürlich haben sie es alle gewusst, was in Griechenland passiert, in Italien, in Portugal, in Spanien usw. Sie haben die Banken gewähren lassen: „Wird schon gut gehen“.

MSE: *Das steckt auch in der Dreigroschenoper drin.*

JH: Ja, klar, es ist das sichere Stück, aber es ist harmlos gegen das, was wirklich geschieht. Lulu kommt heute der Sache näher, meine ich, als kulturelle Gemengelage, Stimmung, Sehnsucht.. Das heißt nichts anderes, als dass wir in einer Spießbürgergesellschaft leben. Das ist Lulu, im 21. Jahrhundert zu reich geworden, gierig und aggressiv. Obenhin schick und drunter brutal. Es ist die große Leere. Man hat mir damals, als ich das erste Mal den Text kennenlernte, Kunst aus dem Jugendstil anempfohlen und mich gefragt, ob ich sie toll finde. Ich kann damit nichts anfangen. Es ist nur Stil, schrecklich. Später habe ich verstanden, was dahinter steckt: Stil anstatt Fülle des Lebens, Kunst als Teppichmuster. Bob Wilson bringt mir großes Vertrauen entgegen. Andere Regisseure, die ich kenne, nicht. Sie halten Schauspieler nicht für Künstler. Mit den wenigen, die sie für Künstler halten, können sie nichts anfangen, aber vielleicht ist das nur in Deutschland so.

MSE: *Aber Sie spielen in Inszenierungen von Peter Stein, Kreon in Ödipus auf Kolonos und Sie haben doch auch in Wallenstein gespielt.*

JH: Weiß Gott. Ich habe den Buttler in Wallenstein gespielt und ich habe meine Sache gut gemacht (nicht anders als Kreon). Buttler: der treueste der

Offiziere Wallensteins wird sein Richter, gleichzeitig sein Todesengel auch, der zu ihm sagt, komm, es ist genug. Folge mir. Ganz sanft. So eine Doppelfigur zu erfinden und dazu einen Militärmann, der sein Leben lang nichts anderes gelernt hat, als Militär zu sein und von äußerster Disziplin. Das war neu. Wallenstein musste einen wirklichen Gegner haben, der ihn herausfordert und der ihn an seine Pflicht erinnert, als Feldherr gegenüber seinen Untergebenen, die ihm treu sind. Es geht um die gegenseitige Treuepflicht im auslaufenden Mittelalter, die Lehnsherrschaft. Das Treuegelöbnis ist im Militär nicht einseitig, sondern es ist wechselseitig.

MSE: Das Lehenssystem.

MJH: Ja, und auch das militärische System ist nicht nur eine Hierarchie, sondern es gibt gegenseitige Verpflichtungen. Der gemeine Mann muss sich auf seinen Leutnant verlassen können, auf seine Treue, seine Gerechtigkeit, seine Zuverlässigkeit, seine Verantwortlichkeit. Das ist auch in der amerikanischen Armee so. Wie umgekehrt, der Offizier muss sich auf den gemeinen Mann absolut verlassen können, dass er die Befehle genau ausführt und so weiter. Wir sind in Deutschland heute so weit, dass wir Lessings große Komödie Minna von Barnhelm nicht mehr verstehen, weil die Menschen im Punkte Offizierssehre, woran dieser Mann Tellheim krankt, nicht begreifen, weil sie irgendeinen Quatsch gehört haben, dass Soldaten Mörder sind. Dabei bleiben sie stehen, weil es so bequem ist, anstatt die soldatische Ehre und soldatischen Codex historisch genau anzuschauen.

MSE: Das war einer der Drehpunkte in Wallenstein.

MJH: Ja, und dann unabdingbar. Da gibts keinen Ausweg mehr. Buttler ist nicht nur der Gegner, sondern auch der Sterbeengel. Beides zusammen zu kriegen, dicht zu kriegen, das heißt dem toten Schiller die schillersche Poetik zurückzugeben und zu sagen: Danke. Dankbarkeit - auch so ein Punkt für uns alle, dankbar zu sein.

MSE: Herr Holtz, ich bin Ihnen sehr dankbar, dass Sie mir ihre Gedanken darüber mitgeteilt haben, was Theater machen kann, wenn es gut gelingt.



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BENEDICTION / PROLOGUE
SUNG TO THE TUNE OF
POSITIVELY 4TH STREET

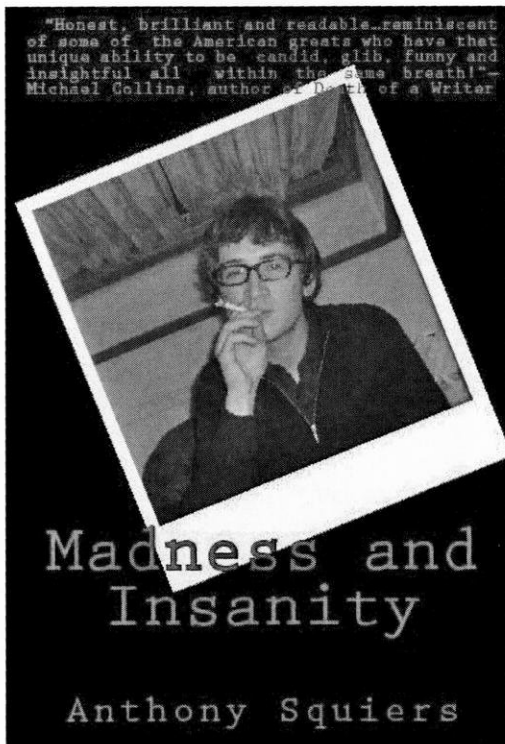
ANTHONY SQUIERS FIRST CAME
TO OUR ATTENTION WITH A
FASCINATING
REVIEW OF A
VIDEOCENTRIC PRODUCTION
OF MOTHER COURAGE
AT WESTERN MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY (CIBS 38 2009).

LITTLE DID WE KNOW WHAT A TALENT HAD
BEEN DELIVERED TO OUR DOORSTEP.

A PUBLISHED
NOVELIST,
MADNESS AND INSANITY: IRISH EYE PUB-
LISHING, 2009,
HE IS CURRENTLY WORKING
ON HIS PHD IN
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY
AND CONTINUING TO
PURSUE THE BRECHTIAN

DRAMATIS PERSONAE:
CIBS 40

MARKER FELT FONT
ANTHONY SQUIERS
LUCIDA HANDWRITING FONT



WE SUPPOSE THAT YOU DID NOT COME OUT OF THE BLACK FOREST LIKE BB, BUT
GIVE US YOUR BEST VERSION OF "VOM ARMEN BB" IN REGARD TO YOUR OWN
LIFE. YOU ARE A PUBLISHED NOVELIST, CURRENTLY WORKING ON NEW FICTION PROJECTS
AS YOU PURSUE A PHD IN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY. PLEASE, RE-PRESENT TO US / SELF-
FASHION YOURSELF TO US, IN VERSE IF YOU LIKE, A FEW OF THE LANDMARKS OF YOUR
LIFE UP TO THIS MOMENT.

I GREW UP IN A PROVINCIAL TOWN IN SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN. I WENT TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND LIVED A PETIT-BOURGEOIS EXISTENCE. I RECEIVED A BA IN POLITICAL SCIENCE IN THE DOMINICAN TRADITION AT AQUINAS COLLEGE AND THEN STUDIED IN THE UK. I ATTENDED THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER AND THE UNIVERSITY OF WALES, ABERYSTWYTH. I RECEIVED A MA IN POLITICS FROM THE FORMER AND THEN I DECIDED TO WRITE A NOVEL. THE RESULT WAS THE AFOREMENTIONED MADNESS AND INSANITY.

AS YOU POINTED OUT, I AM CURRENTLY FINISHING MY PHD AT WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY. THE TITLE OF MY DISSERTATION: "THE SOCIAL/POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF BERTOLT BRECHT." I CONSIDER MYSELF A WRITER AND ACADEMIC THOUGH I DON'T RECOGNIZE THERE BEING ANY DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TWO. I COMPOSE WRITTEN WORD IN SCHOLARLY FORM AND CREATIVE FORM BUT SEE THIS AS SIMPLY CONSTITUTING TWO APPROACHES TO

ANTHONY
SQUIERS

KALAMAZOO /
USA; HELSINKI /
FINLAND

PHONE:
MARCH 3, 2011

TEXT:
JULY 22, 2011

THE SAME PROJECT—THE DISSEMINATION OF IDEAS TO FACILITATE A CRITICAL DISCOURSE. NORMATIVELY, I SEEK SOCIAL CHANGE. THIS IS WHY, FOR ME, BRECHT IS SUCH A GOOD STUDY.

WHAT IS YOUR ORIGIN STORY CONCERNING BRECHT? HOW DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER HIS WORK AND IDEAS? WHAT DID BRECHT DO FOR YOU IN TERMS OF YOUR INTELLECTUAL ECONOMY?

I DISCOVERED BRECHT PERHAPS A BIT DIFFERENTLY THAN MOST. OF COURSE, I KNEW SOMEWHAT OF BRECHT THROUGH BOBBY DARREN AND THE DOORS AND I HAD SEEN GEORG PABST'S 1931 FILM VERSION OF THE THREEPENNY OPERA. MY UNDERSTANDING OF BRECHT, AT THE TIME, WAS OF A POLITICAL PROPAGANDIST. BUT, AFTER WATCHING THE MOVIE IN 2007 WITH RUDOLF SIEBERT, THE HEGELIAN THEOLOGIAN AND CRITICAL THEORIST AND A SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION, WITH HIM, I BEGAN TO REALIZE THAT BRECHT WAS MUCH DEEPER THAN THAT. I BEGAN TO GET A SENSE THAT BRECHT WOULD MAKE AN INTERESTING STUDY FROM A SOCIAL/POLITICAL PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE. WITH THIS VAGUE NOTION I BEGAN TO DIG INTO THE EXTANT LITERATURE ON BRECHT. MOST BRECHT SCHOLARS COME FROM LITERARY OR THEATRICAL BACKGROUNDS. THEIR RESEARCH, THEREFORE, REFLECTED THE INTERESTS OF THESE DISCIPLINES AND PRIMARILY SOUGHT TO SPEAK TO THE LITERATURES IN THOSE RESPECTIVE FIELDS.

AS A CONSEQUENCE, MUCH OF THE SCHOLARSHIP ON BRECHT HAS TAKEN A FORMALISTIC APPROACH AND DID NOT SEEK TO ANSWER THE TYPES OF QUESTIONS I WAS INTERESTED IN. I DID, HOWEVER, FIND ENOUGH PHILOSOPHICAL WORK (E.G. BENJAMIN, JAMESON, LUKÁCS OESMANN, BARTHES, ARENDT, ETC.) WHERE I FELT I COULD SPEAK TO A SPECIFIC LITERATURE. THIS WORK, HOWEVER, ONLY ADDRESSES ELEMENTS OF BRECHT'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY IN A PIECE-MEAL FASHION. I FOUND NO ATTEMPT TO TOTALIZE HIS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY. MY PROJECT IS THEN TO BEGIN BRINGING BRECHT'S THOUGHT INTO A COHERENT PHILOSOPHICAL WHOLE. IN THIS REGARD, IT IS HOPED THAT MY WORK THEN WILL SERVE BOTH AS A MODEL FOR THE STUDY OF BRECHT AS PHILOSOPHER AND AS A STARTING POINT FOR THE DISCOURSE. GIVEN THE IMMENSE UNDERTAKING OF THIS PROJECT MY WORK PRIMARILY FOCUSES ON BRECHT'S POSITION ON QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL ARRANGEMENT. HOWEVER, GIVEN THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP THESE QUESTIONS HAVE WITH OTHER PHILOSOPHICAL PURSUITS I ALSO EXPLORE QUESTIONS OF ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY, AESTHETICS, ETHICS AND LOGIC.

WHAT'S IN YOUR BRECHTIAN POCKET LIBRARY? WHAT ARE THE KEY TEXTS THAT YOU KEEP ON A SHORT LEASH AND BUST OUT WHEN YOU NEED TO? WHAT BRECHTIAN TEXTS ARE OF MOST USE-VALUE FOR YOU AS AN INTELLECTUAL, WRITER, TEACHER, LOVER?

AS A SCHOLAR I DRAW ON ALL OF BRECHT'S WORKS INCLUDING, ESSAYS, REVIEWS, SHORT-STORIES, NOVELS, POETRY, LETTERS, PLAYS, MOVIE SCRIPTS, JOURNAL ENTRIES AND MUSINGS. SPECIFICALLY, I USE HIS THEORETICAL WRITINGS, FOUND PRIMARILY IN HIS ESSAYS, REVIEWS, JOURNAL ENTRIES, LETTERS, AND MUSINGS AS MY GUIDE IN RECONSTRUCTING HIS SOCIAL/POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY. THROUGH A SEMIOTIC APPROACH, I USE

HIS ARTISTIC WORKS TO REVEAL THE PHILOSOPHICAL TENETS OF HIS THEORETICAL WORKS IN ORDER TO CLARIFY THEM, DEMONSTRATE THEIR MATERIAL APPLICABILITY AND TO MAKE GENERAL CLAIMS REGARDING HIS PRAXIS PHILOSOPHY. ALL TYPES OF WORK ARE CONSIDERED WITH EQUAL WEIGHT BECAUSE AS I ARGUE ELSEWHERE (SQUIERS, 2011) THEY ALL ARE A CONSTITUENT PART OF HIS PRAXIS PHILOSOPHY.

AS A WRITER AND AS A TEACHER I EMPLOY BRECHTIAN ALIENATION TECHNIQUES. FOR EXAMPLE, OFTEN WHILE TEACHING AN INTRODUCTORY LEVEL INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COURSE, I MAKE USE OF THE DISCUSSION BOARD WHICH IS PROVIDED ON THE UNIVERSITY E-LEARNING PROGRAM. DURING A RECENT SEMESTER, I BEGAN THE FIRST TWO DISCUSSION TOPICS BY COPYING AND PASTING NEWS ARTICLES FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS IN THE SPACE PROVIDED FOR THE INSTRUCTOR TO ILLICIT RESPONSES. FOR THE SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION, I PROVIDED MY STUDENTS WITH A JOURNALIST ACCOUNT OF A BIBLICAL PASSAGE THAT I PREPARED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE PURPOSE. IT WENT AS FOLLOWS:

RELIGIOUS BLOODSHED IN NORTHEAST EGYPT LEAVES THOUSANDS DEAD
- CAIRO, EGYPT

A MILITANT CLERIC KNOWN ONLY AS MUSA HAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEATHS OF THOUSANDS IN THE SINAI PENINSULA WHO REFUSED TO FOLLOW HIM AS SUPREME RELIGIOUS LEADER. REPORTS PUT THE NUMBER OF SLAIN BETWEEN THREE AND FIVE THOUSAND IN A SINGLE DAY OF VIOLENCE. THE ATTACKS WERE CARRIED OUT ON AN UNARMED CROWD WHO HAD GATHERED TO CELEBRATE A RELIGIOUS FESTIVAL. EARLIER MUSA CIRCULATED A WARNING NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH RELIGIOUS PRACTICES.

IN A STATEMENT, MUSA SAID, "I DECIDE BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND INFORM THEM OF GOD'S DECREES AND INSTRUCTIONS."

MUSA'S PRIVATE MILITIA, KNOWN AS THE LEVI, ARE SUSPECTED OF CARRYING OUT THE ATTACKS. THIS GROUP HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHER SECTARIAN CLASHES IN THE AREA PREVIOUSLY. DESPITE THE VIOLENCE MUSA'S POPULARITY HAS BEEN INCREASING AND HE IS SAID TO HAVE FOLLOWERS IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES.

THIS STORY IS, OF COURSE AN ADAPTATION OF A STORY FOUND IN THE BOOK OF EXODUS. IN IT, I USE SEVERAL ALIENATION EFFECTS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE ADAPTATION IS WRITTEN IN A TONE THAT TRIES TO EMULATE THAT OF CONTEMPORARY JOURNALISM. THE SENTENCES ARE OF APPROXIMATE WORD LENGTH, THE WORDS ARE AT APPROXIMATE READING LEVEL, A QUOTATION WAS USED AS A REPORTER WOULD USE ONE, A HEADLINE AND PARTIAL DATELINE ARE ADDED, CURRENT VOCABULARY EMPLOYED, ETC.

IN SHORT, IT ATTEMPTS TO MIMIC, AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE, THE STYLE AND FORM THAT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF CONTEMPORARY JOURNALISM. ALSO, THE ADAPTATION PROVIDES A DIFFERENT TEMPORAL CONTEXT FOR THE EVENTS.

THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE USE OF CONTEMPORARY FORM AND LANGUAGE AND THE MEASURES TAKEN TO OBSCURE THE ORIGINAL CONTEXT OF THE STORY (E.G. THE USE OF THE NAME MUSA NOT MOSES). INSTEAD OF TAKING PLACE IN BIBLICAL TIMES THE ADAPTATION APPEAR TO TAKE PLACE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES. ACCORDING TO BRECHT'S THEORY AND WORK DONE IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES, BRECHTIAN ALIENATION EFFECTS SHOULD HAVE HAD IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WAYS THE STUDENTS REACTED TO THE STORY. SPECIFICALLY, I EXPECTED THAT THE STUDENTS WOULD TREAT THE STORY DIFFERENTLY THAN THEY WOULD OTHERWISE, IF THEY HAD KNOWN IT WAS A BIBLICAL STORY AND ANCHORED IT IN THE EVERYDAY, COMMONSENSE, UNCRTICAL, TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED CONTEXT THAT THEY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO. THAT IS, INSTEAD OF EXPECTING THE DEFAULT DEFERENCE TO THE BIBLE TO WHICH THE STUDENTS HAVE LARGELY BEEN SOCIALIZED TO APPROACH IT WITH, I EXPECTED A DETACHED (I.E. ALIENATED) MORE CRITICAL READING OF THE STORY. IN FACT, THE EMPIRICAL RESULTS SUPPORT THE THEORY. THE RESPONSES BY THE STUDENTS INDICATED THE EMERGENCE OF AN UNTYPICAL DISCOURSE ON THE BIBLE AND WHEN THEY FOUND OUT THE STORY WAS ABOUT MOSES, THEY WERE SHOCKED.

IF I WERE FORCED TO PICK SOME TITLES FOR THE "BRECHT POCKET LIBRARY" I WOULD SAY THAT WILLET'S EDITED VOLUME BRECHT ON THEATRE IS, OF COURSE, SEMINAL AND SILBERMAN'S BRECHT ON FILM AND RADIO AND KUHN AND GILES' BRECHT ON ART AND POLITICS AUGMENT THIS NICELY. IN TERMS OF BRECHT'S ARTISTIC WORKS I WOULD INCLUDE MOTHER COURAGE AND THE GOOD PERSON BECAUSE BOTH SERVE AS GOOD EXAMPLES OF EPIC THEATRE AND BOTH SEEM PERPETUALLY RELEVANT. I OFTEN TEACH MOTHER COURAGE IN MY POLITICS CLASSES IN RELATION TO CRITICAL THEORY AND ALSO IN A SECTION ON WAR. I AM ALWAYS HAPPY AT THE ENGAGEMENT THE STUDENTS HAVE WITH THE WORK.

WHITHER THE BRECHT INDUSTRY IN THE FUTURE? HOW DO YOU ASSESS THE STATE OF BRECHT IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICA? IN CURRENT ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP? IS THERE A DIVIDE BETWEEN BRECHT SCHOLARSHIP AND THE BRECHT INDUSTRY? IS THE IBS A FAIR AND NECESSARY MEDIATOR / PROMOTER OF THE BRECHT BRAND? OR, PERHAPS AN INTELLECTUAL MAFIA PIMPING PRODUCT TO INCREASINGLY PROLETARIANIZED PROFESSORS?

ONE CAN TRACE THE ADVENT OF BRECHTIAN SCHOLARSHIP AS A CONSCIOUS, SELF-REFLEXIVE ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE TO A SEMINAR HELD AT THE 1968 MEETING OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION. THAT YEAR THE WORLD'S LEADING BRECHT SCHOLARS MET TO DISCUSS THE CURRENT STATE OF BRECHT RESEARCH. THE MAIN FOCUS OF THAT MEETING WAS ON THE PUBLISHED WORKS OF BRECHT. THE PRIMARY CONCERN WAS TO RAISE THE ISSUE OF WHICH VERSIONS OF BRECHT'S WORK WERE BEING CONSIDERED THE STANDARD VERSIONS. DURING THIS MEETING, HOWEVER, OTHER QUESTIONS WERE RAISED AND A CONSENSUS SOON EMERGED THAT THESE QUESTIONS WARRANTED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SOCIETY DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF BRECHT RESEARCH. THE RESULT WAS THE FORMATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRECHT SOCIETY (FUEGI, 1969).

MOST OF THESE SCHOLARS WERE FROM LITERARY AND THEATRICAL BACK-
 GROUNDS AND OTHERS HAD A BACKGROUND IN TRANSLATION. BECAUSE
 OF THIS, THE DISCIPLINE HAS REMAINED STRONG IN THESE AREAS. SINCE
 BRECHT'S DEATH A WHOLE ACADEMIC INDUSTRY HAS EMERGED ON BOTH
 SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC THAT CONTINUES TO GROW STEADILY. TODAY
 BRECHTIAN SCHOLARSHIP IS BEING PRODUCED NOT ONLY IN EUROPE AND
 THE STATES BUT ALSO IN ALL PARTS OF THE AMERICAS, ASIA AND AFRICA.
 ONE NEED ONLY TO SEARCH FOR BRECHT IN THEIR LIBRARY CATALOGUE
 OR THUMB THROUGH THE VARIOUS PUBLICATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL
 BRECHT SOCIETY TO SEE THAT SERIOUS MINDS HAVE CHOSEN BRECHT (BOTH
 AS MAN AND PHENOMENON) AS THE SUBJECT OF THEIR INQUIRIES AND HAVE
 PRODUCED AN ARRAY OF DIVERSE SCHOLARSHIP. TO MY MIND, MUCH OF
 THIS SCHOLARSHIP HAS FALLEN INTO TWO BROAD CATEGORIES. THE FIRST IS
 LARGELY BIOGRAPHICAL IN NATURE. IN TRUTH MOST OF THIS LITERATURE
 TENDS TO BE HAGIOGRAPHIC THOUGH NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS EXIST (E.G. FU-
 EGI 1994). THE SECOND DEALS WITH THE ENORMOUS CORPUS OF WORK
 THAT BRECHT PRODUCED IN HIS LIFE INCLUDING PLAYS, POETRY, ESSAYS,
 MUSINGS, AND OTHER PROSE. HOWEVER, THIS WORK HAS, BY AND LARGE,
 BEEN FORMALISTIC IN NATURE.

IN SUM, THE STATE OF BRECHTIAN SCHOLARSHIP TODAY IS ROBUST AND
 AT THE SAME TIME, IT SUFFERS FROM A CERTAIN PAUCITY. THERE ARE AR-
 EAS OF BRECHT'S THOUGHT THAT HAVE LARGELY BEEN IGNORED, INCLUDING
 HIS EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS, CONCEPTUALIZATION OF HISTORICAL
 MATERIALISM, PRAXIS PHILOSOPHY, AND SOCIAL ONTOLOGY. FURTHER-
 MORE, BECAUSE OF ITS RELIANCE ON FORMALISTIC APPROACHES MUCH OF
 BRECHTIAN SCHOLARSHIP HAS FAILED TO CRITICALLY ENGAGE WITH MARX-
 ISM. INSTEAD, IT HAS RELIED TOO HEAVILY ON LITERARY THEORY AND LIT-
 ERARY CONCEPTS TO UNDERSTAND HIS THOUGHT. WHILE MOST SCHOLARS
 ACKNOWLEDGE BRECHT'S MARXISM THERE IS LITTLE ANALYSIS OF WHAT THAT
 MARXISM ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE AND WHAT HIS MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO
 MARXISM ARE. THE ONE EXCEPTION TO THIS IS THE SCHOLARSHIP THAT HAS
 GONE INTO HIS CONTRIBUTION TO MARXIST AESTHETICS (E.G. BENJAMIN,
 1973; BLOCH, 2007; JAMESON, 2000; SOLOMON, 1979).

IT IS MY HOPE THAT BY EXAMINING BRECHT THROUGH THE UNDERREPRE-
 SENTED PERSPECTIVE OF "BRECHT THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHER," I WILL HELP
 EXPAND THE PURVIEW OF BRECHTIAN SCHOLARSHIP. THAT IS, I HOPE TO
 FURTHER ENCOURAGE THE FIELD TO BEGIN THOROUGHLY AND SYSTEMATI-
 CALLY EXPLORING BRECHT'S INFLUENCE AND IMPORTANCE BEYOND HIS ROLES
 AS A DRAMATIST AND LITERARY FIGURE.

**WHERE THE UNMASTERABLE PAST MEETS THE AMERICAN DREAM: BRECHT AND THE INTELLECTUAL
 ECONOMY OF THE GERMANY - AMERICA STORY. YOU COME TO BRECHT THROUGH A NON-GER-
 MANISTIC ROUTE, NO? DO YOU SPEAK/WRITE GERMAN, SPEND TIME IN GERMANY, HAVE A KNOWLEDGE OF
 GERMAN HISTORY AND CULTURE? FURTHER, DO YOU SEE BRECHT AS MEDIATING A LARGER DISCOURSE BETWEEN
 GERMANY AND AMERICA?**

I HAVE NO BACKGROUND IN THE GERMAN LANGUAGE. I FIND MYSELF FORTUNATE TO BE ABLE TO UNDERTAKE THIS RESEARCH AT A TIME WHEN MOST OF BRECHT'S MAJOR WORKS HAVE BEEN TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH THROUGH THE METHUEN SERIES AND OTHER PLACES. IN THIS RESPECT, I AM INDEBTED TO THE TRANSLATION EFFORTS OF BENTLEY, CHALMERS, CONSTANTINE, GILES, KUHN, MANHEIM, SILBERMAN AND WILLET. FURTHERMORE, MY WORK HAS PROFITED IMMENSELY FROM THEIR EDITING ABILITIES AS WELL AS THOSE OF HERTA RAMTHUN. MY RESEARCH IS PREDICATED ON THIS SCHOLARSHIP. THE TASK OF RECONSTRUCTING BRECHT'S SOCIAL/POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT THE SORTING AND COMPILATION OF THE COPIOUS WORKS OF BRECHT THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE WOULD BE HERCULEAN IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE. WHILE I AM UNABLE TO SPEAK GERMAN, I DO HAVE A FAIR KNOWLEDGE OF GERMAN CULTURE AND HISTORY. WHILE I AM CERTAINLY NO EXPERT IN THESE FIELDS I HAVE A SOLID BACKGROUND THAT HAS ALLOWED ME TO CONTEXTUALIZE BRECHT'S WORK AND LIFE. FOR EXAMPLE, I AM ABLE TO DISCUSS TO SOME DEGREE BRECHT IN TERMS OF GERMAN AESTHETICS VIS-À-VIS HEGEL, KANT, LESSING, NIETZSCHE, WAGER, ETC. I AM ALSO ABLE TO CONTEXTUALIZE BRECHT THROUGH WORLD AND GERMAN HISTORY AND EVENTS (E.G. THE WORLD WARS, THE DEPRESSION, RISE OF FASCISM, THE COLD WAR, ETC.). THIS ABILITY COMES PRIMARILY THROUGH MY STUDIES OF POLITICS WHERE ONE MUST ACQUAINT ONESELF WITH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL HISTORY.

I HAVE NOT THOUGHT MUCH ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF BRECHT MEDIATING A LARGER DISCOURSE BETWEEN GERMANY AND AMERICA. HOWEVER, I HAVE NO DOUBT THIS WOULD BE THE CASE. ONE WAY THIS COULD BE DONE WOULD BE TO PLACE BRECHT'S AESTHETIC (AS YOU DO) IN WHAT YOU REFER TO AS LESSING'S "CRITICAL AESTHETIC TRADITION," WHICH YOU DEFINE AS A "SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION OF THE AESTHETIC-ANTHROPOLOGICAL REALM OF PERFORMANCE COMBINED WITH NEW WAYS OF SEEING PERFORMANCE" (ROESSLER, 2008, 307). THIS DIALECTICAL TRADITION FACILITATES SOCIAL SELF-REFLECTION AND OFFERS A MEANS OF SOCIAL META-CRITIQUE. SOME QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THIS WOULD BE, FOR EXAMPLE, "WHY DID SUCH A SELF-CRITICAL AESTHETIC DEVELOP IN GERMANY BUT FACE SUCH OPPOSITION IN AMERICA?" AND "WHAT IS REVEALED WHEN THIS DRAMATURGICAL TRADITION IS APPLIED TO THE TEXTS OF AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS?" I ANTICIPATE ALL SORTS OF INTERESTING AND TELLING THINGS WOULD BE REVEALED. I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR SUCH A DISCOURSE.

BRECHT AS MODEL FOR THE WRITER. TO WHAT DEGREE DOES BB INSPIRE YOU OR SERVE AS A MODEL FOR YOU AS A WRITER?

AS WAS MENTIONED EARLIER, I FREQUENTLY USE ALIENATION EFFECTS IN MY WRITING. BRECHT'S POETRY HAS ALSO BEEN INFLUENTIAL. HIS POETRY THAT I FIND MOST IMPRESSIVE ARE THE PIECES THAT POETIZE PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS - "ON THE CRITICAL ATTITUDE" JUMPS TO MIND FIRST. LIKE BRECHT, A GOOD PORTION OF MY POETRY ATTEMPTS TO POETIZE PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENTS. THEY CONTAIN A THESIS. RECENTLY, YOU

PUBLISHED A SHORT COLLECTION OF MY POEMS IN THE *ECIBS*. WE CHOSE THESE PARTICULAR POEMS BECAUSE THEY WERE EXAMPLES OF THIS. HOWEVER, I HAVE ALSO LEARNED FROM WHAT I CONSIDER TO BE SOME OF BRECHT'S FAILINGS AS A POET AS WELL. SPECIFICALLY, I BELIEVE THAT SOME OF HIS POEMS HAVE THE TENDENCY OF CRUDE PROPAGANDA. IT IS TOO HEAVY-HANDED AND THUS OFF-PUTTING. "SOLIDARITY SONG" IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THIS. I LIKE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF BRECHT'S MORE SUBTLE POEMS. I FEEL THEY ARE CLEVERER AND HAVE MUCH MORE DIDACTIC POTENTIAL.

BRECHT AS SOCIAL PHILOSOPHER (BRECHT V. PLATO, KANT; BRECHT V. MARX, MAO, LENIN; BRECHT V. BENJAMIN, LUKACS, FRANKFURT SCHOOL). YOU WOULD LIKE TO USE BRECHT AS A PART OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATES THAT ANIMATE HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY WESTERN DISCOURSE. WHY DO YOU THINK BRECHT HAS BEEN KEPT OUT OF THIS DISCOURSE?

AS YOU SAY ELSEWHERE, "AS A DRAMATIST/PHILOSOPHER OF HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS, BRECHT SOMEHOW ALWAYS FALLS BETWEEN THE CRACKS OF THEATRE AND PHILOSOPHY, OF MARX AND THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL..." (ROESSLER, 2006). A THOROUGH REVIEW OF BRECHT'S WORK AND THE LITERATURE ON IT ATTESTS TO THE TRUTH OF THIS STATEMENT. FOR TOO LONG, BRECHT HAS BEEN UNDERSTOOD MORE AS DRAMATIST THAN PHILOSOPHER. THIS IS THE CASE EVEN THOUGH AS BARTHES AND OESMANN SHOW US, PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING CAN BE EXPRESSED AND EXTRACTED FROM HIS LITERARY AND DRAMATIC WORKS. FURTHERMORE, DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF PEOPLE LIKE BRECHT, CAMUS AND SARTRE, THIS IS A FACT THAT IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED BY THOSE STUDYING SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY AND POLITICAL THEORY. NO DOUBT THIS IS DUE, AT LEAST IN PART, TO THE FORMAL DEMARCATIONS ESTABLISHED BETWEEN DISCIPLINES IN PRESENT DAY ACADEMIA. WHILE I MAKE NO NORMATIVE CLAIMS REGARDING THE WAYS DISCIPLINES HAVE BEEN DIVIDED, ONE OF ITS RESULTS IS THAT MANY SOCIAL PHILOSOPHERS DO NOT CONSIDER NARRATIVE WORKS TO BE PART OF THEIR DISCIPLINE. THIS PERSPECTIVE OVERLOOKS THAT MANY OF THE ANCIENT ROOTS OF THE FIELD (AT LEAST IN THE WESTERN ACADEMY) WERE PRESENTED IN NARRATIVE FORM. ARISTOPHANES, HOMER, SOPHOCLES, AND THE BIBLE STAND AS READY EXAMPLES. FURTHERMORE, THIS MINDSET HAS CREATED A SITUATION WHERE THINKERS WITH SIGNIFICANT PHILOSOPHICAL IMPORTANCE ARE NOT PROPERLY BEING ANALYZED FROM A PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK. MANDEVILLE, IBSEN, CHEKOV AND, OF COURSE, BRECHT CAN SURELY BE INCLUDED IN THIS GROUP.

DO WE NEED TO READ / VIEW BRECHT IN A DIFFERENT WAY IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND HIM AS A PHILOSOPHER?

QUITE SIMPLY, YES. WHILE I THINK THERE MAY BE DIFFERENT WAYS OF DOING THIS, I CAN PRESENT MY APPROACH AS ONE POSSIBLE MODEL. FOR EXAMPLE, UNLIKE JAMESON AND OESMANN WHOSE LITERARY STUDIES ON BRECHT MANIFEST MORE AS PHILOSOPHICAL MUSINGS THAN PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS, MY WORK CONSTITUTES A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE WORK AND THOUGHT OF BRECHT. IN THE WORK OF JAMESON AND OESMANN LITERARY THEORY IS INFORMED BY PHILOSOPHY.

THAT IS, THE READINGS HAVE BEEN INFORMED BY VARIOUS PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS AND WORKS, E.G. MARX, ADORNO, BENJAMIN, BARTHES, ETC. THIS MANEUVER ALLOWS THEM TO MAKE INTERESTING AND INSIGHTFUL COMPARISONS ABOUT BRECHT AND OTHERS. THAT IS THE GOAL OF THE WORK AND IT IS ACCOMPLISHED IN ITS TASK. BUT THIS IS NOT THE GOAL OF MY RESEARCH. THE GOAL OF MY RESEARCH IS TO RECONSTRUCT BRECHT'S SOCIAL/POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY. IN ORDER TO DO THIS, MY APPROACH REJECTS THE TRADITIONAL FORMALISTIC APPROACH UNDERTAKEN IN LITERARY STUDIES WHERE THE FORM IS THE OBJECTIVE OF INVESTIGATION. I AM NOT INTERESTED IN EXPLAINING, EXAMINING, COMPARING, ETC. BRECHT'S ARTISTIC FORMS.

INSTEAD, I ANALYZE THE CONSTITUENT PARTS OF THE FORM WITH THE INTENTION OF HIGHLIGHTING WHAT IS SIGNIFIED. IN OTHER WORDS, THIS APPROACH IS SEMIOTIC. IT LOOKS FOR THE UNSTATED MEANING - NOT WHAT IS BEING SAID BUT WHAT IS BEING SIGNIFIED. IN THIS RESPECT, MY WORK IS VERY MUCH INDEBTED TO BARTHES WHO LENDS THE TERMINOLOGY. IN SHORT, THE SIGNIFICATION CONSTITUTES THE OBJECT OF MY INQUIRY NOT THE FORM. THIS IS THE GENERAL APPROACH OF BARTHES AND THE WAY BRECHT HOPED HIS FORM WOULD BE APPLIED. I AM PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN DETERMINING WHAT IS SIGNIFIED ABOUT BRECHT'S SOCIAL ONTOLOGY.

FURTHERMORE, I CONSIDER BRECHT'S FORM AS A CONSTITUENT PART OF HIS SOCIAL/POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY. BECAUSE OF THIS BRECHT'S FORM IS NOT MY PRIMARY OBJECT BUT IS USED SOLELY FOR THE PURPOSES OF REVEALING SOMETHING ABOUT BRECHT'S PHILOSOPHY. THIS IS A KEY POINT AND CONSTITUTES WHAT I SEE AS MY WORK'S KEY CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCIPLINE. BRECHT'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEATRE AND THE ARTS HAVE BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED IN THE LITERATURE AND HE IS WIDELY CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FIGURES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

WHILE HIS IMPACT IN THIS AREA IS UNDENIABLE, WHAT IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED (BECAUSE OF THE AFOREMENTIONED EMPHASIS ON FORM) IS THAT BRECHT WAS AN EQUALLY SERIOUS PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOLAR. AS WOLFGANG HAUG STATES, "BEHIND BRECHT'S WORLD FAME AS A PLAYWRIGHT AND POET IT IS STILL A WIDELY KEPT SECRET THAT HE WAS ONE OF THE MOST OUTSTANDING MARXIST PHILOSOPHERS" (HAUG 1999; 113). MY PURPOSE IS TO PRESENT BRECHT PRIMARILY AS A PHILOSOPHER, IN THE MARXIAN PRAXIS TRADITION, WHO USES ART AS A PARTICULAR FORM OF PRAXIS. SPECIFICALLY, I PLACE BRECHT IN THE DISCIPLINES OF POLITICAL THEORY AND SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY. I EXPLAIN, CLARIFY, RECONSTRUCT AND AT TIMES AUGMENT BRECHT'S SOCIAL/POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

IN THIS ENDEAVOR, I AM TRYING TO WALK A FINE LINE. SPECIFICALLY, IT IS NOT MY INTENTION TO CLAIM THAT MY WORK CONSTITUTES A PERFECT HERMENEUTICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF BRECHT'S THOUGHT, NOR DO I FEEL SUCH AN ERRAND WOULD BE POSSIBLE. I REJECT THE IDEA THAT THERE CAN BE ONE AUTHORITATIVELY CORRECT READING. TO MAKE SUCH A CLAIM

WOULD REQUIRE AN ABSOLUTE, AUTHORITATIVE STANCE ABOUT A THEORIST'S WORK. GIVEN THE NATURE OF HERMENEUTICAL RECONSTRUCTION, I THINK SUCH A CLAIM IS IMPOSSIBLE. FURTHERMORE, BRECHTIAN SCHOLARSHIP HAS BEEN LIMITED BY THESE TYPES OF AXIOMATIC READINGS. INSTEAD OF LOOKING FOR NEW WAYS TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY BRECHT SO MUCH OF THE LITERATURE HAS TAKEN THE CANONICAL WORKS (E.G. ESSLIN, BENTLEY, WILLET, ETC.) AT FACE VALUE. LIKE, JAMESON AND OESMANN, I HOPE TO CHALLENGE SOME OF THE AXIOMS OF BRECHTIAN RESEARCH.

YOU ATTENDED THE RECENT IBS SYMPOSIUM IN HAWAII. COULD YOU GIVE US YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE CONFERENCE AND SOME OF THE SIGNATURE MOMENTS (PREMIERE OF JUDITH OF SHIMODA, 3P0 ON THE ARMY BASE, ETC...) ALSO, MAKE THIS IMAGE WORK FOR US: BRECHT IN A HAWAIIAN SHIRT, SMOKING A CIGAR, SURFING A HUGE WAVE, WITH HIS ARMS AROUND TWO WOMEN ON THE SURFBOARD WITH HIM. THE WOMEN ARE STUNNING PHYSICALLY AND HAVE THE FACES OF HELENE WEIGEL AND THERESE GIEHSE (YES, YOU HAVE TO ANSWER THIS ONE!)

THIS WAS AN OUTSTANDING EVENT THANKS TO MARKUS WESSENDORF AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AND EVERYONE ELSE WHO HAD A HAND IN ORGANIZING AND RUNNING THE CONFERENCE. BOTH THE ACADEMIC AND THE CULTURAL COMPONENTS WERE FIRST CLASS. I WAS ESPECIALLY HAPPY TO CATCH A SUNDAY MATINEE OF THE PREMIERE PRODUCTION OF THE JUDITH OF SHIMODA, WHICH WAS RECONSTRUCTED FROM DRAFTS BY HANS PETER NEUREU AND TRANSLATED BY WESSENDORF. THE PLAY IS BASED ON ANOTHER PLAY BY YAMAMOTO YUZO AND WAS WRITTEN BY BRECHT IN COLLABORATION WITH THE FINNISH PLAYWRIGHT HELLA WUOLIJOKI. BRECHT ALSO COLLABORATED WITH WUOLIJOKI, OF COURSE, ON PUNTILA.

DESPITE THIS, AND A SOLID BODY OF OTHER WORK, WUOLIJOKI REMAINS AN OBSCURE FIGURE HERE IN FINLAND. WHILE CERTAINLY THIS WORK IS NOT ONE OF BRECHT'S FINEST AND ONE STILL HAS A SENSE OF ITS INCOMPLETENESS IT WAS AN INTERESTING AND WORTHWHILE STUDY OF BRECHT. IT WAS LIKE WATCHING A THEATRICAL DEMONSTRATION OF HIS FAMOUS "STREET SCENE" ESSAY AND IT ALSO WAS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF HOW BRECHT DREW FROM THE STYLES AND TRADITIONS OF THE EAST. I ALSO FELT THAT THE PRODUCTION WAS GOOD.

AS FOR MAKING YOUR IMAGE WORK, I WILL TRY MY BEST:

BRECHT IN WAIKIKI

BRECHT WAS FROM
 THE BLACK FOREST.
 BUT, I FOUND HIM ONE DAY,
 SUNNING HIMSELF,
 ON THE WHITE SHORES
 OF WAIKIKI.

HIS SKIN WAS INSIPID

BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN
DEAD FOR SO LONG;
AND MANY DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM
LAYING THERE
GAUNT AND SMOKING.

HE WAS TALKING ABOUT
GLOBAL WARMING,
BANK FAILURES,
UNEMPLOYMENT,
OIL,
AND WAR.

HE TOOK AN UMBRELLA IN HIS ARMS,
CRADLED IT LIKE A RIFLE
AND SHOWED US
WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
WHEN AN ARAB
IS KILLED.

BUT THEN HE SMILED,
BECAUSE SMOKING IS ALLOWED
STILL,
ON THE BEACH;
AND HE PADDED OUT
ON LONG BOARD
JOINING FRAU WEIGEL
AND

FRAU GIEHSE — STRAIGHT FROM
A RITTNER PORTRAIT,
INTO THE SURF.

THOUGH HE DIDN'T CARE
FOR SHARKS,
INTO THE SHARK
HAUNTED WATERS
HERR BRECHT WENT,
WITH SURF BOARD,
TO JOIN THOSE LADIES.
BECAUSE,
AS YOU KNOW
HE WAS A GREAT FAN
OF BOTH WOMEN AND SPORT
AND OF
LIFE,
FOR THAT MATTER.

THE IBS SYMPOSIUM (BRECHT & MAO). YOU PRESENTED ON THIS TOPIC AT THE CONFERENCE. HOW DID IT GO? DID THE SESSION WORK? WILL WE SEE THE MATERIAL?

I FELT THE SESSION WENT VERY WELL. I PRESENTED WITH JOE DIAL AND FRIEDEMANN WEIDAUER (WHO BOTH GAVE EXCELLENT PAPERS) AND THE PANEL WAS WELL ATTENDED. ALTHOUGH MY WORK CHALLENGED SOME OF THE CONVENTIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF BRECHT, I ENCOUNTERED NO RESISTANCE BECAUSE OF IT. THIS, AS WELL AS THE CONTENT OF THIS PUBLICATION OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, INDICATES TO ME THAT THE DISCIPLINE IS WILLING AND WANTS TO TAKE BRECHT TO NEW PLACES.

FURTHERMORE, I RECENTLY PRESENTED AT THE MARXIST LITERARY GROUP'S 2011 INSTITUTE ON CULTURE AND SOCIETY. THE MARXIST LITERARY GROUP EMERGED OUT OF THE 1968 MLA CONFERENCE IN NEW YORK. THE KEY FIGURE IN ITS FOUNDATION WAS FREDRIC JAMESON WHO WANTED TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MARXIST THEORY OF LITERATURE. THE INSTITUTE ON CULTURE AND SOCIETY IS AN ANNUAL FORUM DEDICATED TO THE CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF MARXIST IDEAS. ALL SUBMISSIONS ARE WELCOMED IF THE PROPOSED PAPER ENGAGES SERIOUSLY WITH MARXIST THOUGHT, THOUGH A SPECIAL EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON THE WAYS MARXIST THOUGHT INTERACTS WITH LITERATURE AND FILM. MANY OF THE TOP MARXIST LITERARY CRITICS ATTENDED INCLUDING MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE BARBARY FOLEY, WHO PROVIDED ME WITH GREAT FEEDBACK. I PRESENTED A PAPER ON BRECHT'S SOCIAL ONTOLOGY AND I WAS SURPRISED BY THE ATTENTION MY PAPER RECEIVED. MANY WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT BRECHT.

OF COURSE, THEY WERE ALL FAMILIAR WITH BRECHT THROUGH JAMESON'S AESTHETICS AND POLITICS; AND BRECHT ON THEATRE BUT GENERALLY NOT MUCH ELSE. I WAS PLEASED AND ENCOURAGED THAT THE GROUP WAS RECEPTIVE OF MY WORK. THE PAPERS THAT I PRESENTED AT THESE CONFERENCES ARE CURRENTLY IN SUBMISSION. I ANTICIPATE THEY WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON AND, OF COURSE, I WOULD BE HAPPY TO SHARE THEM WITH ANYONE WHO IS INTERESTED, BEFORE THEY ARE PUBLISHED.

REVISITING BRECHT AT WESTERN MICHIGAN. YOU WROTE AN INTERESTING REVIEW OF A VERY DIFFERENT PRODUCTION OF MC AT WESTERN MICHIGAN. LOOKING BACK, WHAT STILL RESONATES WITH YOU IN REGARD TO THIS PRODUCTION?

I THINK IT WOULD HAVE TO BE THE SETS AND COSTUMES. THEY WERE ALIENATING AND STRIKING AND GROTESQUE AND COMPELLING. MOST OF THE ACTORS, I THINK, HAD A HARD TIME GRASPING THE CONCEPT OF A-EFFECT AND HOW TO USE IT IN THEIR ACTING, THOUGH. THEY WERE JUST NOT USED TO IT AND THAT WAS EVIDENT. I STILL THINK THAT THE CREATION OF THE VIDEO GAME WAS A CLEVER MOVE.

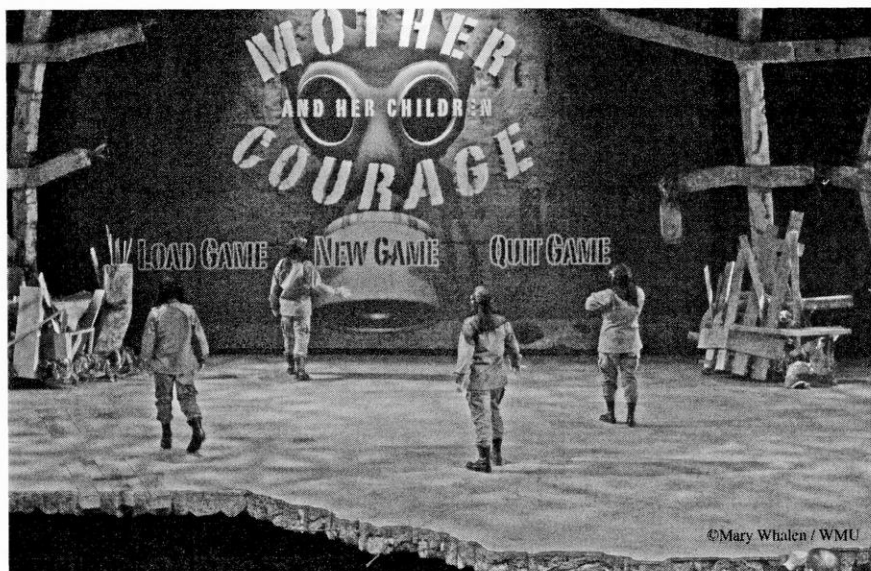
ALTHOUGH, IN RETROSPECT, I'M NOT CONFIDENT THAT IT HAD ALIENATING EFFECTS. IT SEEMS THAT PORTRAYING TORTURE AND WAR IN THIS WAY IS TOO COMMONPLACE THESE DAYS AND ONE DEFAULTS TO A POSITION OF ENGROSSED SUSPENDED DISBELIEF WHEN ENCOUNTERING IT. THERE IS A SUBDUED, UNCRITICAL MINDSET THAT PEOPLE TAKE WHEN THEY PLAY VIDEO GAMES. THEY BECOME WRAPPED UP IN THE EMOTION OF THE CHARACTER BECAUSE THEY ARE CONTROLLING THE CHARACTER. THE CHARACTER THEN

BECOMES A VEHICLE FOR THE PLAYER'S EMOTION. IT HAS NO EMOTION OF ITS OWN. EMPATHY IS, THUS, MORE PRONOUNCED IN VIDEO GAMES THAN IN ARISTOTELIAN DRAMA. THERE IS NO ROOM FOR ANY SEPARATION OF THE EMOTION OF CHARACTER AND PLAYER. THEY ARE ENTIRELY LINKED AND THEY ARE THE SAME. THIS IS WHY PEOPLE GET SO INTO VIDEO GAMES.

IN ORDER FOR A VIDEO GAME TO WORK AS AN A-EFFECT, A-EFFECTS WOULD FIRST NEED TO BE INTRODUCED INTO THE GAME ITSELF. THAT BEING SAID, I STILL MAINTAIN THE PERFORMANCE WAS LARGELY A SUCCESS AND I WAS GLAD TO SEE IT PERFORMED IN KALAMAZOO, WHICH IS NOT GENERALLY AS LIBERAL AS BERKLEY, ANN ARBOR, OR MADISON.

BRECHT'S *THE WEDDING IN CHICAGO*. YOUR REVIEW OF THIS PRODUCTION IS IN THE CURRENT EDITION. SO, GIVE US THE ALTERNATIVE REVIEW OF THE PRODUCTION. WHAT DID YOU REPRESS THE FIRST TIME AROUND? LET IT ALL HANG OUT NOW!

MY REVIEW WAS PROBABLY AS HONEST AS I COULD HAVE MADE IT. ALTHOUGH, PERHAPS I COULD HAVE STRESSED THE MUSICAL TALENT OF THE CAST A BIT MORE. AFTER THE PERFORMANCE, I WAS INVITED TO THE CAST PARTY AT TUTA'S REHEARSAL STUDIO. THERE, WE DRANK AND PARTIED UNTIL THE EARLY MORNING. THE WHOLE TIME THE CAST WAS PLAYING MUSIC - PLAYING TOGETHER, PLAYING INSTRUMENTALS, FEATURING VARIOUS VOICES, ETC. THIS WAS ALL INFORMAL AND AD HOC. THEY WERE NOT PERFORMING FOR ANYONE. THEY WERE JUST HAVING FUN; BUT IT WAS VERY REVEALING. NOT ONLY DID THEY SHOW HOW GOOD THEY WERE INDIVIDUALLY, BUT THEY ALSO HAD FANTASTIC ABILITY TO READ AND RESPOND TO WHAT THE OTHERS WERE DOING. THIS TAKES A LOT OF WHAT OAKESHOTT REFERS TO AS "PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE" - A KNOWLEDGE THAT CAN ONLY BE ACQUIRED THROUGH PRAXIS AND CANNOT BE FORMULATED INTO RULES. THIS IS ONE OF THE BIG ADVANTAGES, AS I SEE IT, FOR A THEATRE TO MAINTAIN



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ITS OWN ENSEMBLE.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD? IS BEING A WRITER FIRST AND AN ACADEMIC SECOND A SUSTAINABLE CAREER? IS IT THE FUTURE FOR THE BRECHTIAN IN THE RAPIDLY DEGENERATING EDIFICE OF THE HUMANISTIC UNIVERSITY?

I'M NOT SURE IF IT IS. IDEALLY, I WOULD FIND A PATRON - MY OWN ENGELS. WHETHER OR NOT I AM ABLE TO PRIMARILY SUSTAIN MYSELF THROUGH MY CREATIVE ENDEAVORS IS YET TO BE SEEN THOUGH I'VE BEEN ABLE TO DO SO, SO FAR. REGARDLESS, I DON'T THINK THAT THE FUTURE FOR THE BRECHTIAN IS BLEAK IN THIS "RAPIDLY DEGENERATING EDIFICE OF THE HUMANISTIC UNIVERSITY"—THOUGH I THINK YOUR DEPICTION IS ACCURATE. ON THE CONTRARY, I THINK THAT THE FUTURE FOR BRECHTIANS, IN ACADEMIA, IS A GOOD ONE. THE HUMANITIES ARE ENJOYING A RENAISSANCE IN THE ACADEMY BECAUSE OF THE EMPHASIS BEING PLACED ON INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND MIXED METHODOLOGIES.

I SEE SEVERAL ADVANTAGES TO CONDUCTING INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH ON LITERARY FIGURES. SINCE LITERATURE IS GENERALLY LESS ESOTERIC THAN SCHOLARLY WRITINGS IT ALLOWS FOR A WIDER DISCOURSE TO DEVELOP. FOR EXAMPLE, PSYCHOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, POLITICAL, MORALISTIC, ETHICAL, EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL THEMES ARE OFTEN EXPRESSED IN A SINGLE WORK OR ARE DEALT WITH DURING THE COURSE OF A LITERARY CAREER.

BRECHT SEEMS AN ESPECIALLY LIKELY CANDIDATE TO ELICIT A WIDE DISCOURSE. NOT ONLY DO HIS LITERARY WORKS EXPLORE THE AFOREMENTIONED THEMES AND MORE, BRECHT WAS ALSO MANY THINGS BESIDES A PLAYWRIGHT AND POET. BRECHT WAS ALSO ONE OF THE PREMIER MARXIST AESTHETIC THINKERS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, HE WAS AN ACCOMPLISHED DIRECTOR AND SONGWRITER, WE WROTE ON SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY, POLITICS, ART AND ECONOMICS, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION, ETC. SINCE BRECHT PLAYED ALL OF THESE ROLES AND STANDS AT THE CROSS SECTION OF SO MANY DISCIPLES, THROUGH HIM WE ARE ABLE TO BRING TOGETHER DIVERSE DISCOURSES IN WAYS WE OTHERWISE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO.

FURTHERMORE, IT IS FAIR TO ASK WHAT WE GET AS SCHOLARS AND PHILOSOPHERS FROM BRECHT THAT WE DO NOT GET FROM OTHERS LIKE BENJAMIN OR ADORNO OR ANYONE ELSE. WHILE CERTAINLY BRECHT WAS CLOSE IN MANY ASPECTS OF HIS THINKING TO THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL, ESPECIALLY BENJAMIN, I OFFER TWO ANSWERS.

FIRST, HE PRESENTED ONE OF THE MOST (IF NOT THE MOST) COMPLEX AND THOROUGHLY DEVELOPED MARXIAN PHILOSOPHIES OF PRAXIS. HIS THEATRE WAS A LARGE-SCALE SOCIAL EXPERIMENT WHICH SOUGHT TO FACILITATE THE ADVENT OF RADICAL POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE. IT WAS ALSO AN EXPERIMENT THAT WAS CONSTANTLY ADAPTING FOR EFFECTIVENESS AND ONE WHICH EXTENDED THROUGHOUT SOCIETY - REACHING THE WORKERS THEMSELVES. GRAMSCI AND MARCUSE SPOKE OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND ADORNO OF CONSTANT CRITICISM OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM.

WHILE ALL THREE OF THESE CRITICAL THEORISTS ADVOCATED FOR A PRAXIS

ELEMENT TO THEIR PHILOSOPHY IN ORDER TO CHANGE THE CONDITIONS OF THE MATERIAL LIFE-WORLD, THEIR PRAXIS RARELY IF EVER LEFT THE REALM OF METAPHYSICS! IN BRECHT'S PRAXIS, SETS WERE BUILT, LIGHTS SHONE, INSTRUMENTS WERE PLAYED, SONGS WERE SUNG, DANCES WERE DANCED, GESTUS WERE SHOWN, MATERIAL CONDITIONS WERE EXPOSED IN RECOGNIZABLE WAYS, THEATRES WERE FILLED, MINDS WERE ENGAGED IN MATERIAL WAYS. FURTHERMORE, IT WAS A PRAXIS PHILOSOPHY MORE DEEPLY ROOTED IN NOTIONS OF HUMAN PSYCHOLOGY THAN THAT OF GRAMSCI, MARCUSE, ADORNO, ETC.

SECOND, I BELIEVE BRECHT WAS UNRIVALED IN HIS ABILITY TO PORTRAY SOCIAL CONTRADICTION IN A REALISTIC AND ACCESSIBLE WAY. BRECHT WAS SO DEFT AT THIS THAT HIS PLAYS IN PARTICULAR SERVE AS A SORT OF SOURCE OF EMPIRICAL DATA FOR HIS AUDIENCE. WHILE OF COURSE, OTHER CRITICAL THEORIST EXPOSE SOCIAL CONTRADICTION THEY ARE ABLE TO DO THIS ONLY BY ABSTRACTING THEM. THAT IS, THEY ARE ABLE TO DO SO ONLY BY MEANS OF RATIONALIZATION, IN THAT THEY INTERPRET FROM A RATIONAL STANDPOINT AND PRESENT THE ABSTRACTED INTERPRETATION. BRECHT, ON THE OTHER HAND, DOES NOT ABSTRACT.

QUITE SIMPLY HE EXPOSES, DEMONSTRATES, SHOWS, ETC. SOCIAL CONTRADICTION IN A MANNER THAT IS OBVIOUS TO THE AUDIENCE. THIS ALLOWS THE AUDIENCE TO THEN INTERPRET FROM A RATIONAL STANDPOINT FOR THEMSELVES. ADMITTEDLY THE DISTINCTION IS SLIGHT. HOWEVER, IT IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. FOR BRECHT AND THE OTHER PRAXIS THEORISTS I MENTION THE IDEA IS TO BRING ABOUT A NEW WAY OF THINKING, UNDERSTANDING, INTERPRETING THE WORLD. IN A WORD, THE GOAL IS TO ALTER CONSCIOUSNESS. WHAT GRAMSCI, ADORNO, MARCUSE, EVEN LUKÁCS, ETC OFFERED IN THIS REGARD WAS THE PROPER CONCLUSIONS FOR THIS NEW WAY OF THINKING. THAT IS, THEY PROVIDED ANSWERS. WHAT BRECHT ATTEMPTED WAS NOT TO PROVIDE ANSWERS BUT TO PROVIDE THE NEW WAY OF THINKING SO THAT PEOPLE COULD COME TO THEIR OWN CONCLUSION.

LAST WORDS – LEAVE THE READERS WITH A BRECHTIAN HAPPY ENDING. NO PRESSURE.

TODAY,
I SAW A WOMAN TAKING A SHIT,
IN THE PARK,
IN FRONT OF MY HOUSE.

"WHY IS SHE TAKING A SHIT
THERE?"
I REMARKED TO MY GIRLFRIEND,
BUT SHE HAD
NO ANSWER.

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INTERSECTIONS:
GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM &
THE AMERICAN AVANT GARDE

GROUP MOTION DANCE COMPANY

PHILADELPHIA / USA
DECEMBER 22, 2011

I'M WITH MANFRED FISHBECK AT THE GROUP MOTION OFFICES AT THE CEC ON LANCASTER AVENUE IN PHILADELPHIA ON WHAT FEELS LIKE A BALMY SPRING DAY, AND WE'RE TALKING ABOUT HIS PART IN GROUP MOTION DANCE TROUPE AND WORKSHOP, WHICH STARTED IN BERLIN AS GROUP MOTION BERLIN.

GRUPPE MOTION BERLIN, YES. I ACTUALLY CAME TO THE GRUPPE LATER. THE GRUPPE WAS FOUNDED AS AN OUTGROWTH OF MARY WIGMAN'S SCHOOL IN 1962. AT THAT POINT I WAS AT THE FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN WHERE I STUDIED LITERATURE AND WAS PART OF AN INDEPENDENT THEATER GROUP WITH THE NAME OF

"KARUSSELL", LATER CALLED "PROVISORISCHES THEATER" THAT A FRIEND OF MINE, RÜDIGER TUCHEL, HAD CREATED. THE PROVISORISHES THEATER BROUGHT THE VERY FIRST BRECHT PRODUCTION TO WEST BERLIN AFTER A BOYCOTT OF I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY YEARS. BRECHT WAS NOT PERMITTED TO BE PLAYED IN THE WEST, NOT BECAUSE OF THE WESTERN GOVERNMENT OR REGULATIONS, BUT THE BRECHT PEOPLE DID NOT WANT BRECHT TO BE PLAYED BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T THINK

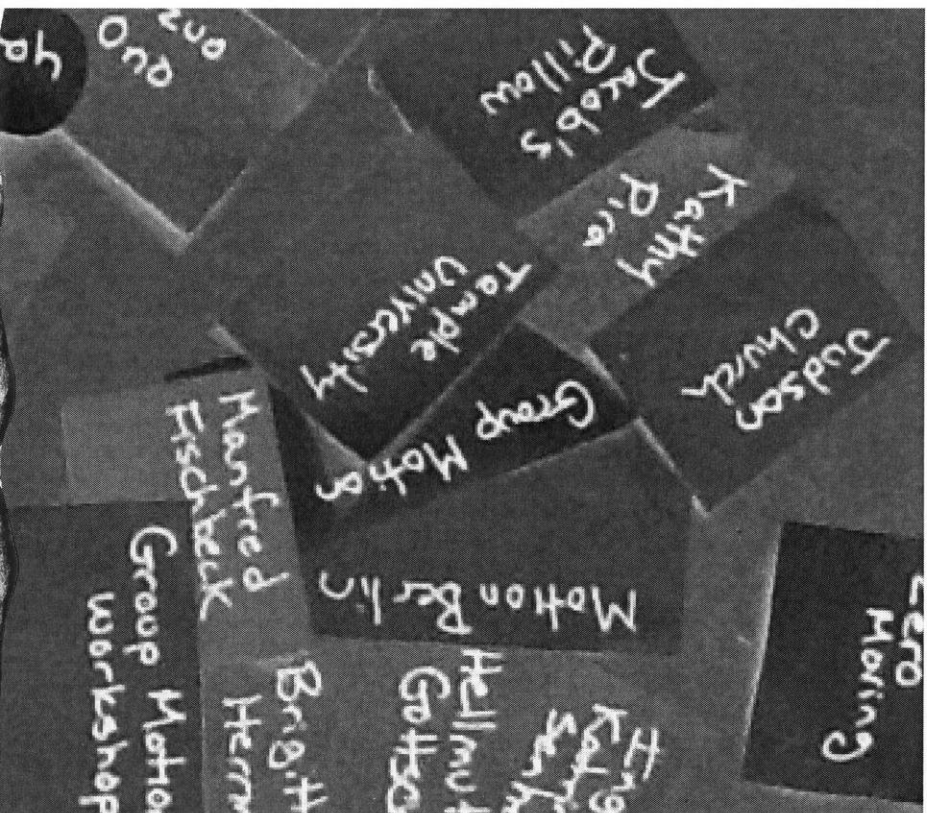


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MY FRIENDS AND I WERE VERY INTERESTED IN EARLY BRECHT PLAYS, AND WE WANTED TO STAGE IN THE JUNGLE OF CITIES. SO WE WENT OVER TO EAST BERLIN TO THE BERLINER ENSEMBLE AND TALKED TO HELENE WEIGEL AND ELISABETH HAUPTMANN. BRECHT WAS DEAD AT THAT TIME ALREADY. THEY WERE THE TWO PEOPLE WHO WERE IN CHARGE OF THE NACHLASS. AND SO A FRIEND OF MINE AND I WENT TO VISIT THEM AT THE THEATER, AND WE TOLD THEM WHAT WE WANTED TO DO. I THINK THEY WERE RESPONSIVE TO OUR OPENNESS. WE WERE PASSIONATE AND DETERMINED, BUT ALSO HUMBLE, AND THEY GAVE US AN "OK." [LAUGHS]. I THINK THEY WERE ALSO JUST READY TO MAKE THAT CONNECTION. WE HAD TO GO TO THE WEST GERMAN PUBLISHER, AS WELL, TO WORK IT OUT WITH THEM, BUT EVENTUALLY WE WENT AHEAD AND STAGED THIS PLAY. AND THAT'S THE PLAY THAT BROKE THE BOYCOTT. ELISABETH HAUPTMANN AND HELENE WEIGEL CAME OVER AND SAW THE PERFORMANCE IN WEST BERLIN. SO IT WAS A HISTORIC EVENT. IT WAS IN DECEMBER '64 / JANUARY '65 THAT WE STAGED THIS.

WAS THE PLAY WELL RECEIVED?
YEAH! IT WAS! IT WAS NOT

YEAH! IT WAS. IT WAS NOT A SENSATIONAL SUCCESS, BUT IT WAS WELL RECEIVED. IT WAS ALSO AN EARLY BRECHT, WHICH IS NOT THE POLITICAL BRECHT. BAAL AND IM DICKICHT DER STÄDTE WERE THE EARLY BRECHT PLAYS THAT REALLY WERE MORE IN THE EXPRESSIONISM MODE STILL. AND THEN WE ALSO STAGED INGEBOURG BACHMANN'S THE GOOD GOD OF MANHATTAN, A RADIO PLAY THAT WE



ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE IN A VERY MOVEMENT-DRIVEN, INNOVATIVE STAGING. LATER ON I WORKED WITH VOLKER SCHÖNDORFF, THE DIRECTOR OF THE TIN DRUM. I WAS IN ONE OF HIS FILMS, MORD UND TORSCHLAG [A DEGREE OF MURDER, WITH A SOUNDTRACK BY BRIAN JONES, 1967]. I WAS A LEAD ACTOR THERE AS FRITZ; ALSO THERE WAS PETER HALLWACHS AS GUNTHER, AND ANITA PALLENBERG AS MARIE. AND AS AN OUTCOME OF THE FILM, I WORKED WITH PETER ZADEK

IN A MAJOR ROLE AT THE FREIE VOLKSBÜHNE IN GERETTET [SAVED] BY EDWARD BOND. BUT ALL OF

THESE THINGS WERE HAPPENING WHEN I WAS ALREADY SET ON ENGAGING IN DANCE.

WERE YOU INVOLVED IN THEATER AS A CHILD, AS WELL?

NO, I DIDN'T GET INVOLVED

IN THE- AFTER UNTIL MY COLLEGE DAYS IN WEST BERLIN. I GREW UP IN EAST GERMANY, AND I WAS TRAINED RATHER INTENSIVELY IN VIOLIN, PIANO, AND CHOIR FROM THE AGE OF SIX UNTIL I WAS THIRTEEN. AFTER THAT I PURSUED PIANO PLAYING ON MY OWN, MOSTLY IMPROVISATION.

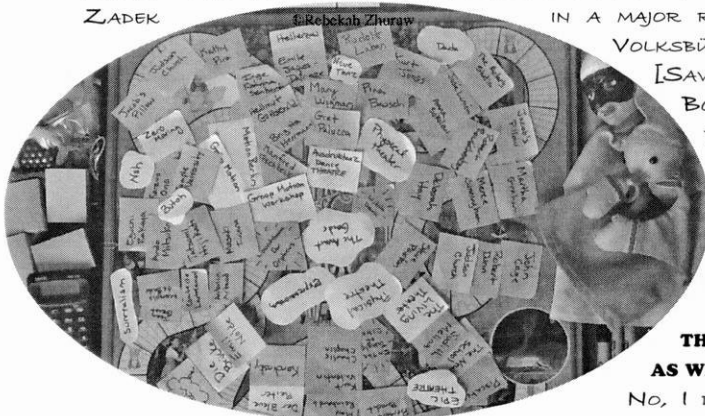
IN TERMS OF THEATER ITSELF, I HAD A VERY POWERFUL EXPERIENCE WITH A STAGING OF A KAFKA TEXT, A REPORT TO AN ACADEMY IN 1962, BY A VERY AMAZING ACTOR WHO WAS PROBABLY THE PRIME ACTOR IN BERLIN AT THE TIME, KLAUS KAMMER. IN IT, A FORMER APE WHO HAS BECOME A HUMAN BEING HOLDS A REPORT TO THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCE TALKING ABOUT HIS PROCESS. THE WAY IT WAS STAGED AND EMBODIED WAS OPENING FOR ME THE IDEA OF PHYSICAL THEATER. KAMMER WAS NOT JUST A PERSON ON A STAGE. HE TURNED THIS ROLE INTO A "DANCE," THE WAY IT WAS STAGED AND PERFORMED WITH SUCH PHYSICALITY. I ACTUALLY WENT TO HIM AND ASKED IF I COULD BE HIS STUDENT ONE NIGHT, BUT HE SAID HE WASN'T TEACHING, AND HE PASSED ME ONTO HIS TEACHER. I TOOK ONE LESSON, BUT COULD NOT CONTINUE. IT WAS TOO EXPENSIVE FOR ME.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH IN THE JUNGLE OF CITIES WAS AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME WHEN YOU JOINED GRUPPE MOTION BERLIN.

YES, THAT'S RIGHT. I HAD BEEN COMING IN JUST AS A FRIEND AND HAD ASSISTED IN MAKING THE MUSIC PIECE FOR A PERFORMANCE. THEN I TRAVELED WITH THE GROUP AS A STAGE MANAGER TO ZAGREB IN 1965. IT WAS THERE WHEN BRIGITTA HERRMANN AND I BECAME CLOSE. WHEN SOME MONTHS LATER GRUPPE MOTION EMBARKED ON A LARGER, MULTI-MEDIA THEATER PROJECT CALLED COUNTDOWN FOR ORPHEUS, I CAME ON BOARD AS A DRAMATURGE, FILMMAKER, AND WRITER. I HAD APPLIED TO THE FILM ACADEMY IN BERLIN, AND I WAS ACCEPTED, AND HAD JUST STARTED TO MAKE SMALL FILMS.

SO YOU NEVER ATTENDED THE MARY WIGMAN SCHOOL WITH THE OTHER GROUP MOTION FOUNDERS?

RIGHT. I VISITED THE SCHOOL AND SAW MARY WIGMAN TEACH ONCE, AND OF



COURSE I WATCHED MY GRUPPE MOTION FRIENDS. PLUS I TOOK SOME MIME CLASSES WITH ONE OF THE TEACHERS. WHEN I TOOK UP DANCE LATER, BRIGITTA AND HELMUT GOTTSCHILD WERE MY TEACHERS, ESPECIALLY BRIGITTA. SHE'S A VERY GOOD TECHNIQUE TEACHER.

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO DANCE THEN?

I HAD REALLY BEGUN TO SEE THE THEATER OF MOVEMENT AND THE LANGUAGE OF MOVEMENT IN THEATER AS BECOMING MORE AND MORE INTERESTING FOR ME. BRIGITTA AND I HAD EXPERIENCED THE LIVING THEATER STAGING OF AN IMPROVISATIONAL MOVEMENT PIECE, MYSTERIES, AND THAT WAS SPARKING OFF A WHOLE NEW WAY OF THINKING FOR BOTH OF US. IT WAS MOVEMENT THAT WAS COMMUNICATION, AND IT HAD A VERY DISTINCT IMPROVISATIONAL STRUCTURE. THE MOVEMENT WAS NOT SIMPLY PRESENTED TO THE AUDIENCE. IT WAS AN INTERACTIVE, INTERNAL, MOVEMENT-LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PERFORMERS. THAT'S WHAT HIT ME AS THE MOST IMPORTANT EXPERIENCE THERE. WE ALSO SAW PARADISE NOW! ALTOGETHER I FELT THAT MOVEMENT WAS A POWERFUL LANGUAGE THAT I NEEDED TO LEARN TO SPEAK. SOMEHOW WITH JUST TRADITIONAL ACTING I DIDN'T FEEL FULLY ALIVE ON STAGE. THERE WASN'T ENOUGH MOVEMENT FOR ME. AT LEAST THEN THE THEATER WAS NOT YET AS INFUSED WITH MOVEMENT AS SOME OF IT MIGHT BE TODAY.

ALSO, THE STUDENT REVOLUTION HAD STARTED IN BERLIN, AND WE REALLY BEGAN TO THINK OF HOW THINGS NEEDED TO BE CHANGED. IN THE BEGINNING WE WERE ALIGNED WITH THE PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS AND WE HAD A LOT OF FRIENDS IN THE MOVEMENT. IT SEEMED LIKE WE BEAT OUR HEADS AGAINST THE WALL AND CREATED A CONFLICT AND BATTLES OF WORDS, AND SOMETIMES VIOLENT REACTIONS, BUT IT DIDN'T REALLY SHOW ANY POSSIBILITY FOR REAL PRODUCTIVE CHANGE. IN THAT PARTICULAR SITUATION, I EXPERIENCED DANCE AS A LANGUAGE, AND TO ME IT WAS MUCH MORE REVOLUTIONARY. I BEGAN TO SEE DANCE AS ACTUAL HUMAN INTERACTION, NOT JUST AS THIS ESOTERIC ART FORM, THIS ELITIST KIND OF THING.

THE LANGUAGE OF MOVEMENT, THE LANGUAGE OF DANCE AND WHAT AND HOW IT COMMUNICATED WAS WHAT REALLY ATTRACTED ME. I FOUND IT A MORE HONEST LANGUAGE. YOU HAVE TO REALLY THINK ABOUT WHERE WE WERE AND THE TIME PERIOD: COLD WAR GERMANY. THERE WAS A LOT OF CONFLICT FOR US WITH OUR CULTURE'S AND OUR PARENTS' GENERATION'S PAST, EVEN WITH OUR OWN LANGUAGE - AND I WAS A WRITER. THE GERMAN LANGUAGE HAD THIS GLORIOUS, WONDERFUL POETIC TRADITION THAT I STUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY, BUT IT ALSO HAD THIS HORRIFIC, CORRUPTIVE EXPERIENCE OF THE NAZI ERA WHERE THE LANGUAGE WAS DISTORTED AND ABUSED IN WAYS THAT WE HAD DIFFICULTY HEARING, LISTENING TO CERTAIN WORDS AND CERTAIN WAYS OF SPEAKING. SO THE LANGUAGE BECAME FOR ME DIFFICULT, EVEN THOUGH I KEPT ON WRITING. TO A LARGE PART IT SEEMED CORRUPT. WE HAD A POET'S CIRCLE IN WHICH WE READ, BUT I DIDN'T PUBLISH UNTIL LATER IN SPURTS HERE IN AMERICA.

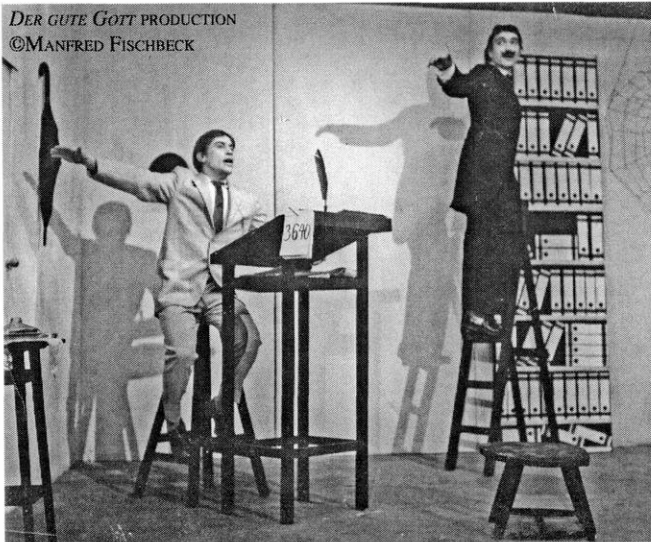
GROUP MOTION, EVEN THOUGH IT CAME OUT OF THE MARY WIGMAN SCHOOL, BEGAN TO DEVELOP ITS OWN STYLE AND LANGUAGE OF CHOREOGRAPHY THAT MOVED AWAY FROM THE PURE EXPRESSIONIST TRADITION. IT SET ITSELF APART AS MORE ABSTRACT, PURE MOVEMENT WORK RATHER THAN CONTINUING WITH THE IDEA OF EXPRESSIONISM IN THE WAY THAT MARY WIGMAN DEFINED IT OR CREATED IT.

SO WHAT DID GROUP MOTION TAKE FROM MARY WIGMAN?

FIRST OF ALL, MARY WIGMAN'S WORK WAS VERY STRONGLY BASED IN IMPROVISATION. TECHNIQUE WAS TAUGHT VERY DIFFERENTLY THAN WHAT WE KNOW HERE

IN AMERICAN MODERN DANCE. SHE DID NOT ADHERE TO A STRICT TECHNIQUE LIKE MARTHA GRAHAM OR MERCE CUNNINGHAM. SHE TAUGHT APPROACHES TO DANCE, QUALITIES OF DANCE, VERY BASIC. IN A WAY THEY ARE TECHNIQUES, BUT NOT TECHNIQUES, NOT STEPS SO MUCH AS QUALITIES OF EXPRESSION.

DER GUTE GOIT PRODUCTION
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SHE SEEMED TO BE INTERESTED IN THINGS SHE MIGHT CALL "PRIMAL."

YES, AND WITH THAT, FOR INSTANCE SHE WOULD TEACH A WHOLE CLASS ON SWINGING OR TURNING - THE WHOLE CLASS! AND SO YOU WOULD REALLY GET INTO DEPTH WITH THAT PARTICULAR QUALITY AND THE ASPECT OF BREATH AND MOVING FROM THE BREATH AND THE ASPECT OF SPACE. THIS GROUP MOTION TOOK FROM HER VERY CLEARLY. SPACE WAS SOMETHING THAT MARY WIGMAN REALLY

DISCOVERED AND WORKED WITH IN A DIFFERENT WAY THAN MOST OTHER MODERN CHOREOGRAPHERS. SHE REALLY TRANSFORMED SPACE WITH THE DANCE. THE SPACE CHANGED AND WAS CREATED THROUGH THE DANCE, RATHER THAN THE DANCE TAKING PLACE IN THE SPACE. MARY WIGMAN'S STYLE TRANSFORMED THE STAGE: IT BECAME SPACE. A VERY SIMPLE EXAMPLE - WHEN YOU TAKE THE IDEA OF TURNING, HER WAY OF TURNING WAS THIS - (DEMONSTRATES A TURN WITH ARMS OPEN AND EYES FOLLOWING THE ROOM AS HE TURNS) - NO SPOTTING. THE FOCUS DID NOT STAY IN ONE PLACE, AND SO THAT MOVEMENT CREATES THE ROUND SPACE, WHILE TURNING WHILE SPOTTING IS MORE IN SPACE.

SPOTTING REQUIRES TURNING IN A MORE LINEAR WAY.

YES, USING SPACE TO MARK A PROGRESSION RATHER THAN MAKING SPACE. AND OF COURSE HER BIG MOVEMENT-CHORUS CREATIONS ARE ALSO ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF TRULY TRANSFORMING THE SPACE. FROM MY PERSPECTIVE, THIS IDEA OF SPACE, BREATH AND DANCE BECOMING THE LANGUAGE - NOT SPEAKING ABOUT SOMETHING, BUT BECOMING WHATEVER IT SAYS, BEING WHAT IT IS - THOSE ARE THE THINGS GROUP MOTION TOOK VERY CLEARLY FROM MARY WIGMAN.

AND WHERE DID GROUP MOTION MORE CLEARLY DIVERGE FROM THAT TRADITION?

STARTING WITH ORPHEUS, AND THEN CONTINUING WITH OUR WORK HERE IN AMERICA, THE MULTI-MEDIA DANCE-THEATER FRAME WAS SOMETHING THAT WE PIONEERED, EVEN THOUGH THERE WERE OTHER MULTI-MEDIA DANCE-THEATER EXAMPLES, ESPECIALLY IN AMERICA. BUT IN GERMANY AT THE TIME IT DIDN'T REALLY EXIST YET.

ALSO, WE BROUGHT EXPRESSIONISM'S MYTHICAL AND ARCHETYPAL THEMES INTO THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS. WITH THE SOCIAL-POLITICAL REVOLU-

tion in Berlin, the communal idea was getting very strong, and the Living Theater demonstrated to us the power of that kind of work, politically and intellectually, as well as artistically and aesthetically. And so the idea of group consciousness - group collective creation - communal art, so to speak, was born there. And that's really what drove Group Motion and still does.

In Berlin, Merce Cunningham was also an influence, his abstract transparency. The pieces were not dramatically expressing one particular thing, but were kind of leaving space for life. His work also involved improvisation through the "by chance" aspect.

SO TELL ME MORE ABOUT COUNTDOWN FOR ORPHEUS, THE DEFINITIVE PIECE THROUGH WHICH GROUP MOTION TRANSFORMED FROM DANCE TROUPE TO DANCE THEATER.

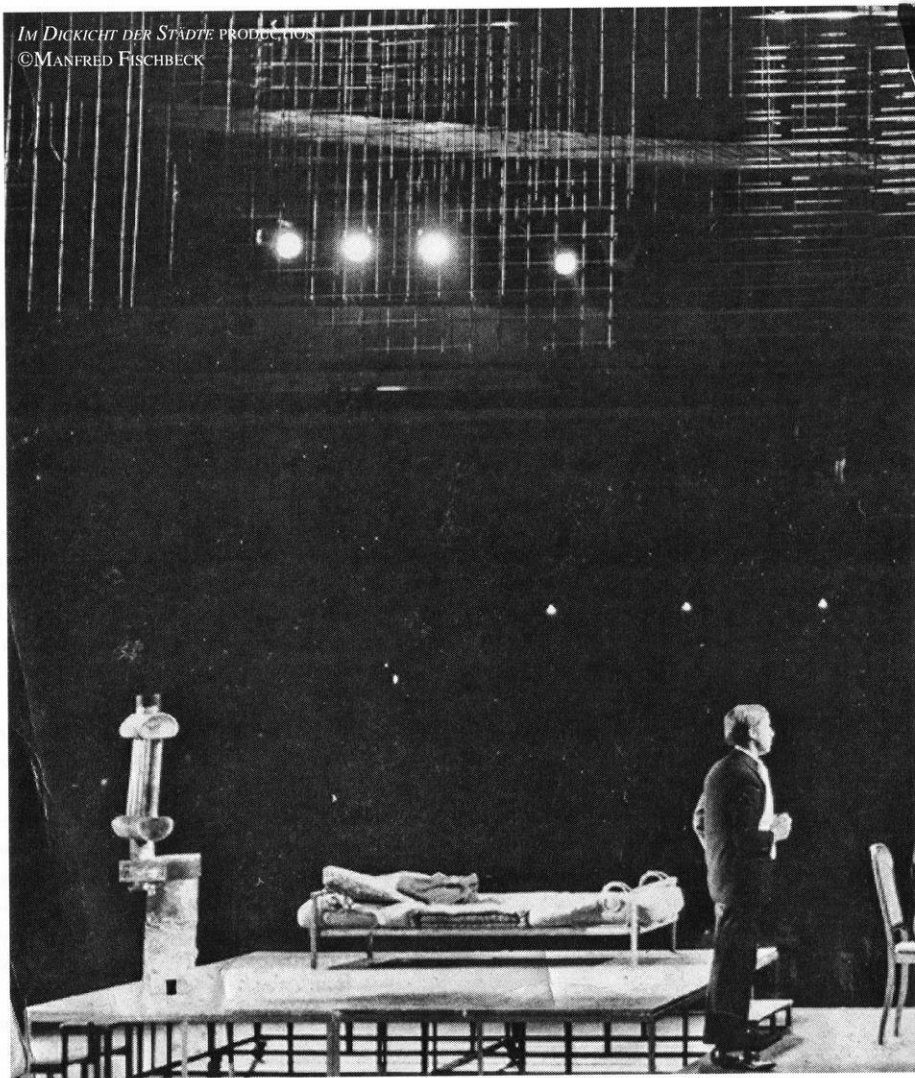
COUNT DOWN FOR ORPHEUS IS A MULTI-MEDIA DANCE-THEATER PIECE, SUPERIMPOSING THE FRAMES OF A COUNTDOWN FOR A SPACE FLIGHT OVER THE AWAKENING FROM DREAMING. IT INTENDS TO RE-TELL THE MYTH OF ORPHEUS AS THE PROCESS OF A SHIFT FROM THE ARTIST'S INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS TO THE COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS, FROM AN INDIVIDUAL TO A COLLECTIVE CREATION. WE DID ONE PERFORMANCE IN BERLIN OF ORPHEUS AT THE AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE, AND ACTUALLY IT WASN'T A BIG SUCCESS AT ALL [LAUGHS], PARTIALLY BECAUSE IT WAS NEW, AND WE MIGHT HAVE OVERLOADED IT WITH COMPLEXITY. BUT IT WAS DEFINITELY CLEARLY A NEW VISION. MARY WIGMAN WAS IN THE AUDIENCE WITH DANIEL NAGRIN. HELMUT TOLD ME THAT MARY WIGMAN DIDN'T REALLY LIKE IT, BUT DANIEL NAGRIN DID [LAUGHS].

SO IT'S 1968. YOU ARE 28. BRIGITTA AND HELMUT COME TO PHILADELPHIA, AND YOU SOON FOLLOW, JOINING THE DANCE TROUPE THAT WOULD BECOME, IN AMERICA, GROUP MOTION.

YES. KATHY PIRA, WHO TAUGHT IN THE TEMPLE UNIVERSITY THEATER DEPARTMENT AND HAD BEEN PART OF THE ORPHEUS PRODUCTION IN BERLIN THOUGHT OUR WORK WOULD BE OF INTEREST HERE. RIGHT AWAY WE GOT BUSY PUTTING TOGETHER THIS PICK-UP GROUP TO RESTAGE THE PIECE AND PERFORMED OUR DEBUT PRODUCTION OF COUNTDOWN TO ORPHEUS IN THE UNITED STATES AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY IN 1968. THEN WE TOOK IT TO JUDSON CHURCH IN NEW YORK CITY AND JACOB'S PILLOW IN MASSACHUSETTS.

WE WERE IDENTIFIED RIGHT AWAY BY OTHER POSTMODERN DANCERS, AND REVIEWS BY DEBORAH JOWITT AND ANNA KISSELGOFF GAVE US STRONG RECOGNITION. ONE OF THE LINES FROM ONE OF THOSE REVIEWS SAID, "GROUP MOTION HAS HOLD OF AN EXCEPTIONALLY INTERESTING IDEA: THAT OF ORGANIC GROUP MOVEMENT." ANOTHER WAS: "GROUP MOTION PUTS HOT MOVEMENT IN COOL CONTEXTS." WHEN I HAPPENED TO RUN INTO ANNA KISSELGOFF TWENTY YEARS LATER, SHE STILL REMEMBERED THAT PERFORMANCE. SHE SAID THAT ONE THING ABOUT IT THAT WAS UNUSUAL WAS THE USE OF THE UNDULATING UPPER BODY, WHICH WAS AT THAT TIME IN AMERICAN MODERN DANCE NOT REALLY DONE. WE WERE DEFINITELY PERCEIVED AS A VERY FORWARD MOVING, CREATIVE, AND UNIQUE COMPANY IN NEW YORK. IN PHILADELPHIA, WE WERE FOR A MOMENT THE ONLY MODERN DANCE COMPANY! [LAUGHS]. BUT WE HAD A STRONG RESPONSE AUDIENCE-WISE, AND I THINK A LOT OF IT HAD TO DO WITH THE VITALITY OF WHAT WE WERE DOING, THE PHYSICALITY, ALSO THE MULTI-MEDIA ASPECT.

IM DICKICHT DER STÄDTE PRODUCTION
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HOW HAS GROUP MOTION CHANGED AND DEVELOPED IN AMERICA?

THE FIRST TWO YEARS WE WORKED WITH DANCERS THAT WERE ALL TRAINED. THEN WHEN HELMUT BROKE OFF TO FOUND THE ZERO MOVING COMPANY, BRIGITTA AND I CONTINUED GROUP MOTION TOGETHER, AND WE DECIDED WE WANTED A LESS PRE-FORMULATED AND MORE ORIGINAL EXPRESSIVENESS, SO WE BEGAN TO WORK WITH LARGE GROUPS OF NON-DANCERS, MOSTLY COMING FROM THE VISUAL ARTS. WE PURSUED THIS DIRECTION OF LARGER CHORAL WORKS, ALWAYS WITH SOME TRAINED DANCERS AMONGST THEM, FOR TWO OR THREE YEARS. THEN WE WENT BACK TO THE IDEA OF REALLY STRONGLY TRAINED DANCERS IN THE MID-1970S.

AND WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE TO GO BACK IN THAT DIRECTION?

I THINK IT WAS JUST OUR OWN EVOLUTION OF AESTHETIC NEEDS. ONE THING WAS THE SIZE OF THE GROUP CHANGED FROM TEN OR TWENTY TO FIVE OR SIX.



So in order to get the same dynamic effect without having a full chorus, you needed people who had greater control of their movements, not merely expressive, but more definitively performative?

Yes, exactly.

Was this kind of fluctuation happening in general in dance at the time?

Yes, definitely. One example is Deborah Hay. I recently had the privilege to meet her and actually work with her. Deborah Hay was one of the Judson Church artists also. She was part of the Merce Cunningham Company. Then she went into a phase where she made large group circle dances - very far away from the very formal Cunningham stuff - and then she went to a farm in Vermont and kind of disappeared for a while. Steve Paxton, the Contact Dance founder, was there also, and other innovative artists such as Robert Rauschenberg. After that she went to Austin, Texas and totally

withdrew from the "professional" scene and worked with the people. Now she's back to working with highly specialized professionals from all over the world, including Baryshnikov and William Forsythe. So there was a time when I think some of the post-modern dance artists just needed to get in touch with pedestrian movements and non-dancers to get closer to life in order to find new and authentic movement language.

Group Motion has been in a sense the hub of the Philadelphia dance scene.

Well, we've worked with just about everyone who is dancing here in the city. Really it's like everybody has passed through Group Motion at one point. But it's not only that. We have always worked creatively

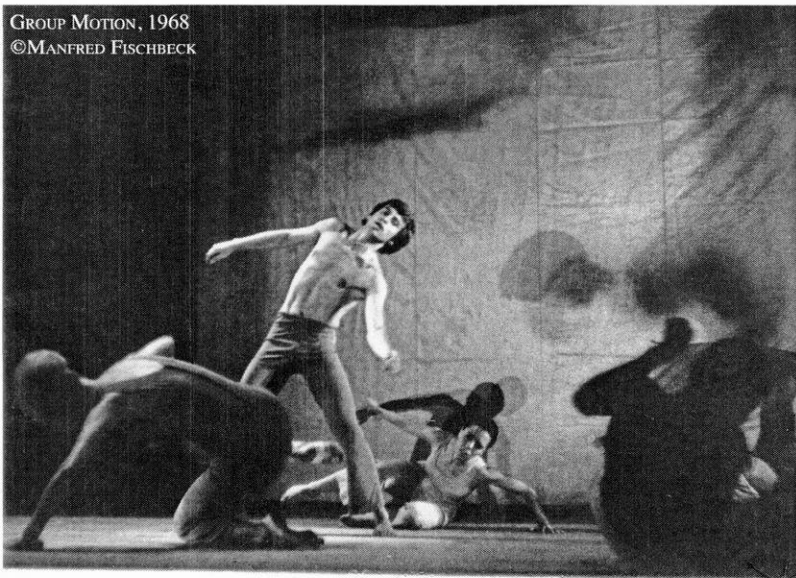
WITH ALL OF THE DANCERS, NOT JUST USED THEM FOR OUR OWN PURPOSES, BUT COLLABORATED AND DONE A LOT OF IMPROVISATIONAL AND COLLECTIVE CREATIVE WORK, AND THAT HAS FORMED A LOT OF CONNECTIONS. WE'VE ALSO BROUGHT IN INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS FROM THE GLOBAL AVANT-GARDE TO PHILADELPHIA WHOM PHILADELPHIA HAD NEVER SEEN BEFORE, DANCERS WHO'VE ALL HAD MARY WIGMAN IN THEIR BACKGROUND SUCH AS CAROL BROWN, AKIKO KITAMURA, AND OSCAR ARAIZ. AND THIS CONNECTION HAS ENABLED US TO TOUR INTERNATIONALLY IN JAPAN, ARGENTINA, TAIWAN, FRANCE, ENGLAND, CYPRUS, POLAND, AND OF COURSE GERMANY. IN FACT, IN 1998 OR SO GROUP MOTION WAS INVITED TO CREATE A PIECE IN HELLERAU, WHERE MARY WIGMAN STARTED OUT.

HAVE ANY SUCH COLLABORATIONS DISTINCTLY AFFECTED GROUP MOTION'S EVOLUTION?

DEFINITELY THE BUTOH WORK WITH MASAKI IWANA. WE BROUGHT HIM HERE THE FIRST TIME IN THE LATE-1980S.

BUTOH'S ORIGINS IN A WAY HAVE A COMMONALITY WITH GROUP MOTION'S, COMING INTO BEING IN JAPAN IN THE WAKE OF WORLD WAR II AND STUDENT RIOTS. AND OF COURSE OHNO KAZUO STUDIED WITH EGUCHI RAKAYA WHO HAD STUDIED WITH MARY WIGMAN, AND HIJIKATA TATSUMI STUDIED WITH

GROUP MOTION, 1968
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EGUCHI'S STUDENT, ANDO MITSUKO, THROUGH WHOM HE MET OHNO AND IT WAS THROUGH THEIR MEETING THAT BUTOH WAS BORN. HOW DID GROUP MOTION RECONNECT WITH THIS OTHER OFFSHOOT OF THE MARY WIGMAN TRADITION?

WELL, IT'S VERY INTERESTING. ONE OF THE FORMER FOUNDERS OF GRUPPE MOTION BERLIN, INGE KATARINA SEHNERT, STAYED IN GERMANY. SHE HAD BEEN WORKING WITH MASAKI IWANA IN GERMANY, AND WHEN I WAS VISITING HER SHE TOLD ME ABOUT HIM. THEN I WENT TO SEE A PERFORMANCE OF HIS IN PARIS AND SOON AFTERWARDS BROUGHT HIM HERE, FIRST JUST FOR A PERFORMANCE AND A WORKSHOP. THEN THE NEXT TIME WE WERE FUNDED TO GO TO FRANCE AND WORK WITH HIM THERE, AND THEN HE CAME BACK ANOTHER TIME TO SET ANOTHER PIECE

HERE IN PHILADELPHIA.

WHAT WAS IT ABOUT HIS WORK THAT EXCITED YOU?

THE BEINGNESS OF BUTOH. IT'S TOTAL EXISTENCE. BEING, NOT SHOWING. THERE IS A SYNTHESIS OF LIFE AND ART IN BUTOH. WITH BUTOH, EXPRESSIONISM BECOMES NOT EXPRESSING SOMETHING, BUT IT IS EXPRESSION. THROUGH OUR OWN IMPROVISATIONAL WORK, WE CAME TO THAT POINT OF APPRECIATING THE ALIVENESS AND IN-THE-MOMENT-NESS OF THINGS, AND THERE'S NOTHING MORE IN THE MOMENT THAN BUTOH. YOU CAN'T NOT BE IN THE MOMENT WHEN YOU WORK WITH BUTOH.

THAT WAS QUITE CLEAR IN IWANA'S PERFORMANCE PRESENTED BY GROUP MOTION IN SEPTEMBER. WHAT STRUCK ME WAS HOW HE COULD BE BOTH DEATHLY GROTESQUE AND TREMENDOUSLY, UNEXPECTEDLY FUNNY. BUTOH'S SURREALISM BREAKS DOWN NOT ONLY TABOOS, BUT EVERY SECOND OF EVERY MOMENT, THE IMPERCEPTIBLE PASSAGE OF TIME, WITH AN INCREDIBLE BODILY CONTROL TO SORT OF MELT INTO FORM.

IT OPENS THE PARAMETERS OF TIME AND SPACE. A CONSCIOUSNESS IS BROUGHT INTO THE MOVEMENT AND A DIMENSIONALITY. IT'S A JOURNEY - OF COURSE THE QUESTION ALWAYS IS, IS IT AS MUCH A JOURNEY FOR THE AUDIENCE AS IT IS FOR THE PERFORMER? WE DIDN'T EVER MAKE A BUTOH PIECE, BUT OUR MOST RECENT PIECE, BASED ON THE FAIRY TALE-LIKE ART BOOK ON THE HOLOCAUST, SCHWARZER TOD BY QUINTAN ANA WIKSWO, MADE MANIFEST MANY ASPECTS OF BUTOH. IN THAT PIECE THERE ARE NO "STEPS," JUST AN ORGANIC EVOLUTION OF MOVEMENT. THE DANCE MERGES WITH THE IMAGE OR IDEA IT REPRESENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, FOR A LONG TIME THREE OF THE DANCERS JUST ROLL FROM SIDE TO SIDE, MANIFESTING A STREAM OF WATER.

THAT REMINDS ME OF ANOTHER THING THAT STRUCK ME ABOUT THE BUTOH PERFORMANCE IN SEPTEMBER: WHEN MOENO WAKAMUTSU'S HAIR BECAME LIKE WATER FLOWING OVER HER HANDS, AND THEN AS SHE CRADLED IT, IT BECAME A BABY... AND THEN IT WAS JUST HAIR AGAIN. IT WAS LIKE WATCHING MATTER AND ENERGY FLOW BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN EACH OTHER.

EXACTLY.

YOU SAY GROUP MOTION'S INNOVATIVE STYLE WAS APPLAUDED HERE, YET, THEATRICALY SPEAKING, THE THEATER SCENE IN PHILADELPHIA IS QUITE...

CONVENTIONAL?

[LAUGHS].

YES. [LAUGHS] IS IT THE SAME WITH THE DANCE SCENE, AND HOW DOES THAT AFFECT YOUR WORK?

THAT'S A VERY INTERESTING QUESTION. IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE TO COMPARE US TO, AND PEOPLE JUST CAME. IT WAS THE 1960S - I MEAN WE HAD 200 PEOPLE INVOLVED IN AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION IN ONE PIECE! AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

GROUP MOTION, 1969

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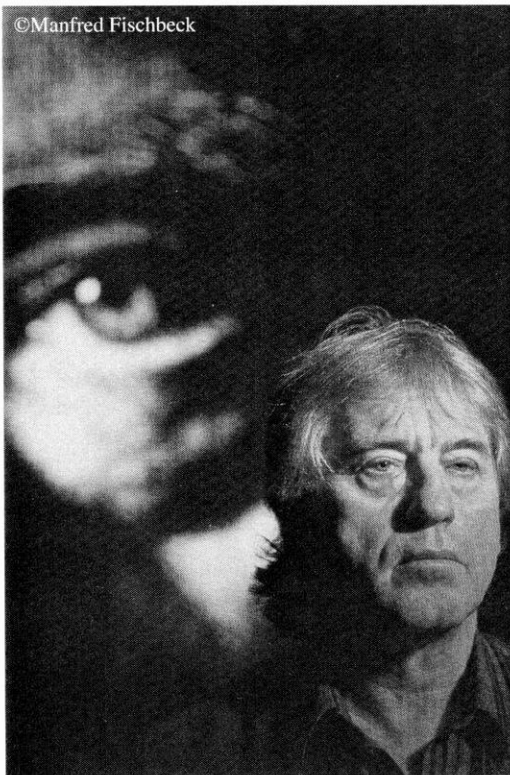


NIA ANNENBERG CENTER / ZELLERBACH THEATER, WE DECLARED THE THEATER TO BE A SPACE SHIP, AND WE ASKED THE AUDIENCE AT THE END TO WALK OUT IN SLOW MOTION [LAUGHS], WHICH THEY DID! UNTHINKABLE TODAY IN A WAY. THERE WAS A CERTAIN PURER PERCEPTION OF IT. AND THEN THINGS BUTTONED UP IN THE 1980S.

FOR THE OPENING OF THE PHILADELPHIA FESTIVAL IN 1973 [GESTURES TO POSTER FROM FESTIVAL ON WALL], WE WERE ASKED TO DO A LITTLE PREVIEW ALONG WITH OTHER FESTIVAL PARTICIPANTS AT THE FRANKLIN INSTITUTE SCIENCE MUSEUM. WE HAD JUST MADE A PIECE ON THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD WHERE WE WERE DANCING TOPLESS. SO IN THIS FRANKLIN INSTITUTE FESTIVAL OPENING, WITH THE WHOLE CULTURAL ELITE OF PHILADELPHIA GATHERED WITH PARTY HATS ON [LAUGHS], WE COME OUT IN THE NUDE, OR HALF NUDE, AND DANCE A BREATHING DANCE PIECE WITH MUSIC OF PINK FLOYD IN FRONT OF BEN FRANKLIN. AT FIRST IT WAS LIKE A [CAT CALL WHISTLES] KIND OF RESPONSE, AND THEN PEOPLE WERE SORT OF MESMERIZED AND GATHERED TIGHTLY AROUND US AND JUST - THEY TOOK IT IN. THEY WERE JUST THERE WITH IT. AND ONE OF THE ORGANIZERS CAME TO US AND SAID, "THIS IS THE DANCE OF THE FUTURE!"

BUT ALL ALONG THERE WAS ALSO THE OTHER SIDE OF THINGS, THE CONVENTIONAL ONE. IT TOOK A LITTLE WHILE, BUT THINGS HAVE EVOLVED AND OPENED UP DRAMATICALLY TO PROGRESSIVE AND INNOVATIVE WORK IN ALL THE DIFFERENT AND DIVERSE AREAS OF DANCE AND DANCE THEATER. THERE IS A GOOD AMOUNT OF EXCELLENT AND PROGRESSIVE WORK NOW.

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SO THROUGH THE AMBIANCE OF THE 1960S AND 1970S: THE AVANT-GARDE WAS ABLE TO HAVE IT'S WAY!

THAT'S A GOOD WAY TO PUT IT.

LET'S GET TO THE FORMATION OF THE WORKSHOP.

THE WORKSHOP WAS CREATED OUT OF THE INTERACTION OF BOTH DANCE AND MUSIC IMPROVISATION. THE ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD ON A MINI-MOOQ SYNTHESIZER THAT I HAD ACQUIRED AND LEARNED HOW TO PLAY, ALONG WITH VOCAL AND OTHER INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC SET BOTH A MEDITATIVE AND ENERGIZING SOUND SPACE AND THE AMBIENCE FOR AN INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE THAT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THE CREATION AND EVOLUTION OF THE WORKSHOP. SO ALONG WITH THE MOVEMENT STRUCTURE, A VERY SPECIAL MUSICAL STYLE WAS DEVELOPED AND CONTINUES TO EVOLVE.

THE IDEA FOR "DANCE GAMES" WAS SPARKED IN LARGE PART BY THE LIVING THEATER. WHEN WE

WORKED WITH THE FIRST COMPANY, WE STARTED DEVELOPING MORE AND MORE GAME STRUCTURES. AND THEN WHEN WE CHANGED THE COMPANY TO THIS LARGER GROUP OF UNTRAINED DANCERS, WE FOUND THAT THE STRUCTURES THEMSELVES COULD PROVIDE NOT ONLY AN EXPRESSIVE AND COMMUNICATIVE SPONTANEITY, BUT ALSO A CHOREOGRAPHIC IMPACT, ORDER AND FORM. BUT THEN, ALONG WITH THAT EXPERIENCE, WHEN WE WERE ON SOUTH STREET AT OUR FIRST STUDIO DOWNTOWN, 5TH AND SOUTH, WE WERE HAVING A COMPANY REHEARSAL AND IT WAS A SUMMER NIGHT, THE STUDIO WAS ON THE FIRST FLOOR, AND PEOPLE JUST WALKED IN OFF THE STREET. WE WERE DOING AN IMPROVISATION WITH LIVE MUSIC, AND, YOU KNOW, IT WAS THE 1960S: PEOPLE JOINED IN TO DANCE! [LAUGHS].

BRIGITTA, WHO WAS LEADING THE REHEARSAL, BEGAN TO VERBALLY GUIDE THE DANCERS AND THE PEOPLE ON THE FLOOR. AND OUT OF THAT CAME THE IDEA OF MAKING THAT KIND OF GUIDED IMPROVISATIONAL PROCESS AVAILABLE TO ALL PEOPLE, DANCERS AND NON-DANCERS ALIKE, AS AN ONGOING EVENT, WHICH IT HAS CONTINUED TO BE EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT SINCE THEN FOR 45 YEARS UNTIL TODAY AND FROM HERE ON.



PROGRAMMHEFT IM DICKICHT DER STÄDTE

HOW DO POLITICS PLAY THROUGH YOUR AESTHETIC?

I THINK REVOLUTIONIZING HUMAN RELATIONS, COMMUNICATION, AND ALLOWING PEOPLE TO BECOME WHOLE IN THEMSELVES THROUGH THE DANCE IS TRULY POLITICAL. ONE OUTCOME OF THE FRUSTRATION HERE IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION OF THE 1960S/1970S WAS THE IDEA OF STARTING WITH YOURSELF. A LOT OF OUR PIECES RAISE QUESTIONS. THE SECOND PIECE WE DID HERE IN AMERICA, CALLED THE GREAT THEATER OF OKLAHOMA CALLS YOU, WAS ABOUT SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THIS MULTI-CULTURAL PLACE. IT WAS ENCAPSULATED BY A KAFKA EXCERPT FROM AMERIKA, AT THE END OF THE BOOK WHERE THERE IS THIS GREAT THEATER OF OKLAHOMA THAT CALLS EVERYONE TO COME AND BECOME AN ARTIST. SO THAT WAS A VERY STRONG POSTULATE, ALONG WITH THE NEED FOR NEW TRIBAL FORMS OF EXISTENCE.

WHAT'S ATTRACTIVE ABOUT THE WORD "TRIBAL"?

"COMMUNAL" WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS MORE EXISTENTIAL AS A PROTEST AGAINST SOCIETY. TRIBAL INDICATES PEOPLE WITH THE SAME RITUAL, SO TO SPEAK, OR PRACTICE OF COMING TOGETHER IN ORDER TO COMMUNICATE, CELEBRATE, EXPERIENCE, AND THAT IMMEDIATELY ASSOCIATES WITH ARTISTIC FORMS, AND THE RITUAL

ASPECT BECOMES VERY IMPORTANT. "CONTACT IMPROV" OR GABRIELLE ROTH'S "5RHYTHMS" AND EVEN RAVE DANCING ARE OTHER FORMS OF TRIBAL, RITUAL DANCE. WE NEED NEW RITUALS THAT TRANSCEND THE STAGNANT AND EXHAUSTED SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES. I FIND IT VERY, VERY IMPORTANT TO BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS AND CREATE NEW SPACES FOR SPIRITUALITY AND NEW RITUALS. NOW THAT I'VE BEEN TEACHING FOR MANY YEARS ALMOST EVERY DAY AND HAVE SEEN THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE IMPROVISE IN THE DANCE AND MANIFEST THEIR HUMANITY IN THAT WAY, I HAVE A HARD TIME WITH ANYTHING LESS [LAUGHS] AS A SOCIAL INTERACTION.

THE ONE THING THAT ALSO HAS MADE A HUGE DIFFERENCE FOR ME IS THE MULTI-CULTURAL, MULTI-RACIAL ASPECT OF AMERICA. I WAS BORN IN AFRICA, IN TANZANIA. MY FATHER WAS A MISSIONARY TEACHER. BUT AGAIN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE GERMAN NAZI ERA AND THAT NATIONALISM AND GENOCIDE HAS OPENED FOR MY GENERATION THE DESIRE TO CONNECT WITH THE WORLD.

I HAD THIS UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH ANOTHER CHILD OF THE NAZIS ON A TRAIN FROM BERLIN TO HAMBURG WHEN I WAS VISITING IN THE 1980S. I HAD SEEN A TELEVISION TALK SHOW WITH A MAN BY THE NAME OF NIKLAS FRANK. TURNS OUT THE MAN BESIDE ME ON THE TRAIN WAS NIKLAS FRANK. HE WAS THE SON OF HANS FRANK, THE KRAKOW COMMANDER NAZI WHO WAS HANGED IN NUREMBERG, AND HE HAD JUST PUBLISHED A BOOK CALLED THE FATHER [1987, PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH IN 1991 AS IN THE SHADOW OF THE REICH]. THIS BOOK, FROM BEGINNING TO END, IS AN ATTACK. IT'S A BIOGRAPHY OF HIS FATHER IN DETAIL WITH GREAT THOROUGHNESS, BUT THE MODE, THE LANGUAGE IS ONE OF A CURSE. AND WHEN HE PUBLISHED THE BOOK HE GOT DEATH THREATS FROM PEOPLE BECAUSE HE HAD VIOLATED ONE OF THE ARCHETYPAL IDEAS THAT THE FATHER IS UNTOUCHABLE.

YES, FREUD ADDRESSED THAT [LAUGHS].

[LAUGHS] LIKE BRECHT, I BELIEVE IN THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIAL ORDER. THERE'S NO QUESTION ABOUT THAT. I THINK THAT ALL MY LIFE I HAVE LEARNED ONE THING AND THAT IS THAT POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IS NOT FULLY REALIZED WITHOUT CULTURAL ARTISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS, AND WHENEVER IT'S ONLY ONE OR THE OTHER THERE'S A DISCONNECT. ART AND LIFE NEED TO BE IN SYNC. ART BELONGS IN THE CENTER OF LIFE. BRECHT CONCEIVED THE THEATER OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AS CENTRAL TO THE LIFE OF SOCIETY. DANCE ADDS AN EXTENDED PHYSICALITY AND TOTALITY OF EXPRESSION THAT OPENS NEW DIMENSIONS FOR THEATER. DANCE FOR ME LIVES CENTER-CENTER IN AN IMAGINABLE, NEW GLOBAL CULTURE.

Am späten Abend des 1. 7. setzen sich drei Herren vom „Provisorischen Theater“ ins Auto und fahren über Nacht nach Frankfurt am Main, zum Suhrkamp Verlag. Am Mittag des folgenden Tages betreten sie unangemeldet das Büro des Dramaturgen und sitzen binnen kurzem mit ihm am runden Tisch. Die Angereisten berichten über das „Provisorische Theater“ und begründen ausführlich, warum man dieses Stück und kein anderes spielen wolle. (Man will Theater spielen, nicht demonstrieren. Was „Theater spielen“ heißt, ist ein anderes Kapitel.) Der Dramaturg erklärt, schwer habe der Boykott Brecht und den Verlag getroffen. Brecht müsse zunächst von großen Theater (in West-Berlin) gespielt werden, zunächst der reife Brecht, und später könne man weiter . . . Die Herren, über Nacht gefahren, unausgeschlafen, bestehen freundlich darauf, den Brecht spielen zu wollen, da er sie begeistere und sie Theater spielten um der Stücke willen . . . Da hat der Dramaturg die rettende Idee (er glaubte, sie rette ihn, jedoch rettete sie das „Provisorische Theater“) — man solle die Erben fragen. Hätten sie keinen Einwand, würde der Verlag seinen zurückstellen. Mit dieser Auskunft fahren die Berliner heim.

Am 3. 7. besucht ein Herr im Auftrag des „Provisorischen Theaters“, ein Herr, der im Besitz eines westdeutschen Personalausweises ist, Frau Elisabeth Hauptmann in Ost-Berlin. Frau Weigel, erfährt er, weilt an der südfranzösischen Küste. Frau Hauptmann zeigt sich gegenüber dem Plan, „Im Dikicht der Städte“ zu spielen, sehr aufgeschlossen (es sind junge Leute) und schreibt Frau Weigel einen Brief, in dem sie um eine Stellungnahme bittet. Die muß abgewartet werden.

Vom 3. 8. datiert ein zweiter Brief des Verlages, darin dieser seine Absage bestätigt. Der Verlag habe noch einmal die Lage geprüft, und die sei einer Aufführung des Stückes nicht günstig. Man weiß natürlich, daß dahinter auch Mißtrauen steht gegenüber dem unbekannten „Provisorischen Theater“. Am 7. 8. fliegt ein Vertreter des „Provisorischen Theaters“ nach Frankfurt, um nachdrücklich darauf hinzuweisen, daß im Laufe der Verhandlungen günstige Termine verpaßt würden (Berliner Festwochen). Aber diesmal ist der Dramaturg verreist, und sein Vertreter weiß in der Sache nichts. Am 5. 8. war aber bereits der Herr mit dem westdeutschen Ausweis ein weiteres Mal in Ost-Berlin und hatte erstmals Frau Weigel getroffen, die versprach, in einem Brief an den Verlag den Plan zu befürworten. (Mit

INTERSECTIONS:
GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM &
THE AMERICAN AVANT GARDE

GROUP MOTION DANCE COMPANY

PHILADELPHIA / USA
DECEMBER 27, 2011

BRIGITTA HERRMANN
LUCIDA HANDWRITING / SMALL CAPS

REBEKAH ZHURAW
COOPER BLACK / SMALL CAPS

BRIGITTA, YOU'RE ONE OF THE ORIGINAL CREATORS OF GRUPPE MOTION BERLIN, THE FORERUNNER OF GROUP MOTION MULTI-MEDIA DANCE THEATRE AND THE GROUP MOTION WORKSHOP, AN OUTGROWTH OF THE MARY WIGMAN SCHOOL OF DANCE, AND AS SUCH THE GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST MOVEMENT. LET'S BEGIN WITH HOW YOU CAME TO DANCE.

I GREW UP A FAMILY OF MUSICIANS IN WEIMAR, GERMANY. MY MOTHER WAS A PIANIST, AND HER SISTER WAS AN OPERA SINGER. WE LIVED ON THE FIRST FLOOR, AND SHE LIVED ON THE SECOND FLOOR. HER HUSBAND WAS THE FIRST FRENCH HORN PLAYER AT THE STAATSKAPELLE WEIMAR. SOON AFTER THE WAR, THE THEATER, THE DEUTSCHES NATIONALTHEATER WEIMAR, OPENED AGAIN, AND MY

AUNT TOOK ME WHENEVER THEY NEEDED CHILDREN IN ANY OF THE PRODUCTIONS, WHETHER IT WAS AN OPERA OR THEATER OR BALLET PRODUCTION. I WAS INVOLVED IN MANY OF THOSE AS A CHILD ALONG WITH A GROUP OF CHILDREN PROBABLY ALL FROM THE EMPLOYEES OF THE THEATER.

Here it's World War II, and all the men were drafted into the war ...

THEY DIDN'T COME BACK. MY FATHER DIDN'T COME BACK. AND WHAT WAS, I THINK, SIGNIFICANT ABOUT THIS WAS THAT THE REAL WORLD - MY HOME AND SCHOOL AND ALL THAT - WAS PRETTY AWFUL, DURING THE WAR AND AFTER THE WAR. THERE WAS GREAT SCARCITY. THERE WAS NO FOOD, CLOTHES, PAPER - YOU NAME IT. EVERYTHING WAS - NOT THERE. BUT AS A CHILD, I DIDN'T

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KNOW THAT THERE WAS NO FIREWOOD OR THAT THERE WAS NO COAL FOR HEAT OR HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS FOR MY MOTHER. MY MOTHER HAD TO GO OUT INTO THE FOREST TO FIND WOOD. LATER WE RAISED

CHICKENS AND RABBITS AS FOOD. OUR JOB AS CHILDREN WAS TO GO OUT TO THE ALREADY HARVESTED FIELDS AND LOOK FOR WHATEVER RYE OR BARLEY OR POTATOES WAS LEFT OVER. THERE WAS ALWAYS ANXIETY, MY MOTHER'S TRYING TO MAKE ENDS MEET, BUT AS A CHILD YOU DON'T REALLY KNOW ALL THAT. IT'S MORE OF A SUBCONSCIOUS THING.

SO THERE'S THE REAL WORLD AND THEN THERE'S THIS OTHER WORLD OF THE THEATER, A WORLD OF FANTASY AND OF FUN. AS KIDS, WE HAD TO ALWAYS WAIT FOR OUR SCENE, SO WE HAD HOURS IN THE GREEN ROOM, PLAYING TOGETHER, DOING ACROBATICS AND THINGS. WE HAD MAKEUP AND WIGS, AND COSTUMES. AND THE OPERA SINGERS AND THE DANCERS, THEY LOOKED SO BEAUTIFUL, AND THEY WERE SO FRIENDLY. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL WORLD, WHILE OUT THERE IT WAS NOT. SO NO WONDER I MOVED IN THIS DIRECTION!



So how did Tom Schilling fit in?

TOM SCHILLING WAS THE BALLET MASTER CHOREOGRAPHER. TOM SCHILLING DANCED WITH MARY WIGMAN AND WITH DORE HOYER. AT THE TIME WHEN I WAS PARTICIPATING (1953-56) HE WAS A YOUNG CHOREOGRAPHER. HE'S WORLD-RENOUNDED NOW. HE BECAME THE CHOREOGRAPHER FOR THE KOMISCHE OPERA BERLIN. BESIDES THE ONGOING COMPANY, HE INCLUDED IN HIS PRODUCTIONS AN EXTENSION GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE, AND I WAS PART OF THAT GROUP, TOGETHER WITH A FRIEND, IN MANY BALLETS, THEATER PRODUCTIONS, AND OPERAS. I HAD NO FORMAL TRAINING AT THAT POINT, BUT HE JUST DID A GREAT JOB WITH US.

THEN - IT SOUNDS REALLY UNREAL, BUT I HAD A DREAM THAT I WAS GOING TO GO TO THIS DANCE SCHOOL AND BECOME A DANCER. AND I TOLD MY MOTHER ABOUT IT, AND SHE ACTUALLY DIDN'T DOUBT THAT. I STILL ACKNOWLEDGE HER FOR THAT. SHE WAS ALWAYS SUPPORTIVE OF ME AS A DANCER. YET SHE NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE ME PERFORM.

SO MY GIRLFRIEND AND I DECIDED TO ASK TOM SCHILLING IF HE THOUGHT WE COULD BECOME DANCERS, AND HE SUPPORTED US AND SUGGESTED WE APPLY TO THE PALUCCA SCHULE IN DRESDEN. GRET PALUCCA WAS A STUDENT OF MARY WIGMAN, WHICH I DIDN'T KNOW AT THE TIME. RETROSPECTIVELY, HOWEVER, I FOUND WE HAD A BOOK IN THE BOOKSHELF THAT I WOULD TAKE OUT PERIODICALLY AS A CHILD TO LOOK THROUGH THE PICTURES CALLED KÖRPER, SCHÖNHEIT UND KULTUR (BODY, BEAUTY, AND CULTURE) WITH PHOTOS OF SPORTS, GYMNASTICS, BALLET AND MODERN DANCE, AND I HAD MY FAVORITE PICTURES. ONE WAS MARY WIGMAN, ONE WAS PALUCCA, AND ONE WAS DAISY SPEES WHO WAS IN A YOGA POSTURE, BUT SHE TAUGHT BALLET LATER ON. I WAS TOTALLY SURPRISED TO SEE THIRTY YEARS LATER

WHEN I CAME BACK TO VISIT MY MOM AND I TOOK THE BOOK OUT OF THE BOOKSHELF AGAIN THAT THEY ALL BECAME MY TEACHERS. I WAS LIKE, "OH MY GOD!" VERY MYSTERIOUS!

Was Palucca German?

SHE GREW UP IN MUNICH, AND SHE WAS PART JEWISH, AND SO HER SCHOOL WAS CLOSED DURING THE NAZI PERIOD. AND THEN AFTER THE WAR TO HONOR HER A NEW SCHOOL WAS BUILT AND NAMED AFTER HER, AND PALUCCA BECAME THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR. PEOPLE SAID THAT SHE REALLY DIDN'T HAVE THE AUTHORITY BECAUSE IT WAS BASICALLY STRUCTURED MORE LIKE A RUSSIAN BALLET SCHOOL. IT WAS A HIGH SCHOOL WITH ACADEMIC CLASSES ALTERNATING WITH DANCE CLASSES THROUGHOUT THE DAY. IT WAS STRICT BALLET, WAGANOWA STYLE, AND ONCE IN A WHILE THEY BROUGHT IN SOME TEACHERS FROM THE SOVIET UNION AT THE TIME. WE STARTED WITH BALLET EVERY DAY - VERY RIGOROUS - AND VERY RIGOROUS TO GET INTO THE SCHOOL, TOO. EXCRUCIATINGLY SO [LAUGHS]! WE HAD TWO AUDITIONS, AND KIDS CAME FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY - 200 OR MORE - FROM WHICH THEY SELECTED TWO CLASSES WITH 20 STUDENTS EACH. THE SCHOOLING WAS A FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM. I WAS 15 GOING ON 16. THAT WAS 1954. WE HAD A TRIAL PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS, AND AFTER THE SIX MONTHS ONLY MY GIRLFRIEND AND I WERE LEFT IN THAT CLASS ALONG WITH FOUR BOYS, AND IN THE OTHER CLASS 10 WERE LEFT. PALUCCA WAS TEACHING THE MODERN DANCE. I BELIEVE THREE TIMES A WEEK FOR AN HOUR WE HAD MODERN DANCE. I ATTENDED FOR TWO YEARS, AND IN THE LAST PART OF THAT SECOND YEAR I DEVELOPED A HIP PROBLEM. I WAS GIVEN AMAZING MEDICAL ATTENTION WITH PHYSICAL THERAPY AND MASSAGE, BUT IT WOULDN'T GO AWAY. SO I WENT BACK HOME, AND AS SOON AS I GOT BACK HOME MY HIP PROBLEM DISAPPEARED. I THINK IT WAS PSYCHOSOMATIC.

So how did you get from there into the Wigman School?

I MET A CLASSMATE WHO SAID TO ME, "YOU MUST GO TO BERLIN AND STUDY WITH MARY WIGMAN." I KNEW PALUCCA WAS A WIGMAN STUDENT. SO THAT SUMMER AFTER I LEFT THE PALUCCA SCHOOL I WENT TO BERLIN AND INTRODUCED MYSELF THERE. HOWEVER, MARY WIGMAN WASN'T THERE BECAUSE SHE WAS RECOVERING FROM A HEART ATTACK. SHE WAS SEVENTY OR SEVENTY-ONE. SO I WAS TOLD I HAD TO COME BACK. LATER THAT YEAR I GOT A LETTER THAT SHE WAS BACK. SO I WENT BACK TO BERLIN IN JANUARY 1957 AND AUDITIONED THERE AND GOT ACCEPTED.

IT WAS LIKE A CULTURE SHOCK COMING FROM THE EAST GOING TO THE WEST. DURING MY TIME AT THE PALUCCA SCHOOL I WAS LIVING IN A DORM WITH FOUR OTHERS IN ONE ROOM, AND EVERYTHING WAS PAID FOR. I HAD CLOTHES FROM THE SCHOOL, THREE OR FOUR MEALS A DAY IN THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA, AND WE HAD UNIFORMS - EITHER OUR DANCE CLOTHES OR A SORT OF JOGGING SUIT ON TOP OF IT. AND THEN I CAME TO WEST BERLIN AND THE KIDS WERE SO EASY GOING! THEY HAD LONG HAIR AND SKIRTS ON AND MAKEUP AND DIFFERENT KINDS OF CLOTHING! THE WHOLE SCENE WAS LIKE DAY AND NIGHT [LAUGHS] TOTALLY!

How did that affect you?

I WAS EXTREMELY SHY. I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO FIND MY PLACE THERE FOR QUITE SOME TIME. ANYONE WHO CAME FROM THE EAST LIKE MYSELF WAS VERY POOR AND WE HAD A DIALECT. SO THEY MADE FUN OF US [LAUGHS]. MY MOTHER HAD DROPPED ME OFF WITH FRIENDS OF HERS, AND THEN THEY FOUND A PLACE FOR ME WITH A FAMILY WHERE I WAS BABYSITTING AND DOG SITTING IN EXCHANGE FOR A TINY LITTLE ROOM AND TWO ROLLS AND A HALF LITER OF MILK A DAY. AND THEN AT THE WIGMAN SCHOOL WE GOT SCHOOL LUNCH. SO THAT'S WHAT I WAS LIVING ON [LAUGHS]. BUT I NEVER WORRIED ABOUT IT ONE MOMENT. IT WAS JUST THE WAY IT WAS. I WAS 19. THAT WAS 1957. I HAD A REALLY GOOD FOUNDATION FROM THE PALUCCA SCHOOL, SO MY CONFIDENCE WAS UP IN DANCE CLASSES.

What was the curriculum at the Mary Wigman School?

THREE TIMES A WEEK WE STARTED OUT WITH SOMETHING LIKE YOGA, FOLLOWED BY TECHNIQUE CLASS AND THEN EITHER IMPROVISATION, COMPOSITION, EURHYTHMICS, OR ÜBUNGSSTUNDE - PRACTICE HOUR - AND TWO DAYS A WEEK WE STARTED OUT WITH BALLET. IT WAS WIGMAN'S SCHOOL, BUT IF YOU WANTED TO MAKE YOUR EXAM, WHICH WAS A STATE EXAMINATION, IT WAS REQUIRED THAT YOU ALSO STUDIED BALLET.

WIGMAN'S FIRST TRAINING WAS WITH ÉMILE JAKUES-DALCROZE WHO DEVELOPED EURHYTHMICS. HE WAS AT HELLERAU IN DRESDEN. IT WAS A COMMUNE OF SORTS - A COMMUNAL, ARTISTIC, VISIONARY, FUTURE-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIFIC ARCHITECTURE TO THAT PURPOSE. I VISITED HELLERAU A FEW YEARS BACK. THEY RESTORED THE BUILDING, AND IN THE FRONT OF THE BUILDING IS A HUGE YIN/YANG SIGN. THEY HAD ALREADY INCORPORATED EASTERN PHILOSOPHY AND ALL THAT. IT WAS VERY MUCH A PART OF THAT TIME WITH JUNG, WITH FREUD, AND WITH A LOT OF THE ARTISTS THAT WIGMAN WAS CONNECTED TO. SHE WAS MORE CONNECTED TO THE VISUAL ARTISTS - EMIL NOLDE, ARTISTS FROM THE BLAUE REITER, KIRCHNER. YOU CAN SEE THE INFLUENCE IN WIGMAN'S EMBRACE OF EXPRES-



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SIONISM, THE DARK SIDE - AS OPPOSED TO BALLET BEING ALL LIGHT AND IDEALISM - THE EARTH AND COSMOS, AND THE FEMALE IN HER WORK. THEN NOLDE SPOKE TO HER ABOUT RUDOLF VON LABAN: "THERE IS SOMEBODY WHO DANCES JUST LIKE YOU!" SO SHE WENT THERE FOR A SUMMER COURSE AND STAYED FOR 6 YEARS WITH LABAN.

What are your memories of Wigman herself?

WELL, WIGMAN WAS IN HER SEVENTIES, AND SHE ALWAYS WORE A LONG BLACK SKIRT WHEN SHE WAS TEACHING, AND SHE SMOKED. WHEN WE HAD IMPROVISATION OR COMPOSITION, SHE WAS SITTING IN HER SPECIAL CHAIR AND SHE WOULD ALWAYS LIGHT UP A CIGARETTE. FOR HER GENERATION OF EMANCIPATED WOMEN DRINKING AND SMOKING WAS PART OF AN IMAGE. SHE WAS AN ICONIC FIGURE. WIGMAN WAS TEACHING THREE TIMES A WEEK. THERE WERE CERTAIN QUALITIES THAT SHE WOULD TEACH: GLIDING, SKIPPING, FALLING, SWINGING, JUMPING, VIBRATION, SPINNING, TURNING - ONE QUALITY AT A TIME THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE CLASS, STARTING OUT SLOWLY AND THEN BECOMING MORE INVOLVED AND COMPLICATED OVER TIME - A CHANGE IN TIMING OR IN RHYTHM, THE ADDITION OF VARIOUS ELEMENTS, AND SO ON,

GOING FASTER AND FASTER TOWARDS A PEAK. AND THERE WAS ALWAYS LIVE MUSIC, PIANO.

TWO OTHER IMPORTANT DANCE INSTRUCTORS AT THE MARY WIGMAN SCHOOL WERE DORE HOYER AND MANJA CHMIEL. DORA HOYER WAS A STUDENT OF PALUCCA, BUT ALSO WORKED WITH WIGMAN IN 1959 WHEN WIGMAN WAS INVITED TO DO THE CHOREOG-



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RAPHY FOR STRAVISKY'S *LE SACRE DU PRINTEMPS* BY THE BERLIN OPERA. DORE HOYER WAS THE SOLO DANCER FOR THIS PIECE, AND I PARTICIPATED

IN THE CHORUS. WIGMAN TRIED THINGS OUT WITH HER STUDENTS IN SOME OF THE COMPOSITION CLASSES, WHICH IS HOW I GOT INVOLVED. DORE HOYER WAS AT THAT TIME THE clearest, most authentic representative of the tradition of WIGMAN'S AUSDRUCKSTANZ (EXPRESSIONIST DANCE). WIGMAN DID NOT PERFORM ANYMORE AT THE TIME THAT I MET HER. DORE HOYER WAS HIGHLY RECOGNIZED AND SHE WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL DANCER. SHE WAS PROBABLY A TERRIBLE TEACHER THOUGH BECAUSE SHE WOULD JUST GO WITHOUT EXPLANATION. SHE WOULD START WITH ONE MOVEMENT AND YOU HAD TO GO FOLLOW HER, PICK IT UP. THERE WAS NO BREAKING IT DOWN AND ANALYZING OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT. SHE WOULD DO IT, AND THEN IF YOU COULD FOLLOW HER, GOOD FOR YOU! [LAUGHS]. AFTER A WHILE PEOPLE SORT OF STOOD AGAINST THE WALL, AND THEN WHOEVER WAS LEFT WOULD FOLLOW DORE AS SHE DEVELOPED COMBINATIONS OVER THE CLASS PERIOD AND IT BECAME MORE COMPLICATED. IT ALL CAME OUT OF HER BODY, OUT OF THE MOMENT. THERE WAS NO PREVIOUS PLAN OR A VOCABULARY THAT COULD BE REPEATED LIKE YOU HAVE IN BALLET OR SOME OTHER MODERN DANCE. IT WAS CHALLENGING, BUT IT WAS WONDERFUL - BECAUSE SHE WAS DANCING! SHE WAS REALLY DANCING IT.

You created Gruppe Motion Berlin with two other Mary Wigman students, Helmut Gottschild and Inge (now Katharina) Sehnert. How did that come together?

IT WAS A GRADUAL PROCESS. HELMUT, INGE AND I WERE ALWAYS SITTING IN THE KITCHEN AFTER SCHOOL, HAVING LUNCH AND TALKING, AND THEN GOING BACK INTO THE STUDIO TO WORK ON OUR OWN DANCES. SO WE BASICALLY LIVED IN THE SCHOOL ALL DAY LONG AND HUNG OUT TOGETHER. WE BEGAN TO WORK TOGETHER AND BECAME CLOSE FRIENDS, AND INGE WAS ONE OF THE BEST DANCERS. AT THE WIGMAN SCHOOL WE HAD PERFORMANCES TWICE A YEAR. ALL THE STUDENTS, ALL THE TEACHERS, AND MAYBE SOME GUESTS WOULD COME AND SEE OUR WORK ON OUR DANCES CREATED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR. SOMEHOW THE IDEA OF PERFORMING OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL CAME UP. HELMUT HAD SOME CONNECTION TO THE ACADEMY OF THE FINE ARTS, AND WE GOT INVITED TO PERFORM THERE. SO WE NEEDED A NAME. HELMUT CAME UP WITH "MOTION" AS A NAME. AT FIRST IT WAS JUST "MOTION BERLIN" - HELMUT, INGE, AND MYSELF - AND WE STARTED TO PERFORM IN VARIOUS PLACES. LEONORE ICKSTADT WAS A FULBRIGHT STUDENT AT THE WIGMAN SCHOOL AND JOINED US. THEN WE HAD AN ENGAGEMENT IN YUGOSLAVIA AT THE ZAGREB MUSIC BIENNALE, AND MANFRED JOINED US AT FIRST AS A MANAGER FOR THAT EVENT. HE WAS FRIENDS WITH INGE AT THE TIME. AFTER THAT MANFRED AND I BECAME FRIENDS AND SAW THE LIVING THEATER PRODUCTIONS OF PARADISE NOW! AND MYSTERIES TOGETHER.

What was that experience of the Living Theater like for you?

FOR ME, COMING FROM THE DANCE, DANCE WAS VERY ARTICULATE, VERY PRECISELY CHOREOGRAPHED TO THE TEE, COMING OUT OF IMPROVISATION AND GOING THROUGH A CREATIVE PROCESS INTO COMPOSITION. THE LIVING

THEATER WAS A WILD BUNCH OF PEOPLE, DEFINITELY STONED [LAUGHS]! THEY HAD LEFT NEW YORK BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T PAY TAXES AND THEY HAD SOME PROBLEMS [LAUGHS]. SO THEY CAME TO EUROPE AND THEY WERE WELCOMED IN BERLIN. BERLIN WAS A VERY SPECIAL PLACE AT THE TIME. IT WAS STILL DIVIDED AND KEPT ARTIFICIALLY ALIVE IN A WAY. IT WAS LIKE AN ISLAND IN EAST GERMANY. THEY STAYED IN THE AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE. THEY WERE A SORT-OF-MAGNET FOR OTHER ARTISTS IN BERLIN WHO WERE CURIOUS, AND THEY BECAME PART OF THE STUDENT REVOLUTION THERE. A WILD BUNCH, TWENTY OR THIRTY OR SO PEOPLE - GUYS WITH LONG HAIR AND STRANGE CLOTHING.

WHAT STRUCK ME ABOUT THE LIVING THEATER WAS, FOR ONE THING, THE COMMUNAL CREATION, THE SPONTANEITY. IT WAS A SENSE THAT LIFE AND WORK WERE ONE BECAUSE THEY LIVED AND WORKED TOGETHER. IT ALL WAS MINGLED TOGETHER, AND THEREFORE IT HAD A SPIRITUAL DIMENSION I RECOGNIZED NOT CONSCIOUSLY, BUT SOMEHOW THERE WAS A SENSE OF THAT. THEIR SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT WAS OBVIOUS, BUT I COULDN'T SPEAK ENGLISH AT THE TIME AT ALL. I HAD TEN YEARS OF RUSSIAN. I HAD NO ENGLISH. SO, I PERSONALLY HAD NO WAY TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE PEOPLE FROM THE LIVING THEATER, AND ANY OF THE VERBAL EXPRESSIONS THAT WERE PART OF THEIR PERFORMANCES I MISSED. I WAS MORE IMPACTED BY THE PHYSICALITY OF THE THEATER. THEY USED STRUCTURED IMPROVISATION, AND WHAT I GOT OUT OF IT WAS THIS CONNECTION BETWEEN LIFE AND WORK, INTIMACY AND CREATIVITY IN AN EXTENDED SCALE OF EXPRESSION.

I imagine that was profound given that in your childhood there was such a separateness of those two spheres, and then here they were coming together.

YES! MANFRED AND I, OF COURSE, TALKED MORE ABOUT IT, AND THEN THERE WAS A CERTAIN IDEA ABOUT A PIECE, COUNTDOWN FOR ORPHEUS, WHICH WAS RELATED TO THE ORPHEUS MYTH, BUT NOW TAKEN INTO ANOTHER CONTEXT, AND MANFRED BECAME INVOLVED WITH THE CONCEPTUAL PROCESS OF THAT. I WAS ALWAYS INVOLVED WITH THE DANCE FROM THE CHOREOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE.

AT THAT SAME TIME, HELMUT AND I HAD STARTED TO CREATE OUR OWN STUDIO. WE HAD RENTED AN OLD FACTORY AND HAD STARTED RENOVATING, PAINTING, AND WITH SOME HELP FROM AN ARCHITECT, PUTTING IN A SPRUNG FLOOR. WE WERE ABOUT TO ESTABLISH OURSELVES IN BERLIN AS A COMPANY WITH OUR OWN STUDIO AND PLANS FOR TEACHING.

How did this transform to your coming to America?

THAT'S A GOOD QUESTION. KATHY PIRA WAS PART OF THE ORPHEUS PIECE IN BERLIN. SHE WAS AN AMERICAN DANCER WHO WAS EMPLOYED BY TEMPLE UNIVERSITY AND CLOSE FRIENDS WITH HELMUT. SHE HAD TO GO BACK TO PHILADELPHIA, AND A FEW MONTHS LATER SHE INVITED US TO VISIT HER IN PHILADELPHIA. WE TALKED ABOUT IT, AND WE DECIDED TO GO. NO INTENTION TO STAY! IT WAS JUST FOR THREE WEEKS!

And did you go back home after the three weeks?

NO! WE STAYED. WE ARRIVED, AND HELMUT GOT OFFERED A JOB THROUGH

KATHY AT TEMPLE, AND I GOT OFFERED TO TEACH IN NEW YORK AT THE VALERIE BETTIS STUDIO IN NEW YORK CITY AND THE JEANNE WILLIAMS SCHOOL OF DANCE IN PHILADELPHIA. VALERIE BETTIS WAS A STUDENT OF HANYA HOLM WHO WAS A STUDENT OF MARY WIGMAN. WIGMAN SENT HOLM TO OPEN A WIGMAN BRANCH IN NEW YORK CITY.

What was the Philadelphia dance community like at that time?

IT WAS VERY SMALL. I REMEMBER JOHN KERR AND ONLY A HANDFUL OF OTHER COMPANIES KATHY INTRODUCED US TO, AND WE HAD FRIENDS IN NEW YORK, FORMERLY FROM THE WIGMAN SCHOOL.

So how did you end up at Judson Church and Jacob's Pillow?

HELMUT AND I WENT TO THE JUDSON CHURCH AND AUDITIONED. AL CARMINES WAS THE DIRECTOR, AND HE LIKED OUR WORK, AND HE INVITED US TO PERFORM. SO WE RECONSTRUCTED COUNTDOWN FOR ORPHEUS IN ADDITION TO SOME SOLOS AND DUETS.

By the time you actually performed, Manfred was there.

THAT WAS HIS DEBUT. THERE WAS HELMUT, MYSELF, MANFRED, AND FIVE OTHERS.

Were you a troupe then?

IT WASN'T THOUGHT OF AS A TROUPE. WE WERE JUST DOING A PERFORMANCE. WE DID TOMLINSON THEATER AT TEMPLE UNIVERSITY AND THEN JUDSON CHURCH, AND IT WAS THE RESPONSE THAT WE GOT IN NEW YORK THAT WAS SO OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE - THAT WAS THE TRIGGER AND WE DECIDED, "WE MAY AS WELL STAY HERE! THIS IS GREAT!" WE HAD THIS AMAZING REVIEW IN THE VILLAGE VOICE AND THE NEW YORK TIMES, AND THEN PEOPLE CAME FORWARD AND SAID, "WE WANT YOU TO PERFORM AT JACOB'S PILLOW" AND OTHER PLACES. AND SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED.

HELMUT AND MANFRED AND I HAD RENTED A HOUSE IN PHILADELPHIA FOR \$95 A MONTH IN A LITTLE SLUM STREET, SHAMOKIN ST. IT WAS A LITTLE TRINITY AND IT WAS FULL OF ROACHES AND RATS. SO AFTER A YEAR, WE MOVED TO A PLACE IN THE ROXBOROUGH NEIGHBORHOOD. IT WAS AN OLD FIREHOUSE, AND THE SPACE UPSTAIRS WE USED AS OUR FIRST STUDIO. WE TAUGHT THERE, AND THEN A YEAR LATER HELMUT STARTED HIS OWN COMPANY, ZERO MOVING, AND MANFRED AND I MOVED TO THE SOUTH STREET AREA, AND WE GOT INTRODUCED TO THE SOUTH STREET RENAISSANCE. IT WAS ABOUT 1970. WE RENTED THIS CLOTHING STORE ON 5TH AND SOUTH AND ALSO LIVED THERE WITH ABOUT 12 PEOPLE SHARING THE SPACE. WE HAD THE FIRST FLOOR AS A STUDIO, AND THE SECOND AND THIRD FLOORS WERE LIVING SPACE. IN 1971 WE INCORPORATED AND BECAME GROUP MOTION MULTIMEDIA DANCE THEATER, AND WE MOVED TO 4TH AND LEITHGOW ST. WHERE WE STAYED UNTIL 2000.

So the dancers are all living there, and now you're doing what the Living Theater was doing. What was that like?

Exactly! Yeah, it was pretty crazy.

And ultimately the workshop came out of this.

YES, LIFE AND WORK BECAME ONE. YOU COULD WORK ANY TIME, DAY OR

NIGHT, GO TO THE STUDIO, TRY SOMETHING OUT. WE USED A LOT OF IMPROVISATION IN THE CREATIVE PROCESS. AMERICAN PROFESSIONAL DANCERS WERE NOT USED TO IMPROVISING AT THE TIME. IT WAS UNFAMILIAR AND UNCOMFORTABLE FOR MOST, SPECIFICALLY IMPROVISING IN PERFORMANCE. MEANWHILE MANFRED AND I WERE TEACHING AT THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS (NOW UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS), AND THE ART STUDENTS HAD NO PROBLEM WITH IMPROVISING WHATSOEVER. THEY DIDN'T HAVE THE INHIBITION OF WHAT WAS TECHNICALLY CORRECT. SO WE STARTED TO INTEGRATE PEOPLE FROM THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS - KAREN BEAUMONT, KATHY ROSE, PETER ROSE, WARREN MULLER, AND MICHAEL BIELLO, TONIO GUERRA - A WHOLE BUNCH OF VERY CREATIVE PEOPLE WHO HAVE MADE VERY INTERESTING ARTISTIC CAREERS OF THEIR OWN.

THEY BROUGHT IN A CERTAIN VITALITY, BUT ALSO A SENSE OF ROUGHNESS



WHICH REQUIRED THAT, FOR THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN A PERFORMANCE, AS A CHOREOGRAPHER I HAD TO COME UP WITH SOME STRUCTURE OR A SCORE SO THEY COULD ACTUALLY HAVE SOME KIND OF REFERENCE, AND THAT'S HOW OUR MOVEMENT STRUCTURES EVOLVED. TO MAKE DANCE AVAILABLE FOR PEOPLE WHO WERE NOT PROFESSIONALLY TRAINED, SOMETHING HAD TO BE STRUCTURED. A LOT OF THE STRUCTURES HAD TO DO WITH FOLLOWING AND LEADING EACH OTHER TO CREATE CERTAIN PATTERNS IN SPACE THAT HAD ALMOST A CHOREOGRAPHIC EFFECT.

THEN THERE WAS LIVE MUSIC. MANFRED WAS PLAYING THE ELECTRONIC KEYBOARD TOGETHER WITH CHARLES COHEN AND SOME OTHER MUSICIANS. I DON'T KNOW IF LENNY SIDEMAN WAS ALREADY THERE. I HAD TO USE THE MICROPHONE TO GIVE INSTRUCTIONS OVER THE MUSIC. AND WE PROBABLY WERE STONED AND MOST OF THE PEOPLE ON THE FLOOR PROBABLY, TOO.

I HAD THE SENSATION THAT I WAS CHANNELING THE INSTRUCTION. I WAS SAYING, "FIND YOUR PLACES ON THE FLOOR. CROSS YOUR LEGS IN FRONT OF YOU AND FOCUS ON YOUR BREATHING," AND EVERYTHING FROM THEN ON WAS COMING OUT OF MY MOUTH AS IF DICTATED TO ME. THEN LATER ON I REALIZED, "OH, THIS IS WHAT CHANNELING IS!"

You tap all those resources you've built, but you're not thinking about them. You're thinking with them. They're, as you've said about the avant-garde adaptation of eastern philosophy, integrated.

YES. SO WHAT CAME TO ME THAT FIRST NIGHT WAS THE BLUEPRINT OF GROUP MOTION WORKSHOP. WE CALLED IT "PROGRAMMATION." IT CREATED A SENSE OF TRANCE, STARTING OUT WITH MEDITATION AND BREATHING INTO THE WHOLE BODY - MOVING THE FACE, FACIAL EXPRESSIONS, AND MOVING MORE AND MORE INTO THE WHOLE BODY. IT ENDED IN HOLDING HANDS AND MOVING IN SLOW MOTION, AND THAT'S WHEN PEOPLE WALKED OUT OF ONE DOOR IN SLOW MOTION AND INTO THE STREET ONTO THE SIDEWALK AND THEN BACK INTO THE STUDIO THROUGH THE OTHER DOOR. THEN WE MADE A PAUSE, A LITTLE BREAK, AND THEN WE HAD A SECOND PART AND INTRODUCED THE MIRROR GAME, ACTIVE PASSIVE DANCE, AND THE LIKE.

Also focusing on body parts?

THAT CAME IN LATER. THAT WAS PART OF A WORK OUT THAT WE DID WITH THE COMPANY, BUT NOT PART OF THE WORKSHOP AT FIRST.

In a way, the workshop, as it has evolved, beginning with this baseline meditation focused on the breath and moving through various structures, sounds to me very much like a compressed day at the Mary Wigman School; but while she may have devoted entire periods to examining a single element, you move through a number of those types of structures within an hour and a half period.

I DID NOT MAKE THAT CONNECTION AT THE TIME. MY DANCE EDUCATION INCLUDED MANY OTHER ELEMENTS. THERE WAS NO CONSCIOUS REPRODUCTION.

But the guided improvisation seems to have a root in that.

YES, HOW ONE THING CAME OUT OF THE OTHER OUT OF SENSING SOMETHING INTUITIVELY.

One thing that's always struck me when you lead are your vocalizations. With the highly interactive format of the Group Motion workshop, there's a tendency to get involved in watching and keeping up with everyone. Periodically though you make vocal sounds that put my attention back on an internal space. Where does that come from?

I'VE WORKED WITH SOUNDS ACCOMPANYING MYSELF AND ACCOMPANYING DANCERS WHILE PRACTICING, ALSO CREATING SOUNDSCAPES FOR SPECIFIC PERFORMANCES. IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WORKSHOP, THE BREATH IS THE CONNECTION WITH THE GROUP OF DANCERS WHO ARE ON THE FLOOR, A SORT OF ENERGETIC CONNECTION. SENSING WHERE THE ENERGY IS GOING OR WHERE IT NEEDS TO GO AND REACHING OUT WITH SOUND IS A WAY OF SUPPORTING THAT ENERGY.

So it's a form of subtle choreographing.

ONE COULD SAY THAT. YOU SEE THE WORKSHOP UNFOLD, PEOPLE COMING FROM DIFFERENT PLACES. THE ENERGY IS DISPERSED IN THE BEGINNING. THROUGH THE MEDITATION A COMMON GROUND IS CREATED, AND THEN AS THE MOVEMENT BEGINS TO UNFOLD, TO BECOME COHESIVE, IT SEEMS TO ME ALWAYS LIKE THE WEAVING OF ENERGY TOGETHER WHERE PEOPLE LIFT EACH OTHER UP TO THE NEXT LEVEL - THE DANCERS ON THE FLOOR, BUT ALSO THE PEOPLE WHO PLAY THE MUSIC - AND THE VOICE IS PART OF THAT, REACHING IN AND REACHING OUT TO DIRECT. THE VOICE AND THE MUSIC CAN CALM OR CHANGE THINGS IN WAYS THAT ARE NURTURING AND SUPPORTIVE OF THE CREATIVE PROCESS.

Was it your divorce from Manfred what caused you to leave the Group Motion Company in 1987 and create the Ausdruckstanz Dance Theater (ADT)?

IT WAS DEFINITELY PART OF THE DIVORCE. HEDY TOWER WAS A WIGMAN STUDENT AND SHE TOLD A STUDENT OF MINE, MICHAEL A. CARSON ABOUT GROUP MOTION. SO HE CAME TO GROUP MOTION TO MEET ME. MICHAEL AND HEDY WERE BOTH FANS OF PINA BAUSCH AND HE WAS INTERESTED IN THE AUSDRUCKSTANZ TRADITION OF DANCE. I HAD SEEN PINA BAUSCH FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1974 AT A DANCE FESTIVAL IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. PINA BAUSCH PERFORMED A SOLO - BEAUTIFUL. LATER I SAW HER COMPANY IN NEW YORK CITY, AND I VISITED WUPPERTAL AND SAW HER COMPANY THERE. BUT IT WAS MICHAEL'S INITIATIVE TO CREATE A COMPANY BASED ON AUSDRUCKSTANZ DANCE THEATER.

And so you created Ausdruckstanz Dance Theater together?

YES. WE PERFORMED IN PHILADELPHIA, WE TRAVELED AND WENT TO GERMANY. MICHAEL AND I OPENED A STUDIO IN THE KENSINGTON NEIGHBORHOOD ON FRANKFORD AND GIRARD. WHEN WE OPENED THE STUDIO WE CREATED AN EXHIBIT ABOUT MARY WIGMAN, AND MY FOCUS BEGAN TO REACH BACK INTO THAT WORK AND MY HERITAGE WITH THE WIGMAN TRADITION, ALTHOUGH I STILL USED MULTI-MEDIA.

A NUMBER OF MY WORKS HAD TO DO WITH THE SUFFERING OF THE EARTH. THAT WAS LIKE 20 YEARS AGO WHEN NOBODY WAS TALKING ABOUT IT. MY INTENTION WAS TO STRENGTHEN THE NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRIT WITH THE PIECES THAT I DID. WE CREATED A FORM OF DANCE RITUAL AND PRAYER FOR THE NATIVE AMERICAN SPIRIT. I'M A PERSON WHO RELATES TO THE SUFFERING OF OTHERS. THAT'S WHERE MY INTENTION COMES FROM: WANTING TO HEAL SOMETHING OR FIX THINGS THAT ARE BROKEN. I GUESS TYPICALLY FEMALE OR JUST OUT OF MY UPBRINGING AND MY WHOLE HISTORY. THE NATIVE AMERICAN SUFFERING WAS SOMETHING OBVIOUS AND YET NOT ADDRESSED IN THE CULTURE, OR HISTORICALLY DISTORTED. FOR ONE PIECE UNDER THE TITLE EARTH MATTERS, WE HAD 99 RIVER ROCKS BY AN ARTIST JOYCE DE GUATEMALA, AND WE USED VOICE, A WHOLE SECTION OF CHANTING, AND SPINNING DANCES AS PART OF THIS RITUAL PERFORMANCE.

THE LAST AUSDRUCKSTANZ DANCE THEATER PRODUCTION WAS IN 2006, HONORING MARY WIGMAN'S 120TH BIRTHDAY. IT WAS VERY WELL RE-

CEIVED. I INVITED SEVEN DANCERS, SOME WIGMAN RELATED PEOPLE WHOM I KNEW AS A STUDENT - SARAH MANNO WHO IS IN FORT COLLINS, SANDY BROYARD WHO IS IN MARTHA'S VINYARD, MARY ANNE SANTOS NEWHALL WHO IS IN SANTA FE, VICKIE SEITCHIK WHO IS IN PHILADELPHIA (AND WAS IN GROUP MOTION IN THE BEGINNING), SHEILA ZAGAR BECAUSE SHE HAD BEEN IN MY COMPANY FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, AND BARBARA DILLEY, WHO HAS NO CONNECTION TO WIGMAN BUT WAS PRINCIPAL DANCER OF THE MERCE CUNNINGHAM COMPANY. BARBARA AND I HAD CONNECTED WHEN I WAS IN BOULDER, COLORADO WHERE I HAD GONE BACK TO SCHOOL TO GOT A DEGREE IN SOMATIC PSYCHOLOGY. I DANCED THERE, TOO, AND THEN WE BECAME FRIENDS AND PERFORMED TOGETHER IN BOULDER, AND THEN SHE CAME HERE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PERFORMANCE. MARY ANNE HAS WRITTEN A BOOK ABOUT WIGMAN, AND SHE PERFORMED A RECREATION OF WIGMAN'S "WITCH DANCE."

SINCE THEN, I'VE PERFORMED IN SOME OTHER CONTEXTS WITH SOME OTHER COMPANIES. I PERFORMED FOR SUSANNE LINKE IN QUASI NORMAL WHEN LINKE WORKED WITH THE JEANNE RUDDY DANCE COMPANY IN PHILADELPHIA IN 2008. LINKE WAS A WIGMAN STUDENT WHEN I WAS THERE. SHE'S AN EXTRAORDINARY DANCER AND CHOREOGRAPHER.

In closing, what would you say dance adds to theater?

I COME FROM A DANCE BACKGROUND AND SO TO ME TRADITIONAL THEATER CAN BE VERY BORING UNLESS IT'S SOMEONE LIKE KLAUS KAMMER WHO IS ONE OF THOSE RARE ACTORS WHO EMBODIES TOTALLY HIS ROLE. IN GENERAL, MY PERCEPTION OF THEATER REFLECTS ON A CULTURE THAT ELIMINATES THE BODY AND EMPHASIZES THE TALKING HEAD, EVEN IN OUR EXPRESSIVE MEDI-UMS. FOR ME THERE IS A QUOTE BY PINA BAUSCH IN THE WONDERFUL FILM PINA THAT SUMS IT UP: "DANCE, DANCE, OTHERWISE WE ARE LOST."

Neue
Tanz

Kurt
Jooss

Pina
Bausch

José Limón

Anna
Sokolow

The Actors
Studio

Jacob's
Pillow

Martha
Graham

Merce
Cunningham

Robert
Rauschenberg

Deborah
Hay

Physical
Theater

Ausdrucks-
Dance
THEATRE

HOT W

spinning
band

John
Cage

Robert
Unn

Edson
Church

Steve
Paxton

R

Piscator

The New
School

Judith
Melina

The
Living
Theater

EPIC
THEATRE

Physical
Theatre

The
Globe
Theatre

In the
Jungle
of
Cities

Chap

CHESTER BROWN'S PAYING FOR IT: RADICAL SEX ACTIVISM AT 8 PANELS PER PAGE

Here is a yucky but essential book. Exactly how important you find it will be defined by whether you think the book's author is amoral, immoral, or boldly defining a nontra-psychological model. Incredible skill, its funny. It's also quite even the most open-minded and steel-bellied among us a little queasy. I stack it on the "must-read" shelf, though there's the lingering suspicion that the intellectual

JONATHAN PAPPAS

ditional moral/financial/ It's told - and drawn - with scenes are vivid, and it's gross, and might leave

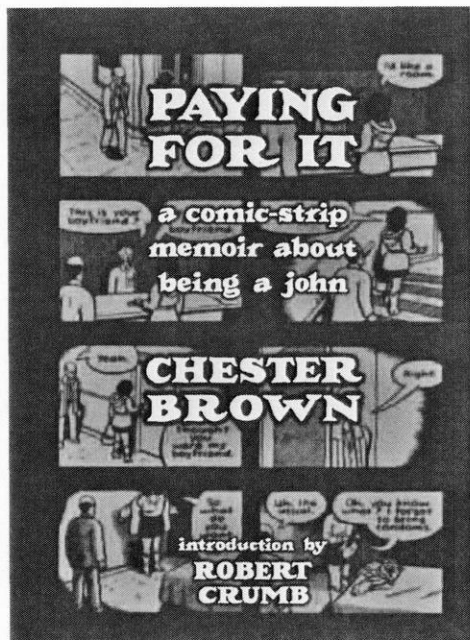
model that Brown presents is hollow and even corrupt. But that conclusion should only be considered after full engagement with this "comic strip memoir."

There is a manifesto element here in favor of decriminalizing prostitution, but this is not only a tract: as the title implies, it's a personal story. When Brown is left alone after being dumped by his girlfriend, he commits himself - physically and psychologically and ideologically - to paying for sex with prostitutes. He believes he has found the antidote to society's devotion to the ideal of romantic love, which he calls evil. This is his true subject.

In comics terms, these are some of the best panels you'll see this year, and Brown honors the form by being able to dispense actual laughs, sometimes as traditional last-panel punchlines. He has ad-

opted a lucid eight-panel grid for his pages that was apparently inspired by the "good duck artist" and comics legend Carl Barks, and the story moves fast even when not much is happening. That kind of flow takes a master, or at least a technical expert. Brown is both. His characters are visually iconic, consistent, and they look funny. The action and bodies, while "cartoonish" are also "realistic" in that they meet the eye with ingeniously descriptive proportions and gestures.

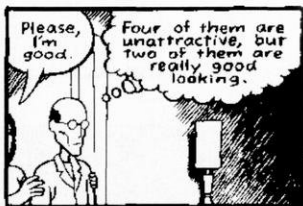
There are lots of nuts and bolts here about the protocols of calling prostitutes, of paying them, and also stuff about the bodily plumbing and mechanics of the sex. Here, Brown attempts to flee a brothel after the woman looks nothing like what he was led to believe. (It should be noted that the lousy scanned images here do not come close to doing justice to the quality and clarity of Brown's art as it appears on the page. For instance, his lines are clear and indelible, there's no static and nothing shaky to his style. A topic for another day is how the pleasure of



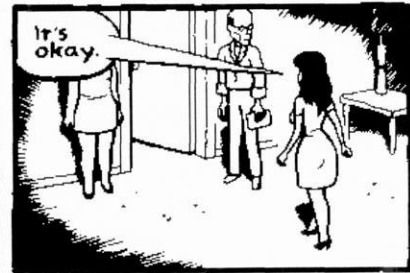
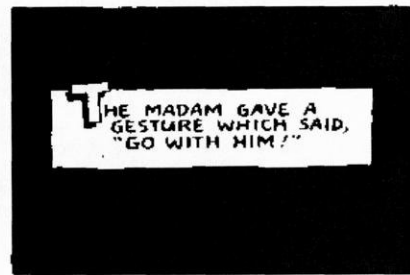
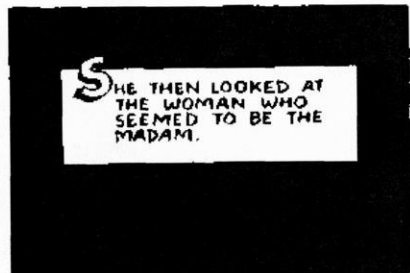
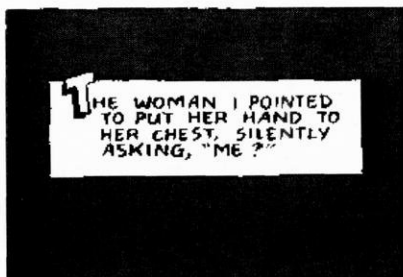
viewing these images and words in a well-designed book is the factor that will guarantee the survival of paper-book graphic works in general).

Brown uses the performative act of cartooning to painstakingly describe his forays into this world. All the while, he is building a rhetorical case with his friends in the narrative, and with the readers of the book. He writes that, "Feminists should be consistent on the subject of choice. If a woman has the right to choose to have an abortion, she should also have the right to choose to have sex for money. It's her body, it's her right." His male and female friends, and his fellow cartoonists Joe, Matt, and Seth, are all characters in the narrative; they are foils, sounding boards, and mouthpieces for the opposing arguments. The case being built is not for the legalization of prostitution, which would involve regulation, but its decriminalization.

The explicit stuff - and surely all of our sex lives are "ex-



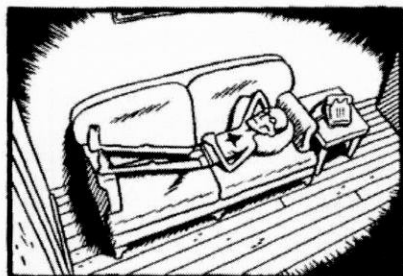
PLICIT" if rendered so carefully and with such exacting attention - are compelling, but I'm just as into the pages that move at the speed of life and chronicle Brown's mental wranglings. One gets the feeling that everything Brown does is carried out methodically and with excruciating attention to detail, but the scenes from his life outside bedrooms are the biggest strength of the book. The only element that might grow old for the reader is the preaching. In the conversations with friends, he outlines his arguments as they develop, and it might be said that this stuff is aggressively didactic. I much prefer pages like these, which come right after Brown is asked to leave the home of his ex-girlfriend and her new guy,



where Brown has been living peaceably as a roommate.

As Brown notes in the foreword, "In this book I record every time I paid for sex up to the end of 2003 and every prostitute I've had sex with since then." The fullness of that "every time" lends both a sense of authority and a sense of the cold-blooded to the whole undertaking. But it also lends credence to the philosophy, grounding the episodes in a meticulous, academic sort of procedural. Some of

the sex scenes are compelling in the salacious, voyeuristic way you might expect, and you will want to file some of them under "Too Much Information." But that's part of Brown's point, to not shy away from the disgusting bits. In this scene of a return visit to the "incall" prostitute who turns out later, to Brown's surprise, to be a non-English speaker, there is the loaded detail of the spent tube of lubricant.



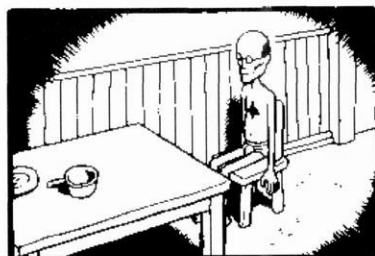
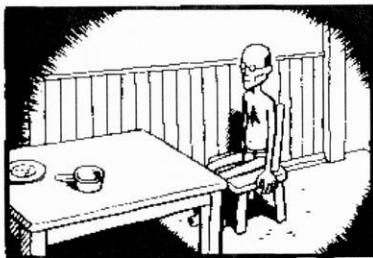
WITH NO ONE ELSE AROUND I DIDN'T FEEL THE NEED TO KEEP UP A FRONT, AND I FELT MYSELF SINKING INTO DEPRESSION.



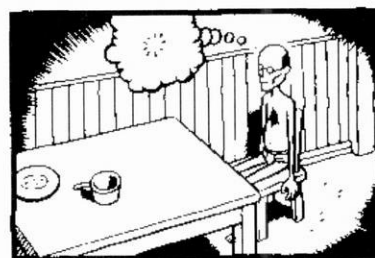
THE TRANSITION FROM ROMANTIC COUPLE TO FRIENDS-WHO-LIVE-TOGETHER HAD BEEN EMOTIONALLY EASY --

--BUT THE PROSPECT OF NOT LIVING WITH SOOK-YIN FELT LIKE AN ENDING--

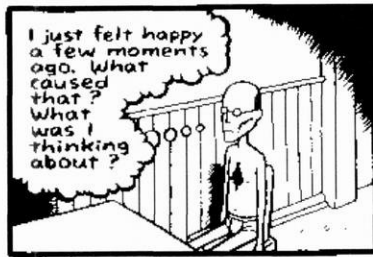
--AND THE MORE I DWELLED ON IT THE MORE DEPRESSED I GOT.



SUDDENLY I FELT
A TINY TWINGE
OF HAPPINESS.

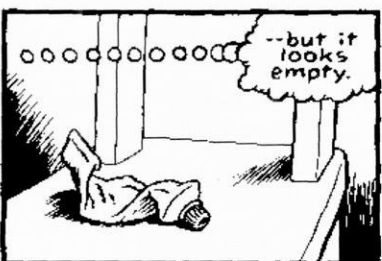
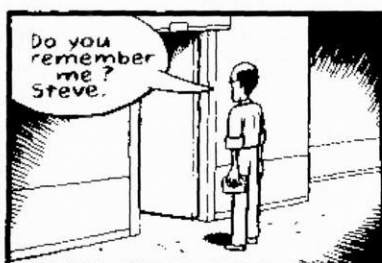
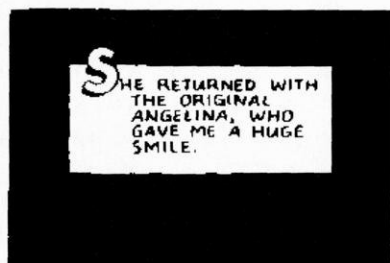


AND THEN I WENT
BACK TO BEING
DEPRESSED.



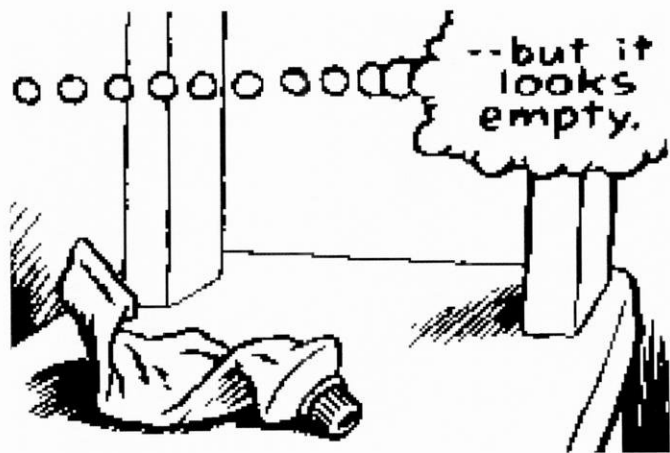
The spent tube of lube carries many of the book's assets and contradictions. Brown's need for it in the moment encapsulates the gross quandaries he finds himself in, and its depiction in close-up shows Brown's use of the form as well as his unerring eye for detail. Let's revisit that tube: The tube works as a story-telling device, and it works to boost the "this-really-happened" effect. And the nebbishy desperation of the moment is funny. So the art, the sex, and the story are served, but what of the personal politics? Well, that spent tube also speaks to coercion, doesn't it? Or, at least to the emphatic un-arousal of the prostitute. And

its emptiness illustrates the constancy of the trade, of the unrelenting parade of johns that must come through that room. The tube raises the specter of prostitution's exploitative qualities, a charge that Brown vigorously denies. Either way, that tube is funny at first, then comes to embody a mundane tool of the trade, and then on further consideration, reads as increasingly awful. We are fully engaged with the issue at hand, and Brown has brought us there using the particular tools of his medium.



The ideology-rich portions of this book (scenes of his debates with his buddies as well as a lengthy text-heavy polemical appendix) are rescued from the whiff of the didactic by their connection to an authentic story, and to the presence of an arc: Brown shifts from attacking the concept of romantic love outright to pointing his venom at the construct "possessive monogamy." This nuance, along with the obsessive reconsiderations and research, suggests a mind that's sharp but also pliant, even if the personality attached is bereft of certain interpersonal mannerisms we may expect to find in our free-thinking writers and artists.

Brown is unmoored from certain arguably common hang-ups like, say, being sexually turned-off by the fact that your partner is not enjoying the act but is merely enduring it. That sentence comes off as sort of square, maybe, and far less radical than Brown, but then Brown is untroubled by situations that would trouble most. He points out that coerced sex is the case in plenty of nonpaid sexual situations as well, but I'm not sure that's a workable defense of paid sex.



The physical stuff: the vaginal dryness, or the woman who covers her face with her own hair, or the one who repeatedly yells "Ow" (!) or most prostitutes' general refusal to make eye contact let alone kiss, all rate a mention but are not a deterrent. That is, these loaded conditions

are reported but not really dealt with by our narrator. By the end, Brown has found and agreed to terms with a sort of personal prostitute, a woman who is retired from the business except for him. They are exclusive to each other, and the sex remains paid. This unique arrangement seems to be the perfect one for Brown; one that does not involve strangers, but also does not carry with it unachievable expectations. In a narrative or philosophical sense, it may be seen as a cop-out, since the process of sexual gratification that the book describes and ostensibly promotes is ultimately untenable even for the author. *Paying For It* is not likely to be widely effective as a persuader, but it is the rare serious book about a serious subject that is also a lot of fun. It should be owned and loaned and discussed. It's a bracing - and in its way even logical - account of how one idiosyncratic man found a unique kind of satisfaction, if not happiness.

DER GUTE HASA DIGA EEBRECHTOWHY, 2.0 (OR, WHEN THE COVER STORY MEETS THE VERSUCHE)

March 19, 2011: Norman Roessler finishes watching *Battlestar Galactica* (Reimagined) on Netflix online video streaming service.

NORMAN ROESSLER

Roessler conducts various Guitar Prophet Treatments (GPT) of the signature song in the series, Jimi Hendrix's adaptation of Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower." Guitar Prophet is a Brecht-Dylan App in which a song is reimagined and reproduced on the acoustic guitar, harmonica, and (hopefully) bad voice. One must play against the epic teleology that has been inscribed on the song in order to liberate both the song and the singer. One alienates the song by playing it small where it is usually played big, interprets it in a counter-ideological way, and sings in-out-between the rhymes and the rhythms of the song. When the song is rediscovered in its plasticity (Rubber Soul) and is understood to be infinitely adaptable (Humboldt: "Infinite Use of Finite Media") one has achieved dialectic catharsis and contentment. Roessler's GPT is successful. By the next day he has no memory of the event.

March 24: *The Book of Mormon* written by Trey Parker, Matt Stone (*South Park*) and Robert Lopez (*Avenue Q*) premieres on Broadway at the Eugene O'Neill Theater in New York City, USA.



March 31: *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* written by Rajiv Joseph premieres on Broadway at the Richard Rodgers Theater. Roessler considers submitting a request for review tickets, but doesn't feel like begging the Broadway-Military-Industrial Complex for one peanut gallery ticket in order to see what probably will be little better than Harry Potter aesthetics. He considers a new idea: why not just read the fucking playscript? It's a cheaper and more useful ticket and seems like a fitting Bb alienation. He orders *Gruesome Playground Injuries* (which contains Bengal Tiger) as well as Lynn Nottage's *Ruined*. *Ruined* will play in Philadelphia

in June. Hedging one's bet? The proof of the pudding lies in the eating?

April 2: Roessler begins re-reading Jane McGonigal's *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World* (2011) and uses it as the basis to secure a small university grant in which he will examine the potential use of games for the development of Online Learning Courses (OLL). He begins an intense research agenda of Digital Humanities, New Media, Ludological Aesthetics / Ethics under the following topics: Asynchronicity, Liberation of Meat Puppet Space, Algorithmic Literacy, Big Data, DatabaseReading, Performative Scholarship, Gaming the University, University = Socratic Game, Ludological Alienation, Phaedo, 2.0, Massive Open Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG), and Massive Open Online Course (MOOC).

April 20: He continues to work on the gaming initiative for the university. He christens the project, MMORPG. He isolates what he considers to be the crux of McGonigal's argument in *Reality is Broken*. It revolves around her use of a citation from Book 1.94 from Herodotus, *The Histories*. This is what she cites:

Now the Lydians have very nearly the same customs as the Hellenes, with the exception that they prostitute their female children; and they were the first of men, so far as we know, who struck and used coin of gold or silver; and also they were the first retail-traders. The Lydians themselves say that the games which are now in use among them and the Hellenes were also their invention. These they say were invented at the same time as they colonised Tyrnesia, and this is the account they give of them: In the reign of Atys the son of Manes their king there came to be a grievous dearth over the whole of Lydia; and the Lydians for a time continued to endure it, but afterwards, as it did not cease, they sought for remedies; and one devised one thing and another of them devised another thing. And then were discovered, they say, the ways of playing with the dice and the knucklebones and the ball, and all the other games excepting draughts (for the discovery of this last is not claimed by the Lydians). These games they invented as a resource against the famine: on one of the days they would play games all the time in order that they might not feel the want of food; and on the next they ceased from their games and had food. Thus they went on for eighteen years. As however the evil did not slacken but pressed upon them ever more and more, therefore their king divided the whole Lydian people into two parts, and he appointed by lot one part to remain and the other to go forth from the land; and the king appointed himself to be over that one of the parts which had the lot to stay in the land, and his son to be over that which was departing; and the name of his son was Tyrsenos. So the one party of them, having obtained the lot to go forth from the land, went down to the sea at Smyrna and built ships for themselves, wherein they placed all the movable goods which they had and sailed away to seek for means of living and a land to dwell in; until after passing by many nations they came at last to the land of the Ombricans, and there they founded cities and dwell up to the present time; and changing their name they were called after the king's son who led them out from home, not Lydians but Tyrsenians, taking the name from him. Herodotus. Histories. Trans. G.C. Macauley (1890). Book 1.94.

McGonigal equates the Lydians' famine problem with that of modernity: people are suffering, alienated, atomized, discontented from reality. If we all become gamers and game designers we will solve our 21st century problems. Gaming will provide us with among other things: 1) purposeful escape from broken reality; 2) more satisfying work; 3) stronger sense of community; 4) heroic and moral purpose; 5) individual control, power, reward; 6) entrepreneurial spirit; 7) intervene in reality and change it; 8) happiness.

Roessler notes in his journal that McGonigal fails to cite the whole passage. She only cites up to the fact that the Lydians survived for eighteen years. She fails to mention that in the end, the gaming initiative fails and half the population is sent into exile to solve the problem. Games do not intervene in reality and change it, they merely postpone it.

May 20: Roessler tries one more time to finish the 3p0 Cover Story that was originally planned for CIBS 39 2011 (published three months earlier). The 3p0 (*Threepenny Opera*) Cover Story was meant to serve as Killer App for the journal and for his career. Roessler shelves the project and takes out a project started in 2009 – *The Good Asshole of Philadelphia*. It is a

reimagining of Bb's *Good Person of Sezuan* that intervenes in and performatizes what it takes to be a real fucking asshole in Philadelphia. The signature stage prop is a giant pink asshole (a stand in for the Gods?) in which the Water Seller character keeps on getting his head shoved into for comic effect. Not realizing that she is indeed the real "good asshole," the main character travels around Philadelphia and confronting various tyrannies: the NFL, the university, dog fighting rings, and the Rocky Statue. A short time later, he is contacted by Linda Henderson from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia: Uwe Haus will be directing *The Good Person of Sezuan* at the school in the fall. Kairos?

June 1: Roessler attends production of *Ruined* in Philadelphia. He remembers his idea of not seeing a production, but rather just reading the playscript. Is it possible to review a production without seeing it? Is it moral to do such a thing? Does anyone really care? Could anyone tell the difference?

August 6: He works extensively on *The Good Asshole of Philadelphia*. The character is an African-American woman known as Johanna Dexter. Sort of



like Mother Courage betwixt Angela Davis and between Lisbeth Salander. Turning away from the original theater idea he writes a chapter of a proposed novel trilogy. The chapter is entitled, “The Killer App,” and finds Johanna Dexter, recently shot, laying in a pool of her own blood reflecting on who shot her. Her new video game pedagogy, a threat to the sanctity of the university and its hero – the professor, must be the root cause.

September 11: Tenth Anniversary of terrorist attacks on World Trade Center. Continuing work on the MMORPG Project. He begins to challenge McGonigal’s definition of the ludological. He throws Nietzsche’s “Eternal Recurrence of the Same,” Bakhtin’s “Carnavalesque,” and Brecht’s “If People Were Sharks” into the ludological stew. This proves to be an effective counter to McGonigal’s ludological theory, which is teleology wrapped up in positive psychology (The Science of Happiness), topped off with capitalist / entrepreneurial ideology.

October 4: He attends rehearsals of the *Good Person of Sezuan* at the University of the Arts.

November 11: He reviews production of *Good Person of Sezuan*.

December 1: *Stunde Null*: Roessler decides to try and write a review without seeing a production. He buys the playscript, soundtrack, and songtrack for the *Book of Mormon* (BoM).

December 6: Reads the playscript of the BoM. He successfully intervenes, resists, alienates. He feels no compulsion to see the show, yet at the same time he has enacted the show in his mind.

December 7: Listens to the BoM soundtrack.

December 8: Reads newspaper reviews of the BoM. Watches interviews and song clips on YouTube.

December 9: Listens to the BoM soundtrack on continuous loop for six hours. Likening the experience to a crystal methamphetamine high, he “comes down” by ingesting large amounts of jazz: Thelonious Monk, Lonnie Johnson, John Coltrane, Django Reinhardt.

December 10: Reads *Avenue Q* and *Urinetown*. Listens to both soundtrack albums.

December 11: Intensive meditation on *Badener Lehrstück*, *Street Scene*, and *3p0* in regards to BoM.

December 12: Rereads Bb’s *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*, but only the interludes / scenes with the Gods, as he listens to “Hasa Diga Eebowai” from the BoM. Pushes envelope by reading Genesis 12-24 as well as Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*. Finishes with a nightcap, Dylan’s *Highway 61 Revisited*.

December 13: Reads *Im Dickicht der Städte* (*Jungle of the Cities*) in conjunction with CIBS 40 Interviews with Group Motion Dance Company in Philadelphia. Conducts dangerous “Frankenstein” experiments by mixing *Jungle* with *Good Person*. IBS considers an intervention but concludes that dialectical salvation, redemption, and a happy end will come through CIBS 40.

December 14: Friends report that Roessler is acting very odd and begin to worry about his sanity. Yet, why does he seem so content?

December 15: Writes a new chapter for *The Good Asshole of Philadelphia*.

December 16: Returns to a pure musical analysis by listening to the *BoM* soundtrack. He starts augmenting the musicological realm with Frank Zappa: *Freak Out!* (1966) *Absolutely Free* (1967), *We're Only in it for the Money* (1968), "Billy the Mountain" (1972) and *Joe's Garage* (1979), and "Bobby Brown (Goes Down)" (1979). Also, starts to include *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1970) and *The Threepenny Opera* (1994 London / Jeremy Sams) soundtrack as dialectical interlocutors.

December 17: Begins editorial work on *CIBS 40*. Starts with a retro cover design (only black and white) and early leitmotif articles, Ralf Remshardt, Theatertreffen; Anthony Squiers, Interview.

December 18: Increasing success - mixing *BoM* with *Joe's Garage* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

December 19: Starts to read the actual Book of Mormon on his IPAD. Watches *South Park* authors' earlier movie: *Team America: World Police*. Hilarious, puppet version of the debauched American dream. Loves the kinky puppet sex scene and the application of the Chekov's Gun: "If in Act I you have a blow job offer on the table, then it must fire in the last act." But is probably most impressed with the Epic Puke Scene as it fulfills Brechtian principles of playing the intimate as epic. Idea slowly dawns that visual / spatial element of the cartoon / puppet show is crucial to the Brechtian success of the *South Park* project. The closer they get to live action, a.k.a, the musical, the more their subversion is totalized into sweetness. The insight affirms his thesis: He can review a production without seeing it and it will be a better experience.

December 20: Although highly entertained and cognitively engaged with material, he still feels no compulsion to see *BoM*. Content with his dialectical rehearsals, he begins an intense musical analysis of the *BoM* soundtrack. He decides to concentrate a model analysis on the song, "Hasa Diga Eebowai." Here is the song:

(Spoken) In this part of Africa, we ALL have a saying- whenever something bad happens, we just throw our hands up to the sky and say HASA DIGA EEBOWAI! It's the only way to get through all these troubled times. There's war, poverty, famine... but having a saying makes it all seem better!

There isn't enough food to eat!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

People are starving in the street!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

Hasa Diga Eebowai! (Chorus)

We've had no rain in several days!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

And 80% of us have AIDS!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

Many young girls here get circumcised,

Their clits get cut right off.

Way oh!

*And so we say up to the sky-
Hasa Diga Eebowai!*

*(Spoken): Now you try! Just stand up tall, tilt your head to the sky,
and list off all the bad things in your life!*

Somebody took our luggage away!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

The plane was crowded,

And the bus was late!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

When the world is getting you down,

There's nobody else to blame!

Way oh!

Raise your middle finger to the sky,

And curse his rotten name!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

(Spoken): Well, let's see... "Eebowai" means "God." And "Hasa Diga" means... "Fuck You." So I guess in English it would be "Fuck you, God!"

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

When God fucks you in the butt-

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

Fuck him right back in his cunt!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

Fuck you, God!

Here's the butcher, he has AIDS.

Here's the teacher, she has AIDS.

Here's the doctor, he has AIDS.

Here's my daughter, she has A....

Wonderful disposition.

She's all I have left in the world.

And if either of you lays a hand on her...

I will give you my AIDS!

If you don't like what we say,

Try living here a couple days!

Watch all your friends and family die!

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

(Fuck you!)

Hasa Diga Eebowai!

Fuck you God in the ass, mouth,

And cunt-a

Fuck you God in the ass, mouth,

And cunt-a

Fuck you God in the ass, mouth

And cunt-a

Fuck you in the eye!

Hasa-

Diga Eebowai!

Hasa-

Fuck you in the other eye!

Fuck you!
Fuck you God!
Fuck you!
Fuck you God!
Fuck you!
Fuck you God!
Hasa Diga!
Fuck you God!
In the cunt!

Parker, Lopez, Stone. *Book of Mormon* (2011): 17-23.

December 21: Roessler concludes his close reading of “Hasa Diga Eebowai” and makes the following notes in his journal:

- 1) Great parody of Disney’s *Lion King*. Pitch perfect imitation or Orientalist-Afrocentrism of the Magic Kingdom. Follows the symptomatic aesthetic from *South Park*: play the symptoms without blinking an eye. No alienation of form - the form is perfect musical theater and Disney songbook. This runs counter to Brecht, Zappa and most avant-garde practices - no attention is drawn to form; there is no skepticism / suspicion of form. Alienation comes through the content played against the form. The old “Mack the Knife” trick.
- 2) But alienation of form does take place. Mafala, the lead singer, sings in an African accent throughout, except for the part where he refers to his daughter. Then he breaks into a classic baritone voice of musical theater, something from Rodgers and Hammerstein. All the actors do this during the show.
- 3) Another alienation of form - the first chorus of “Hasa Diga Eebowai” occurs absurdly early. The syntax of musical theater and song is thrown off with such a maneuver. A wink-wink from the authors? Are they breaking their own symptomatic aesthetic and going Brechtian with the notorious Zeigefinger! Get people dancing and singing before they even know what they are saying. Nazism 101. Are these *South Park* guys even more subversive than Brecht?
- 4) After reading the playscript again for this part, also a bit of Brechtian irony. I’m sure it is not projected on a screen anywhere onstage but only the reader can read. Right after the song, the stage directions read: “After the inevitable thunderous applause, we can start the music up again as the set changes” (23).
- 5) By the end of the song they have changed keys to heighten musical tension and they have inserted various ridiculous harmony elements (e.g. “Hasa Diga Eebowai” is harmonized by the chorus as “Fu—uck You, Fuck You God.”)

December 23: After his intense effort analyzing “Hasa Diga Eebowai,” and resisting the Guitar Prophet Treatment of the song, Roessler processes the rest of the major songs through a musicological analysis: “All American Prophet,”

“Joseph Smith American Moses,” “Turn it Off,” “I Believe,” “Baptize Me,” “I Am Africa.”

December 24: The musicological analysis starts to resolve more and more into a standard musical theater production. The songs are too natural to be imitations, and hence the alienation effects begin to wane. The *mise en scene* within Roessler’s brain begins to degrade into a fascist musical theater production. He imagines the songs choreographed within a set design producing staged numbers that he has seen many times before. The *BoM* becomes *The Lion King*. Seeking to stem the degradation he watches *Team America* and several *South Park* episodes. The treatment is successful. He is able to graft the visual template of the puppet



show and the cartoons onto the human production of *BoM*. Roessler thanks God for the successful intervention by singing “Thank You, God” to the tune of “Hasa Diga Eebowai.” He checks his pulse: no compulsion to see the show.

January 15: He returns to a close re-reading of the *BoM* playscript. As he reads, he plugs in his musicological analysis with the spatial poetics provided by *Team America* and *South Park*. His initial reading had been indifferent, but now that the musical analysis has filled in many of the cracks, the playscript reads much differently. One still sees the musical theater *mise en scene* and choreography coming a mile away, but the musicological work allows one to make adjustments and circumlocute and circumambulate around the teleological totalizations. Additionally, one notices a Brechtian craft at work in the writing – a bitch slap at the audience every now and then to not completely swallow during the blow job they are giving; a voice of reason here and there. For example the Ugandans understand that both versions of the Book of Mormon they have heard (Elder Price’s truthful yet absurd retelling of the Book of Mormon and Elder Cunningham’s false yet equally absurd improvisation of the Book of Mormon are both equally metaphorical in the service of religion). The Ugandans “read” the religion enough to seemingly change their reality.

January 17: Performance Review I (Brechtian) section of *CIBS 40* is formatted.

January 20: Continued close re-reading of the text. Thoughts on the *BoM* aesthetic vis-à-vis Brechtian aesthetics. *BoM* never breaks character. It presents symptoms in full detail with exacting *Street Scene* observation. The symptoms they observe are human stupidity. Act II, Scene 1 ("Making Things Up Again) is a perfect example. Elder Cunningham has never read or understood the Book of Mormon or the Bible yet attempts to proselytize and colonize the Ugandans. He conflates the text with various pop culture references and the Ugandans buy it. So does the audience. There is a full examination of the symptoms – represented in voyeuristic detail but not any investigation. Any attempt at alienation is forestalled. In this resistance lies a tension – to not explore through the Brechtian lens. But in 2012 is such a symptomatic reading more subversive, more illuminating than the Brechtian turn? If Brecht had written Elder Cunningham, he would have written Arturo Ui.

January 25: Performance Review II (Brecht) section of *CIBS 40* is formatted.

January 27: Listens to new releases: Lou Reed / Metallica, *Lulu* and Tom Waits, *Bad as Me*. They do not prove useful.

February 15: Conducts a close reading of all major critical reviews of the *BoM*. He is astounded by the "Theatricality of Fascism" that he finds on the page, rather than on the stage. With the exception of only a few, almost every critic falls over themselves labeling the production with words such as "faith, love, sweetness." The consensus seems to be that since it is not a mean-spirited show, it is ok to say mean, racist, misogynistic things. The critics fall over each other to show that the production is neither "angry" or "intellectual" nor does it engage in any fingerpointing maneuvers. Oh, really? Most importantly, it prays to the God of Broadway. Interestingly enough, no critic seems to mention, or cite "Hasa Diga Eebowai" Why not? The critics confirm Roessler's thesis: Do not see the show. Look at what it does to one. Are the *BoM* authors crying about being mainstreamed or laughing their way to the bank?

Roessler notes the priestly incantations:

"Parker and Stone are actually morality-minded believers....there is decidedly something behind truly religious behavior. It's based, they suggest on conciliatory aspects that draw people together rather than force them apart" (David Finkle, Huffington Post).

"It's also surprisingly – and here's the dirty word – wholesome. An old-fashioned toe-tapping optimistic Big Broadway Musical, a buddy story....It argues for the social value of religion – no matter how implausible and arguable invented the stories upon which a religion is based – while teaching (if winkingly) the old showbiz lesson that the golden boy can be flawed, and the young misfit, if only he believes in himself, can come back a star." (Jesse Oxfeld, New York Observer)

"unbridled celebration of faith" (Howard Shapiro, Philadelphia Inquirer)

"it manages to leave you with a renewed sense of spiritual faith" (Roma Torre, NY1)

"Ultimately, they acknowledge that the altruistic element within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and other religions is worth preserving." (David Sheward, Back-

stage)

"the show is earnestly about the power of faith" (Steven Suskin, *Variety*)

"its heart is as pure as that of a Rodgers and Hammerstein show...dues-paying members of the church of Broadway" (Ben Brantley, *New York Times*)

"even as it profanes some serious articles of faith, its spirit is anything but mean" (Peter Marks, *Washington Post*)

"not only grounded in a serious love and understanding of the traditions that make a Broadway musical great but also filled with love for the very flawed, mortal characters who populate this romp" (Lisa Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly*)

"its inherent sweetness" (Elysa Gardner, *USA Today*).



March 1: Formats *Good Person of Sezuwan* Casebook for *CIBS 40*. As he works on the section, he mixes the *GPS* with the *BoM*. Speculates that *GPS* could done completely as a *BoM*-type production. How is the prologue not *BoM* aesthetics? How is the final trial scene not "Hasa Diga Eebowai?" Oh, that's right, Brecht wants the audience to say it consciously and not hum it unconsciously as a dirty little ditty underneath one's breath.

March 3: Conducts a Guitar Prophet Treatment on *BoM*. Plays "Hasa Diga Eebowai" on the guitar with the harmonica and juxtaposes with "King Herod's Song," "Bobby Brown," "All Along the Watchtower." Every time that the song starts to transform into an anthem, he plays against the totalization by ludologically alienating the song at all turns. Successful treatment.

March 4: He watches *Hello Dolly* at the school in which both his children participate in the production. The production is wonderfully rendered, but the

material is horribly fascistic. Processing the lessons of *CIBS 40*, he seamlessly starts to Brechtify the show with the principles of ludological alienation: 1) play it straight but switch the background to the War in Afghanistan; 2) Play it straight but reverse all gender roles; 3) Imagines son playing hidden guitar riffs against the orchestral music. The variations, permutations, mutations, interpretations, perspectival deviations go on endlessly. He infinitely games the production and yet does not intervene in reality. In the end, there is a tone, a moment, a residue of Contentment / Ausweg. The egoistic desire to be heard, point out stupidity, and suggest a different way has been sublated. He wonders: Is this dialectic catharsis the last moment of Becoming Brecht? To not speak, yet live for another day? To avoid the contented deaths of Socrates and Jesus and have Swiss bank accounts? To be good, yet survive?

March 10: He does one last round of musicological intervention. He juxtaposes the *BoM* with extensive renderings of Zappa, Coltrane, and the *3p0* (MacDonald / Sams, 1994 London Production). This is partially what it sounded like:

1. Coltrane (*Afro Blue*, *Live in Japan*. Length: 38:49)

2. *3p0* (*Squaddies Song* / *Cannon Song*)

*The British Army
Will make salami
From Basra to
Goose Green
Hoo Hoo Hoo
We'll help the foreigner
To meet the coroner
Brown or black or cocky
A darkys still a darky
You'll notice from the bodies
Where the squaddies have been*

3. *BoM* (*I Am Africa*)

*I am Africa...
I am Africa.
With the strength of the cheetah,
My native voice will ring...
We are Africa!
We are the heartbeat of Africa!
With the rhino-
The meerkat-
The noble lion king-
We are Africa!
We are the winds of the Serengeti,
We are the sweat of the jungle man,
We are the tears of Nelson Mandela,
We are the lost boy of the Sudan.
I am Africa!
Just like Bono! I am Africa!*

*I flew in here, and became one with
This land!*

Ha na heya! Za ba neyba!

4. Zappa, Joe's Garage (Stick It Out)

Fick mich, du miserabler Hurensohn

Fick mich, du miserabler Hurensohn

Steck ihn aus

Steck aus deinen heissen gelockten.

Steck ihn aus

Steck aus deinen' heissen gelockten

Steck ihn aus

Steck aus deinen heissen gelockten

Schwanz

Ah-ee-ahee-ahhhhh!

Mach es sehr schnell

Rein und raus

Magisches Schwein

Mach es sehr schnell

Rein und raus

Magisches Schwein

Bis es spritzt, spritzt, spritzt Feuer!

Bis es spritzt, spritzt, spritzt Feuer!

Aber beklecke nicht das Sofa, Sofa!

Aber beklecke nicht das Sofa, Sofa!

Aber beklecke nicht das Sofa, Sofa!

Aber beklecke nicht das Sofa, Sofa!

5. BoM (Joseph Smith American Moses)

Even though their prophet had died,

The Mormons stuck together,

And helped each other,

And were really nice to everyone they came across.

And one day, the Mormons finally found,

Sal Tlay Ka Siti! (Sal Tlay Ka Siti)

And then, the Mormons danced with ewoks,

And were greeted by Jesus!

Welcome Mormons!

Now, let's all have as many babies as we can,

And make big, Mormon families!

Woohoo!

Fuck your woman, fuck your man,

It is all part of gods plan

Mormons help god as they can,

Here in Salt Lake City land!

Thank you! Thank you,

For now we are fucking.

Thank you! Thank you,

Come god wants us fucking.

*Thank you! Thank you,
But get back to fucking.
Thaaaa- Get back to fucking!
Thank you! Thank you god!*

6. 3p0 (*Mack the Knife*)

*Little Johnny was abducted
And they sought him high and low
Though his parents paid the ransom
Mackie slashed him weeks ago,*

*You remember that fire in Houslow
Twenty Asians and a cat
While they're raking through the embers
Here's a flick knife, fancy that!*

*There's a schoolgirl, who's a call girl
With a baby at her breast
Someone's robbed her; someone's raped her
Someone's flick knife did the rest*

*These may seem like scary stories
But don't have nightmares or be upset
Still he is evil, he's a murderer
And they haven't caught him a yet.*

*He's a rapist, he's a sadist
And they haven't caught him yet.*

March 19, 2012: Roessler concludes his project. He has successfully, and with great dialectical pleasure, reviewed the *BoM*. The final price: \$50; the final conclusion: priceless. He works on the last sections of *CIBS 40*, continues to write the *Good Asshole of Philadelphia*, and games the university, academic journal infinitely with sweetness and faith.

Aber

Widerstand

Leisten...

Aber

Widerstand

Leisten...

Norman Roessler
Editor, CIBS
Temple University
Intellectual Heritage Program
214 Anderson Hall
1114 W. Berks St.
Philadelphia, PA 19122 / USA

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