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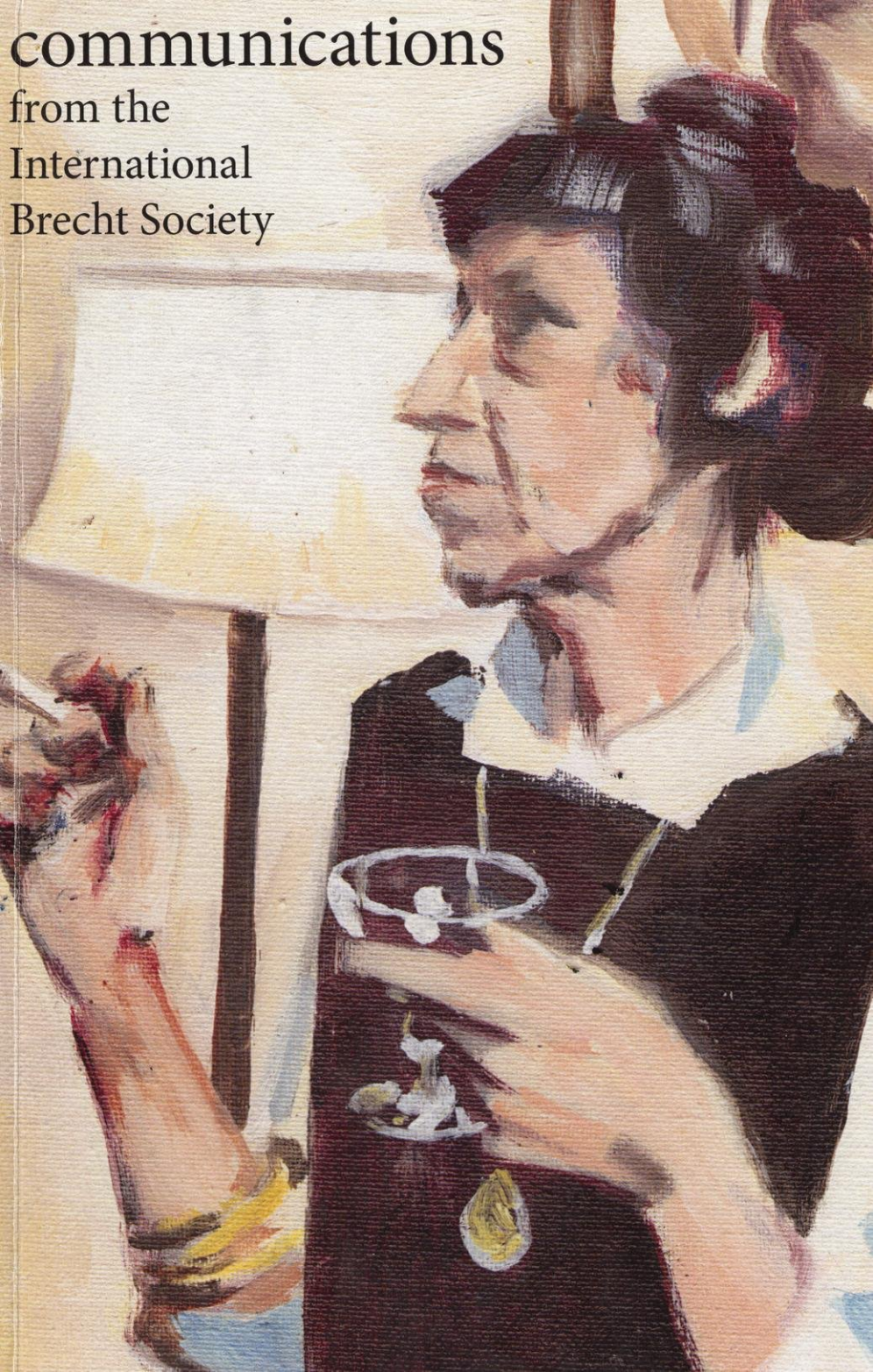
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communications

from the
International
Brecht Society



CIBS

www.ecibs.org

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CIBS 41 / 2012

Edited by Andy Spencer

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Membership: All IBIS 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 submissions in English, German, Spanish, and French. To join the IBIS go to the society website www.brechtsociety.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 (not limited to the theatre) of Brecht's 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. 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 spencer.4@osu.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 editor's viewpoints or the viewpoints of the organization.

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Inside back cover: Cover Artist Berry van Boekel

My sincere thanks to all contributors and to Paula Hanssen, Norm Roessler, and Marc Silberman for their assistance.

On a personal note, best wishes to two of our reviewers and recent / soon-to be graduates Kevin Richards and Louis Waldmeir.

Please feel free to contact me with comments, suggestions, and ideas for the next issue (spencer.4@osu.edu) - and remember, reviewers are entitled to press tickets!

AS

Bericht über Aktivitäten des Vorstands der IBS im Jahr 2012

**Prof. Dr. Günther Heeg,
Vizepräsident der IBS**

1. Beitritt der IBS zur Arbeitsgemeinschaft Literarischer Gesellschaften (ALG)

Im September 2012 hat die IBS die Mitgliedschaft in der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Literarischer Gesellschaften und Gedenkstätten (ALG) beantragt und nach einer Präsentation auf der Jahresversammlung der ALG auch erhalten. Die ALG ist der Dachverband von aktuell 222 Literaturgesellschaften und Literaturmuseen. Sie unterhält u.a. das Projekt „Panorama and Perspectives“, das die Zusammenarbeit und Vernetzung von Literarischen Gesellschaften in Europa unterstützt. Die ALG fördert überdies aus Mitteln des Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien Projekte, „die geeignet scheinen, die Wirkung eines historischen oder zeitgenössischen Autors oder eines literarischen Genres in der Öffentlichkeit zu verbreiten und zu vertiefen.“ Beides kommt unseren eigenen Aktivitäten sehr entgegen. Der Beitritt zur ALG ermöglicht der IBS eine gezielte Kommunikation, einen besseren Austausch und die Vernetzung mit anderen literarischen Gesellschaften. Vor allem aber versetzt er die IBS in die erfreuliche Lage, über die ALG Fördergelder für Projekte wie das folgende der Brecht-Haus-Lectures zu beantragen.

2. Das Projekt der Brecht-Haus-Lectures

Im November haben der Vorstand der

IBS, vertreten durch Vizepräsident Günther Heeg, und Erdmut Wizisla, Leiter des Bertolt-Brecht-Archivs, zusammen mit Christian Hippe vom Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus das Projekt der „Brecht-Haus-Lectures“ entwickelt. Unter diesem Titel planen die International Brecht Society, das Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus und das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv der Akademie der Künste eine neue Veranstaltungsreihe, die innovative Zugänge zum Werk Bertolt Brechts entwickeln und präsentieren soll. Sie will das Brecht'sche Konzept der „Verfremdung“ auch auf sein eigenes Werk anwenden. Ziel ist es, neue Zugänge zum Schaffen Bertolt Brechts zu entwickeln, auszuloten und zur Diskussion zu stellen. Neben überraschenden Neuansätzen aus den Reihen der Brecht-Forschung geht es in erster Linie darum, Künstler, Literaten, Filmemacher, Medientheoretiker und Kulturwissenschaftler einzuladen, eine unvoreingenommene „Außenperspektive“ auf Brecht vorzustellen und derart das Gespräch über Brecht neu zu eröffnen. Geplant sind Folgen von jeweils sechs Veranstaltungen, verteilt über bis zu drei Jahre, mit mindestens zwei Veranstaltungen pro Jahr. Um die Resonanz der Veranstaltungen zu erhöhen, sollen die Lectures als dokumentarische Videomitschnitte im Internet zugänglich gemacht werden, nach Möglichkeit in Form eines Livestreams. Darüber hinaus ist geplant, die einzelnen Beiträge in dem Jahrbuch der IBS sowie, in gebündelter Form, in späteren Sammelbänden zu publizieren, um sie derart einer weiteren Interessentenschaft zugänglich zu machen. Geplanter Starttermin der Brecht-Haus-Lectures ist Mitte/Ende 2013. Erste Gespräche mit den favorisierten Gästen der ersten Veranstaltungsfolge haben bereits begonnen.

3. Konferenzen

In 2012 haben in Europa bedeutende internationale Konferenzen stattgefunden, an denen der Vorstand und Mitglieder der IBS aktiv gestaltend und beiträgend beteiligt waren. Am 13. und 14. Februar fand in Rom an der Universität Roma Tre die Konferenz „Brecht e i media“ („Brecht und die Medien“) statt, veranstaltet vom Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici unter der Leitung von Francesco Fiorentino. Die Konferenz, an der von der Seite der IBS Vizepräsident Günther Heeg und Patrick Primavesi teilgenommen haben, hat zentral Brechts bislang noch nicht hinreichend erforshtes transmediales Verfahren in seiner Produktionsweise und in der Reflexion seiner Arbeit in den Blick genommen. In den Sektionen „Brechts Auseinandersetzung mit den technischen Medien“, „Das ‚Modell Brecht‘ in den anderen Medien“ und „Postdramatische Fortschreibungen von Brechts transmedialer écriture“ wurde ein zukunftsträchtiges Feld abgesteckt, das in einer italienisch-deutschen Forschungskooperation, vor allem durch den Austausch von Nachwuchswissenschaftlern, weiter erforscht werden soll. Die Publikation der Konferenzbeiträge steht unmittelbar bevor.

Von großer Bedeutung für die Verständigung zwischen Ost- und Westeuropa über das Werk von Brecht war die Konferenz „Theater – Drama – Gesellschaft. Die heutige Perzeption des Werkes von Bertolt Brecht.“ Sie fand vom 19. – 21. April in Katowice in Polen statt. Veranstalter waren das dortige Instytut Filologii Germańskiej UŚ unter der Leitung von Grażyna Barbara Szezwczyk, das Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv und die Biblioteka Śląska. Als Vertreter der IBS trugen u.a. Florian Vaßen, Günther Heeg, Gerd Koch, Joachim Lucchesi,

Francesca Vidal und Erdmut Wizisla vor. Verhandelt wurde ein breites Spektrum von Themen, überwiegend aus der Perspektive gegenwärtiger Forschungskonzepte und mit einem großen Interesse an Brecht als Zeitgenossen. Besonders erfreulich waren dabei das Engagement und die Initiativen der polnischen NachwuchswissenschaftlerInnen. Beiträge der Konferenz werden im Jahrbuch der IBS 2013 veröffentlicht.

4. Brecht in Japan

Anlässlich eines Forschungsaufenthalts von Vizepräsident Günther Heeg in Japan ergab sich ein intensiver Austausch mit japanischen KollegInnen über Brechts Konzept der Geste und seine Aktualität. Das vom DAAD und der JSPS geförderte Forschungsprojekt „Tradition und Transkulturalität im japanischen und deutschen Gegenwartstheater“ ist an der Keio Universität Tokyo angesiedelt, der unmittelbare Kooperationspartner ist Eiichiro Hirata. Im Zentrum des Projekts steht dabei das transkulturelle Potential der Geste. Ausgegangen wird von dem Konzept der gestischen Mediatisierung von kulturellen Traditionen und den Erscheinungen kultureller Globalisierung und Hybridisierung. Darunter wird mit Brecht und Benjamin das Potential von Gesten verstanden, die jeweils eigene Geschichte als Zitat in die Begegnung mit dem Fremden einzubringen. Die in der Geste zitierte Vergangenheit ist aus dem Kontinuum der kulturellen Tradition herausgebrochen und offen für neue Geschichte(n) in der Konstellation mit anderen Räumen und Zeiten. Der Forschungsaufenthalt gab Gelegenheit, in Workshops, Seminaren und Vorträgen an unterschiedlichen Orten dieses Konzept mit japanischen WissenschaftlerInnen, Experten des Gegenwartstheaters

und Theatermachern vorzustellen und zu diskutieren. Die große Resonanz, auf die das Projekt dabei gestossen ist, zeigt, dass hier eine neue Forschungsperspektive für die Kooperation japanischer und deutscher Brecht-ForscherInnen eröffnet wurde, die auch den Theaterensembles des japanischen Gegenwartstheaters überraschende Impulse geben kann. So haben der Regisseur Motoi Mura und die Gruppe Chiten aus Kyoto, die auf dem Festival/Tokyo mit Elfriede Jelineks „Kein Licht“ einen sensationellen Erfolg feierten, nach einem längeren Gespräch über die Brecht'sche Geste spontan die Arbeit an einem „Fatzler“-Projekt beschlossen, das sie auch in Europa zeigen wollen.

**Brecht Yearbook:
Editor's Report
Ted Rippey (Bowling Green
State University, Ohio)
December 2012**

As newly appointed editor of the Brecht Yearbook, I am beginning to sketch out the plans for the next volumes. BY 38 (2013) will be a multi-topic volume. We will have a dossier on director Manfred Karge that will include an appreciation by British director Stephen Unwin and a range of memoir and tribute texts. Peggy Setje-Eilers (Vanderbilt University), the point person for the dossier, is organizing the bulk of the materials; I am working with Unwin. Volume 38 will also feature articles developed from contributions to the April 2012 international Brecht conference in Katowice, Poland. At present, we have six commitments and expect two or three more. These are grouped under two general headings: transcultural dimensions and construction—performance—consumption. I

am working with Zbigniew Feliszewski (University of Katowice) on this. NOTE: I would still like to receive and refer further manuscripts for BY 38. Preferred submission deadline: ca. 15 February (theodor@bgsu.edu). Target publication date: August 2013.

BY 39 (2014) will feature articles developed from contributions to the 2013 IBS symposium in Porto Alegre (The Creative Spectator: Collision and Dialogue). The provisional focus for BY 40 (2015) is aesthetics and war, drawing on (but not limited to) work to be presented at various venues on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the start of World War I. For BY 41 (2016), I am considering a focus on the senses.

Joy Haslam Calico (Blair School of Music, Vanderbilt University) will join the BY editorial board. To close, I would like to thank Hans-Thies Lehmann for this appointment, Friedemann Weidauer and Marc Silberman for information and guidance, and the members of the editorial board for welcoming me on board.

Report from the IBS Secretary/Treasurer 2012

Paula Hanssen

IBS Financial report 2011 to 2012

Memberships are coming in and we've raised our numbers! The following report indicates, as last year, that we'll cover expenses for 2011 and 2012.

And to help us, please ask your library to subscribe to the *Brecht Yearbook*.

We discussed raising our fees at the last membership meeting (2010):

for those renewing in 2013 and afterward these will be the rates:

•	Institutional	\$50
•	Regular membership	\$45
•	Student, retired	\$30

Summary of expenses and assets in USD

<i>Brecht Yearbook</i> 36 / 2011 (paid 2012)	\$3,500
Shipping	\$1,500
'Wild Apricot' database	\$ 275
<i>Communications</i> 40 / 2011 + shipping (paid 2012)	\$2,920
Total expenses paid:	\$8,195

IBS assets–

Yearbook Royalties, back orders, memberships 2011/2012	\$13,790
Euro checking 9707 Euro	\$12,785
Assets -- after expenses paid	\$18,380
+ Money Market savings	\$11,010
TOTAL	\$29,390

Projected (estimated) expenses in the coming year 2012-2013:

<i>Communications</i> 41 (2012) and shipping :	\$3400
<i>Brecht Yearbook</i> 37(2012):	\$3500
Shipping and Handling	\$1200
Symposium May, 2013 in Porto Alegre, Brazil	\$5000
TOTAL	~ \$13,100

Synopsis of IBS Membership

Year	Individual	Institutional	Total
2007	53	72	170
2008	76	84	160
2009	84	86	170
2010	70	90	160
2011	63	90	153
2012	105	115	220

14th International Brecht Society Symposium

THE CREATIVE SPECTATOR: COLLISION AND DIALOGUE

20–23 May 2013

Tentative Program (as of December 2012)

Post Graduate Program in Performing Arts / Drama Department
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul
110, Paulo Gama Avenue – Central Campus
Porto Alegre/RS – Brazil

May 20

8:00 - 10:00am: Arrival & Registration

10:00 - 10:30am: Opening Ceremony

10:30am - 12:00pm: Conference Keynote - Heiner Goebbels
(Giessen)

12:00 - 2:00pm: Lunch break

2:00 - 3:30pm: Parallel Sessions – UFRGS Central Campus

3:30 - 4:00pm: Coffee Break

4:00 - 5:30pm: Parallel Sessions – UFRGS Central Campus

2:00 - 6:00pm: Workshops – Mário Quintana Cultural Center

6:00 - 7:30pm: Cocktail reception

9:00pm: Performance 1 (to be announced) – Teatro São Pedro

May 21

10:00am - 12:00pm: Conference Keynote – Ingrid Koudela
(São Paulo)

12:00 - 2:00pm: Lunch Break & Performance / Intervention by
Drama Department, UFRGS

2:00 - 3:30pm: Parallel Sessions – UFRGS Central Campus

3:30 - 4:00pm: Coffee Break

4:00 - 5:30pm: Parallel Sessions – UFRGS Central Campus

2:00 - 6:00pm: Workshops – Mário Quintana Cultural Center

6:00 - 7:30pm: Working Reports – *Teatro Oficina* (São Paulo) and
She She Pop (Germany)

9:00pm: Performances – *La Pocha Nostra* (Mexico/United States)
Performance 1 (to be announced) – Teatro São Pedro

May 22

10:00am - 12:00pm: Conference Keynote – Nikolaus Müller-Schöll
(Frankfurt am Main)

12:00 - 2:00pm: Lunch Break and Performance/Intervention –
(E)xperiência Subterrânea (Post Graduate Program in Theater /
UDESC)

2:00 - 3:30pm: Parallel Sessions – UFRGS Central Campus

3:30 - 4:00pm: Coffee Break

4:00 - 5:30pm: Parallel Sessions – UFRGS Central Campus

2:00 - 6:00pm: Workshops - Mário Quintana Cultural Center

6:00 - 7:30pm: Working Reports – *Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani*
(Peru) and *Terreira da Tribo* (Porto Alegre/Brazil)

9:00pm – Performances

Cia do Latão (Brazil)

La Pocha Nostra (Mexico/United States)

She She Pop (Germany)

May 23

10:00am - 12:00pm: Conference Keynote – Hans-Thies Lehmann
(Berlin)

12:00 - 2:00pm: Lunch Break and Urban Intervention –
Heróis do Cotidiano (Post Graduate Program in Performing Arts /
UNIRIO)

2:00 - 3:30pm: Parallel Sessions – UFRGS Central Campus

3:30 - 4:00pm: Coffee Break

4:00 - 5:30pm: Parallel Sessions – UFRGS Central Campus

2:00 - 6:00pm: Workshops – Mário Quintana Cultural Center

6:00 - 7:30pm: Working Reports – *Cia do Latão* (São Paulo/Brazil)
and *Teatro Vivo* (Rio Grande do Sul/Brazil)

9:00pm - Performances

She She Pop (Germany)

Cia do Latão (São Paulo/Brazil)

IBS-sponsored sessions at the Modern Language Association convention in Boston, 3-6 Jan. 2013.

Session 33: Thursday, 3rd January Brecht and Celan

Moderator: Friedemann Weidauer
(University of Connecticut, Storrs)

1. Celan Our Brecht: Robert Kaufman
(University of California, Berkeley)
2. "Not Only Cold": The Motif of Snow
in the Poetry of Brecht and Celan: Elena
Pnevmonidou (University of Victoria)
3. Speaking and Being Silent: Celan's
Dialog with Brecht in his Late Works:
Ulrich Plass (Wesleyan University)

Respondent: Paul Peters (McGill University)

1. Robert Kaufman: Celan Our Brecht

"Celan Our Brecht" begins by polemically arguing that the most important index of Celan and Brecht's deep affinity is that both would have had utterly no patience with the idea that it should even be necessary to spend time and energy establishing (1) the lyric-aesthetic complexity and profundity of Brecht's greatest poetry, or (2) the radically engaged social character of Celan's. Granted, reductionist criticism on various sides has always painted Brecht as merely a politico who had a way with language, and Celan as someone interested only in the deepest recesses of poetic form but who'd somehow found thematic means to make everyone have to wonder if his esoteric works' seeming reference to ultimate sociopolitical and historical concerns might not--unfortunately, or so they thought--have to be taken seriously.

My paper contends that precisely the need to even counter such reductionist portrayals of their work--not to mention, of the always real, intense, yet far-from-straightforward relationship more generally of poetry (or theater) and politics--drove both Brecht and Celan absolutely nuts. I briefly set forth their arguments about this, as well as the evidence (from their work, and from sociopolitical history) that overwhelmingly supports their case.

The paper then turns to give most of its attention to what both poets--including Brecht, who presumably would either interestedly present an energetic challenge to the paper's primary argument, or seek to outflank it by giving a more radical account and claiming its contentions for himself, or: both!--would deem a more genuinely-involved-with-the-poetry-itself thesis: That the two poets' great influence since their deaths (Brecht in 1956, Celan in 1970) has seen a convergence of their poetics; that that convergence has--because of the character of each artist's work, in connection to historical circumstances since 1970--made Brecht's poetics seem a good deal more Celanian while, asymmetrically, Celan's poetry has come to seem MUCH more Brechtian than it had in Celan's own lifetime; and, finally, that this convergence (anticipated by Adorno) has occurred in significant part because of changes in how poetry signifies in a world far more suffused by commodity/exchange-value than even the powerful regimes of commodity/exchange-value that both poets severely critiqued in their times; in short, that for reasons poetic-aesthetic, sociohistorical, and political, Celan Has Become Our Brecht. Ultimately, the paper argues that Brechtian making-strange, and Celanian meridian-making imaginative gesture, have met in a modality

of Gestus that understands the critical poetic form which stretches past the given conceptual boundaries set by commodity/exchange-value to be at once radically aesthetic and urgently political. The paper reads several early poems by Brecht--both less and more political, less and more lyric--together with two of Brecht's later poems, while presenting a series of Celan lyrics that utterly refute claims for the separation of aesthetics and politics in his work; finally, the paper turns to Celan's "Ein blatt, baumlos...[für Bertolt Brecht]." The paper's theoretical sources are Arndt, Adorno, and Benjamin.

2. Elena Pnevmonidou: "Not Only Cold": The Motif of Snow in the Poetry of Brecht and Celan

Bringing Brecht and Celan into a dialogue with each other necessarily leads one to the limits of language and of what poetry can legitimately speak about. Brecht's assertion in "An die Nachgeborenen" that a naïve conversation about trees is almost a crime in light of fascism is as well-known as is Celan's "Ein Blatt, baumlos," which both challenges and radicalizes Brecht to the point of nearly making impossible any conversation at all. Trees, however, are not the only motif through which a link can be forged between Brecht and Celan. In "Ausschließlich wegen der zunehmenden Unordnung," Brecht expresses the same concern about naïve nature poetry, but with reference to conversation about a different natural phenomenon, namely "Von Schneefällen (sie sind nicht nur kalt, wir wissen's)." Snow is arguably one of the most abundant motifs in Celan. Indeed, "Ein Blatt, baumlos" is from Celan's collection *Schneepart*. Snow is also prominent in Brecht, especially in his poetry after 1933. This paper explores the signif-

icance of snow in Brecht and Celan and examines in particular the dual function of snow as both an element of the content of poetry that expresses something about the predicament of the poet and poetry in light of Fascism and the Holocaust as well as a complex metaphor for the situatedness of poetry itself and for the creative process in these times of crisis.

3. Ulrich Plass: Speaking and Being Silent: Celan's Dialog with Brecht in *Schneepart*

My lecture focused on Celan's most frequently cited response to Brecht, the poem "Ein Blatt" from his volume *Schneepart*. In the latter, Celan repeatedly attempts to interpret the message in a bottle Brecht launched with his plea "An die Nachgeborenen." In "Ein Blatt," Celan perceives Brecht's famous lament—how a conversation about trees is almost a criminal act because it includes being silent about the countless atrocities of the war and the camps—not merely as an omission of speech, but, implicitly, as a necessarily negative linguistic act: falling silence or at least approaching silence is for him integral to how a poem must speak negatively in "dark times." In his dialog with Brecht, Celan puts into literary practice his programmatic conviction that poetry must expose itself to the risk of failing to speak responsibly in the wake of the atrocities Brecht alludes to in "An die Nachgeborenen." Celan conceives of poetic silence as a means of passing through the barbarity of what he calls "death-bringing speech." His active, eloquent silence can be seen in another of *Schneepart*'s poems, "Du liegst," which implicitly responds to Brecht's Rosa Luxemburg poems and suggests that it is only in the silently enacted memory of the brutal murders of Luxemburg

and Liebknecht, i.e., in the caesuras and ellipses of poetic speaking, that the continuing catastrophic course of history comes to a momentary standstill.

Moderator Friedemann Weidauer notes: Respondent Paul Peters raised stimulating questions regarding the influence of Brecht on Celan and the role of poetry “after Auschwitz.” While this panel was scheduled for the earliest time slot for regular sessions on the program, it still attracted a fair number of listeners interested in Brecht, Celan, and poetry.

Session 234: Friday, 4th January Brecht – Müller – Language

Moderator: Paula Hanssen (Webster University, St. Louis)

1. Translating Tragedy in Brecht's Marlowe and Müller's Shakespeare: Astrid Oesmann (University of Iowa)
2. Who Is Afraid of Metaphors? Brecht's and Müller's Adaptations of the Horatii: Juliette Brungs (University of Minnesota, Twin Cities)
3. Conduct According to Keuner: Heiner Müller's Interviews: Stephan Pabst (Universität Jena)

Respondent: Janine Ludwig (Dickinson College / Universität Bremen)

This collaborative session between the IBS and the Division of Twentieth-Century German Literature, at the suggestion of the “Internationale Heiner-Müller-Gesellschaft,” used the Division's theme “Translation Unbound” by exploring how Müller's work translates Brecht's ideas. Müller wrote adaptations of Brecht writings and as a lyric poet positioned himself vis-à-vis Brecht as an artist who helped renew the German language. This session focused

on Müller as a case study for Brecht's influence in postwar German literature.

1. Astrid Oesmann: Translating Tragedy: Brecht's Marlowe and Müller's Shakespeare.

This paper included interesting examples for Brecht's “gestic speech” and Müller's similar use in his translation of *Hamlet*. Müller's play *Hamletmaschine* created what critics have called a “Verenglischung des Deutschen” (Anglicization of German). In Brecht's short essay “Über reimlose Lyrik mit unregelmäßigen Rhythmen” (“On Rhymelless Verse with Irregular Rhythms”) he describes his translation of Marlowe's *The Life of Edward the Second of England* and how this led him to formulate the basic principles of his theater. By using parataxis and irregular rhymes, Brecht aims for what he calls “gestic speech” to protest the harmony of traditional theatrical speech. Müller uses “gestic speech,” but claims that in translating Shakespeare he sought to liberate himself from Brecht. This presentation examined how the translations of both authors affect their theatrical practice and their understanding of history. Despite parallels, the authors' differences culminate in divergent approaches to the concept of tragedy, a concept that Brecht seems to escape but Müller seeks to revive.

2. Juliette Brungs: Who Is Afraid of Metaphors: Brecht's and Müller's Adaptations of the Horatii

Müller's version of the Roman Horatii myth in his text *Der Horatier* was an adaptation and response to the ancient myth that was known also from Brecht's early learning play *Die Horatier und die Kuriatier*. Müller not only revives forms of theatricality like Brecht's *Lehrstück*, but linguistically renegotiates political

contents and ideas of the twentieth century. Juliette Brungs presented the ideological and utopian forms of language used by both authors in relation to a general application of the myth as a source for metaphor and imagery and as a tool for social criticism.

A page from Müller's manuscript of *Der Horatier* which showed his sketches of about 40 or so faces was projected, which emphasized visually "Viele Männer sind in einem Mann" (to which he had changed Brecht's motto "Viele Dinge sind in einem Ding"), like a visualization of the motto which Müller gave his *Horatier*. At the end we heard excerpts from the scores for both the Brecht and Müller plays. The musical languages represent not only their time (in terms of style in composition), but also the different philosophical approach to the world by the composers themselves, which again reconnects to the texts.

3. Stephan Pabst: Conduct According to Keuner: Heiner Müller's Interviews

Müller's post-socialist "work" consists primarily of his public interviews. In contrast to his last theater text that features Brecht's disciples and widows on stage and to his last poems on Brecht's death, the interviews seem to mark the end of a critical Brecht reception because the form itself plays only a marginal role in the latter's works. Yet this initial impression deceives, for Brecht is cited so frequently that it seems as if he is disappearing behind Brecht. This recourse to Brecht is partially explained on a meta-reflexive level, pointing to a strategy of self-denial that Müller pursues in the interviews. An entire series of unidentified Keuner quotes refers not only to an arbitrary object of interest but to a strategy of communication. The reason for this connection can be

sought in the dialogically constructed Keuner stories themselves, which reflect on communicative strategies. Müller's recourse to the communicative model "Keuner" raises the question whether the strategy of self-denial still serves some end, as with Keuner, or whether it has become an end in itself, having lost the link to the end that it is supposed to justify – be it conceived as an ideological end or the literary end of a "work."

Moderator Paula Hansen notes that while respondent Janine Ludwig was unable to attend, a lively discussion ensued with questions from the audience and a reading of questions from her response paper.

Next Year: Two calls for papers for the IBS sessions at the 2014 MLA, convening in Chicago, January 2-5.

Brecht and the Century of War

Anticipating the 100th anniversary of the onset of hostilities in WWI and looking back at the impact of war throughout the twentieth century, this panel will explore how war informs and takes form in Brecht's work; how it functions as political problem and aesthetic opportunity. Areas of inquiry might include: conflict as a condition of perception, reality, identity; war, exile, and literary experiment; displaced artists, deprived audiences, and the vulnerabilities of theater; antifascism and the necessity of violence; trauma, memory, and writing for those born later; the viscosity of war and the dual edge of epic distance; poetry and propaganda; media and mobilization. Send abstracts (200-300 words) by March 15, 2013 to Marc Silberman (mdsilber@wisc.edu) and Ted Rippey (theodor@bgsu.edu).

Teaching Brecht (a collaborative session with the MLA Division on Teaching Literature)

Proposals sought with critical reflections and best practices on teaching Bertolt Brecht's ideas and works (dramas, prose, poetry), including text selection, performing excerpts, and integrating theoretical issues. Send abstracts (200 words), by March 15 to Per Urlaub (urlaub@austin.utexas.edu) and Paula Hanssen (hanssen@webster.edu)

In July we received the following press release from Suzi Williamson,
Marketing Manager at Methuen Drama & Arden Shakespeare

NEWS FROM DRAMA ONLINE:

Drama Online to make Brecht's dramatic works available electronically for the first time

We are delighted to announce that Drama Online's digital library will include the work of Bertolt Brecht. This is the first time that Brecht's plays will be available electronically, and will be the only place that users can browse his work online.

In the same way that Drama Online will hold multiple translations of works by authors such as Chekhov and Ibsen, classics texts by Brecht can be browsed and studied in more than one translation. For example *Mother Courage and Her Children* will be available in translations by Tony Kushner, John Willett, and Michael Hoffman, and versions of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* will be available by Alistair Beaton, Frank McGuinness and a translation by James Stern, Tania Stern and W. H. Auden. Alongside Brecht's most-studied and performed works, lesser-known plays

from all eight Brecht *World Classics* play collection volumes will be available, including the *Lehrstücke*.

Additionally, Drama Online will bring together many of the crucial essays that illustrate the development of his aesthetic and the breadth of his interests. *Brecht on Theatre*, *Brecht on Film and Radio*, *Brecht on Art and Politics*, and the *Journals* will together provide an unrivalled corpus of Brecht's writings on theatre, culture and theory. This fully searchable collection offers the work of one of the twentieth century's leading cultural theorists within the click of a mouse.

Drama Online will feature drama titles from Bloomsbury's Methuen Drama and Arden Shakespeare lists and from Faber & Faber to form a collection of the most studied, performed and critically acclaimed plays from the last two and half thousand years. In addition, it provides expert student guidance in the form of scholarly notes, annotated texts, critical analysis and contextual information. Performance and practitioner texts, from theory to backstage and acting guides, will make this an essential study tool meeting the full range of drama teaching needs.

Drama Online launches in Spring 2013, with trials from October 2012.

If you have any queries, please contact Suzi Williamson at suzi.williamson@bloomsbury.com or on 020 7631 5840. (Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP)

Memorial for Suhrkamp's Brecht Lector Wolfgang Jeske

2 July, 2012, Palais am Festungsgraben
in Berlin

Margaret Setje-Eilers (Vanderbilt
University, Nashville)

On 2 July, 2012, Hoffmann und Campe Verlag and the International Brecht Society co-sponsored an evening in honor of Wolfgang Jeske, Brecht lector at Suhrkamp Verlag for many decades. Organized by the *Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus*, eleven speakers and a large audience of Brecht scholars gathered to commemorate his life and work. Jeske, who passed away at the age of sixty on 11 February, 2012, became known in the former East and West for his conscientious and enthusiastic responsibility to Brecht's work, his "Dienst am Text." Moderator Jan Knopf announced that the distinguished panel of Jeske's friends and colleagues would relate memories highlighting his life. In stories and anecdotes, speakers described Jeske's painstaking dedication to every task, from providing answers to individual questions, to large projects that culminated in his *Bibliographie des Suhrkamp Verlages 1950–2000* (2002). Despite the somber circumstances, recollections of Jeske, who had hosted many panel members, at times became quite high-spirited. Inge Gellert, Christa Mühl, Werner Hecht, Gotthard Erler, Günter Berg, Joachim Lucchesi, Therese Hörnigk, Frank Hörnigk, Kristin Schulz, Erdmut Wizisla, and moderator Jan Knopf recapped thirty years of Jeske's life with Suhrkamp that also simultaneously traced the publishing history of Brecht at Suhrkamp and its East German counterpart, Aufbau Verlag.

Speakers recounted Jeske's career, including Suhrkamp's move from Frankfurt am Main to Berlin in 2010,

and Jeske's new life at the present location, emphasizing the unique cooperation between the two Brecht publishers in former East and West Germany and Jeske's crucial role in promoting this successful collaboration. Günter Berg, current head of Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, worked with Jeske for twenty years at Suhrkamp and stressed Jeske's collegiality, reliability, loyalty, diligence, expertise, and kindness to his colleagues, as well as his relentless dedication to the text. Werner Hecht, acquainted with Jeske for three decades, declared that Jeske's final and only authority was Brecht himself, a trait he had only seen to this degree in Elisabeth Hauptmann. Jan Knopf stated that Jeske had such a high level of expertise that only he could prove whether a quote was or was not Brecht's. One could ask Jeske anything about Brecht, Werner Hecht explained. He was truly Brecht's representative on earth, as Stefan Geyer wrote in an obituary, "Der Stellvertreter Brechts auf Erden – in Memoriam Wolfgang Jeske" (17 February 2012). Joachim Lucchesi noted that Jeske did not object to corrections as long as the text was "richtig durchkorrigiert." Many speakers recollected the difficult communication between former East and West in the days before E-mail, when parcel post from Frankfurt to Berlin had taken three weeks. Gotthard Erler recalled his own first computer, one that Jeske had personally transported piece by piece from Frankfurt to East Berlin. Erdmut Wizisla described Jeske as a messenger (and smuggler) whom one could trust, "Zöllner und Weiser zugleich." When Jeske bent over a manuscript, it was never in vain. Inge Gellert, editor of Margarete Steffin's posthumous work, *Konfutse versteht nichts von Frauen* (Rowohlt Verlag Berlin, 1991), talked about the generosity and kindness that

Jeske had shown during their trips to places in Scandinavia where Brecht and Steffin had lived. Television film director Christa Mühl contributed some of the most touching personal memories of a trip to Frankfurt to celebrate Jeske's fiftieth birthday. Jeske, who lived alone, hosted his guests in a new five-room apartment. He explained that the reason for the move was "more walls" in the new apartment. Because the movers refused to transport the countless boxes of books up to the new space, he told them that he had found a crane to move the books to the thirty-five bookcases with special sections, not only for Brecht, but also for scholars such as Hecht and Knopf. Puzzled by the enormous stacks of newspapers and other papers in crates that spilled over into the halls, Mühl picked up a newspaper from one crate and turned it over, deeply moved to find an article about one of her own films on the title page.

The evening of memories, with a wine reception hosted by the International Brecht Society, took place at the Palais am Festungsgraben in Berlin, the interim home for Literaturforum events until the September reopening of the *Kleiner Saal* of the Brecht-Haus in the Chauseestrasse. To close the formal part of the evening, Erdmut Wizisla, director of the Bertolt-Brecht-Archive, announced that the Brecht portion of Jeske's private library would be donated to the new Ukrainian Brecht Center, housed in the German section of the Institute for Foreign Languages at Zhytomyr University in Zhytomyr, Ukraine. The gift will supplement the current modest library holdings in appreciation for the enormous commitment to Bertolt Brecht in the Ukraine. The new "Brecht Library Wolfgang Jeske" will display a photograph in honor of Wolfgang Jeske.

Postscript: Erdmut Wizisla reports from the Ukraine

In der ukrainischen Stadt Zhytomyr, zwei Stunden westlich von Kiew, tut sich seit geraumer Zeit Beachtliches. Der Germanist Oleksander Chyrkov hat mit Schülern ein Brecht-Zentrum gegründet. Geleitet wird es von Kolja Lipisivitsky, der soeben über Brecht promoviert hat. Es gibt weltweit vermutlich keine Universität, in der im Augenblick so viele Dissertationen über Brecht erscheinen, wie in Zhytomyr. Chyrkov betreut inzwischen schon die Kinder seiner ersten Doktoranden. Jährlich finden in Zhytomyr Konferenzen statt, sogenannte "Brechtische Lesungen", auf denen Kolleginnen und Kollegen aus Russland, Deutschland und von verschiedenen ukrainischen Universitäten sprechen. Außerdem stellen Studierende Studien zu Brecht vor. Ein Jahrbuch präsentiert die Ergebnisse der Tagung und neue Übersetzungen von Brecht-Texten ins Ukrainische. Bislang war man dort fast ausschließlich angewiesen auf Übersetzungen ins Russische. Durch die Initiative der jüngeren Kollegen hat sich der Kanon nennenswert erweitert, und es liegen die Lehrstücke auf Ukrainisch vor, übersetzt von Larissa Fedorenko, ferner Stück-Fragmente und Keuner-Geschichten aus der "Zürcher Fassung". Neue Übersetzungen, die sorgfältig kommentiert und interpretiert werden, gehören zu den wesentlichen Erträgen der Arbeit des Brecht-Zentrums. Bei der Tagung im Februar 2012, die aus Anlass von Chyrkovs 70. Geburtstag veranstaltet wurde, stellte Erdmut Wizisla die Arbeit des Brecht-Archivs vor. Zwischen dem Brecht-Archiv und dem Brecht-Zentrum wurde eine Kooperationsvereinbarung unterzeichnet. Erstes Ergebnis der Zusammenarbeit ist die Eröffnung der Brecht-Bibliothek Wolfgang Jeske in Zhytomyr, die im März 2013 während der Brecht-Kon-

ferenz eröffnet wird. Jeske ist 2012 verstorben, und seine Schwester hat den Brecht-Teil seiner Bibliothek, der ungewöhnlich dicht bestückt ist, der Universität Zhytomyr geschenkt. Damit eröffnen sich völlig neue Arbeitsmöglichkeiten für die Studierenden und die Kolleginnen und Kollegen. Die Referentinnen und Referenten der Tagung im März 2013 kommen wieder aus der Ukraine, aus Russland, Deutschland und erstmals aus Polen, von der Universität Katowice.



Next to a photo of Jeske, Inge Gellert (left) and Christa Mithl (right).

Robert Cohen: A Tribute by Helmut Peitsch

Robert Cohen's retirement from NYU this past year was marked in April by a farewell event at which Helmut Peitsch paid tribute to his friend and colleague. My thanks go to Prof. Peitsch for making the text of his laudatio available to *CIBS*.

Helmut Peitsch

Robert Cohen Retires From NYU

Robert Cohen, who late in life started to study German literature at NYU, is about to end a period of his life which has been marked by his research-based teaching commitment to this university. Over twenty-five years he has been – to use an appropriate Brechtian adjective he likes – “productively dealing” with colleagues whose names can be found in the very specific, often pointed acknowledgements Robert formulated for his books and articles: Margaret and Volkmar Sander, from his time as a PhD student and then visiting scholar in the Department of German; Konstanze Streese, from his early years as an adjunct professor; and in later years Bernd Hüppauf and Ulrich Baer.

Many footnotes in Robert's articles also testify to the productive discussions he had with NYU colleagues who incited his interest in theoretical positions which had to that point not been his own. Thus, for instance, he has tried out a Foucaultian reading of seminal US American works on Holocaust literature, a psychoanalytical reading of Peter Weiss' *Trotsky in Exile*, informed by Dori Laub's notion of testimony, and a site-of-memory reading of Anna Seghers's novel *Transit*, applying not only Pierre Nora's terminology, but also Bakhtin's concept of polyphony.

Commenting on Walter Benjamin vis-à-vis Gershom Scholem on the one hand, and members of the communist party on the other, Robert Cohen once wrote: “Brecht's productive dealing with Benjamin stands in between these two positions, making both closeness and strangeness equally useful for understanding his friend and his thinking.”¹

Taking this view of productivity as programmatic for Robert, I would like in what follows to highlight not what he has shared with his colleagues, the closeness, but rather that in which he has differed, what might have been strange.

Having been a filmmaker, having started in advertising, having worked in tourism, and having actually been motivated to start writing by his work experience, the late-arriving student of German literature became a committed literary critic.

I start with a striking feature of Robert Cohen's scholarly writing, the first of three.

There is hardly any scholarly text by Robert which does not address current affairs at the time of its writing. This Germanist does not respect the boundaries of the academic discipline but directly refers to the politics of the day.

His contribution to an Amherst conference on exile literature as history states in the opening paragraph: “The present study was put on the agenda by the acts of violence between Israelis and Palestin-

1 “Zwischen diesen beiden Positionen steht der productive Umgang Brechts mit Benjamin, worin Nähe wie Befremden für das Verstehen des Freundes und seines Denkens gleichermaßen nutzbar gemacht werden.“ “Ein Brief Rosa Luxemburgs und die Folgen oder Die Linie Luxemburg - Kraus - Benjamin.“ *Das Argument*, 213:1996. 94-108. 102.

ians which do not seem to want to end", and the specific topicality of the theme of the paper – "Arnold Zweig and the Arab Question" in the novel *De Vriendt kehrt heim* – is generalized by the speaker, declaring as his "point of departure": "Fascism is dealt with because of the consequences which follow from it for the present."²

Similarly, in another paper given at a conference of the Society for Exile Studies in 1989, Robert ends the introduction to his essay "*Der Gesang von Plötzensee*": *Zur Darstellung des antifaschistischen Widerstands in Peter Weiss' Ästhetik des Widerstands*" thusly: "For as long as the terrible lawyer Filbinger, for instance, adheres to the terrible view, that what was lawful back then, may not be called unjust today, and for as long as West German historians insinuate that the main culprit of fascism and war was the Soviet Union [in the footnote the reference is to Ernst Nolte], then texts about the resistance will not be possible without such contradictory pathos."³

2 "Arnold Zweig and the Arab Question: On the change in his thinking through his work on the novel *De Vriendt comes home*". In *Wider den Faschismus: Exilliteratur als Geschichte*. 17th Amherst Colloquium on German Literature. 1993. 123.

3 "Und solange etwa der furchtbare Jurist Filbinger nicht von der furchtbaren Auffassung abläßt, daß heute nicht unrecht sein dürfe, was damals rechtens gewesen sei, solange westdeutsche Historiker insinuieren, daß die Hauptschuld an Faschismus und Krieg der Sowjetunion anzulasten sei, solange dürften Texte über den Widerstand nicht ohne dieses widerspruchsvolle Pathos zu haben sein." ("*Der Gesang von Plötzensee. Zur Darstellung des antifaschistischen Widerstands in Peter Weiss' Ästhetik des Widerstands*". *Der Zweite*

The closing sentence of the article "Auschwitz Language. On Heimrad Bäcker's *Postscript*" makes a similar point (and the usage of 'productive dealing' hints at Robert's strong criticism of the second of the author's two books under scrutiny in the article): "[...] as discussions of the dialectics of words and deeds, as reflections on the deadly babble that is still to be found in the latest war reporting from Iraq and Yugoslavia, but also as reflections on the involvement of those who speak out, Bäcker's texts enable productive dealings."⁴

The fact that Robert not only refers to media war correspondents, but also to intellectuals taking a stance, underlines the fact that his commitment is based on an understanding of an involvement which is always given.

Thus, his version of the biography of Peter Weiss before the latter publicly declared his commitment to the cause of socialism, is punctuated by sharp comments by the biographical narrator which juxtapose the world in which the hero thinks to live, and the one in which he is actually involved. After presenting what happened in 1959 in the Congo, in Angola, in Vietnam and even in Bad Godesberg, the narrator states: "Although Peter Weiss at the time seems not to have registered any interest in these

Weltkrieg und die Exilanten. Helmut Pfanner ed. 1991. 197-208. 198).

4 "... als Auseinandersetzung mit der Dialektik von Sagen und Tun, als Reflexion über ein tödliches Kauderwelsch, wie es noch in den neusten Kriegsberichterstattungen über den Irak oder Jugoslawien sich findet, aber auch als Reflexion über die Verstrickung derer, die das Wort ergreifen, geben Bäckers Texte zu produktivem Umgang Anlaß." "Auschwitzsprache. Zu Heimrad Bäckers ,nachschrift.'" *Peter Weiss Jahrbuch*, 1999. 141-53. 151-52.

events, his life now moved toward them." (*Understanding Peter Weiss*. 1993. 40) A few pages later the narrator comments on Weiss' writing of *Vanishing Point*: "the delay with which Weiss registered political events grew shorter" (53), and finally, when Weiss sticks a photo of Patrice Lumumba into his *Notebooks*: "Peter Weiss had caught up with historical events." (53)

The committed literary critic starts with what his hero had to learn: he turns his contemporary willy-nilly involvement into a conscious, rational statement by trying to argue the general validity of his individual opinion on a book, a writer, a genre or an epoch.

If the reference to political issues beyond the boundaries of the academic discipline lends urgency to the critic's statement, the generalization of his individual view hinges on argumentation. Here the second striking feature of Robert's writing comes in. There is no article or book-chapter by Robert which is not only based on a complete bibliographical search into the research so far done, but which also carefully documents the findings, in particular controversies or views opposed to his own. The fact that the second book he brought out, contemporaneously with or shortly after the PhD Thesis, was a bio-bibliographical handbook speaks volumes. Even if some of his comments on West German specialists on Weiss were sharply criticized by two West German reviewers, members of the Peter Weiss-Gesellschaft, they only proved the point Robert made in his critical presentation of post-1989 turncoats. Michael Hofmann and Clemens Kammler replied with the formal exclusion of Robert from the (West German) academy "for not meeting its methodological standards" (Hofmann 1992, 588) and "falling back behind the level of Marxist theoretical discussion of

the last decades" (Kammler 1993, 157) on to "an all too simple variant of Historical Materialism which is only content if it stinks of partiality and economy" (156). Kammler's argument that Robert was not a political (as Hofmann suggested), but 'only' a theoretical Stalinist, tops with regard to illiberality the professional bans of 1972 (*Berufsverbote*) and the Federal Constitutional Court's verdict against the KPD of 1956 which openly forbade Marxist political practice at universities, but not any views.

However, Robert's taking into account of previous research is part of his general concern with the history of reception of literary works. One of his earliest texts, an article on Anna Seghers' *The Excursion of the Dead Girls*⁵, reads the story through its readings by Christa Wolf. Quotations from Wolf are employed as subheadings to structure the argument: "The difficulty of saying 'I'" ("Die Schwierigkeit, 'ich' zu sagen", 186), "The past is not dead, it is not even past" ("Das Vergangene ist nicht tot, es ist nicht einmal vergangen", 188), "A way of writing that pays the rupture of the times the respect it deserves" ("... ein Verfahren, dem Riß, der durch die Zeit geht, die Achtung zu zollen, die er verdient", 190), "Suffering from Germany" ("Leiden an Deutschland", 192). The last subheading is, however, the quotation from Seghers' story which gives the article its title: "Doing the ordered task" - "Die befohlene Aufgabe machen". By following the "traces of Seghers in Wolf's work" ("Von diesen Spuren Seghers' im Werk Christa Wolfs geht die vorliegende Arbeit aus." 186), Robert aims, as he states at the beginning, at "another contribution to correct the false start of Seghers' reception in the Federal Republic" ("ein weiterer

5 "Die befohlene Aufgabe machen: Anna Seghers Erzählung *Der Ausflug der toten Mädchen*". *Monatshefte*, 79:2 (1987). 186-198.

Beitrag zur Korrektur des Fehlstarts der Seghers-Rezeption in der Bundesrepublik", 186), evinced by an article by Marcel Reich-Ranicki in Springer's *Die Welt*, later turned into a chapter of his highly influential book *German Literature in East and West* (1963). Outlining the state of research on Seghers' story, Robert is not just fulfilling an academic duty, but raising the question of canonization by asking why a text has been either excluded from or included in the 'normal' business of the discipline. As a committed critic he does not take for granted the specific selection of German texts which has been institutionalized as literature and which functions as the canon. Therefore, he very often starts by asking, why, for instance, Joseph Roth's *The Spider's Web*, first serialized in the *Arbeiterzeitung* in Vienna in 1923, has been neglected: "Ways of reading which interpret Roth's early social positions from the perspective of his later political development do not do justice to his phase of engagement on the left."⁶ So what Robert aims at, is not the notorious 'research gap' or 'desideratum', defined solely in terms of disciplinary completeness and closedness, but an intervention to change the canon. His own attempts at an opposing, an alternative canonization, at selecting texts for the university and school reading lists which differ from the received ones, do not shy away from big words. "Book of the century" is one of them, quoted frequently in Robert's writings and taken over from the West Berlin philosopher Wolfgang Fritz Haug who

6 "Leseweisen, welche Roths frühe gesellschaftliche Positionen weitgehend von seiner spätrn politischen Entwicklung aus interpretieren, werden Roths linksengagierter Phase kaum gerecht." "Männerwelt, Gewalt, Weimarer Republik: Rechtsextremisten im Frühwerk Joseph Roths und in Ernst Ottwalts *Ruhe und Ordnung*," *Modern Austrian Literature*, 30:1 (1997). 48-68. 63.

as editor of the journal *Das Argument* (on whose advisory board Robert sits) and founder of the West Berlin "People's University", was instrumental in making Peter Weiss' *The Aesthetics of Resistance* a widely read book among not only students, but also among politically active members of the trade unions in the late 70s and early 80s.

Very often Robert's proposals for canonization follow the suggestions given by writers as critics or, less often, by critics, and rather journalistic than academic critics. In his very first essay for an academic journal, *The Germanic Review* of 1987, on the literary quality of Karl Kraus's *Obituary*, a postscript to *The Last Days of Mankind*, Robert quotes aesthetic judgments by Elias Canetti, Robert Musil and Alfred Polgar, with a particular emphasis, however, on Hans Wollschläger's exuberant claim in the introduction to the *Karl Kraus Lesebuch* that Kraus's *Obituary* is "perhaps the most powerful (...) prose-piece of world literature."⁷

The two literary critics who most often appear – not in footnotes, but – in the body of the text of Robert's articles are Hans Mayer and Walter Benjamin. In the case of Mayer, one of the first times he is mentioned is revealing: "Hans Mayer, who read [Seghers' *Excursion*] with much attention to detail" ("sehr genau", *Ausflug*, 187), because such programmatic praise will be repeated with regard to Mayer's analysis of Weiss' *Trotsky in Exile*⁸ as well as of Max Frisch's *Man in*

7 "vielleicht gewaltigste [...] Prosastück der Weltliteratur überhaupt." "Schöne Geschichte diese Weltgeschichte: Zum Nachruf von Karl Kraus". *The Germanic Review*, 62:1. (1987). 37-43. 37.

8 "A Dream of Dada and Lenin: Peter Weiss's *Trotsky in Exile*." *Rethinking Peter Weiss*. Jost Hermand and Marc Silberman, eds. 2000. 151-73. 170.

the *Holocene*⁹. In his own interpretations, Robert always takes up Mayer's method of drawing attention to one specific formal detail of a text; in Seghers' *Excursion* it is the narratorial stance. The references to Walter Benjamin in Robert's texts, however, work differently. They refer sometimes to methodological guidelines like 'reading against the grain' or '*Jetztzeit*', but one Benjamin quotation is very similar to the sort of aesthetic value judgments of writers Robert likes to quote: "the strongest bourgeois prose of the post-war years" ("die stärkste bürgerliche Prosa des Nachkriegs", *Luxemburg*, 103). Benjamin wrote this in 1932 about Karl Kraus's public reply to a letter he published under the title "Reply to Rosa Luxemburg by an Unsentimental Woman" ("Antwort an Rosa Luxemburg von einer Unsentimentalen") in November, 1920, in *Die Fackel*. However, Robert refers to Benjamin's judgment on the superlative literary quality of Kraus' commentary only in passing, because he is mainly concerned with Gershom Scholem's critique of the Kraus essay on account of its "communist phraseology" ("kommunistische Phrasenhaftigkeit") and identifies the only passage of the essay which Scholem might accuse of 'communist phraseology' as the one which is, as Robert writes, "introduced by Benjamin with the words: the essay amounts to the strongest bourgeois prose of the post-war years" ("das von Benjamin mit den Worten eingeleitet wird, es handle sich hier um die 'stärkste bürgerliche Prosa des Nachkriegs'", 103). Whereas Robert then goes into detail as to whether or not Benjamin's statement about the communists as a threat to the "Brut von Guts- und Blutsbesitzern" (103) can be read as a profession of communist belief, and as being formula-

ically phrased, both of which he denies, three monographs on Benjamin and Kraus which appeared in the US in 2010 manage to avoid any dealings with this passage at all. The very fact itself, that in 1932 Benjamin so described Kraus's commentary on a female Austrian aristocrat's 'unsentimental' reply to Luxemburg's letter of 24 December, 1917, from Breslau prison, is excluded from the present dominant image of a canonized Benjamin.

The third striking feature of Robert's scholarly writing is its combination of canon-critique and canon-building. With few exceptions – two commissioned contributions to dictionaries and one review turned into an essay, Robert has not written in the literary-historical vein, neither descriptions of literary fields at a given moment nor accounts of their change. The exceptions therefore testify to the rule: The articles, as well as the chapters of the great book on Peter Weiss which came out in German 1992, and in English in 1993 as *Understanding Peter Weiss*, undertake close readings of individual texts which are analyzed and interpreted by way of synchronic as well as diachronic contextualization. For the *Yale Companion to Jewish Writing and Thought in German Culture 1096-1996* and for the *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus* (Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism), both of which happened to appear in the same year of 1997, however, Robert wrote the entries with two contexts, a political one for the *Yale Companion* entry on the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial of 1963-65, and a literary-theoretical one for the German *Historical-Critical Dictionary* entry on the Expressionism Debate of 1937-38. In the latter article, Robert describes the "antagonistic constellation of politically allied writers" in a way that surpasses comparable articles in the "Brecht" as well as in the "Benjamin Handbook",

9 „Zumutungen der Spätmoderne. Max Frischs *Der Mensch erscheint im Holozän*.“ *Weimarer Beiträge*, 54:4. 2008. 541-556. 542.

since his focus allows him to bring out differences and commonalities systematically. The focus is on the relation between "a political and an artistic (*künstlerischen*) avant-garde".¹⁰

Already before completing his PhD thesis, the three parts of which proclaimed his interest in formal detail (the narrator of *The Aesthetics of Resistance*), relations between writers (Weiss and Brecht), and the history of reception (the tradition of Marxist literary theory), Robert outlined the map of his future research in an article for *The German Quarterly*. The title, "The Dangerous Aesthetics of Ernst Ottwalt", reflects also the author's awareness of taking risks. Literally, however, 'dangerous' refers to Ottwalt's death in a Soviet camp near Archangel: In 1937, that which the author had written in 1932 about the relationship between his novel *Law and Order* and the facts of his life in the early 20s, was used against him by the party and the secret police in order to reveal him as "an agent against the revolutionary workers" ("Spitzel gegen die revolutionären Arbeiter"): "I am an agent heart and soul" ("Ich bin mit Leib und Seele Spitzel"), Robert quotes from the novel.¹¹

In this first article on Ottwalt – later followed up by one on right-wing radicalism of young men in Joseph Roth's early texts and Ottwalt's first novel, cited above in reference to Roth – not only do many of the writers and the texts on which Robert would later write make their first appearance: Weiss' *Aesthetics of Resistance* figures prominently four times (229, 239, 240, 241), and two pages

are devoted to Brecht's notes "On the Aristotelian Novel" in order to refute their applicability to Ottwalt's novel (243-4), but also, and in particular, some of Robert's key concepts or leitmotifs are introduced.

When Robert presents the object of his study as "Ottwalt's attempt at further developing the avant-garde" ("Ottwalts Versuch einer Weiterentwicklung der historischen Avantgarde", 229) without regard for the concept of work which bound some modernists to the idea of the autonomy of art, he bridges the past and the present by using an image to which he will come back on different occasions, the image of the line (*Linie*): "The Ottwalt-line of a literature which takes verifiable facts as its point of departure and intervenes in the real world finds its continuation – regardless of differences in aims and literary quality – on the one hand in the activism of a Günter Wallraff, on the other hand in literary forms which mix document and fiction, like Alfred Andersch's *Winterspelt* and especially Peter Weiss' 'book of the century' *The Aesthetics of Resistance*".¹² In the course of the article, Brecht's name is added to the line, which thereby becomes a "Brecht-Ottwalt-line" (242) and it is set in a "constellation which, shortly before the end of the Weimar Republic, blocked this productive literary develop-

12 "Die Ottwalt-Linie einer von nachweisbaren Fakten ausgehenden, in die gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit eingreifenden Literatur, findet ihre Fortsetzung - bei allen Unterschieden der Zielsetzung und der literarischen Qualität - einerseits im Aktivismus eines Günter Wallraff, andererseits in literarischen Mischformen aus Dokument und Fiktion wie Alfred Anderschs *Winterspelt* und ganz besonders Peter Weiss' 'Jahrhundertbuch' *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*." 229.

10 *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*. Ed. Wolfgang Fritz Haug. Vol. 3. Berlin, 1997. 1167-83. 1167 & 1171.

11 "Die gefährliche Ästhetik Ernst Ottwalts". *The German Quarterly*, 61:2. 1988. 229-248. 230 & 231.

ment".¹³ In contradistinction to the view prevailing in the GDR as well as in the FRG on the Expressionism debate as a "Brecht-Lukács-Debate", which Robert explicitly refutes in the entry for the *Historical-Critical Dictionary*, he distances Ottwalt's novel from both literary theorists: "Neither Lukács nor Brecht" ("Weder Lukács noch Brecht", 239), because Robert's focus is on the two avant-gardes. To explain the 'constellation' he calls on Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*: "Ottwalt's aesthetic program of systematically binding fiction to the material of facts thinks through – from a socialist position – the main impulse of the historical avant-garde, as formulated by Bürger, namely 'to lead art back to the practice of life'."¹⁴

Ottwalt's continuation of this project of the artistic avant-garde from the standpoint of the political avant-garde is defended by Robert against the criticism of Lukács as well of Brecht. One specific aspect of this double defense is stressed by the final sentences of the introduction: "The left's coming to terms with the crimes of the Stalin era, newly embarked upon in the Soviet Union in November, 1987, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, gives sharp urgency to dealing with Ottwalt's fate. The present study therefore starts with the attempt to reconstruct this life in its historical context."¹⁵ In the final

13 "die Konstellation [...] welche, kurz vor dem Ende der Weimarer Republik, diese fruchtbare literarische Entwicklung blockierte". 239.

14 "Ottwalts ästhetisches Programm, Belletristik systematisch an Tatsachenmaterial festzumachen, denkt - von einer sozialistischen Position aus - das bei Bürger formulierte Grundanliegen der historischen Avantgarde, 'Kunst in Lebenspraxis zurückzuführen' weiter." 241.

15 "Die in der Sowjetunion, im

instance, it is the 'constellation' of the 'blocked' merger of the two avant-gardes which emerges as the context being reconstructed.

In spite of the principled defense of Ottwalt's use of verifiable facts and his mixing of fact and fiction on the level of context, Robert criticizes Ottwalt's text in a way which brings into play another pair of terms which will also become a key concept or leitmotif of his criticism: the private and the public. The decline of the German judiciary "happened, as Ottwalt saw it, in two spheres totally separated from each other [...]: in the private and in the public spheres [...]: the decline in the private sphere was to be criticized in the (psychological) characterization of freely invented figures, the decline of the public sphere by citing authentic court cases and legal texts."¹⁶ Robert criticizes such a separation as undialectical and 'metaphysical' (236).

However, when resuming the detailed criticism leveled against one of

November 1987, anlässlich des siebenzigsten Jahrestages der Oktoberrevolution, neu eröffnete Auseinandersetzung der Linken mit den Verbrechen der Stalin-Ara, verleiht der Beschäftigung mit dem Schicksal Ottwalts eine scharfe Aktualität. Die vorliegende Arbeit beginnt denn auch mit dem Versuch, dieses Leben im historischen Kontext zu rekonstruieren." 229-30.

16 "...der Niedergang der deutschen Justiz [...] vollzog sich, so sah es Ottwalt, in zwei voneinander völlig getrennten Sphären [...] in der privaten und in der öffentlichen [...]: der Niedergang der privaten Sphäre sollte durch die (psychologische) Gestaltung frei erfundener Figuren kritisiert werden, der Niedergang der öffentlichen Sphäre durch das Zitieren authentischer Gerichtsfilie und Gesetzestexte." 237.

Ottwalt's figures, Judge Dickmann, Robert does not use these philosophical terms, but a literary, or rather theatrical one which he had already used in his debut article on Kraus and which he was to write an article on twelve years later: gesture (*Gestus*). "Because Dickmann, as Ottwalt implies in his preliminary remarks, should stand for German judges in general, the indecisiveness of the figure ultimately distorts the image that Ottwalt draws of the German judges into diffusion. The basic gesture of resistance against class justice which underlies the novel is thereby partially undermined."¹⁷ Whereas this usage of gesture refers to the text of Ottwalt's novel as a whole, in the analysis of the character Dickmann a more limited use of the concept can be found: "His 'development' consists in learning to ignore the contradictions of the social relations which he personifies. He tirelessly rehearses the gesture of the judge who is concerned only with correctly applying the letter of the law, who has nothing to do with the consequences of his activity – and who nevertheless knows what he is doing. That is what the imploring title of the novel intends and from which the conclusion can be drawn, by inverting the quotation from the Gospel of Luke: One may not forgive this Dickmann and his like."¹⁸

17 "Da Dickmann, wie Ottwalt in seiner Vorbemerkung impliziert, für die deutschen Richter allgemein stehen soll, verzerrt diese Unentschiedenheit der Figur letztlich das Bild, das Ottwalt von den deutschen Juristen zeichnet, ins Diffuse. Dadurch wird der dem Roman unterlegte Grundgestus des Widerstands gegen die Weimarer Klassenjustiz teilweise beeinträchtigt." 235.

18 "Seine 'Entwicklung' besteht darin, daß er lernt, die Widersprüche der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse, die er verkörpert, zu ignorieren. Unermüdlich trainiert er den Gestus des nur mit der korrekten Anwendung von Para-

In a structurally comparable, but reversed way, the relation between knowing and emotions also marked Robert's application of the concept of gesture to Kraus's *Obituary*. Its "gesture" was praised for its "unlimited ability for moral outrage" ("unbeschränkte Fähigkeit zur moralischen Empörung", 39), at the same, however, criticized as a gesture of very limited "insight into society and politics".¹⁹ The gesture is "more outraged at the 'Spirit' behind the crime than the crime itself."²⁰ However, in the Luxemburg article, Kraus's "basic gesture" is presented as "hatred against the property-owning bourgeoisie"²¹ without further qualification.

It is in this article on "A letter by Rosa Luxemburg and its consequences" that Robert draws another 'line' in German literature of the 20th century, namely from the key concept of the private and the public: "The Luxemburg–Kraus–Benjamin line". The focus of the analysis of Luxemburg's letters from prison, of Kraus' comments on one of them, (the famous one about the maltreatment of buffalos from Romania by a soldier who defends his behavior by saying, "Nobody has empathy with us men either"²²), and graphen befaßten Richters, der mit den Folgen seiner Tätigkeit nichts zu tun hat – und weiß doch, was er tut. Das meint der beschwörende Titel des Romans und folgert, in Umkehrung des Zitats aus dem Lukas-Evangelium: diesem Dickmann und seinesgleichen darf man nicht vergeben." 234.

19 „Allerdings war das ethische Sensorium bei Kraus ungleich stärker entwickelt, als seine gesellschaftlichen und politischen Einsichten –“. 39.

20 "... Denk-Gestus, der sich über den Geist, der hinter der Untat steckt, mehr empört als über die Untat selbst." 38.

21 "Ihr Grundgestus ist aber [...] Haß auf das Besitzbürgertum". 104.

22 "Mit uns Menschen hat auch nie-

of Benjamin's Kraus essay is the same: It is on the "changing constellations into which the personal enters with the political".²³ Robert takes Kraus's commentary, and the passage of Benjamin's essay criticized by Scholem, as evidence for his reading of Luxemburg's letters as an argument against any separation of the private from the public: Their connectedness is seen as particularly visible in Luxemburg's interpretation of the buffalo scene, in which "characteristics like crudity or empathy, which are commonly taken as personal, emerge as direct consequence of the most political of all events: of war".²⁴

It is not only the question of quoting documents – as facts or in fiction – that links Robert's two lines, but also the present relevance of the past context of the 1930s. In a remarkable move of distancing himself from Peter Weiss, who in his *Notebooks* reflected on a "Luxemburg-Gramsci line" (105), an idea which was picked up by Haug in 1989 for an edited volume of theoretical essays, Robert insists on drawing attention to the line "which, following the example of Luxemburg's life as she lived it – as an inseparable unity of human being, woman and politician – which does not separate the personal, the private from the political, but rather sees this separation as disastrous and in causal connection with the deformations and the downfall of the movement of 'actual-existing socialism'".²⁵

mand Mitleid." 97.

23 "Die wechselnden Konstellationen, in die das Persönliche mit dem Politischen tritt". 94.

24 "Allgemein als persönlich geltende Charaktereigenschaften wie Rohheit oder Mitleid als direkte Folge des politischsten aller Vorgänge: des Kriegs –". 98.

25 "Die aber, dem Beispiel von Luxemburgs Lebenspraxis – als untrennbare

The pattern – or perhaps more adequately put: the basic gesture – of Robert's book on Peter Weiss, the pattern which underlies the selection and the ordering of facts from his life and of his works – is directed against the separation of the personal, the private, from the political. The bold sentence of the introduction: "the impact the era had on his life produced the impact that Weiss had on his era" (4), applies to the biography (as its German title, "Peter Weiss in His Time" – *Peter Weiss in seiner Zeit*, suggests), the two points made in Robert's reading of Seghers' *Excursion* five years earlier: the political "necessity of seeing one's own existence historically too"²⁶ and the artistic necessity of developing an "avant-gardism [...] in order to find a way of narrating which would be commensurate with Anna Seghers' state of historical consciousness".²⁷ By following the Brecht-Ottwalt as well as the Luxemburg-Kraus-Benjamin line, the biographical narrator, as an interpreter of those works written during the "long time Weiss was to see his own developmental history only from the perspective of an artistry outside of any social context" (14), uses anticipation: "The surrealist and dreamlike tone [...] will impart with artistic truth even those of Weiss' works most anchored in reason and rationality" (28)

Einheit von Mensch, Frau und Politikerin – folgend, das Persönliche, Private nicht abtrennt vom Öffentlich-Politischen. Sondern gerade dieses Abtrennen als unheilvoll und in einem ursächlichen Zusammenhang stehend mit den Deformationen und dem Untergang der realsozialistischen Bewegung versteht." 105.

26 "[die] Notwendigkeit, auch die eigene Existenz historisch zu sehen." 187.

27 ein "Avantgardismus [...] wurde entwickelt, um ein dem Stand des Geschichtsbewußtseins von Anna Seghers adäquates Erzählen zu finden." 190.

Because of the central position which the overall pattern ascribes to *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, the title of a later conference paper which elaborated specific themes further, poses the opposition in clear-cut fashion: "Nonrational Discourse in a Work of Reason: Peter Weiss' Antifascist Novel *Die Ästhetik des Widerstands*."²⁸ If, in this paper for a conference on European memory of the Second World War, the nonrational and the rational are discussed on the textual level of the personal, the paper for a conference on the individual writer Peter Weiss addresses it on the level of political context, as the historical relation between the two avant-gardes: "A Dream of Dada and Lenin: Peter Weiss' *Trotsky in Exile*" (cited above).

Understanding *The Aesthetics of Resistance* as 'the book of the century' does not hinder Robert in doing justice to other texts by Weiss, a fact that is underlined by his Weiss volume for "The German Library", which his teacher Volkmar Sander had established with the publisher Continuum in 1981. For volume 92 in the series, Robert's choice was limited by a fixed maximum number of pages, however, the inclusion of *Marat/Sade*, *The Investigation* and *The Shadow of the Body of the Coachman* was a deliberate choice which highlights – as the dates of appearance from 1959 to 1965 show – a period of change, not only in Weiss' writing, but in German literature in general. This change is at the center of Robert's book-chapter "Self-Liberation through Autobiographical Narration" (40-54). Robert's reading of *Leavetaking* and *Vanishing Point* works against a possible misunderstanding of the chapter-title in order to establish a dialectic which is, again by anticipation, hinting at a "new synthesis" (50) in *The Aesthetics*

of Resistance: a dialectics of "obsessive fidelity to reality and free flights of creative fantasy" (50). By clarifying the genre question of the use of document in a sense to which he will return in his later articles on montage and collage, discussing texts by Heimrad Bäcker and Max Frisch, Robert emphasizes the difference between the protagonist and the narrator in their relation to the author Weiss: Whereas the protagonist discovers the artistic freedom of expression of the avant-garde, "[t]he narrator of 1959 is able to view his own tale of suffering no longer merely in terms of individual psychology but in its social and historical contexts as well" (45); the author, however, "had already progressed to a critique of the historical avant-garde and its ability to reflect historical developments" (49).

Nevertheless, the dialectics of the rational and the nonrational, of the politically public and the personally private, of the two, meanwhile historical avant-gardes, the political as well as the artistic avant-garde, these dialectics have remained at the center of Robert's scholarly attention since he published his great book on Peter Weiss, for instance when looking at Arnold Zweig's attempts to rewrite the story *The Beast* which came out in 1914 to support the German war effort. Later, "Zweig's sense of what constituted good writing came into conflict with what he considered to be the demands of the day in the struggle against ethnic hatred, violence, and war".²⁹ The image Robert uses for Zweig's unfinished business: "a long, meandering process, wherein creative and artistic demands would at times come into an unresolvable conflict with the demands

28 In: *European Memories of the Second World War*. Helmut Peitsch, Charles Burdett, and Claire Gorrara, eds. 1999.

29 "Arnold Zweig's War Novellas of 1914 and Their Versions: Literature, Modernity, and the Demands of the Day". War, Violence and the Modern Condition. Bernd Hüppauf, ed. 1977. 277-289. 278.

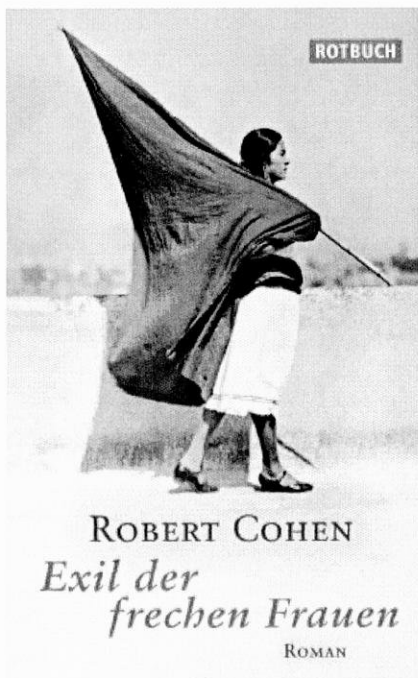
of the day" (289), is in line with the only usage of the key word "gesture" in the chapter on *The Aesthetics of Resistance* in the Weiss book: "all the great passages [...] are based on the same narrative *gestus*: that the questions are more important than the answers, the discussions more important than the results. Also important are the contradictions. Each participant in these discussions and debates, from the dogmatic communist bureaucrat Mewis to Rosalinde von Ossietzky who radically rejects communism, is given equal space to express his or her opinions. Therein lies the essence of this work and this democratic narrator Peter Weiss. The socialist-communist positions are not presupposed in *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. They may be gleaned from the sum of all questions, doubts, and contradictions." (156-7)

However, the key concept gesture should warn us from simplifying this touching statement. In three great articles on Brecht - on Brecht's city poems (*Das Argument*, 228:1998), on the extremely long poem *To the German Soldiers in the East* (*The Brecht Yearbook*, 33:2008) and on *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich* (1999)³⁰ - Robert has arrived at a distinction between decontextualized and recontextualized gestures in Brecht's writing. If the former cover gestures which happen in 'a world of bodies' - as Robert likes to quote Weiss' de Sade: "this is a world of bodies" (70); from the perspective of the latter they emerge as "gestures of coldness and inhumanity, the extremeness of which resides in their refusal of any relation to reality."³¹

30 „Brechts Furcht und Elend des III. Reiches und der Status des Gestus.“ *The Brecht Yearbook*, 24:1999. 193-207.

31 "... Gesten der Kälte und Unmenschlichkeit, deren äußerste darin besteht, daß sie den Bezug auf die Wirklichkeit verweigern." 201.

And I would like to end with Robert's conclusion from the contradiction between the two versions of gesture: "Causality, reason, responsibility, history, progress and the attempt to understand and change everything - these terms have fallen into disrepute of late, but without them Brecht's gesture is not for the having."³²



32 "Kausalität, Vernunft, Verantwortlichkeit, Geschichte, Fortschritt und der Versuch, das Ganze zu verstehen und zu ändern - diese Begriffe sind seit einiger Zeit in Verruf. Ohne sie aber ist der Brechtsche Gestus nicht zu haben." 205.

Jungbrunnen für Bertolt Brecht durch Bertolt Brecht selber

Ein Rezensionssassay von Gerd Koch aus Anlass des Erscheinens von:
Bertolt Brecht: Notizbücher 1 – 3 (1918 – 1920)

Hrsg.: Martin Kölbel, Peter Villwock im Auftrag des Instituts für Textkritik (Heidelberg) und der Akademie der Künste (Berlin). Berlin (Suhrkamp) 2012 (ISBN 978-3-518-42299-1), 481 Seiten.

Als in den 1970er Jahren durch die epochemachende, philologisch sorgfältige Untersuchung von Reiner

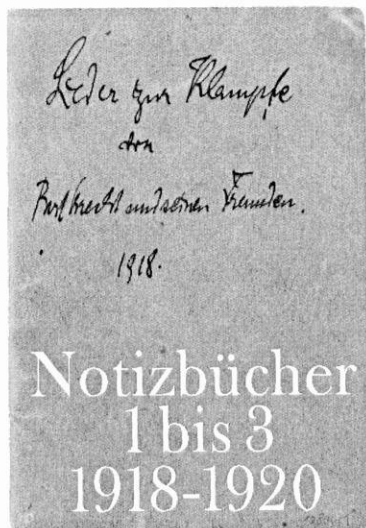
Steinweg zum Brechtschen Lehrstück (Das Lehrstück, Stuttgart 1972) herauskam, prägte ich mir das (mein persönliches) Arbeitsmotto: „Mit Brecht über Brecht hinaus!“. Also: Der Lehrstück-Brecht, der Brecht der *learning plays* (eine Übersetzung von Brecht) als neuer Scheinwerfer auf sein Werk.

Jetzt kann etwas Ähnliches geschehen: Eine ‚Frischzellen-Kur‘ für Brecht durch Brecht selber. Denn: Sukzessive werden Brechts 54 Notizbücher nun zum erstenmal öffentlich gemacht und erscheinen in Buchform im Suhrkamp Verlag. Brecht begann in seinen Jugendzeiten Notizbücher zu schreiben und tat das noch 1953. Die Buchpräsentation von Band 1 (= Notizbücher und das Heft „Lieder zur Klampfe von Bert Brecht und seinen Freunden. 1918“) fand am 26.4.2012 im Literaturhaus Berlin statt. Bei der Gelegenheit war es auch möglich, sich im Literaturhaus Originale der Notizbücher aus dem Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv nebst Zeichnungen des Jugendfreundes und späteren Bühnenbauers Caspar Neher sowie Fotos aus Brechts Augsburger Clique anzuschauen: Blicke in die Schreibwerkstatt eines Autors! Skizzen eines *work in progress*! Ein Autor, der sich gerade bildet!

Ulrich Matthes las bei der Buchvorstellung aus den Notizbüchern und Felix Lücke sang zur Gitarre Brechtsche Lieder aus Vertonungen Brechts, der sich (s)eine Notation dazu erfunden hatte.

Ermöglicht wird das umfangreiche Editionsprojekt unter anderem durch die Otto Wolff Stiftung, durch den Suhrkamp Verlag, das Institut für Textkritik (ITK), die Akademie der Künste, Berlin, mit ihrem Bertolt-Brecht-Archiv und durch die beiden sorgfältigen Herausgeber und Entzifferer der Brechtschen Handschriften (gra-

Bertolt Brecht



Band 1

Suhrkamp

phologisch wie inhaltlich kein leichtes Unterfangen!) Martin Kölbel und Peter Villwock.

Die im Folgenden von mir zusammengestellten Ideen/Splitter sind zum großen Teil diesem informativen Abend geschuldet. Alle Akzentsetzungen (und Fehlerhaftigkeiten) stammen aus meinem Erkenntnis- und Praxis-Interesse als Theaterpädagoge und Theoretiker wie Praktiker in sozialer Kulturarbeit und sind nicht den Editions-Experten anzulasten. Es wurde (mir) deutlich, dass mithilfe der frühen Notizbücher von Brecht sein Werk eine neue Facette bekommt und eine *TheaterBildung* und *TheaterAgogik* (Agogik hier verstanden als professionelles Begleiten und Leiten von Menschen) dadurch bereichert werden kann.

*

Mitte der 1970er Jahre besuchte ich eine Baal-Inszenierung am Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf: Dort hatte man Brechts *spätere* Bemerkungen zu seinem Jugendwerk „Baal“ – diesem Stück fehle Weisheit – zur Regie-Maxime genommen. Nun kann Umgekehrtes geschehen: Die frühen Notizen, z. T. auch Text-Skizzen, Musiken und Assoziationen aus vitalen, freundschaftlichen und örtlichen Entstehungskontexten können Regie, Inszenierung und TheaterBildung methodisch anregen. Fragmente, wenige Zeilen und/oder Stichworte können zum Schreiben von Szenen und theaterpädagogisch sinnvollen Spielvorlagen animieren – möglicherweise gekoppelt an später von Brecht Ausgeführtes oder an jugendkulturelle Erfahrungen heutiger Jugend und deren Artikulationen (z. B. aus ihren Notizbüchern und blogs) – ein offenes, bewegliches Werk liegt in Brechts Modell vor und kann weiter kultiviert werden ... Wozu der Brecht wiederum gut ist: Nicht schlecht, der Brecht!

*

Bertolt Brecht hat früh schon Balladen geschrieben. Das weisen seine Notizbücher auf, wo sie auch gedruckt zu finden sind. Und zu diesen Gedichten sind Melodien von ihm übermittelt. Zweierlei ist sehr bedeutend: einmal, dass Balladen Lieder sind, die eine Geschichte erzählen: *a ballad is a song that tells a story*. Und: Balladen können wir auch verstehen als Romane in Versform (als Poem ...) – möglicherweise haben wir eine Grundform des epischen Theaters, wie Brecht es entwickelt hat, schon hier rudimentär, poetisch vor uns liegen. Brecht liefert Dichtung und Liedgesang mit eigener Notation. Seine Lieder zur Klampfe sind mittlerweile um die 100 Jahre alt – aber nicht veraltet.

*

In den Notizbüchern/Liedern zur Klampfe finden sich gewissermaßen Urfassungen von Poemen und Stücken, etwa das „sentimentale Lied“ – später eines der großartigen Liebeslieder des 20. Jahrhunderts: „Erinnerung an die Marie A.“ – geschrieben im Zug nach Berlin als (fingiertes) 1004. Lied in Anlehnung an Don Giovanni, der in Spanien – nur – 1003 Geliebte gehabt haben soll ... (vonseiten der Herausgeber hieß es: solche Gedichte seien nicht fertig-gemacht, was man glücklicherweise doppelsinnig lesen kann ...).

*

Es werden insgesamt 14 Bände aus den Notizbüchern erscheinen. Bd. 7 liegt bereits zuvor – die Herausgabe erfolgt also nicht in chronologischer Reihenfolge. Wichtig ist, dass solche frühe Zeugnisse sichtbar gemacht werden: Empirie gegen Spekulation und Geniekult ...

*

Möglicherweise können die

Notizbücher wie Skizzen in der Malerei, Plastik/Skulptur und auch Architektur verstanden werden. "Notizbücher sind Keimzellen" für Späteres, so Roland Reuß (Universität Heidelberg und ITK – Institut für Textkritik). Die ‚Kunst-Szene‘ der Renaissance (namentlich beeinflusst durch den Architektur-Theoretiker und -Praktiker und Kunst-Historiker, der auch für die Theatergeschichte wichtig ist: Giorgio Vasari) schätze die Kunst der Skizze, des *disegno*, hoch ein und als eigenständige Werk-/Wirk-Weise: „Durch die Zeichnung des *disegno* läßt sich erstens die *Inspiration des Künstlers in diesem Medium mit der Inspiration des Dichters vergleichen*, zweitens ist eine Form der Werkstattorganisation möglich, was heißt, viele Arbeitskräfte können *an einem gemeinsamen Werk auf der Grundlage einer Zeichnung ihres Meisters arbeiten*, drittens eignet sich das *disegno als Mittel der Kommunikation mit den Auftraggebern, den Kardinälen und Fürsten ...* Maßgeblich unter (dem Einfluss von Vasari) gründet man 1563 in Florenz die Accademia dell'Arte del disegno, welche bis heute fortbesteht.“ (so stellt uns komprimiert WIKIPEDIA den Sachstand zusammen).

*

Mithilfe der Notizbüchern kann *induktiv* statt *deduktiv* gearbeitet werden („induktiv“ vorzugehen, schlug Brecht für seine Theaterarbeit vor): ausgehend von den früheren Impulsen kann die weitere Ausdifferenzierung des Werkes von Bertolt Brecht (philologisch und praktisch) nachvollzogen und verstanden werden. Das weitgehend unbekannte frühe „Notizbuch“-Werk kann reflexiv und intra-textuell und intra-methodologisch als eine Art V(erfremdungs)-Effekt ans bekannte Werk, etwa in der Berlin-Frankfurter-Brecht-Ausgabe, herangeführt

werden.

Ganz Ähnliches passiert ja, wenn Brechts Texte in andere Sprachen übersetzte Texte werden: durch die Übersetzung können neue Assoziationen freigesetzt werden; etwa kann im Englischen der Bezug auf Kipling und Shakespeare deutlicher werden als etwa im Deutschen, wo der Bezug auf Hegel und Marx (... darunter gehen wir nicht ...) sich in den Vordergrund schiebt ...

*

Peter Villwock und Martin Kölbel als Herausgeber des ersten Notizbuch-Bandes zeigten sich überrascht von den Funden, die sie machten. Insgesamt gibt es ja nicht wenige, nämlich 54, solcher handschriftlich verfasster Notizbücher, dazu einige Adressbücher und auch Einzelblätter, die augenscheinlich aus Notizbüchern stammen (siehe Peter Villwock: Brechts Notizbücher - Editionsplan: www.textkritik.de/brecht/index.htm). Jede Seite eines Notizbuches ist beim Druck faksimiliert, das heißt seine *Gestalt* wird in der Druckfassung aufgenommen und auf der jeweils gegenüber liegenden Seite finden sich eine Transkription und auch eine erste Auskunft zum Text. Wichtig ist den Herausgebern, herauszufinden wo, und wie geschrieben wurde, etwa möglicherweise auf den Knien, im Zug oder im Theater: deshalb ist auch wichtig, das *Schriftbild* mit zu liefern und es versuchsweise zu entschlüsseln. Wichtig ist in diesem Zusammenhang auch zu wissen, in welchen Jahren, in welchem Zeitkontext Bertolt Brecht etwas geleistet hat. Fritz Sternberg (Soziologe und einer von Brechts ‚Lehrern‘) sagt, Brecht denke wie im „Rösselsprung“ und assoziativ. Brecht verfolgte „ungerade Linien“ (Sternberg).

*

Sichtbar kann durch diese Editionsweisen Bertolt Brecht Sch-

reibwerkstatt werden: Sein *work in progress*, sein schöpferischer Prozess, seine Gleichzeitigkeit an ungleichzeitigen, verschiedenen Dingen zu arbeiten. Brechts Schreibprozesse kommen zu Tage – sein variables, methodisches Vorgehen im Gegensatz zu einem so genannten ‚Inhaltismus‘, dem sich manche Philologie gerne zuwendet. Indem der Blick auf den arbeitenden Autor gerichtet wird, kann der voyeuristische Schlüssellock-Blick auf diesen Typen Brecht schön kontextualisiert werden ...

*

Brecht geht – schon als junger Mensch – hart ins Gericht mit sich und seinen Stücken; damals ist erst 22 Jahre alt. Er nennt sie „grünes Obst“ – also noch nicht ausgereift. Solche Passagen aber sind sehr sinnvoll gerade in der theaterpädagogischen Arbeit bzw. in einer Theaterbildung: wir können mit den frühen Bemerkungen des Autors an seine Werke herangehen: es werden uns neue Lesarten und Spielarten zur Verfügung gestellt, und zwar vom Autor selber.

*

Bertolt Brecht ließ seine frühen Stücke von Sekretärinnen der Haindl'schen Papierfabrik, in der sein Vater in leitender Position war, abschreiben bzw. diktieren sie den Sekretärinnen, die sich schon mal weigerten, anstößige, drastische Stellen zu tippen. Sie benutzten dann die Leertaste der Schreibmaschine und ließen eine Leerstelle, die Brecht handschriftlich füllte. Nebenbei: Mitte der 1960er Jahre besuchte ich in Bremen eine öffentliche Kino-Vorführung der „Dreigroschenoper“ von 1962 (Regie: Wolfgang Staudte; mit Hildegard Knef, Curd Jürgens, Gert Fröbe, Lino Ventura, Walter Giller u.a. – auch mit Sammy Davis jr. als Moritaten-Sänger, wenn ich es recht erinnere). Mir wurde mit dem Kino-Billet

ein Papierstück ausgehändigt, auf dem stand, dass ich mich verpflichte, keinen Anstoß an den anstößigen Stellen des Dreigroschenoper-Stoffes zu nehmen ... Ach, *wann* war das? 19. Jahrhundert? Nein, nein, gerade eben vor etwa 50 Jahren – Mann-O-Mann!

*

Wichtige Thematiken in den ersten Notizbüchern sind: Liebe, Vater-schaft und Mutterschaft (immer wieder ist ungewollte Schwangerschaft Thema in diesem Kreis der jungen Leute; Geld für Abtreibung muss besorgt werden), erotische bis pornographische Gedichte und Entwürfe zu alldem. Und es geht um den so genannten neuen Menschen, wie er namentlich im Expressionismus thematisiert wurde. Sichtbar werden Motive und Schreib-Methoden, die Brecht sehr früh begleiteten. Außerdem wird sichtbar, dass Bertolt Brecht kollektiv – unter seiner Führung – produziert hat: „von Bert Brecht und seinen Freunden“ heißen die „Lieder zur Klampfe“ von 1918 – die Namen seiner Mitstreiter, mit denen er z. B. Balladen-Texte oder Sujets oder -Melodien ge- und erfunden und gesungen hat, werden nicht genannt. Sichtbar ist hier schon Caspar Neher (Zeichnungen von ihm befinden sich in Notizbüchern). Der Freundeskreis ist ein persönlicher und auch ein werkmäßiger.

*

Der Herausgeber Peter Villwock: Die Struktur des Brechtschen Vorgehens sei um circa 1920 bereits fertig gewesen – wenn man sich an die Notizbücher hält: man findet die erste Struktur, den ersten Typus – nämlich: „Baal“. Die zweite Struktur, der zweite Typus: das seien Händler, Kaufleute, Kapitalisten = neu sachlich handelnde Typen. Und im Gegensatz zu Baal wohl auch: intermediäre Typen, kommunikative Strukturen. Dann notiert Bertolt

Brecht das, was er später die große Methode oder auch die Dialektik nennt – hier in der Form des Humors. *Humor*, das ist ein Abstandhalten und gleichzeitig ein Zusammenspiel, eine Dynamik der unterschiedlichen Wesenskräfte und Feuchtigkeiten des Körpers. Also etwas Vitales und gleichzeitig Intellektuelles.

*

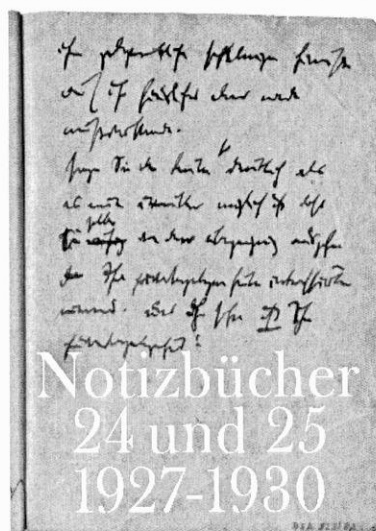
Also: Es lassen sich in Brechts skizzierten Frühwerk nach Kenntnis der Herausgeber drei Ich-Ideale feststellen: a) Baal, der Anti-Bürger; b) der global vernetzte Kapitalist, Kaufmann und Händler, der neu-sachliche Mensch, der die Dinge liebt wie sie sind [siehe auch die Passagen: „und der denkende liebt die / die welt wie sie ist“ (= der rechte Chor) und „der denkende liebt / die welt wie sie wird“ (= der linke Chor) in den Fragmenten vom „Bösen Baal dem asozialen“ (hrsg. von Dieter Schmidt. Frankfurt am Main 1969, erw. und verb. Ausgabe, S. 85 f.; und: Gerd Koch, Reiner Steinweg, Florian Vaßen im Auftrag der Gesellschaft für Theaterpädagogik (Hrsgg.): *Assoziales Theater. Spielversuche mit Lehrstücken und Anstiftung zur Praxis*. Köln 1984, S. 24, 26], der auch den Menschen als Ware, als Tauschobjekt sieht. Brecht hat dazu Stücke skizziert über den Kaufmann, den Übersee-Kaufmann und „Hans im Glück“. Er hat auch einen Aphorismus über geschäftstüchtige Juden geschrieben: Sie führen den Krieg im Handelsladen und gewinnen dort. Das Ich-Ideal c) ist eine Synthese aus a) und b): Brecht plädiert für Humor und Dialektik. Der Typus a) war durch *Verzehr* charakterisiert, der Typus b) durch *Verkehr*. Brecht fügt beides zusammen, indem er Dialektik/die große Methode, die den Humor gegen den Ernst zusammenbringt und sich für Leicht-Fertiges entscheidet. Im Deutschen habe man

„dicke Vorstellungen von Komik“ (Brecht) – keine Leicht-Fertigkeit. Er ist der Meinung, dass der Humor im Himmel regiere. Und „Humor ist ein Distanz-Gefühl“. Brecht sagt, man müsse jemanden „beim Schreiben betrachten“ (siehe Brechts Verwendung des Haltungsbegriffs – auch „gestisches Schreiben“ und die Fülle des „Gestus“).

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Bertolt Brecht



Band 7

Suhrkamp

***Hangmen Also Die* gets the Hi-Tech Treatment**

2013 will see Kino re-release Fritz Lang's *Hangmen Also Die* on dvd using high quality digital transfer. The new "version" will also (hopefully) include a minute or so of rediscovered footage. In anticipation of the event, CIBS brings you film scholar Peter Ellenbruch's essay on the film which will accompany the release. No further details as to other extras to be included were available at press-time.

***Hangmen Also Die* – A Production History**

A collaborative work by Fritz Lang and Bertolt Brecht?

For many the very idea is surprising, but that probably has to do with the common assumptions about Lang and Brecht that you encounter today. On the one hand, the director-dandy who made the monumental "silent classic" *Metropolis* in 1927, on the other, the left-intellectual innovator of the German theatre of the 1920s. But if you look more closely at the biographies of the two artists, you arrive inevitably at the German exile colony in Hollywood, in which émigrés of the most varied political persuasions and social backgrounds lived together, forced, as they had all been, to flee from the National Socialists. Then today's opinion-page clichés start to fade from view to give way to a world in which the Berlin of the '20s was only a memory and the threat from Nazi-Germany an everyday reality.

However, cultural developments in Berlin during the Weimar Republic did, of course, play a role in the later collaboration between Lang and Brecht. They had become acquainted at

the beginning of the '30s through their mutual friend Peter Lorre, and Lang was already at that time mightily impressed by Brecht, seeing in his style a modern form of theatre which he preferred to that of Max Reinhardt.

Yet their acquaintanceship didn't lead to a creative collaboration at that time: The National Socialists' seizure of power crushed the culture of the Weimar Republic and Fritz Lang immigrated in the spring/summer of 1933 via France to the USA. There he was able to further establish himself as a successful director and was at home with the American way of life and in the Hollywood studio system.

For Lang, life in Hollywood also included actively supporting other émigrés who lived in fear of their lives in Europe and who hoped to make it to the US. In 1940 he received a letter from theatre-director Erwin Piscator, who drew his attention to Brecht's perilous position in Swedish exile. Lang, who had already made a case for Brecht and had founded a special Bertolt Brecht Fund under the auspices of the European Film Fund (to which Wilhelm Dieterle, Oskar Homolka, Fritz Kortner, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Ernst Lubitsch, among others, had contributed), went to work immediately, and as a result Brecht, his wife Helene Weigel, their children Barbara and Stephan, as well as his collaborator Ruth Berlau, all received visas for the USA. Brecht's group left from Finland and reached Los Angeles in summer 1941.

In spite of his misgivings about the American dream factory, Brecht found entrée into the German colony in Hollywood and moved in the same circles as Feuchtwanger, Heinrich and Thomas Mann, Ludwig Marcuse and others. He continued to write in German and numbered among those

émigrés who – as opposed to Lang, Franz Waxman or Billy Wilder – did not intend to stay in America, but rather to return to Germany after the end of Nazi rule.

In the spring of 1942 Fritz Lang came upon a newspaper report on the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, Hitler's "Reichsprotektor" in the Czech territories. In *Man Hunt* he had already made an anti-Nazi film a year earlier, and the story of the Heydrich-assassination seemed to him a good basis for a second one. He contacted Brecht, with whom he had, in the meantime, formed a friendship, and who now lived in the neighbourhood, and suggested that together they write a screenplay based on the material. In quick time they readied an outline for the film *Never Surrender* and sometime thereafter a treatment, which Hans Viertel translated into English. Since he was not under contract to a studio at the time, Lang offered the film as a freelance director and producer to executive producer Arnold Pressburger, who worked with United Artists and who immediately bought the proposal. Brecht had asked Lang to request \$3,000 for his work on the script; thanks to his experience in Hollywood, Lang returned from his meeting with Pressburger with a check for Brecht for \$7,500. The film-project came at the right time for both men: Brecht had difficulty finding work in the US, but he notes in his *Journal* that it was financially tight at that time for Lang too, and thus they got straight down to business. As Brecht could barely speak English, the bilingual screenwriter John Wexley was hired to translate his ideas and instructions both into English and into a screenplay. At first the two worked together harmoniously, after all, Wexley was known to be a left-wing writer who in all likelihood must have been able to

understand the background to Brecht's ideas. The first tensions actually arose between Lang, who came at things from his background in the film-industry, and the two authors, who had wanted to put a collective stamp on the material through the introduction of scenes showing the masses. Although Brecht's *Journal* is known to include mistakes, imprecisions, and unfair judgments, the following description of the situation in October 1942 probably captures the working environment very well, as Lang's volatile side is well-known from other sources: "just now, right before shooting, lang hauled poor wexley into his office and screamed at him behind closed doors that he wants to make a hollywoodpicture, and shits on scenes that show the people etc. the change in the man once \$700,000 is in the offing is remarkable. he sits with all the airs of a dictator and old movie hand behind his boss-desk."¹

However, this was just a foretaste of the problems which would arise during production. When Brecht found out that Wexley was getting \$10,000 for his work, he demanded the same amount from Pressburger. Although the latter acquiesced following Lang's intervention, he felt himself to have been blackmailed by Brecht. Lang, meanwhile, was unhappy that Brecht had initially gone behind his back in making his demand of Pressburger. On top of this, Brecht noticed that Wexley had written only his own name on the finished pages of the screenplay. Thus, before shooting had even started, the main players had moved far from any kind of relationship based on trust, and the situation would only worsen when

1. Bertolt Brecht. *Journals 1934-1955*. Translated by Hugh Rorrison. Edited by John Willett. New York: Routledge, 1996. 259.

Pressburger announced that, owing to unforeseen organizational problems, shooting would have to be moved up by three weeks. A consequence of this new deadline was that Lang himself, together with yet another writer, Milton Gunzberg, cut the far too voluminous screenplay from 280 pages down to 190. While this procedure would certainly not have been uncommon in the Hollywood-system, it must have seemed inadmissible from Brecht's perspective. Then when Lang began to shoot sequences which Brecht and Wexley had already cut, Brecht's displeasure only mounted.

The absolute low-point in this conflict-ridden production history came, however, when shortly before completion of the film, in early 1943, Wexley claimed that he was the true author of the screenplay and that his should be the only name listed in the credits. The Screen Writers Guild was called upon to settle the matter. Wexley made his case, Brecht disputed it and called as witnesses Fritz Lang and the composer Hanns Eisler, who had worked on the film's music. Lang expressed his opinion that there were innumerable sequences in the screenplay which, in their overall conception, in the constellation of characters, in the development of the dialogue and the linguistic composition, could only have come from Brecht. But the arbiter decided in favor of Wexley, reasoning that as an American author he needed the credit for his career, whereas for Brecht, in light of his stated goal of returning to Europe, the credit would ultimately be of no relevance. Since the judgment allowed for no further appeal, the parties agreed on the wording: "Screenplay by John Wexley – Adaptation and Original Story Bert Brecht and Fritz Lang." After this decision Brecht called it quits on his work on the film, which he would have

liked to call *Trust the People*, and the writer and director never saw each other again following that appointment with the Screen Writers Guild.

Although Brecht's Journal may appear factually scarcely reliable, it does very closely reflect his change of mood and his bitterness during work on the film. Brecht's reservations with regard to Hollywood and his accusations of superficiality, falsification and moral dishonesty appear with increasing frequency and increasingly pointedly in reference to Lang's film-work. Regarding the accusations levelled at him in Brecht's Journal, Lang would later say in a 1971 recollection of the production of *Hangmen Also Die*: "It won't be possible to write the whole truth without calling Brecht unreliable, and I ask myself whether it's really that important that the memory of a good and great writer be discredited because at the time he was perhaps just reacting emotionally." This view of things is certainly typical for the more relaxed Fritz Lang we all know from testimonies and interviews from the '60s and '70s, but that's not to say that it necessarily tells us much about the actual conditions of production in 1942/43.

A closer inspection ultimately reveals that the conflict resides in the respective positions of Brecht and Lang with regard to the construction of a narrative. As a playwright and somebody who created in language, Brecht was unable to get to grips with the cinematic method of constructing narrative through a series of visual compositions and their combination into a montage, whereas the film-director Lang attached no importance to the interpretation of manner of speech as socially-conditioned symptom, and was never able to think his way into Brecht's conception of the epic.

Indicative of this gap in understanding are two documented criticisms levelled by the one against the other. For Lang it was important that all of the Nazi's in the film be played by Germans, and all the Czechs by Americans. That would result in a clear distinction in speech patterns between accented and accent-free, which would in turn differentiate from the outset between oppressor and oppressed at the compositional level of the film's sound. Lang criticized Brecht for not accepting this cinematically inspired sound-composition, wanting as he did to cast Oskar Homolka in the role of the Czech traitor, and Helene Weigel as the Czech greengrocer. On the other hand, Brecht complained that Lang saw all of the hostages held in the barracks as being on the same social level, and had a working-class character act in a bourgeois manner when interacting with a bourgeois character.

Crudely stated, we can speak of a conflict between a visual artist and a wordsmith, which is often the case when film directors and authors collaborate, a conflict in which Lang and Brecht also became embroiled at the time.

Brecht departed the scene shortly before the premiere, but still at this late date the film was without a definite title. The working title, *Never Surrender*, had had to be scrapped because parallel to the making of the film a book with the same title had appeared, and after other suggestions, such as *Unconquered* and *Lest We Forget*, had likewise been abandoned, Lang and Pressburger organized a contest to find a title within the production office. A secretary came up with the idea of *Hangmen Also Die*, which was appropriate for the Hollywood box-office on the one hand, and on the other for its play on the nickname which the Czechs had

given Heydrich: "The Hangman". Lang accepted the title and the secretary won \$100.

That the film was a lot less Hollywood than Brecht had suspected became apparent when it ran into trouble with the censors, the Hays Office, for its depiction of the resistance, and when the publicity arm of United Artists complained that the film didn't have a love story and was thus scarcely marketable. This inflexibility of the advertising people led eventually to a decidedly mixed marketing campaign. On the one hand the usual tactics were employed and before the premiere a newspaper quiz was announced, but with a macabre twist. In an advertisement readers saw photographs of the film's leading actors arranged around a gallows with a text urging them to guess whose neck would be placed in the noose. Alongside this there were more appropriate ideas: A poster for the film confronted the viewer with a Nazi-soldier screaming: "To see this film is *verboten!*" For the premiere on the east coast meanwhile, things were simply invented: "From Hitler's secret archives! This script was smuggled out of Europe at risk of death! No wonder it is hailed as one of the most exciting pictures to come out of this war!" Notwithstanding such flights of fancy of American film-marketing, *Hangmen Also Die* was almost universally acclaimed in the trade and daily press following its premiere in spring 1943, and heralded as a defining anti-Nazi film. Here it should also be noted that Brecht was indeed acknowledged as author of the film and his contribution discussed, a fact which did not, however, lead to him seeing any further film projects through to completion.

RITZ**LITTLEFIELD**SATURDAY
MIDNITE**SUN. AND MON.****THIS MAN SHOT
HEYDRICH THE HANGMAN***This Picture
was not to be made
until after the war*

A secret script from a secret source...smuggled out of Europe, produced in America, so that the world might know the true, amazing story behind the head-lines heard 'round the world'!

HANGMEN ALSO DIE

PRESENTED BY

Arnold Pressburger

STARRING

BRIAN DONLEVY**Walter Brennan • Anna Lee**GENE LOCKHART • Dennis O'Keefe • Alexander Granach
Margaret Wyche • Tonia Selwart • Produced and Directed by**Fritz Lang**Original Story by Fritz Lang and Bert Brecht • Screenplay by John Wexley
RELEASED BY UNITED ARTISTS

As such this film remains the only one completed in the US with Brecht's participation and a work which has been able to maintain its reputation as one of the most insightful of anti-Nazi films, due in no small measure to Brecht's contribution. Beyond that the film is an important document of the film-work of a whole group of German émigrés. In addition to the contributions of those already mentioned in the areas of screenplay, production, direction, and music, there is also the participation of several actors whose backgrounds are worthy of note. Hans Heinrich von Twardowski, who plays Heydrich, is probably best known to most as Alan in Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920); Alexander Granach had also enjoyed a career in German silent film, having appeared, for example, in F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) and Arthur Robison's *Shadows* (1923). Here, as Gruber, he is a virtual counterpart to Inspector Lohmann in Lang's *M* (1931) and *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1933) from the Weimar period, while Reinhold Schünzel, known from the many Richard Oswald films in which he appeared, gives such an extreme performance as Gestapo Inspector Ritter here that, for the briefest moment, it pushes the film towards the satirical territory of Lubitsch's *To Be Or Not To Be* of 1942.

When all is said and done, however, one would have to describe *Hangmen Also Die* as a Fritz Lang film with a Brecht-touch, as at the narrative level one can find all of the stylistic elements so typical for Lang. The shot compositions, the extreme close-ups, the interior framings, the construction of the montage are all so unmistakably Lang that it is not surprising that the director himself should have adjudged the film from a particular perspective as one of his most important, along with

M. He would mostly refer to the collaboration with Brecht as having been a positive experience and consistently confirmed Brecht as the author of the film's script.

As opposed to Brecht, who is said to have remained an opponent of Lang's, Lang would always have positive things to say about Brecht, valued him as an important author and would continue to be inspired by his work. Witness Jean-Luc Godard's *Les Mepris* (1963), in which Lang plays himself, and into which he slips an homage to Brecht: All of a sudden within the film, and just for a moment, the initials *BB* no longer stand for the lead actor Brigitte Bardot, but for Bertolt Brecht. In the mid-'60s he is also said to have written the first German-language draft for his unrealized film-project *Death of a Career Girl* in a Brechtian style. And last but not least, Lang returned repeatedly throughout his life, and in the most varied of situations, to a couplet from Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*: "Since men are just no good / Pick up a piece of wood / And him them on the head with it! / Then maybe they'll be good."

Thus it is that a closer look at the time of production of *Hangmen Also Die* reveals two artists at odds with the widespread and often repeated clichéd characterizations: A film director and an author who attempted a collaborative work while living in exile. Where the contributions of the one really begin, and those of the other end, is today in the eye of the beholder.

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ESSAY

Visibility, Divisibility and the Language of Revolution: a Brechtian Perspective

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Signs are mental representation of objects. Each mental representation has a specific, though not fixed relative position within a schema of understanding. The total system of relations that signs maintain is what we call a language or *Weltanschauung* and the relative position a sign occupies is what we call its definition.

The visible implies two things—that which is seen and that which it is possible to see. We speak of the visible as a product of perception—that which we can see or that which could be seen. However, the neurological phenomenon that we call sight is related to, yet distinct from the process of making sense of what we see. First we perceive and then we define. That is, first we perceive the object and then, in order to make sense of it, we must form a mental representation (i.e. sign) of it. We classify it, categorize it, differentiate it, locate or place it into a language.

Like the visible, the invisible has two connotations—that which is simply not seen and that which cannot be seen. Something which is simply not seen is something which is not perceived; whereas something which cannot be perceived admits of an incapability of the perceptive functions. However the perceptive functions of the human subject are constantly evolving.

Not everything which is unseen is unperceivable and things which once were unperceivable can become perceivable and perceived. This happens when new methods of differentiation emerge like the application of tools (e.g. the telescope, ultrasound machines, etc).

Often we are able to fit new signs into the existing language with ease. But in other circumstances the visibility of previously invisible objects requires a large scale reordering of language. This is no simple task because material interests are usually linked to the particular ordering of signs within a *Weltanschauung*. In order to maintain particular material interests there are those who argue that the current, dominant *Weltanschauung* is totalized and indivisible. Brecht, for example, envisions a bourgeoisie who seeks to hide its particular interests within an indivisible and totalized *Weltanschauung*. For example, he says the bourgeoisie is “eagerly and desperately occupied with achieving a new totality” (Brecht, Kuhn, Giles, & Bradley, 2003 p.97). The reason the bourgeoisie attempts to create a totality is obvious for Brecht, it is an “attempt to give lasting shape to specific proposals of an ethical and aesthetic nature, and to confer on them a final, definitive character, in other words, the attempt of a class to give permanence to itself and to give its proposals the appearance of finality” (Brecht, Kuhn, Giles, & Bradley, 2003 p.98).

But how does the appearance of finality come about? For Brecht, like Gramsci (1971) and Barthes (1972; Barthes & Lavers, 1972) the sedimentation of bourgeois ideology can be found in the language it uses. Art is, for example, according to Brecht, “a skill in preparing reproductions of human beings’ life together such as lead people to a particular kind of feeling, thought and action”

(Brecht, 1965, 95). Bourgeois art and more generally bourgeois language lead people to certain feelings, thoughts and actions which are, of course, beneficial in maintaining bourgeois social order.

A large scale reordering of language which is warranted by the previously invisible becoming visible is likely to be resisted because reordering

the moons using his telescope. However the philosopher asks, "Mr. Galilei, before we apply ourselves to your famous tube, we should like to request the pleasure of a disputation: Can such planets exist?" (32). Galileo replies "I thought you'd just look through the telescope and see for yourselves" (32). However, the Florentine scholars refuse.



Steven Skybell and F. Murray Abraham in the Classic Stage Company production of *Galileo* this past spring. Photo Joan Marcus

jeopardizes the privilege of some in the current social order. This phenomenon is illustrated quite clearly by Brecht, in his *Life of Galileo* (Brecht, Manheim, & Willett, 1972), most specifically in the attitudes of the court scholars of the Grand Duke Medici.

After discovering the moons of Jupiter, by employing a new manner of differentiation (the telescope), Galileo names the moons after the Grand Duke, in hopes of gaining a patronage. Galileo is invited to Florence where the Grand Duke's scholars attempt to verify his findings. Galileo offers to show them

The philosopher states, "The cosmos of the divine Aristotle...is an edifice of such order and beauty that we shall be well advised not to disturb its harmony." (32). In other words, the philosopher is arguing for the indivisibility of the Aristotelian *Weltanschauung*. Galileo's stars are a truth which disrupts the dominant *Weltanschauung*'s claims to totality and indivisibility. For the philosopher all is accounted for. There is no contradiction to be seen. A point which is continued by the mathematician: "One might be tempted to reply that if your tube shows something that cannot exist it must be

a rather unreliable tube" (33). Brecht represents these claims of totality and indivisibility as coming from the courtisan scholars. Here Brecht reminds the viewer of the connection between material interests and the dominant *Weltanschauung*. The Mathematician and the Philosopher have gained their privileged positions because they lay claims to a mastery of truth. Galileo challenges their mastery of truth and thus the claims to occupy the positions they are in, and by extension the entire social order.

In the end the Florentine scholars refuse Galileo's plea to look through the telescope. What is the nature of this plea? It is phenomenological. He wants the scholars to simply see what which is now visible. However, the scholar's material interests and the *Weltanschauung* which protects and legitimizes them force a betrayal of their perceptive capacities. They must not see. No one must see.

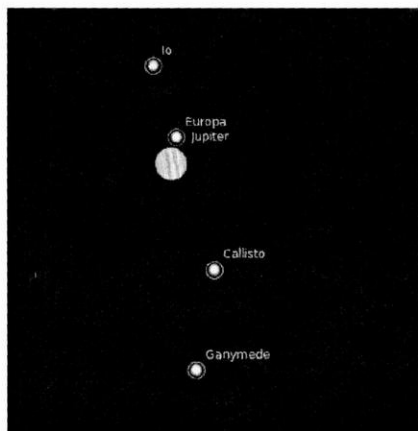
What is visible is
largely a product of
what the dominant
classes want to be
visible.

In short, material interests can dictate what is visible, what remains invisible and what is indivisible. What is visible is largely a product of what the dominant classes want to be visible. Therefore, in order for revolutionary social change to occur subaltern classes cannot rely on the language of the dominant class. A new language must be de-

veloped—one that effectively makes the old one divisible and one that can make visible that which is currently invisible. Understanding, as Brecht did the relationship between ideological hegemony and language and his assertion that this relationship can become undone in the service of a revolutionary movement is an important contribution and one that current practitioners of theatre can use in their own efforts at creating a revolutionary aesthetic.

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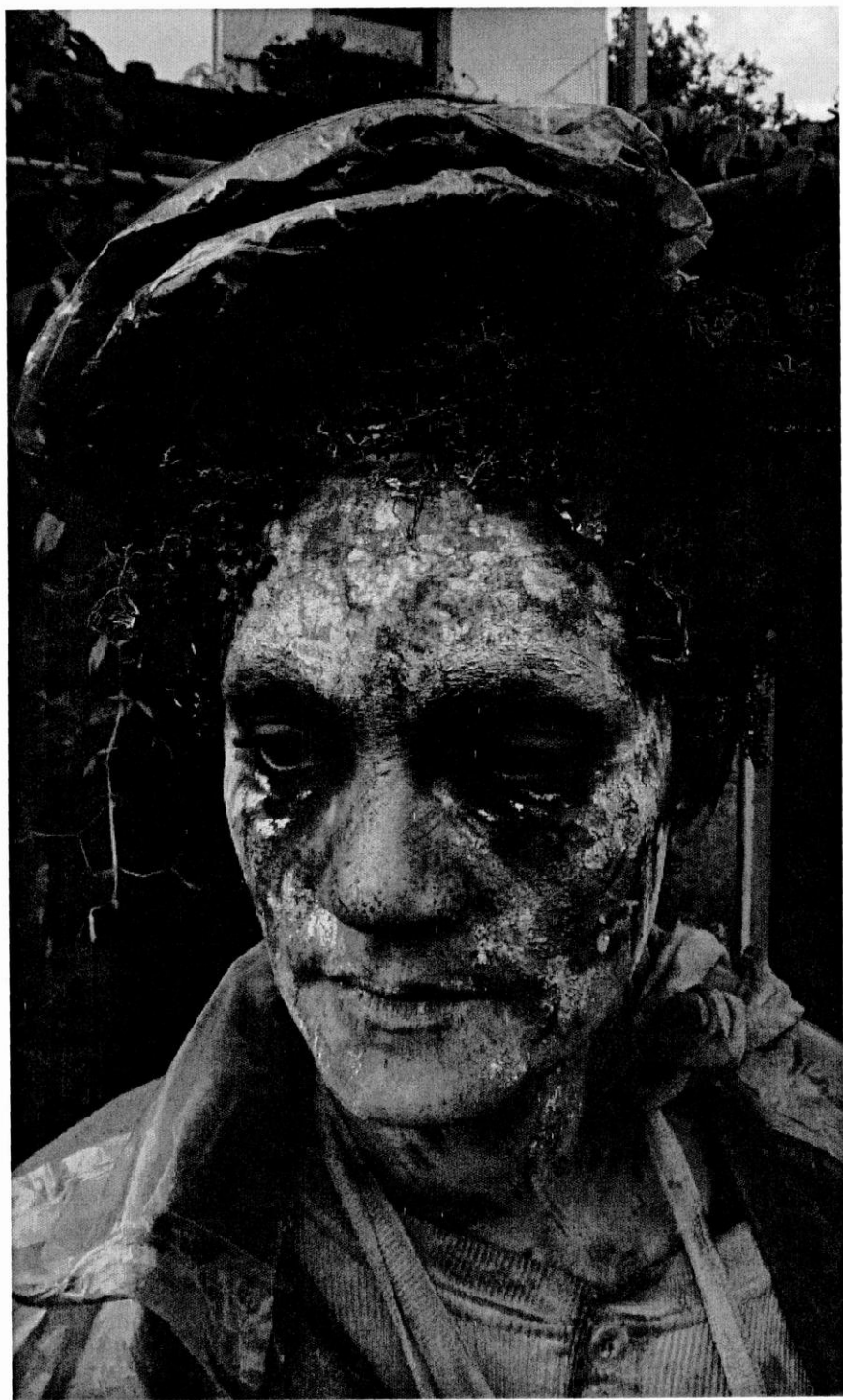
Behind the Scenes at the BE: Prologue



Before getting to Margaret Setje-Eilers' interviews with Ulrike Heinemann and Barbara Naujok from the Berliner Ensemble, a quick peek at the work of somebody at the beginning of her career in the same field. This past summer Susann Weber completed her studies in theatre costume design at Dresden's Hochschule für Bildende Künste with a project focusing on Brecht's *Threepenny Opera*, and on the following pages you will see her ideas for costumes made solely out of recycled materials for Jenny, Macky, Filch and Polly. My thanks go to Katharina Lewonig (pictured above), a mentor of Susann's at the Hochschule, for putting us in touch, and to Susann for providing the photographs.









Margaret Setje -Eilers: Behind the Scenes at the BE - Two Interviews

I. Barbara Naujok: Leiterin Kostüm und Maske, Berliner Ensemble

13. Juni 2012 im Büro von Frau Naujok
am Berliner Ensemble

Barbara Naujok: „*Manche Leute sagen,
ich sei eine Legende. Wegen des Gedächtnisses eigentlich.*“

Barbara Naujok (BN)

Margaret Setje-Eilers (MSE)

MSE: Frau Naujok, als Leiterin Kostüm und Maske am Berliner Ensemble haben Sie einen der faszinierendsten Berufe am Theater. Sie sind schon sehr lange dabei und haben zum Beispiel auch bereits mit Peter Zadek gearbeitet. Ich freue mich darauf, über Ihren beruflichen Werdegang zu hören. Was hat Sie dazu gebracht, diesen Beruf zu wählen?
BN: Oh, das ist eine lange Geschichte. Als Kind und junges Mädchen wollte ich Tänzerin werden. Wegen einer Fußoperation konnte ich diesen Weg aber nicht einschlagen, sondern musste etwas anderes machen. Da ich aber durch die Tanzerei irgendwie schon mit dem Theater in Berührung gekommen war, habe ich mich für einen Beruf hinter der Bühne entschlossen und bin

Maskenbildnerin geworden. Ich habe in Bremen meine Ausbildung gemacht und da unter anderem eben auch Peter Zadek kennen gelernt. Unsere Wege haben sich immerfort gekreuzt und wir sind unser ganzes Leben miteinander umgegangen. Nach der Ausbildung bin ich nach Berlin zurückgekommen und habe dann gleich ganz flink eine Karriere als Maskenbildnerin gemacht. Ich habe schon Anfang zwanzig, so mit einundzwanzig, zweiundzwanzig, richtig große Filme gemacht, darunter auch einige der größten Nachkriegsproduktionen, *Die Nibelungen* (Harald Reinl, 1966) und so weiter, aber eben als Maskenbildnerin. Mit fünfundzwanzig dachte ich dann irgendwie, das kann es nicht sein, du kannst nicht mit fünfzig noch auf der Straße stehen und Nasen pudern, und dann war der Beruf eigentlich für mich erledigt, auch weil es so eine flinke, schnelle Karriere war. Ich hatte viel Glück, muss ich dazu sagen. Dann bin ich an die Hochschule gegangen um Kostüm und Bühne zu studieren. Das habe ich aber nie zu Ende gekriegt, weil ich ziemlich schnell wieder gearbeitet habe. Zuerst habe ich viel Film gemacht und dann auch zwischendurch immer wieder am Theater gearbeitet. Ich musste die Familie ernähren und deshalb musste ich halt Film machen, aber Theater habe ich immer zu meinem Vergnügen gemacht. Ich mache jetzt mal einen Schnelldurchgang: 1984 oder 1985 hatte ich mit Zadek auch viele weitere Berührungspunkte. Ich habe damals viel am Schillertheater gearbeitet, überall, rundum, immer als Freelancer. Dann bin ich fest ans Hamburger Schauspielhaus (*Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg*) gegangen, als Zadek da Intendant wurde (1985-1989). Danach hat er mich hierher ans Berliner Ensemble mitgenommen. Er war zwar schon vorher weg, hat mich

aber nachgeholt. Das war erst dieses Fünferdirektorium. Eigentlich wollte er, dass ich dann mit ihm nach Wien gehe. Er hat am Burgtheater inszeniert, *Kirschgarten*, glaube ich. Das weiß ich jetzt gar nicht mehr so genau.

MSE: Der *Kirschgarten*, mit Angela Winkler (Zadek, 1996)?

BN: Mit Angela Winkler war es. Oder war es *Drei Schwestern*? Ich weiß es nicht. Jedenfalls bin ich aber am Berliner Ensemble in Berlin geblieben, weil ich zu der Zeit einen schulpflichtigen Sohn hatte. In Berlin gab es alle diese Interimsintendanten, wie Martin Wuttke, dann kam Stephan Suschke. Ich weiß nicht, das war eine ziemlich unruhige Zeit am Berliner Ensemble. Dann kam Claus Peymann und bei ihm bin ich immer noch.

MSE: Sie waren also vor Claus Peymann schon hier.

BN: Ja, ich war vor Peymann schon hier. Bin mit Zadek hergekommen und dann einfach geblieben. Peymann hat mich sozusagen übernommen und ich glaube, das haben wir nicht bereut, also ich jedenfalls bin gerne hier. Eigentlich bin ich schon Rentnerin. Das kann man sich ganz simpel ausrechnen. Zadek ist Anfang der sechziger Jahre, glaube ich, nach Bremen gekommen (1962). Und ich auch. So lange habe ich diesen Beruf eben schon, über fünfzig Jahre.

MSE: Was Sie in dieser Zeit an Kostümen gesehen haben, ist erstaunlich. Haben Sie eine Lieblingsinszenierung nach all diesen Jahren?

BN: Das ist schwer zu entscheiden. Es gibt so viele unterschiedliche Dinge. Jeder Regisseur hat eine eigene Handschrift, jeder Regisseur arbeitet anders. Ich mag beispielsweise Robert Wilson sehr gerne, weil er so eine außerordentliche Ästhetik hat. Ich kann mich noch an seine erste Inszenierung, *Death, Destruction and Detroit* (1978) an der

Schaubühne erinnern. Die war sehr einprägsam. Ich kann mich an Zadek-Inszenierungen erinnern, die wunderbar waren. Meine erste Zadek-Arbeit war *Die Geisel* in Bremen (1962). Das waren für mich hervorragende Theater-Erlebnisse, oder *Frühlingserwachen* (1965) und *Maß für Maß* (1967) von Zadek in Bremen, auch wunderbar. Es gab immer wieder Highlights. Peymanns *Hermannsschlacht* zum Beispiel (1982), die mochte ich gerne, und seine Bernhard-Inszenierungen ebenso, z.B. *Hel-denplatz* (1988) oder *Ritter, Dene, Voss* (1986). Jeder Regisseur hat Höhepunkte und jeder Regisseur, wie wir alle, macht manchmal richtig tolle Sachen – und manchmal halt weniger tolle. Sie sind vielleicht immer noch gut, aber sie sind dann eben nicht...

MSE: Sie bleiben nicht in Erinnerung.

BN: Ja, sie sind eben nicht super-gut, ich weiß nicht, wie man es nennen soll. Also die erste Peymann-Inszenierung, *Publikumsbeschimpfung* (1966), habe ich damals schon gesehen, aber was wirklich einprägsam war, war der Stuttgarter *Faust* (1977). Das war eine Arbeit von Peymann mit Achim Freyer und die war ganz toll, die fand ich zum Beispiel sehr eindrücklich.

MSE: Und am Berliner Ensemble (BE)? Da habe ich viele zauberhafte Kostüme gesehen.

BN: In der Peymann-Zeit am BE habe ich keine Kostüme mehr gemacht. Da habe ich mich ausschließlich auf die Ausstattungsleitung hier konzentriert. Ich bin aber auch viel tingeln gegangen, schon während der Peymann-Zeit habe ich in Wien gearbeitet, in Zürich und sonst irgendwo. Ich habe viel an anderen Orten gemacht, aber hier habe ich keine Kostüme mehr gemacht.

MSE: Am BE machen Sie viele Direktionsarbeiten. Mit wem arbeiten Sie, wenn Sie mit einer neuen Inszenierung

anfangen?

BN: Mit den Kostümbildnern, die häufig dieselben sind.

MSE: Wie viele gibt es am BE?

BN: Die Regisseure bringen ihre Kostümbildner mit. Wilson arbeitet beispielsweise immer mit Jacques Reynaud zusammen. Das ist jetzt die ich weiß nicht wievielte Wilson-Inszenierung, die wir hier machen. Das hat mal mit *Ozeanflug* angefangen (Robert Wilson, 1998). Da war Peymann noch gar nicht da, glaube ich jedenfalls, und das war eine sehr schöne Inszenierung mit Stefan Kurt. Wilson hat viel hier gearbeitet.

(Eine Mitarbeiterin kommt, sieht uns und bleibt an der Tür stehen.)

BN: Komm herein, kannst ruhig was fragen. Doch, kannst du. Macht nichts.

Mitarbeiterin: Die Schuhspitzen aus Metall, wie heißen sie denn bei Herrenschuhen, macht das der ganz normale Schuster?

BN: Ja, Eisen. Da ist die Frage, was ihr haben wollt. Wollt ihr Steppeisen haben?

Mitarbeiterin: Die sind zu groß. Normale Steppeisen sind zu groß. Sie wollen das Geräusch haben, aber wirklich nur ganz vorne.

BN: Die hat der Schuster. Da kannst du nur eine kleine oder eine größere aussuchen.

Mitarbeiterin: Kleine, nur für das Geräusch.

BN: Aber du, da muss eine Ledersohle drunter sein.

Mitarbeiterin: Es ist Gummi drunter.

BN: Dann fallen sie immer ab. Du musst eine Ledersohle dranhängen, wenigstens da, wo diese eiserne Spitze drankommt. Vor allem bei Gummi, das haben wir in den *Humanisten*, fallen die Spitzen immer ab (*Jandls Humanisten*: Philip Tiedemann, 2012). Die müssen übrigens auch noch zum Schuster,

die Schuhe von den *Humanisten*. Da müssen überall Ledersohlen drunter, bei den beiden Steppern, bei Krista und bei Rothmann. Die sollen mal hochkommen. Also bei den beiden Steppern, da müssen Ledersohlen und dann die Eisen drauf. Weil sie auf Gummi wirklich nicht halten, also laß die besohlen. Der Schuster soll das Gummi da runternehmen und Leder draufmachen.

Mitarbeiterin: Wir brauchen Gummi wegen des Rutschens. Hinten Gummi, sonst rutschen sie. Er soll nur vorne Leder draufmachen. OK. (Die Mitarbeiterin geht ab.)

MSE: Das ist auch eine meiner Fragen, ob die Schuhe hier im Haus angefertigt werden, da sie immer so perfekt zu passen scheinen. Die Frauen (und auch die Männer) stolpern nicht in ihren Stöckelschuhen. Sie können in diesen Schuhen richtig gut laufen.

BN: Ja, wir sehen immer zu, dass wir die Originalschuhe möglichst früh in den Proben haben, sodass die Schauspieler damit üben und darin laufen können. Es ist unterschiedlich. Manche Schuhe werden angefertigt, andere werden gekauft. Im Haus selbst wird nicht angefertigt. Wir haben einen Schuster in Bayern. Dem schicken wir das immer, mit genauen Fußmaßen und so weiter. Dann kommen die Schuhe wieder zurück zum Anprobieren. Also noch im Rohzustand kommen sie zum Anprobieren zurück und dann schicken wir sie zum Fertigmachen wieder zum Schuster. Das geht hin und her.

MSE: Zum Beispiel in *Miss Sara Sampson* passen die Stiefel von Corinna Kirchhoff wunderbar (Günter Krämer, 2012). Auch die von Anna Graenzer in *Romeo und Julia* (Mona Kraushaar, 2011).

BN: Das sind gekaufte, übrigens. Es gibt ganz oft gekaufte. Bei den meisten gehen wir in Schuhläden. Wir haben

zu Schuhläden, zu manchen jedenfalls, sehr gute Verbindungen, weil wir relativ viel kaufen. Dann kriegen wir einen Stapel Schuhe mit um zu probieren, was gut geht und was nicht gut geht, und was nicht passt, geht zurück.

MSE: Ich war mal im Schuhfundus in der Französischen Straße, wo zum Beispiel viele Stiefel für die Oper und das Staatsballett aufgehoben werden und noch hängen. Werden auch Schuhe speziell für das BE angefertigt?

BN: Sehr unterschiedlich. Es kommt immer darauf an. Historische Schuhe müssen zwangsläufig immer angefertigt werden, wenn wir sie nicht im Fundus haben. Bei Wilson zum Beispiel werden Schuhe ganz häufig angefertigt.

MSE: Das bringt mich auf die Frage nach dem Budget. Haben Sie ein Budget für die Kostüme, wenn Sie mit einer Inszenierung anfangen? Müssen Sie im Fundus schauen, was Sie schon haben, was Sie brauchen?

BN: Es fängt normalerweise so an: Im Schauspiel gibt es erstmal Probenkostüme. Jeder Regisseur fängt an, mit seinen Schauspielern mit Probenkostümen zu probieren. Und manchmal entwickelt aus den Probekostümen was und es werden Originale draus.

Sie werden dann ergänzt oder noch ein bisschen umgearbeitet und passend gemacht. Und dann gibt es Produktionen, wo alles angefertigt wird, wie jetzt zum Beispiel bei den *Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald* (Enrico Lübke, 2012). Bei *Liliom* ist kaum was angefertigt worden (Mona Kraushaar, 2012). Da ist viel geändert worden. Das ist sehr unterschiedlich, wie es so passiert.

MSE: Ich habe zum Beispiel öfters Ritterrüstungen gesehen, ich glaube zuerst bei Schiller, *Die Jungfrau von Orleans* (Claus Peymann, 2006), und dann auch in anderen Stücken immer wieder.

BN: Ja, da haben wir zum Teil ganz viele

anfertigen lassen. Teilweise hatten wir welche, teilweise haben wir uns welche geliehen.

MSE: Dann habe ich einige wieder bei Kleist gesehen, *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn* (Simone Blattner, 2010). Waren das die gleichen?

BN: Ja, sie waren im Fundus. Wenn eine Produktion weg, also abgespielt, ist, gehen die Kostüme in den Fundus und werden dann hoffentlich für eine nächste Produktion wieder benutzt. Und da Ritterrüstungen nicht dem Verschleiß unterliegen, können sie auch wieder benutzt werden.

MSE: Sehen Sie im Archiv nach, was da ist? Oder gehen Sie zum Fundus?

BN: Da geht man hin, ja. Da fehlt uns das Personal, um das alles zu archivieren. Das können wir gar nicht, das schaffen wir personell nicht. Also der Fundus ist schon eine sehr komplexe Angelegenheit und häufig sieht es da aus wie bei Hempels unterm Sofa. Das kann schon passieren, wenn wir so viele Produktionen haben und dann immer geholt und wieder rübergefahren wird. Wir haben einen großen Außenfundus in Weißensee, hier im Haus haben wir nur einen kleinen Fundus für den täglichen Bedarf.

MSE: Es müssen im Fundus tausende von Stücken sein.

BN: Ja, da ist viel. Also damals, als ich hier anfang, war das alles ein Ausstattungsverbund. Die Schneiderei für die Oper, für das Deutsche Theater und für das Berliner Ensemble war in der Französischen Straße. Hier gab's das alles nicht. Die hatten hier noch einen winzigkleinen Aufarbeitungsraum, der total misslich ausgestattet war. Da gab es eine Waschmaschine und alles stand unter Wasser.

[Eine Mitarbeiterin kommt herein und verlangt Geld für etwas. Das Telefon klingelt mit noch einer Bitte. Der Prak-

tikant kommt jetzt auch zurück und wird eingeladen zuzuhören. Souverän jongliert Frau Naujok viele Bälle, ohne eine Sekunde zu vertun.]

So, wo waren wir stehengeblieben?

Ach so, der Fundus. Also, das war eben alles in der Französischen Straße und hier gab es nur einen winzigen Aufarbeitungsraum. Wirklich lebensgefährlich war der, weil die Steckdosen im Wasser waren und ich weiß nicht was. Das Berliner Ensemble ist eine GmbH geworden und aus diesem Grund aus diesem ganzen Verbund ausgeschieden. Ich habe dann hier die Werkstätten eingerichtet, die Leute engagiert und praktisch alles so installiert, wie es heute ist. Das hat sich immer weiter entwickelt, logischerweise, aber das waren die Anfänge.

MSE: Vielleicht ist es jetzt an der Zeit zu fragen, was alles zu Ihrem Verantwortungsbereich gehört.

BN: Es gehören erstmal die Kostümabteilung und die Maskenabteilung dazu. Ich bin für die Finanzen verantwortlich, also für die Etats zum Beispiel, für das Personal, und auch für die Qualität der Abteilung. Ich muss die Kostümbildner mit den Abteilungen zusammenführen und mich um diesen ganzen Kostümbetrieb kümmern, sodass abends die Vorstellungen richtig laufen, dass dann die Kostüme da und dass sie sauber sind. Das ist mehr oder weniger eine Arbeit, bei der sehr viel delegiert wird.

MSE: Wie viele Mitarbeiter haben Sie ungefähr?

BN: Ich weiß es gar nicht so genau, aber ich denke, zwischen zwanzig und dreißig werden es sein. Es ist variabel.

MSE: Darunter gibt es auch Ankleider. Können Sie vielleicht näher erzählen, was sie machen? Ich stelle mir vor, dass sie wirklich den letzten Blick auf die Schauspieler haben.

BN: Ja, abends bei der Vorstellung sind die Maske und die Ankleider zuständig. Die Maske schminkt logischerweise und macht da oben alles, was um den Kopf herum ist und was mit der Haut zu tun hat. Also wenn jemand beispielsweise nackt auf die Bühne geht, dann muss die Maske auch den Körper schminken. Oder wenn da Tattoos drauf sind oder irgend so was, das ist alles Maskenarbeit. Das Kostüm ist für die Kleidung verantwortlich, also für das Kostüm eben, und jeder Ankleider hat da bestimmte Vorstellungen. Die Ankleider haben die Verantwortung für ihre Kostüme aus ebendieser bestimmten Vorstellung heraus. Sie müssen sie pflegen, sie in Ordnung halten und sie müssen sie den Schauspielern anziehen. Das ist der Job der Ankleider. Natürlich betreuen sie auch die Schauspieler. Wenn zum Beispiel jemand eine Flasche Wasser haben möchte, oder aus der Kantine Brot, aber das Kostüm schon anhat und nicht mehr über den Hof gehen mag, dann macht das der Ankleider.

MSE: Also ist Ihr Bereich auch für die erstaunlich dicken Bäuche zuständig, zum Beispiel von Georgios Tsivanoglou als Cupid in *Shakespeares Sonetten* (Robert Wilson, 2009) und von Frau Höpfner-Tabori, die in *Danton's Tod* so unglaublich verstellt ist (Claus Peymann, 2012).

BN: Ja, das fertigen wir auch an.

MSE: Woraus bestehen diese Bäuche eigentlich?

BN: Das sind verschiedene Materialien. Geformt wird es meist aus Watteline. Das ist ein ganz weiches Polywattenmaterial, das dann bezogen wird. In manche Bäuche füllen wir auch Reis hinein, damit sie wackeln. In manche Busen packen wir Silikon. Es ist sehr unterschiedlich, was wir da betreiben, aber es ist in unserem Bereich, das Auspolstern sozusagen... der dicke

Po und der dicke Busen. Es gibt auch Wattons, die bis da unten hingehen, wo die Arme dick gemacht werden, wo die Oberschenkel noch dick gemacht werden und so weiter. Es gibt schwangere Bäuche. Alles, was dick werden kann, können wir auch dick machen. Das müssen die Schauspieler nicht anessen, sondern wir machen das. Das meiste ist eben Watteline, respektive Reis oder Silikon, je nachdem, was es zu tun hat. Ein Kostüm hat immer etwas zu tun. Es hilft dem Schauspieler letzten Endes. Wenn eben ein Bauch wackeln muss, dann füllen wir da Reis hinein. Wenn er nicht wackeln muss, dann lassen wir es. MSE: In *Mutter Courage* sind die Kostüme, eigentlich ist es die Maske, sehr aussagekräftig (Claus Peymann, 2005). Sie zeigen die Religionszugehörigkeit – katholisch oder protestantisch – mit schwarzen oder weißen Kreuzen auf einem jeweils weißen oder schwarzen Gesicht. Also hat das Aussehen nicht nur mit Charakter zu tun sondern auch mit Inhalt.

BN: Ja, klar.

MSE: Können wir nochmals auf Cupid (Georgios Tsivanoglou) in *Shakespeares Sonetten* (Robert Wilson, 2009) zurückkommen? Sie haben gesagt, es gibt eine Haut über dem Bauch und das ist der Bereich der Maske.

BN: Ja, wenn wir zum Beispiel einen Bauch machen, der dick sein soll und kein Kostüm drüber ist, das macht die Maske. Es wird mit einem bestimmten Material, mit einer bestimmten Haut, zum Beispiel mit Latex, gearbeitet. Das kann Ihnen Frau Heinemann viel genauer erklären. Der Bauch wird damit überzogen. Das ist natürlich ein technischer Vorgang, der letzten Endes viel komplizierter ist. Wir nehmen von einem Dickbäuchigen eventuell eine Form ab und die wird dann ausgegossen. Das passiert auch. Also es gibt unter-

schiedliche Methoden. Da nehmen wir uns irgendein dickbäuchiges Modell. Es kann aber auch passieren, dass jemand einen Muskelkörper haben möchte, dass also jemand, der keine Muskeln hat, dann irgendwo Muskeln haben soll, Bauchmuskeln zum Beispiel. Dann muss man sich einen bauchmuskulösen Menschen suchen und die Form da abnehmen. Das ist wieder die Maske; das machen wir nicht.

MSE: Ich frage mich, ob die Schauspieler mit den Kostümen immer einverstanden sind. Eine andere Frage ist, wie viel Freiheit die Schauspieler haben, ihre eigenen Sachen auszusuchen. Sind sie manchmal zickig oder unzufrieden? Sagen sie zum Beispiel, dass sie nicht so dick sein wollen?

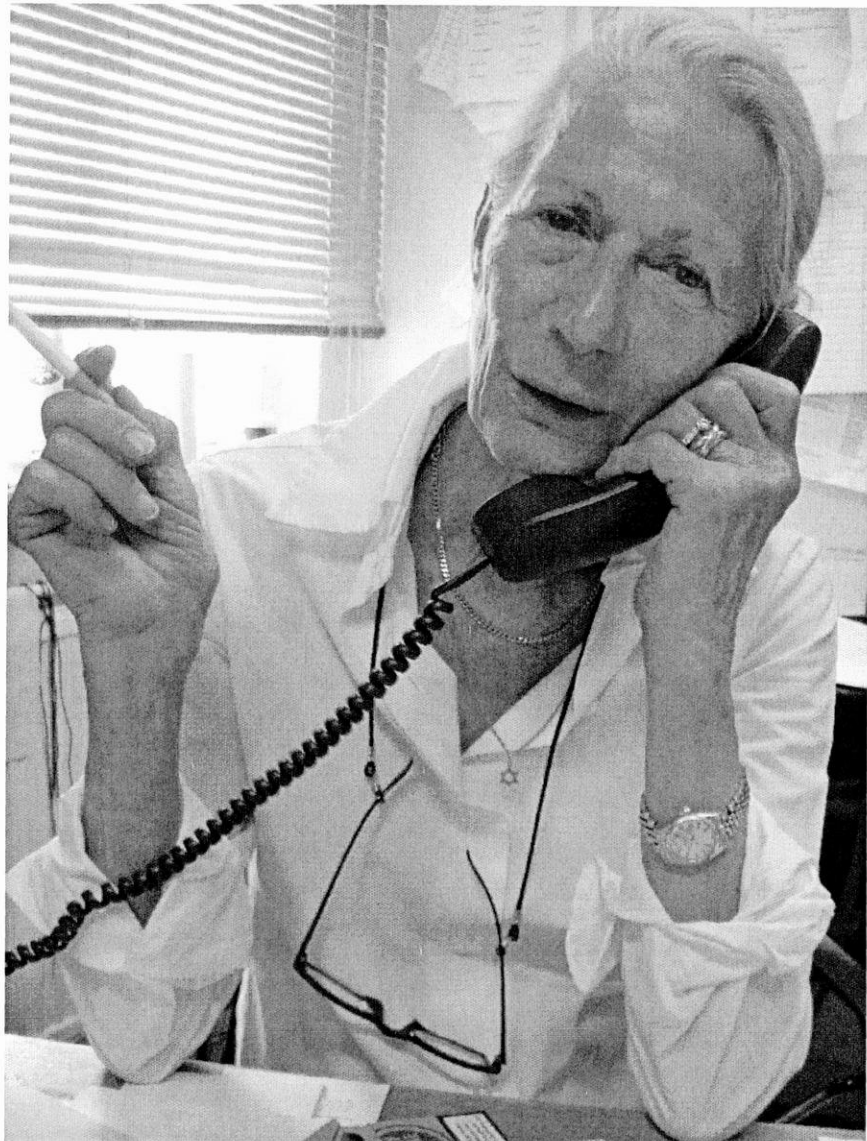
BN: Das kommt schon manchmal vor. Es gibt vor allem Schauspielerinnen, die manchmal nicht so dick sein wollen. Im Prinzip ist es immer eine Frage, wie der Schauspieler zu seiner Rolle steht und zum Kostümbildner. Ob der Kostümbildner noch Überzeugungskraft hat, sagen wir, ganz simple Hässlichkeit zu verkaufen oder nicht. Eigentlich haben wir relativ wenige Probleme. Es kommt selten vor, dass jemand so richtig mault, weil unsere Regisseure offensichtlich den Schauspielern das schon richtig verkaufen, was sie da spielen, und weil die Kostümbildner es auch richtig verkaufen. Also das ist eine künstlerische Entscheidung, wie was gemacht wird. MSE: Welche Abteilungen in Ihrem Bereich arbeiten eigentlich zusammen, damit ein Kostüm überhaupt entsteht? Die Schneiderei, der Schuster...

BN: Der Schuster ist nicht im Haus. Im Haus ist die Schneiderei, dann sind da die Ankleider, es gibt die Maske und das ist im Groben eigentlich schon alles, was wir im Haus haben. Es gibt auch noch die Assistenten und das Kunstgewerbe, auch die Kostümplastik übrigens. Das

Färben, das machen eigentlich immer die Assistenten. Wir haben keine extra Färberei. Wir sind ja ein relativ kleines Haus. Das Hamburger Schauspielhaus ist ein viel größeres Haus zum Beispiel.

Stress einen Termin noch für diesen Nachmittag.)

MSE: Zum Thema Färben kann ich mich an die Inszenierung von Elfriede Jelineks Stück *Wolkenheim*. Und dann



Da hatte ich allein in der Schneiderei über zwanzig Mitarbeiter, nur Schneider. (Das Telefon klingelt nochmals und Frau Naujok macht ohne Hektik oder

nach Hause. gut erinnern (Claus Peymann, 2005). Im Programmheft habe ich damals gelesen, glaube ich, dass es für die grünen Fracks Sponsoren gab.

Es waren eine Menge Fracks auf der Bühne.

BN: Ja, die grünen Teile. Die sind alle angestrichen worden.

MSE: Gibt es oft Sponsoren?

BN: Nein, relativ selten. Früher gab es mehr, als es noch mehr Geld in der Welt gab. Das haben wir leider nicht mehr. Also sie sind alle etwas geiziger geworden, die Sponsoren.

MSE: Falls aber ein interessierter Sponsor dieses Interview liest, wie könnte man vorgehen, um auch etwas so Skurilles zu spenden? Also, mit wem soll man sich in Verbindung setzen, um sponsern zu können?

(Ein Mitarbeiter kommt zwischen- durch mit einer Frage über BE-T-Shirts für das Theaterfußballturnier an der Volksbühne. Frau Naujok erinnert den Mitarbeiter an die Fußballtrikots, die Claus Peymann früher einmal spendiert hat, und auch daran, Knieschoner zu suchen.)

BN: Also ich habe am Schauspielhaus Hamburg mal eine Riesensponsoraktion gemacht. Da hat Peter Zadek mich darum gebeten, dass ich das für *Andi* mache (Peter Zadek, 1987). *Andi* ist ein Musical, das Zadek inszeniert und Burkard Driest dramatisiert hat. Es beruht auf einem Text von Kai Hermann und Heiko Gebhardt, zwei *Stern*-Journalisten, die ein Buch über *Andi* geschrieben haben. Das ist ein Slumkind und darüber gab es ein Musical. Da bin ich zu den Leuten hingegangen. Na gut, das war auch ein Zufall, denn ich wohnte in einem Haus in Hamburg, in dem auch der Public Relations-Mann von Reemtsma wohnte. Unsere beiden Kinder spielten miteinander und wir kannten uns so, wie man sich als Hausbewohner eben kennt. Den habe ich im Treppenhaus mal angesprochen, ob er etwas dafür geben würde, oder ob Reemtsma etwas dafür tun könnte. Er hat mich

gefragt, »wie viel wollen Sie denn?« Dann habe ich ihm eine Summe genannt und die haben wir auch gekriegt, mit ein paar kleinen Abschlügen, aber trotzdem, es war relativ viel. Dann werden Verträge gemacht; die machen die Geschäftsleitung. Von Verträgen habe ich überhaupt keine Ahnung. Aber so habe ich die Leute an Land gezogen, ich bin da einfach immer hingegangen, naiv und blauäugig. Ich meine, das ist jetzt eine Weile her, das war 1987. Aber das ging. Hier am BE habe ich auch mal so was gemacht. Stephan Suschke hat damals *Eva Braun* mit Corinna Harfouch inszeniert (1996). Es gab während der Nazizeit eine Zigarette, die hieß *Nil*. Die war blau verpackt, eigentlich eine ganz altmodische Zigarette. Da habe ich auch herumtelefoniert, gefragt, »wollt ihr das sponsern?« Das machen von den Firmen immer die PR-Abteilungen. Dann haben wir das auch gemacht. Bei jeder Vorstellung lief eine Statistin durch das Foyer mit einem Bauchladen und hat Zigaretten verschenkt. Da gab es diese kleinen Dreierpacks, die mussten sie immer verschenken. Im Programmheft stand dann, wir danken der Firma soundso für ihr großzügiges und so weiter. Also das war schon OK. Und bei *Andi* haben wir von Hudson oder von irgendeiner Strumpffirma Geld gekriegt. Im Foyer guckten aus einem Stand lauter Beine mit Strümpfen heraus, so diese einzelnen Beine, wie man sie auch im Kaufhaus sieht. Die haben uns Reklamematerial geschickt und das mussten wir dann auch aufbauen. Und Reemtsma, die haben uns auch Filmmaterial gegeben, wie ganz früher von Peter Stuyvesant, diese wunderbaren Filme, die immer im Vorprogramm im Kino liefen. Das lief dann ganz hinten auf der Bühne. Stellenweise lief da ein Reemtsma-Film, also Reemtsma-Reklame. Aber das passte in

diese ganze Inszenierung herein und lief dann da. Im Programmheft sind alle genannt worden, die was gegeben haben.

MSE: In den USA passiert das, glaube ich, öfters. Man ist darauf angewiesen, auf Privatgelder und Sponsoren. Zum Beispiel wurde mehrmals an meiner Universität ein Konzert des Philharmonischen Bläserquintetts Berlin an der Blair School of Music (Vanderbilt University) anonym gestiftet.

BN: Ja, die Kunst wird in den USA nicht in dem Maße subventioniert wie hier. Deutschland gehört zu den wenigen Ländern, auch in Europa übrigens, die relativ hoch subventionierte Theater haben. Es ist zwar hier weniger geworden; früher war es bedeutend mehr. Uns geht's gut eigentlich.

MSE: Sie haben auch ein Repertoiretheater. Wäre Ihr Beruf nicht sehr viel einfacher in den USA, wo eine Inszenierung en suite gespielt wird, jahrelang, bis sie abgespielt ist?

BN: Ja, aber in Amerika sind die Leute nicht so fest angestellt, wie sie bei uns fest angestellt sind. Da gibt es mehr Freelancer. Die arbeiten für eine Produktion; wenn die vorbei ist, hört's auf, je nach Position. Also ein Ankleider, Maskenbildner macht dann weiter, aber meine Position, die würde dann bis zur Premiere da sein und nach der Premiere müsste ich die nächste Produktion machen. Das hat alles Vorteile. Also ich mochte diese Freelancerzeit – die hatte ich ja auch. Das habe ich auch gerne gemacht, aber natürlich, wenn man fest an einem Haus ist, hat die Zusammengehörigkeit des Ensembles auch vieles für sich. Also man hat die gleichen Leute, es ist familiärer, das hat viel Qualität. Ich finde, wenn man jung ist, kann man ruhig so ein bisschen durch die Gegend sausen, aber wenn man dann älter wird, finde ich es so viel angenehmer. Ich

möchte jetzt nicht mehr freiberuflich arbeiten. Ich weiß es nicht, ich mache es ja nicht. Es kann sein, wenn ich hier eines Tages wirklich mal aufhören sollte, dass ich dann noch mal ein bisschen frei arbeite, mal hier und mal da.

MSE: Die Kontinuität, die hat man hier. Nicht nur bei den Mitarbeitern des Berliner Ensembles, sondern auch im Publikum. Es gibt ein Stammpublikum.

BN: Ja, das Publikum auch. Zum Beispiel *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui*, den Heiner Müller 1995 noch inszeniert hat, hat inzwischen über 350 Vorstellungen, glaube ich, ich weiß nicht wie viele, jedenfalls viele, und wird immernoch zu Gastspielen eingeladen. Wir spielen ihn auch noch, immer mal wieder. Da gibt es ein Publikum, das wirklich unglaublich treu ist.

MSE: Ein Kult.

BN: Es gibt Leute, die haben es schon zwanzig Mal gesehen, aber gehen immer wieder hin.

MSE: Ich bin mit Leuten befreundet, die auch überall zu Gastspielen hingehen.

BN: Ist ja erstaunlich.

MSE: Zusätzlich zu diesen langjährigen Inszenierungen finde ich es ebenso erstaunlich, dass das Berliner Ensemble so viele Produktionen im Repertoire hat. An einem Abend spielen viele Stücke auf den verschiedenen Bühnen. Wie machen Sie das? Es ist gar kein Computer bei Ihnen hier im Büro.

BN: Der ist nebenan [*lacht*].

MSE: Wie behalten Sie den Überblick bei so vielen Vorstellungen?

BN: Das ist eine Organisationsfrage. Es ist Routine, wenn man es so lange macht, wie ich es mache.

MSE: Wie Sie vorhin ganz spontan auf die Schuhfrage geantwortet haben, das ist bewundernswert.

BN: Also ich habe einen ganz großen Wissensfundus, was das Kostüm betrifft.

MSE: Schreiben Sie das auf?

BN: Nein, nie. Ich bin kein Aufschreiber. Ich merke mir das lieber. Damit halte ich mein Gedächtnis im Gang. Es wird allerdings, umso älter man wird, immer schwieriger. Manches vergesse ich dann schon, was ich früher vielleicht nicht vergessen hätte. Andererseits habe ich früher auch schon viel vergessen. Nur andere Sachen.

MSE: Jetzt habe ich eine Erinnerungsfrage. Was war die schlimmste Panne, die Sie in Ihrem Berufsleben erlebt haben? Ist etwas nicht rechtzeitig fertig geworden?

BN: Meine schlimmste Panne? Es wird immer alles fertig. Ich kann mich aber an eine Panne erinnern, die mir so unglaublich peinlich war. Da war ich noch eine junge Maskenbildnerin in Bremen, also noch in der Ausbildung. Wir haben den *Freischütz* gespielt und es gab ein Ballett. Da ist eine Perücke auf der Bühne heruntergefallen. Die habe ich nicht fest genug aufgesetzt. Das zählte damals zu meinen schlimmsten Pannen.

MSE: Was hat die Tänzerin gemacht?

BN: Sie hat weiter getanzt und dann nachher, als sie abging, die Perücke mitgenommen. Das war eine ältere Tänzerin, die auch wieder Routine hatte. Sie musste einen Spagat auf der Bühne machen und den Kopf so nach hinten werfen und dann flog die Perücke. Das war eins meiner schlimmsten Erlebnisse. Das ist mir ewig im Gedächtnis geblieben, das habe ich nie vergessen, sagen wir es mal so. Das war ein böses Ereignis. Sonst weiß ich gar nicht. Später sind auch unangenehme Geschichten nicht mehr so unangenehm. Die Erfahrung wächst ja und man weiß damit umzugehen. Es gibt ja dann immer wieder irgendwelche Pannen. Irgendwas wird es immer geben. Ich kann mich erinnern, fürs Schauspiel-

haus Hamburg bin ich nach New York geflogen, um Kostüme für *Edmond* von David Mamet (Dieter Giesing, 1987) einzukaufen. Die Inszenierung spielte in New York und es kamen amerikanische Cops vor. Dieter Giesing hat inszeniert und wir wollten es halt sehr amerikanisch machen, sehr treu, sehr realistisch. Dann bin ich mit meiner Assistentin nach New York gefahren, wir haben die Kostüme gekauft, alle anderen auch, im Trödel und ich weiß nicht wo. In Amerika kann man diese Cop-Uniform im Laden kaufen; das war mir auch bekannt. Ich war ja früher viel in New York. Dann haben wir diese Uniform komplett mitgebracht, mit allem Zubehör, mit Handschellen und mit ich weiß nicht, mit allem, was es dafür so gab. Die Premiere haben wir überstanden. Bei der zweiten Vorstellung hat die Garderobiere eingerichtet (es war eine Malersaalproduktion) und hat alles da unten hingelegt und zum Vorstellungsbeginn war der Pistolenhalter leer (es steckte keine richtige Pistole drin) und von dem Kleinkram waren verschiedene Dinge geklaut. Die waren einfach nicht da. Das sind so Pannen, da muss man relativ schnell reagieren. Wir haben die Probenaccessoires als Kostüm benutzt. Das ging dann auch. Ich hatte in Hamburg noch einen Rüstmeister, der Rüstungen herstellt und sich mit Metallarbeiten auskennt, und wir haben versucht, es noch irgendwie nachzumachen, recht und schlecht. Aber das war übel. Also so was gibt's dann auch. Hier am Berliner Ensemble ist es auch passiert, in Lessings *Nathan der Weise* war das, da war der Anzug von Peter Fitz plötzlich vor der Vorstellung weg (Claus Peymann, 2002). Am Tag vorher war er noch da. Die Garderobiere hat sich das alles für den nächsten Abend noch hergerichtet. Als sie dann ihren Ständer holte und die Kostüme in den

Garderoben verteilte, war der Anzug weg. Passiert auch. Er ist nie wieder aufgetaucht, einfach gestohlen.

MSE: Was macht man dann?

BN: Na, man versucht, etwas anderes zu machen. Wir haben noch den Probenanzug von Peter Fitz gehabt. Man kann sich schon immer behelfen, aber solche Momente sind grauenvoll.

MSE: Sie müssen einen ganz kühlen Kopf behalten.

BN: Ja, man muss einfach Probleme lösen können. Einiges gehört mit dazu. Man muss sie eigentlich immer schon vorher riechen und dann muss man ganz schnell irgendwie reagieren können.

MSE: Sie müssen flexibel bleiben. Keine Zeit für Panik oder Hysterie.

BN: Nein, hysterisch bin ich ganz gewiss nicht. Das ist das Letzte, was ich sein möchte und was ich bin.

MSE: Man sieht das an Ihrer Haltung. Ich sehe die Tänzerin, schon wie Sie da sitzen.

BN: Ja, das war ein ganz beträchtlicher Teil meiner Jugend. Wann habe ich denn aufgehört? Mit siebzehn habe ich noch in Bremen ein bisschen mittrainiert. Wir waren ein Dreispartenhaus in Bremen. Wir hatten Oper, Schauspiel und Ballett und noch Operette, alles da beisammen. Da gab's ein Ballett und auch einen Ballettmeister und auch Trainingszeiten. Ich habe teilweise mittrainiert. Aber ich konnte nicht mehr, was der Traum einer jeden Tänzerin ist, auf der Spitze stehen. Das ging einfach nicht mehr.

MSE: Glauben Sie, dass die Disziplin, die Sie im Tanz ausgeübt haben, Ihnen im Beruf geholfen hat?

BN: Ja, die kommt teilweise daher. Ich bin in Berlin in eine Klosterschule gegangen.

(Ein Dramaturg kommt jetzt kurz zu Frau Naujok ins Büro und stellt Fragen

über Kostüme für eine zukünftige Inszenierung. Sie sagt ihm sofort, dass die Teile in Weißensee im Fundus sind und in welchen Farben. Er sollte ihr nur sagen, wie viele er braucht.)

Also bis zum Abitur war ich in einer Klosterschule. Das ist natürlich auch ein sehr disziplinierter Verein. Ich komme aus einer sehr preußischen Familie, bin in Berlin geboren und hier aufgewachsen. Meine Eltern waren selbstständig und haben viel gearbeitet. Meine Mutter kommt zwar nicht aus Berlin, aber die Familie meines Vaters ist seit vielen Generationen hier in Berlin. Ich bin der letzte Teil aus dieser Familie, natürlich auch meine Kinder.

MSE: Sind Ihre Kinder beim Theater?

BN: Nein. Der älteste Sohn schreibt Drehbücher beim Film. Meine Tochter ist Fotografin, hat selber vier Kinder und hat keine Zeit mehr zu arbeiten. Mein Jüngster hat studiert, war bei Zadek Assistent. Er wollte eigentlich zum Theater, aber dann ist Zadek ja gestorben. Er hat damit aufgehört, hat Physik studiert, hat damit auch aufgehört, dann war er wieder beim Theater als Beleuchter, Bühnenarbeiter und Inspizient, hat also hinter der Bühne so allerhand gemacht. Von dem Job ist er zum Film gekommen, hat beim Film beleuchtet. Und zur Filmbeleuchtung ist es gut, wenn man einen LKW-Führerschein hat, so hat er mir es erklärt. Und dann hat er einen LKW-Führerschein gemacht, aber jetzt will er wieder studieren, mit dem LKW-Führerschein, und zwar wird er Indologie und südostasiatische Philosophie, Geschichte und so weiter studieren.

(Eine Mitarbeiterin kommt zwischen-durch mit einer Personalfrage.)

MSE: Es gibt viel Wechsel in seinem Leben. Jetzt etwas anderes, aber auch im Zusammenhang mit Szenenwechsel. Wer schaut während der Vorstellung

zwischendurch nach, ob etwas bei den Schauspielern repariert oder neu geschminkt werden muss? Die Spieler strengen sich schon sehr an. Manchmal werden sie auch sehr nass, wie Christopher Nell und Anna Graenzer bei *Romeo und Julia* (Monika Kraushaar, 2011). Sicher leidet die Maske durch das viele Wasser.

BN: Die Ankleider müssen dafür sorgen. Die Maske kann auch nachgemacht werden. Das machen die Maskenbildner, respektive die Ankleider, dann wenn die Spieler abgehen. Sie können ja nicht auf die Bühne gehen. Entweder haben sie längere Pausen und gehen in die Garderobe, oder wenn nicht, wird es im Gang oder sonst irgendwo gemacht. Das stellt sich dann schon immer heraus, wo was passiert. Es gibt auch sehr schnelle Umzüge, die werden seitlich auf der Bühne gemacht. Die gibt es allerdings auch.

MSE: Also sind die Maskenbildner und die Ankleider sehr wichtig für das, was wir als Publikum den ganzen Abend hindurch auf der Bühne sehen. Nun die letzte Frage, bevor ich mich sehr für das Interview bedanke: Kaufen Sie oder schneiden Sie sich die eigenen Sachen?

BN: Meine Sachen? Es ist unterschiedlich. Manchmal kaufe ich was, manche Sachen lasse ich mir auch nähen.

MSE: Können Sie es selber machen?

BN: Dazu habe ich keine Zeit. Ich könnte, aber ich bin aus der Übung und es würde wahnsinnig lange dauern. Das aufzeichnen, was ich haben will, das kann ich. Die Schneiderin, bei der ich das machen lasse, ist ja nicht hier im Haus, weil ich das nicht gerne mag, wenn so was vermischt wird. Die kennt mich seit vierzig Jahren vielleicht und der muss ich nur drei Wörter sagen, dann weiß sie, was ich will. Das ist ganz simpel. Sie hat früher viel für mich

gearbeitet, als ich noch frei für den Film und für das Theater gearbeitet habe. Sie hat viel für mich genäht, nicht für mich persönlich, sondern für meine Produktionen, und dann auch eben für mich und für meine Kinder. Ich hatte es so gerne, wenn meine Kinder, als sie klein waren, in Matrosenanzügen bzw. -kleidern herumliefen. Das war immer klasse.

MSE: Anscheinend hatten Sie zuhause auch eine kleine Bühne. Frau Naujok, Sie haben sich privat und im Beruf seit so vielen Jahren, angefangen mit Peter Zadek in Bremen und am Schauspielhaus Hamburg, jetzt schon ein halbes Jahrhundert lang, mit den Details der Bekleidung und der Maske beschäftigt. Es gibt sicher kaum Leute, die solch ein Wissen aufweisen können und noch so voll im Berufsleben stehen.

BN: Manche Leute sagen, ich sei eine Legende. Wegen des Gedächtnisses eigentlich. Als wir in Hamburg anfangen, als mich Zadek vorstellte, war es bei einer Pressekonferenz. Er stellte mich vor als die Ausstattungsleiterin für diese Bereiche und sagte, die muss sich jeden Knopf merken, die muss sich jede Naht merken, die muss eigentlich ein fotografisches Gedächtnis haben. Das habe ich mir dann irgendwie sehr eingeprägt, deshalb weiß ich den Satz noch so in etwa. Und es ist auch so. Man muss tatsächlich jeden Knopf kennen. Man muss ein Kostüm einfach angucken, muss es inne haben und man muss es sich merken können. Das kann ich.

MSE: Sie müssen auch wissen, wo Sie alles bekommen können, in Berlin und im Ausland, auch in New York.

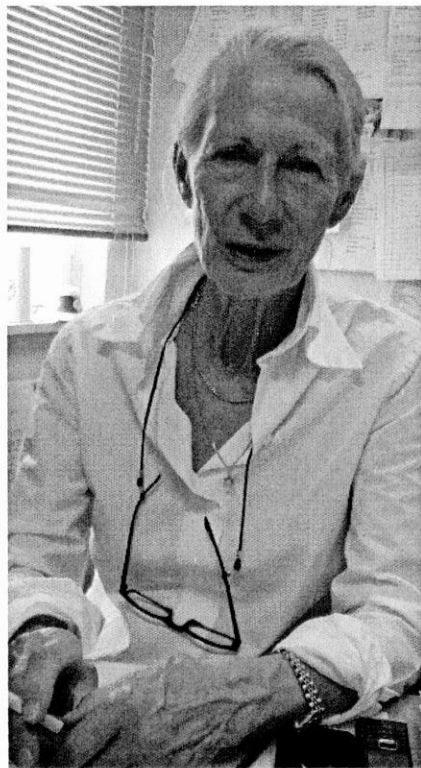
BN: Ja, auch in New York. Das muss man auch wissen. Heute ist es etwas einfacher, als es damals war. Man kann sich alles ergoogeln. Alles, was man braucht, gibt es da in der Kiste.

MSE: Aber trotzdem, während wir

heute gesprochen haben, sind sehr viele Leute gekommen und haben Fragen gestellt, wo ist, wie soll ich, wie kann ich das bekommen. Das haben Sie sofort gewusst, ohne Google.

BN: Ja, das geht den ganzen Tag so. Ich sitze da, einfach so als graue Eminenz und jeder kommt und fragt, was mache ich denn da, wie mache ich das, kann ich es so machen, wo ist das, was geht da. Und das passiert den ganzen Tag. Ich komme zu meiner eigentlichen Arbeit immer erst dann, wenn der Probenbetrieb vorbei ist.

MSE: Ich würde auch gerne den ganzen Tag zuhören. Vielen herzlichen Dank, dass ich diesen kurzen Ausschnitt heute Nachmittag miterleben durfte.



II. Ulrike Heinemann, Leiterin Maske, Berliner Ensemble

14.6.12 im Büro von Frau Heinemann
am Berliner Ensemble

Ulrike Heinemann: „*Wir sind ein Theater, kein Film, und wir arbeiten ohne Schnitt. Da muss man sich immer etwas überlegen.*“

Ulrike Heinemann (UH)
Margaret Setje-Eilers (MSE)

MSE: Frau Heinemann, Sie sind Leiterin der Maske am Berliner Ensemble. Ich bin auf unser Gespräch gespannt, denn ich weiß nicht so richtig, was eigentlich zu der Maskenabteilung alles dazugehört. Zuerst zu Ihrem Hintergrund, über den ich auch wenig weiß. Sind Sie schon lange dabei?

UH: Also geboren bin ich in der ehemaligen DDR. Dort habe ich Betriebswirtschaft studiert und mein BWL-Studium abgeschlossen. Im Mai 1980 bin ich dann nach Westberlin gekommen, das heißt, mein Freund in Westberlin hat einen Ausreiseantrag aus der DDR gestellt, weil ich mit ihm zusammen schon eine Tochter hatte. Am Anfang war ich ein bisschen unsicher, was ich in Westberlin machen sollte. Ich musste mich erst mal zurechtfinden, hatte aber eigentlich in der DDR schon die Idee gehabt, ans Theater zu gehen und in der Maskenbildnerie zu arbeiten. Das habe ich in Westberlin dann angefangen. Als meine Tochter im Kindergarten war, habe ich zuerst eine Friseurausbildung gemacht und dann am früheren Theater des Westens ein Volontariat als Maskenbildnerin gemacht. Das wurde damals noch mit einer Prüfung vor der Paritätischen

Prüfungskommission in Hagen abgeschlossen. Inzwischen gibt es dafür mehrere Möglichkeiten. Man kann zum Beispiel an der Hochschule in Dresden Maskenbild studieren, oder auch in München an der Bayerischen Theaterakademie August Everding. Außerdem gibt es mehrere private Maskenbildnerschulen und auch nach wie vor die klassische Ausbildung am Theater.

MSE: Wie lange dauert die Ausbildung zur Maskenbildnerin?

UH: Die Ausbildung ist jetzt auf drei Jahre begrenzt. Es ist also nach wie vor hilfreich, vorher eine Friseurausbildung zu machen oder wenigstens ein paar Kurse zu besuchen. Wenn man ganz ohne Friseurausbildung ist, merkt man das einfach. Da fehlt das Geschick, mit Haaren umzugehen. Und das braucht man, weil wir die Perücken auch frisieren müssen, genauso wie die eigenen Haare.

MSE: Also setzen Sie nicht nur Perücken auf, sondern arbeiten auch mit den existierenden Haaren?

UH: Ja, bei den Schauspielern bearbeiten wir teilweise die eigenen Haare. Die werden auf Lockenwickel oder ein Lockeneisen aufgedreht oder was auch immer. Je nachdem, wie es halt aussehen soll. Und dann wird entweder aus eigenen Haaren oder aus eigenen Haaren mit Haarteilen eine Friseur gemacht. Oder, wie gesagt, die eigenen Haaren werden ganz weggesteckt und wir setzen eine Perücke auf. Die Perücken werden auch jedes Mal gewaschen, wieder eingedreht und neu frisiert, weil sie in der Vorstellung durcheinander kommen. Die Schauspieler schwitzen und die Perücken sind ganz am Schluss, wenn man sie abnimmt, überhaupt nicht mehr schön.

MSE: Ah, das ahnt man nicht. Ich bin neugierig, mehr darüber zu hören. Vielleicht können wir aber zuerst kurz

zur Frage zurückkommen, seit wann Sie am Berliner Ensemble sind? Sie haben gesagt, dass Sie 1980 in den Westen gingen.

UH: Am Berliner Ensemble habe ich im Januar 1996 als Maskenbildnerin angefangen.

MSE: Das war in der Zeit vor Claus Peymann.

UH: Ganz genau, das war vor Peymann. Heiner Müller war zwischen Weihnachten und Neujahr gerade gestorben. Dann kam Martin Wuttke als Intendant, danach hat es Stephan Suschke eine Weile gemacht und schließlich kam Peymann, 1999/2000 war das.

MSE: Arbeiten Sie mit den Intendanten zusammen?

UH: Nein, mit den Intendanten habe ich eigentlich gar nichts zu tun. Es sei denn, der Intendant ist auch Regisseur und dann kann es natürlich sein, dass er mir Anweisungen gibt. Zum Beispiel, dass ein Schauspieler eine bestimmte Perücke braucht, oder ein anderer die Haare geschnitten bekommen muss. Herr Peymann ist der Chef von allem, aber meine direkte Bezugsperson ist Frau Naujok, sie ist meine Vorgesetzte. Mit wem ich normalerweise aber immer zusammenarbeite, sind die Kostümbildner.

MSE: Wenn Sie Kostüm sagen, will ich Ihnen jetzt diese Frage stellen: Wo beginnt eigentlich die Maske und wo hört sie auf? Wie wird sie vom Kostüm abgegrenzt?

UH: Die Maske beinhaltet den Kopf, das Gesicht, die Haare. Auch eine falsche Nase, falsche Ohren oder dicke Lippen, also wenn man aufgespritzte Lippen haben will. Wir haben auch schon überdimensional große Hände gemacht. Eine Maske ist zum Beispiel auch, wenn man jemanden älter werden lässt. Man kann den ganzen Körper mit Schaum-

teilen verändern und dann wäre das alles Teil der Maske. Wenn allerdings ein Kostüm angezogen ist, dann hört unsere Maske am Dekolleté auf. Dann muss man vielleicht Arme oder Beine mitschminken, das gehört dann alles noch zur Maske dazu.

MSE: Wie vielleicht beim erstaunlich roten Teufel in *Faust. Fragment 1911* (Manfred Karge, 2012)?

UH: Ja, der rote Teufel war Patrick Bartsch. Also der Teufel hat eine Glatze auf, das heißt, seine eigenen Haare sind unter einer Kunststoffglatze verborgen. Dann wird er komplett rot geschminkt, bis zum Hals, also auch in die Ohren hinein, damit alles richtig rot ist. Danach bekommt er die Hörnchen angeklebt.

MSE: Wie macht man das, dass sie nicht herunterfallen?

UH: Die werden ganz fest auf die Glatze draufgeklebt.

MSE: Auf so was wie diese Kappe hier?

UH: Ja, auf so was in der Art, aber viel dünner als das. Die hier ist aus Gummi. Für eine Probe kann man sie einfach drüber stülpen. Die richtige Glatze wird rundum komplett geklebt. Nach der Vorstellung ist sie praktisch hinüber. Man kann sie nicht nochmal verwenden. Da macht man jedes Mal eine neue.

MSE: Wie ist es mit der langen Nase von Anke Engelsmann als Secretary in *Shakespeares Sonetten* (Robert Wilson, 2009)? Einer der Schauspieler tippt sie an, also muss die Nase sehr fest sein.

UH: Es ist Schaum, ein Schaum, der aus fünf Komponenten besteht. Die werden in bestimmter Mischung mit einem Mixer zusammengerührt und in eine Form eingefüllt. Die kann ich Ihnen nachher hier draußen mal zeigen. Der Schaum wird in der Form dann in den Ofen gestellt und muss bei 100 Grad nochmal zwei Stunden backen. Wenn die Form heraus kommt, macht man

Klebstoff auf die Nase, also auf die eigene, und die Schaumnase kommt oben drauf. Man muss nur die Ränder, die rundherum sind, noch ganz vorsichtig ankleben, damit man eben nicht mehr sieht, dass oben drauf etwas Falsches ist.

MSE: Und das bleibt so fest? Bewundernswert. Ist es mal passiert, dass etwas Wichtiges heruntergefallen ist?

UH: Also es sind noch keine Nasen runtergefallen! Was bei Perücken gelegentlich passieren kann, ist, dass sich an der einen oder anderen Stelle der Tüll ein bisschen löst. Und oh, noch eine Sache ist passiert. Wir hatten mal eine Schauspielerin, die bekam eine Perücke aufgesetzt – es war ein Pferdeschwanz – und weil die Perückenhaare nicht lang genug waren, war noch zusätzlich ein falscher Pferdeschwanz drin, ein Haarteil. Beim Applaus hat sie sich so toll gebeugt, dass dieser Pferdeschwanz herausgefallen ist, mitten auf die Bühne. Das war schon ein Missgeschick, was da passiert ist. Aber ansonsten eigentlich nichts. Es ist natürlich auch eine Frage unserer Ehre, dass sowas nicht passiert. Ist doch klar!

MSE: Ja, sicher. Das sind ja unzählige Details, die man für jede Vorstellung beachten muss. Inwiefern sind Sie mit jeder Inszenierung von Anfang an beschäftigt?

UH: Meine Aufgabe ist, mit dem Kostümbildner zu sprechen. Der Kostümbildner hat sich im Idealfall mit dem Regisseur und dem Bühnenbildner vorher zusammengesetzt und sie haben ihr Konzept entwickelt. Dann muss der Kostümbildner arbeiten und sich überlegen, welche Kostüme seine Schauspieler angezogen bekommen und wie die Haare dazu sein sollen. Wie soll das Gesicht aussehen? Und wenn diese Entwürfe gemacht sind, dann kommen sie zu mir und wir sprechen jeden Schauspieler durch. Also Stefan Kurt spielt

Mäckie Messer in der *Dreigroschenoper*. Da sagt mir der Kostümbildner, er möchte, dass Stefan Kurt blonde Haare hat. Dann setze ich mich hin oder sage zu meinen Kollegen, du machst die

auf. Dann bekommt jeder das, was ich mit dem Kostümbildner durchgesprochen habe und das Bild, das er vielleicht im Idealfall davon gemacht hat.

MSE: Wer macht das Bild?



Perücke für den Schauspieler und du für die Schauspielerin. Oder eben, für die *Sonette*, du machst die falsche Nase für Anke Engelsmann. Und so teile ich das

UH: Der Kostümbildner. Er kann Bilder zeichnen. Oder manchmal aus Zeitungen ein Bild ausschneiden und das als Idee bringen. Dann sitzen wir unten

in der Maske und die Perücke wird geknüpft.

MSE: Wieso geknüpft?

UH: Geknüpft im Sinne von knüpfen, „to knot“, richtig wie so ein Teppich wird das geknüpft. Wir nehmen die Haare in die Hand und mit einer ganz kleinen Nadel werden die Haare durch den Tüll durchgezogen und dann machen wir einen kleinen Knoten. Für jedes einzelne Haar.

MSE: Wie? Für jedes einzelne Haar?

(Holt tief Luft.) Unvorstellbar.

UH: Wenn Sie Lust haben, gehen wir nachher in die Maske und Sie können es sich anschauen.

MSE: Ja, gern. Ist das die schwierigste Aufgabe, eine Perücke herzustellen?

UH: Es ist vor allem die zeitaufwendigste Arbeit. Für eine Perücke braucht man schon 60 bis 80 Stunden.

MSE: Erstaunlich. Wie viele Mitarbeiter haben Sie? Wie viel Zeit haben Sie meistens für eine neue Produktion?

UH: Sieben Mitarbeiter habe ich. Im Idealfall haben wir drei Monate Zeit und wenn es knapp ist, etwa vier Wochen.

MSE: Vier Wochen? Da muss es flott gehen. Also Sie und auch indirekt die Maskenbildner arbeiten mit dem Kostümbildner zusammen, der alles mit dem Regisseur bespricht.

UH: Ja, die beiden treffen sich immer im Vorfeld. Es gibt so was, wie zum Beispiel bei *Liliom*, wo alles relativ natürlich ist. Die Jungs sind überhaupt nicht geschminkt und die Mädchen nur ein ganz kleines bisschen (Mona Kraushaar, 2012). Auf der anderen Seite gibt es die Wilson-Produktionen, die extrem sind.

MSE: Zu der Maske für die Wilson-Inszenierungen wollte ich Sie fragen, wie die Schauspieler für jede Vorstellung gleich geschminkt sein können. Ich sehe die Produktionen von Robert Wilson immer wieder und werde jedes Mal

in eine andere Welt versetzt, visuell, akustisch, auch inhaltlich. Ich bewundere zum Beispiel, dass Sabin Tambrea als Jack the Ripper in *Lulu* immer gleich aussieht (Robert Wilson, 2011). Wie kommt das?

UH: Also man hat ein paar Proben vornweg. In der ersten Probe ist der Kostümbildner dabei und die Perücke ist schon vorbereitet. Bei Wilson ist klar, dass die Gesichter weiß werden, weil ein weißes Gesicht natürlich das Licht schön einfängt.

MSE: Ist das der Grund?

UH: Das ist der Grund bei Wilson. Überhaupt bei allen Stücken, in denen die Schauspieler heller geschminkt werden, fängt das helle Gesicht das Licht ein und ist dann besser sichtbar. Wenn die Gesichter so dunkel sind, fallen sie auf der Bühne nicht mehr richtig auf. Dann muss man sie eigentlich extra beleuchten und das kann man ja gar nicht. Man kann nicht jede Stelle auf der Bühne gleich ausleuchten.

MSE: Sie müssen also von der Perspektive des Zuschauers ausgehen, nicht davon, wie die Schauspieler einander auf der Bühne sehen.

UH: Ja, und wie gesagt, gibt es diese Schminkproben. Da fängt man halt an. Als Erstes macht man die Augenbrauen weg und dann wird das Gesicht hell geschminkt.

MSE: Die Augenbrauen werden weggemacht? Doch nicht rasiert?

UH: Nein, nicht rasiert, sondern mit Mastix angeklebt, damit sie nicht mehr aufstehen und man eine glattere Fläche bekommt. Dann werden sie weiß gemacht und man spricht mit dem Kostümbildner, ob er besondere Wünsche hat. Zum Beispiel in der *Dreigroschenoper* hat Angela Winkler ja so ganz spezielle Augenbrauen. Da hatte der Kostümbildner ein Bild mit und hat gesagt, ich möchte gerne, dass ihr diese

Augenbrauen probiert. Also hat die Maskenbildnerin diese Augenbrauen gemalt. Danach wird das Auge schattiert, dann wird unter dem Auge schattiert und dann kommen Wimpern dran. Schließlich kommt noch ein bisschen Rouge drauf. Als Nächstes wird über die Lippenform gesprochen. Man bietet immer etwas an. Der Kostümbildner sagt, ja, so versuchen wir das. Dann geht der Schauspieler für die Probe auf die Bühne und der Kostümbildner und ich, wir sitzen im Zuschauerraum. Dann sagt der Regisseur, das gefällt mir oder das gefällt mir nicht. Ich möchte da mehr Rouge haben, ich will die Augen größer, die Lippen schwarz haben. Oder der Kostümbildner sagt etwas, oder mir selbst fällt irgendetwas auf, was besser gemacht werden könnte.

MSE: Sind die Schauspieler schon in Kostümen?

UH: Ja, in Kostümen auf der Bühne. Danach wird das, was wir an dem Probenstag besprochen haben, für die nächste Probe geändert. Und so entwickelt sich im Laufe von einer Woche bis zu zehn Tagen, wie viel Zeit man auch immer hat, die Maske bis zur Premiere weiter. Dann werden Fotos gemacht und diese Fotos hat die Maskenbildnerin immer dabei.

MSE: Wie, dabei? Im Computer oder auf Papier?

UH: In der Maske unten als ganz normales Papier. Ich habe sie hier auf dem Computer alle gesammelt. Ich mache einen Ausdruck und den hat die Maskenbildnerin dabei, damit sie immer wieder drauf schauen kann. Wenn man es dann so dreißigmal gemacht hat, braucht man das Foto gar nicht mehr. Da weiß man einfach, was man macht. Wenn man einen Schauspieler außerdem ein paar Mal in verschiedenen Stücken hatte, kennt man das Gesicht und dann ist es auch einfacher.

MSE: Ich weiß nicht, ob das in allen Stücken der Fall ist, aber jedenfalls in Wilson-Inszenierungen tragen die Schauspieler ein Mikroport. Wird das ganz am Schluss angeklebt?

UH: Zuerst macht man das Make-up. Dann klebt man das Mikroport an und versteckt es entweder in den eigenen Haaren oder unter der Perücke.

MSE: Was genau ist in den Haaren?

UH: Das Kabel vom Mikroport. Also das Mikro ist hier vorne und der Sender ist hinten am Rücken in einer Tasche. Der Sender überträgt die Stimme zur Tonabteilung, die dann den Ton zusammenmischt.

MSE: Die Schauspieler hören den Text nicht, soweit ich weiß. Das ist eine besondere Technik, nicht wahr?

UH: Dieser Knopf im Ohr ist etwas anderes.

MSE: Wird das am Berliner Ensemble benutzt?

UH: Wir haben das ein oder zwei Mal benutzt. Da ist ein Schauspieler ausgefallen und ein anderer musste ganz kurzfristig einspringen. Weil die Zeit einfach nicht gereicht hat, um den Text zu lernen, wurde ihm der Text als Erleichterung ins Ohr gesprochen.

MSE: Zum Thema Knopf im Ohr hat mir Angela Winkler eine spannende Geschichte erzählt, als sie den Text von *Hamlet* mit der Hilfe von der Souffleuse Eva-Maria Böhm gelernt hat (Peter Zadek, 1999). Frau Winkler und Frau Böhm haben mir beide von ihren Erfahrungen mit dieser Technik berichtet.

UH: Ja, das wird aber hier am Haus kaum benutzt. Die Schauspieler lernen ihren Text wirklich. In der Regel vergessen sie ihn auch nicht, aber falls sie doch mal irgendwo hängen bleiben, gibt es die Souffleuse. Wenn es ganz schlimm ist, fehlt mal ein Satz. Wir sind ja alle Menschen.

MSE: Es wird meistens sowieso kaum

auffallen.

UH: Wenn jemand jeden Tag reingeht, dann vielleicht, aber normalerweise wird es nicht auffallen.

MSE: Bis zum Ankleben des Mikro-ports, wie lange dauert eine Maske, zum Beispiel bei Wilson? Wer hat die komplizierteste Maske? Jürgen Holtz als Königin Elizabeth I. in den *Sonetten*?

UH: Noch nicht mal. Kompliziert sind vor allem die Glatzen. In den *Sonetten* und in *Lulu* gibt es Schauspieler, die eine Glatze haben. Also das ist schon etwas Aufwendiges, diese Glatzen zu kleben.

MSE: Warum ist das so schwer?

UH: Weil die Glatze ja richtig gut halten muss. Sie ist viel schwieriger zu kleben als eine Perücke.

MSE: Ist das nicht einfach ein Stück, wie etwa eine Bademütze?

UH: Ja, schon wie eine Bademütze. Aber wenn man den Kopf dreht, dann gibt es Falten und die müssen sehr klein, also möglichst wenig zu sehen sein. Außerdem ist ein Übergang zu machen, vom Gesicht zur Glatze.

MSE: Den habe ich nie bemerkt.

UH: Das ist genau der Sinn der Sache. Wenn Sie eine Badekappe aufhaben, dann sieht man diese Kante. Und das sollte bei unserer Glatze eben nicht so sein. Die Glatze ist aus einem ganz dünnen Material, aus einem flüssigen Kunststoff. Der wird auf den Kopf aufgetupft. Dann verfliegt das Lösungsmittel und wenn man davon fünf oder sechs Schichten aufträgt, hat man die Konsistenz, die man braucht. Die Ränder sind dann einfach immer dünner.

MSE: Wie, das wird direkt auf den Kopf aufgetupft?

UH: Nein, nur auf einen Gipskopf oder so einen Kunststoffkopf. Da sind schon die Maße für den Schauspieler drauf. Da sieht man genau, ich muss es so und so groß machen. Und dann ist die

Glatze wie eine ganz dünne Bademütze. Sie wird erst vorn geklebt, dann hinten und an den Seiten. Bei den Übergängen muss man ein bisschen mit einem Lösungsmittel arbeiten, damit sie noch unsichtbarer werden. So eine Glatze zu kleben dauert schon eine gute Stunde.

MSE: Die Maske von Sabin Tambrea mit den tollen Augen in *Lulu*, wie lange dauert das?

UH: Eine Dreiviertelstunde ungefähr. Und bei Anke Engelsmann mit der Nase in den *Sonetten* dauert es ein bisschen länger als eine Stunde. Anke Engelsmann hat die Nase und hier vorne auch eine Stirnglatze. Erst muss man die Nase machen, dann die Stirnglatze, dann das Make-up und dann kommt die Perücke drauf.

MSE: Ach, und ich sage den Schauspielern, das sieht so toll aus, sie sollen immer so herumlaufen. Da höre ich sofort: Nein, das dauert viel zu lange!

UH: Ja, bei den Wilson-Stücken fangen wir in der Regel drei Stunden oder drei Stunden und fünfzehn Minuten vor der Vorstellung an zu schminken.

MSE: Wie wird das aufgeteilt? Schminken alle sieben Mitarbeiter?

UH: Nein, nicht immer alle sieben. Ich versuche auch möglichst Maskenbildner einzusparen. Also in *Lulu* sind wir fünf Maskenbildner, die das Stück schminken. In den *Sonetten* sind es sechs und in der *Dreigroschenoper* sieben. In der *Dreigroschenoper* hat aber jeder Maskenbildner drei Schauspieler. Das ist das Maximum, was man bei diesen Wilson-Stücken machen kann. Das füllt die drei Stunden. Mehr geht nicht. Wenn man noch früher anfängt, ist die Zeit bis zur Vorstellung einfach zu lange und dann muss man schon wieder anfangen zu reparieren.

MSE: Manche sitzen vorher in der Kantine und essen noch. Sie sind also noch nicht fertig geschminkt.

UH: Genau, der Mund wird erst später gemacht.

MSE: Wie ist es in Stücken wie *Romeo und Julia* (Mona Kraushaar, 2011)? Die Hauptdarsteller werden ständig nass. Wird da zwischendurch etwas gemacht, wenn sie abgehen?

UH: Ja, das macht immer der jeweilige Maskenbildner. Also der Maskenbildner, der den Schauspieler am Anfang schminkt oder die Frisur macht, der betreut den Schauspieler durch das gesamte Stück hindurch. Manchmal sind die Schauspieler die ganze Zeit auf der Bühne, dann kann man gar nichts machen. Da muss am Anfang alles eben so sitzen, dass es die ganze Zeit hält. Und ansonsten ist man jedes Mal, wenn die Schauspieler abgehen, in der Garderobe. Oder wenn es halt schwierige Sachen sind, kommen die Schauspieler manchmal schon zu uns in die Maske und da wird immer wieder zwischendurch nachgebessert und korrigiert.

MSE: Also sind die Ankleider und die Maskenbildner immer zuständig.

UH: Ja, jeder Ankleider hat seine Gruppe von Schauspielern, die er während des Stückes betreut.

MSE: Das heißt, jeder Schauspieler hat zwei Leute, die ihn betreuen.

UH: Immer einen Maskenbildner und einen Ankleider pro Abend.

MSE: Sie haben selbst in all den Jahren so viele Inszenierungen betreut. Welches Stück hat am meisten Aufsehen erregt?

UH: Robert Wilson, aber nicht die allererste Wilson-Produktion im Haus. Denn die erste, die wir hier gemacht haben, war Bertolt Brechts *Der Ozeanflug* (Robert Wilson, 1998). Das ist schon länger her und damals war Wilson auch noch nicht ganz so extrem wie jetzt, sondern die Schauspieler sahen noch viel natürlicher aus. Sie waren nicht ganz so weiß und nicht so auffällig

geschminkt, also nicht übergeschminkt. Die erste richtige Wilson-Produktion, in der dann die Schauspieler schon ganz extrem aussahen, das war Georg Büchners *Leonce und Lena* (Robert Wilson, 2003). Das war das erste Mal, dass ich erlebt habe, dass in einer Zeitungskritik des Stücks *Leonce und Lena* die Maske lobend erwähnt wurde. Es ist mir danach auch nie wieder passiert. Das passiert einem, glaube ich, nur einmal im Leben.

MSE: Ich habe dieses Stück auch gut in Erinnerung. *Leonce und Lena* tragen am Schluss auch wirkliche Masken.

UH: Im nächsten Jahr gibt es eine neue Wilson-Produktion, *Peter Pan* (2013). Es ist wieder Jacques Reynaud, der Kostümbildner, der das macht.

MSE: Warum, meinen Sie, benutzt Robert Wilson so übertriebene Kostüme?

UH: Er hat das für sich als seinen Stil und seine Ausdrucksform entdeckt. Ich meine, die Schauspieler bewegen sich auch gar nicht normal auf der Bühne, sondern es sind kunstvolle, choreografierte Bewegungen.

MSE: Meine Studenten können Wilson ansehen, ohne sehr viel Deutsch zu können, und trotzdem erleben sie die Produktion auf intensivste Weise.

UH: Ja, das ist eben so, aber leider auch, weil Wilson nicht mehr so viel Wert auf die Sprache legt. Man kann sich das als Kunstwerk anschauen, aber man muss gar nicht unbedingt die Geschichte dazu kennen.

MSE: Aber in den *Sonetten* kommen auch sehr schöne Textstellen vor.

UH: Das stimmt, ich finde das auch. Die *Sonette* mag ich eigentlich auch am liebsten von den Wilson-Stücken.

MSE: Wie so viele Leute bin ich mit *Peter Pan* aufgewachsen. Ich kenne jedes Lied.

UH: Als ich noch in der Ausbildung war, habe ich *Peter Pan* auch schon am

Theater des Westens gemacht und da war Ute Lemper unser Peter Pan (Anna Vaughan, 1984).

MSE: Haben Sie schon mit der Maske für *Peter Pan* am Berliner Ensemble angefangen?

UH: Nein, noch nicht. Im November beginnen wir mit der Stage A. Da wird Jacques Reynaud mit den Entwürfen kommen und wir werden unser erstes Gespräch haben. Kurz vorher gibt es dann auch die Liste für die Besetzung. Der Regisseur muss entscheiden, welche Schauspieler welche Rolle spielen. Bis zum Schluss ist das manchmal schwierig und es gibt zum Beispiel einzelne Rollen, die noch nicht besetzt sind oder erst ganz spät besetzt werden. Also das entscheidet letztendlich der Regisseur, wen er haben will. Erst danach kann der Kostümbildner seine Entwürfe machen und wie gesagt, im November wird Jacques Reynaud kommen und wir werden uns zusammensetzen. Dann werde ich wissen, wie viele Perücken wir machen müssen. Als Wilson hier gearbeitet hat, war immer Jacques Reynaud für die Kostüme zuständig. Wilson hat zwar auch mit anderen Kostümbildnern gearbeitet, aber hier bei uns war es immer Jacques.

MSE: Er näht doch nicht selber! Was macht er genau?

UH: Er macht die Entwürfe. Die Kostümentwürfe, die werden mit Frau Naujok besprochen und Frau Naujok gibt sie an den Gewandmeister weiter. Der Gewandmeister ist derjenige, der diese Entwürfe in einen Schnitt bringen und zuschneiden muss, und die Schneiderei näht dann alles.

MSE: Jetzt verstehe ich das besser. Das passiert also für jeden einzelnen Regisseur, der mit seinem Kostümbildner kommt. Dieser Kostümbildner arbeitet dann mit den zuständigen Leuten hier am Theater und deshalb bekommt die

Produktion einen anderen Stil. Ich bin jetzt neugierig zu hören, mit welchen anderen Abteilungen Sie arbeiten.

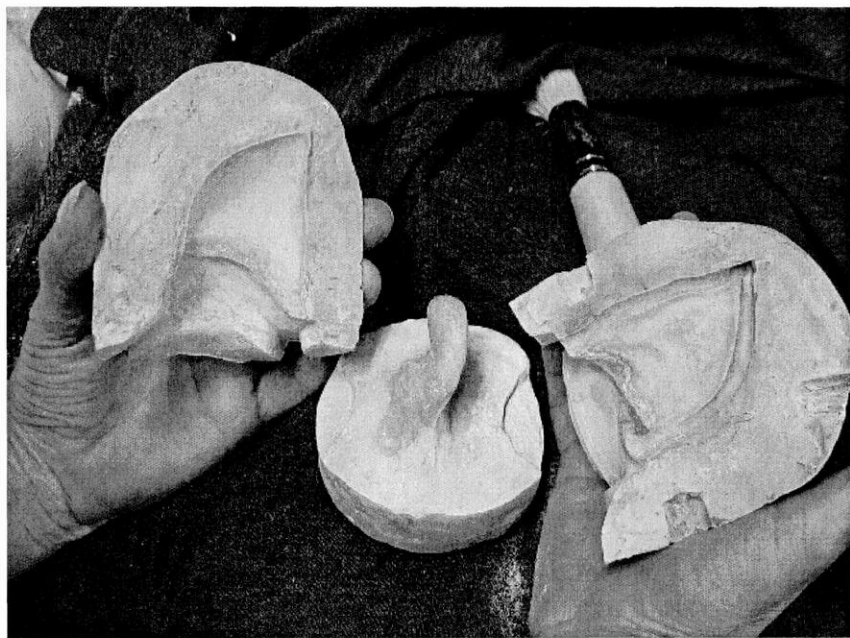
UH: Also mit den Ankleidern haben wir schon viel zu tun. Während der Vorstellung, wenn in der Garderobe umgezogen wird, sind sie auch immer dabei und schauen, ob die Haare noch sitzen oder das Make-up nicht verwischt ist. Dann haben wir auch mit der Requisite zu tun, weil eventuell mal eine Blutblase gemacht werden muss oder irgend solche Sachen, die man mit der Requisite absprechen muss. Wo bringt man sowas an, wie groß oder wie klein soll es sein? In *Romeo und Julia* zum Beispiel gibt es eine ganz große Blutblase. Es gibt auch Blut in *Mutter Courage* (Claus Peymann, 2005) und in *Danton's Tod* (Claus Peymann, 2012).

MSE: Haben Sie auch die übergroßen klatschenden Hände in *Danton's Tod* gemacht?

UH: Nein, die haben wir nicht gemacht. Das ist die Requisite gewesen.

MSE: Manchmal gibt es tatsächliche Masken. Das deutsche Wort *Maske* scheint mit den Ursprüngen des griechischen Theaters zu tun zu haben. Auf Englisch geht das nicht, denn das heißt *make-up*.

UH: Wenn man in Deutschland von „Make-up“ spricht, dann meint man wirklich nur das Make-up. In Amerika ist auch der Beruf des Maskenbildners ganz anders als bei uns. Als wir zum Beispiel 2011 zum Gastspiel mit der *Dreigroschenoper* in Amerika waren, gab es in New York Maskenbildner, die nur das Make-up gemacht haben und andere, die nur die Haare gemacht haben. Bei uns beinhaltet der Beruf des Maskenbildners alles zusammen, das Make-up, die Haare, die Perücken und die Special-Effects. In den USA ist das in verschiedene Bereiche aufgeteilt. Das ist spezialisierter. Die machen eben nur



eine Sache und können diese eine Sache vielleicht, wenn sie sehr begabt sind, auch viel besser als wir. Wir machen es halt anders, wir sind breiter gefächert. Wobei ich sagen muss, die Maskenbildner in New York haben unsere Arbeit ganz schön gelobt. Es war schwierig, in New York mit sechs fremden Maskenbildnern unser Stück zu machen. Das war sehr viel Arbeit. Es gab sehr viele Proben und es ist alles etwas anders gewesen als hier.

MSE: Das war, habe ich mir erklären lassen, wegen der Gewerkschaft, dass Sie nicht Ihre Leute aus Berlin mitbringen durften.

UH: Ja genau, so wurde uns das auch gesagt. Ich weiß aber noch immer nicht wieso. Wir waren schon mal zum Gastspiel in Kalifornien und da haben wir alle selber gearbeitet. Aber vielleicht ist das in New York anders, keine Ahnung.

MSE: Vielleicht hängt das von den jeweiligen Gesetzen des Bundesstaats ab. Wie war das bei Gastspielen in anderen Ländern, zum Beispiel in Tokio oder Teheran?

UH: Es waren immer alle Maskenbildner von uns dabei, auch in Hong Kong.

MSE: Daran denkt man nicht, wenn man das Wort *Gastspiel* hört. Höchstens, dass die Musiker mit den Schauspielern reisen, aber nicht, dass alle Mitarbeiter, die an der Produktion beteiligt sind, mitgehen. Das bringt mich zur nächsten Frage. Ihr Name steht auf allen Programmheften, glaube ich. Ich habe mir anfangs gedacht, dass Sie jeden Schauspieler jeden Abend schminken und mich gefragt, wie das möglich ist.

UH: Das ist hier üblich, dass nur der Abeitungsleiter im Programm steht und nicht die Mitarbeiter, die das Stück dann wirklich letztendlich betreuen. Weil ich zu den einzelnen Maskenbildnern gehen und sagen muss, ab morgen

musst du das anders machen, das musst du anders machen, das anders machen. Und weil ich, wenn Proben und Endproben sind, immer im Zuschauerraum mitsitze und auch beurteilen muss, wie es aussieht, wenn die Masken gemacht werden. Ich höre mir auch an, welche Kritik der Kostümbildner oder der Regisseur hat und das gebe ich den Maskenbildnern weiter.

MSE: Wie notieren Sie das? Machen Sie Bilder?

UH: Nein, ich schreibe das auf.

MSE: Danke, das erklärt viel. Sie stehen also nicht bei jeder Vorstellung persönlich dabei und kontrollieren.

UH: Nein, ich kann nicht immer jede Vorstellung betreuen. Manchmal habe ich Vorstellungen, bei denen ich selbst mitschminke. Da muss ich mich sowieso auf die Maskenbildner verlassen, dass sie ihre Sache gut machen. Wenn ich selber schminke, kann ich nicht gleichzeitig andere Leute beobachten, ob sie auch alles richtig machen. Das heißt, es muss irgendwie vorher klargestellt werden. Entweder muss man vorher probieren, wenn man neue Maskenbildner hat, oder man kennt seine Maskenbildner und weiß, man kann sich darauf verlassen, dass es funktioniert. Bis zur Premiere bin ich immer bei den Endproben da und wenn die Premiere vorbei ist, dann schaue ich nur noch mal gelegentlich, ob alles noch in Ordnung ist. Jeder Maskenbildner hat so viel Eigenverantwortlichkeit, dass er in jeder Vorstellung sein Bestes gibt, um das genauso wieder herzustellen, wie es zur Premiere war.

MSE: Haben die Schauspieler etwas zu sagen? Sträuben sie sich manchmal gegen eine Nase oder Ohren?

UH: Doch schon (*lacht*). Sie können es wenigstens versuchen. Manchmal haben sie Glück und können ihre Einwände vorbringen. Aber manchmal ist es eben

so, und auch wenn sie es nicht mögen, wird es so gemacht.

MSE: Eine Frage noch zur Abgrenzung von Maske und Kostüm. Der überaus dicke Bauch von Cupid in den *Sonetten* ist nicht Ihr Bereich, hat mir Frau Naujok erklärt, glaube ich, weil der Bauch nicht nackt ist.

UH: Das stimmt. Das ist ein Watton, es wird angezogen. In *Endstation Sehnsucht* sollten wir am Anfang einen schwangeren Bauch machen und der sollte gezeigt werden (Thomas Langhoff, 2011). Stella hätte sich ein kleines Hemdchen übergezogen und einfach eine Hose angehabt. Das wäre Maske gewesen, weil das ein nackter Bauch war und er hätte eben echt aussehen müssen. Kein Kostüm drüber. Aber das ist weggefallen und wir haben es nicht gemacht.

MSE: Das hört sich kompliziert an. Was war eigentlich das Schwierigste, was Sie je gemacht haben?

UH: Grundsätzlich schwierig, weil man es nicht so oft macht, sind immer diese Special-Effects. Also irgendwelche Verletzungen oder Wunden. Im *Zerbrochenen Krug* zum Beispiel hier oben beim Richter Adam die Verletzung vom Schlag auf den Kopf (Peter Stein, 2008). Oder wenn man falsche Ohren dranklebt. Das sind Sachen, die machen sehr viel Spaß, aber man macht sie nicht so oft und deshalb ist der Vorlauf da ein bisschen länger.

MSE: Kann man mit den falschen Ohren auch gut hören, wie zum Beispiel beim Teufel in Manfred Karges *Faust. Fragment 1911*?

UH: Der Gehörgang ist frei. Das falsche Ohr sitzt nur hier draußen auf. Wo man hört, wird nie zugemacht, wie auch immer man die Ohren verändert. Bei einer falschen Nase sind die eigenen Nasenlöcher auch immer frei.

MSE: Das ist also das Schwierigste,

wenn Körperteile verändert werden müssen.

UH: Oder bei Gesichtsveränderungen. Wenn man das Gesicht älter macht, also das ist schon am Aufwendigsten.

MSE: Zum Thema Gesichtsveränderung und Special-Effects in Peter Steins *Zerbrochenem Krug*: bei der Versteigerung am BE habe ich den heilen Krug aus den Proben ersteigert. Sind Sie unglücklich, wenn Sachen von der Maske dabei sind?

UH: Von der Maske ist noch gar nichts versteigert worden, glaube ich.

MSE: Wurde nicht auch die Proben-Perücke von Richter Adam angeboten?

UH: Ach ja, das stimmt, von Klaus Maria Brandauer, richtig. Es ist immer wenig von uns da. Die meisten Perücken, die wir machen, brauchen wir noch, weil die Stücke noch spielen. Oder wenn die Stücke abgespielt sind, kommen die Perücken in unseren Fundus und werden dann meist für andere Stücke weiter verarbeitet. Sie werden für andere Schauspieler oder für den gleichen Schauspieler umgearbeitet. Deshalb können wir es uns nicht leisten, dass von uns so viele Sachen einfach verkauft werden. Vor allem, weil so eine Perücke zweitausend Euro in der Herstellung kostet und für zweitausend Euro kann man natürlich nichts verkaufen. Das ist zu teuer, aber wenn man es billiger abgibt, ist es einfach ein Verlustgeschäft. Wir müssen dann ja wieder neue Sachen anfertigen, die wieder so teuer werden.

MSE: Der Fundus muss ja riesig sein.

UH: Nicht mehr so sehr. Wir haben nicht die Zeit, für den Fundus zu arbeiten. Wir stellen nur die Perücken her, die wir dringend brauchen. Es gehen auch Sachen kaputt. Zum Beispiel in der *Dreigroschenoper*, die jetzt schon so lange läuft, sind die Perücken nicht mehr gut. Die müssten wir eigentlich neu machen. Man repariert immer, aber

irgendwann sind sie so morsch, dass es eben nicht mehr geht.

MSE: Also, besonders bei einem Stück wie Brechts *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* (Heiner Müller 1995).

Bei den Köpfen der Grünhändler zum Beispiel?

UH: Die Grünhändler werden angemalt. Das sind die eigenen Haare, das ist der eigene Kopf. Martin Wuttke hat eine Perücke auf und Stefan Lisewski, der hat vorne eine Glatze und eine Perücke. Ansonsten haben alle die eigenen Haare, auch Margarita Broich.

MSE: Wenn ich an die Vielfalt der Vorstellungen denke, auch nur an einem bestimmten Tag, frage ich mich, wie das mit der Terminplanung geht. Wer synchronisiert das? Haben Sie ein Computerprogramm, das die Leute einteilt?

UH: Nein, das Computerprogramm bin ich. Ich habe hier zum Beispiel die Dienstpläne bis zu den Ferien (*zeigt sie mir*). So habe ich sie immer ein paar Wochen im Voraus. Das ist die aktuelle Woche, das ist die nächste Woche und das sind die letzten beiden Wochen, wie ich die so grob geplant habe. Das sind die Vorstellungen, das die Maskenbildner, und hier oben sind die Proben und Umbe-setzungsproben. *Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald* hat hier Premiere, hier ist die Voraufführung, und das hier an den drei Tagen sind Proben (Enrico Lübke, 2012). Ich muss immer Maskenbildner einplanen. Wenn jemand krank ist, der hier arbeiten muss, streiche ich das gleich rot an. Falls zum Beispiel diese Maskenbildnerin zum Arzt geht und weiterhin krank ist, brauche ich hier noch jemanden zur Aushilfe.

MSE: Wie schnell kann ich mich ausbilden lassen?

UH: (*lacht*) Erst Friseur und dann zwei Jahre Maskenbildner! Das ist auch wichtig. Es gibt immer Bewerbungen von Maskenbildnern aus dem Aus-

land. Im Oktober, glaube ich, war ein junger Mann aus einem der anderen europäischen Länder hier. Er hat sich als Maskenbildner beworben und hatte auch eine Mappe dabei, die ich nicht so toll fand. Das habe ich auch gesagt und ihm angeboten, dass er einen Monat lang ein Praktikum machen kann. Und in dem Monat hat sich dann herausgestellt, dass seine Ausbildung überhaupt nicht dem entsprach, was wir hier machen müssen. Es kann sein, dass er an seinem Theater ein wunderbarer Maskenbildner ist, aber bei uns hat es hier überhaupt nicht funktioniert. Also mit der Ausbildung aus dem Ausland bin ich da sehr vorsichtig.

MSE: Und ohne Ausbildung...

UH: Ohne Ausbildung geht es gar nicht. Also die Ausbildung, die will ich schon haben und es soll ab und zu so sein, dass jemand eine Frisurausbildung hat, weil wir auch Haare färben müssen. Wenn ein Schauspieler in irgendeinem Stück blonde Strähnen haben soll, dann kommt er halt zu uns und wir müssen die blonden Strähnen machen. Wenn sie ein halbes Jahr später für das nächste Stück weg sein sollen, dann müssen wir sie wieder umfärben. Es passiert zwar nicht allzu oft, aber es müsste theoretisch möglich sein.

MSE: Wie lange bleiben die Maskenbildner? Sind es alle Frauen?

UH: Nein, wir haben auch einen Jungen. Also es gibt welche, die schon seit 1989 hier sind. Dann gibt es welche, die auch zwischendurch mal aufgehört haben, weil sie entweder andere Jobs gefunden haben, oder an ein anderes Theater gehen wollten. Die letzte Maskenbildnerin ist jetzt im Mai gekommen, sie ist die neueste.

MSE: Bei all den Maskenbildnern und in all den Jahren am BE, was war die größte Herausforderung für Sie? War es, einen Körperteil zu verändern?

UH: Das Schwierigste, was wir hier je gemacht haben, war in *Richard III.*, in einer Inszenierung von unserem Intendanten (Claus Peymann, 2008). Da gab es eine Leiche und diese Leiche haben wir gebaut, was sehr schwierig war. Das haben vor allem zwei Maskenbildnerinnen gemacht, ich habe nur immer wieder etwas geholfen. Wir haben viel Kontakt mit einem jungen Mann, der hier in Berlin eine Firma für Special-Effects hat. Der hat uns viele Tipps gegeben.

MSE: Haben Sie die Leiche noch?

UH: Ja, die hat eine große Kiste bekommen, wo sie drin liegt, und ist nach Weißensee ausgelagert worden.

MSE: Aber die Zuschauer waren nicht so nah dran, also musste die Leiche wirklich nicht so genau sein, oder?

UH: Wir haben aber tatsächlich einen kompletten Körperabdruck von einem Schauspieler genommen, von Heinrich Buttchereit, weil der auch die Leiche sein sollte. Nach und nach haben wir seinen ganzen Körper mit Silikonabdrucken abgenommen.

MSE: Nicht Gips?

UH: Nein, Silikon ist genauer.

MSE: Gab es mal etwas, nachdem Sie mit dem Regisseur und Kostümbildner gesprochen haben, das Sie als unrealisierbar abweisen mussten? Haben Sie irgendwann sagen müssen, Sie könnten stattdessen etwas anderes machen?

UH: Bis jetzt ist das nicht passiert. Die Wünsche der Regisseure waren nicht so unrealistisch. Wir sind ein Theater, kein Film, und wir arbeiten ohne Schnitt. Da muss man sich immer etwas überlegen. Man muss im Zweifelsfall gemeinsam darüber nachdenken und sich mit Kollegen auseinander setzen und darüber unterhalten. Wir fragen, hast du nicht eine Idee dafür? Wie könnte ich das denn jetzt machen? Wie könnte dieses oder jenes funktionieren? Es hat bisher

irgendwie alles geklappt. Es ist nie so gewesen, dass irgendetwas gewünscht war, wo ich sagen musste, es geht nicht.

MSE: Manchmal werden die Kostüme sehr flott gewechselt.

UH: Also der schnellste Szenenwechsel, den wir hier haben, ist im *Frühlingserwachen* (Claus Peymann, 2008), wenn die Jungs abgehen und zwei, drei Minuten später wieder auftreten und alle eine Glatze haben. Da arbeiten immer zwei Maskenbildner an einem Schauspieler und machen die Glatze drauf.

MSE: Das ist wieder diese Art dünne Kappe.

UH: Ja genau, die vorbereitete Glatze. In der Schnelle geht es nicht so perfekt, wie ich es eigentlich gern hätte. Aber auch diese Glatzen sollen nicht aussehen wie diese Badekappe, die da liegt.

MSE: Die Schauspieler erscheinen plötzlich und überraschend. Auch ist die Beleuchtung dunkler. Da sieht man nicht unbedingt auf den Kopf.

UH: Ja, sie zeigen ein bisschen den Hintern. Das ist die Ablenkung, die wir brauchen. Also wie gesagt, da sitzen immer zwei Maskenbildner an einem Schauspieler. Dann kniet manchmal noch der Ankleider dabei und macht die Schuhe zu. Das passiert alles unten direkt an der Bühne. Es gibt nicht genug Zeit, um in die Maske zu laufen. Wir wussten überhaupt nicht, wie schnell das geht, bis wir es das erste Mal gemacht haben. Es war klar, wir müssen es zu zweit machen. Einer allein schafft das nicht, weil auch der Klebstoff etwas Zeit braucht, um fest zu werden und zu halten. Dann hat sich eben herausgestellt, dass wir es zu zweit schaffen.

MSE: Es geht also nicht einfach darum, die Glatze, überzustülpen, sondern auch darum, sie zu kleben.

UH: Ja, man muss sie rundherum kleben. Ich weiß nicht, wie lange wir jetzt brauchen. Frau Naujok hat am Anfang

da gestanden und auf die Uhr geschaut. Sie hat die Zeit gestoppt.

MSE: Zum Thema Klebstoff wollte ich Sie auch fragen, ist das Make-up, zum Beispiel die weiße Schminke für die Wilson-Stücke, schädlich für die Haut?

UH: Das ist ein Make-up, das dermatologisch getestet ist. Es ist ein ganz normales Make-up, nur dass es in diesem Falle weiß ist. Da sind keine schädlichen Stoffe drin. Das Wichtigste für die Schauspieler ist, dass sie hinterher, wenn das Stück zu Ende ist, das Make-up und die Reste davon gut entfernen. Also das liegt auch letztendlich in deren eigener Verantwortung, dass sie sich ihre Gesichter richtig abschminken, dann noch einmal waschen und vielleicht eine Creme drauf machen.

MSE: Machen das die Schauspieler selber? Steht jemand von der Maske dabei?

UH: Wir machen die Perücken weg und helfen vielleicht auch, wenn eine Nase da ist. Dann helfen wir schon auch, aber die Farbe, die macht jeder Schauspieler selbst weg.

MSE: Passen Sie auf, dass zum Beispiel die Nase nicht verloren geht?

UH: Nein, die Nase kommt sowieso in den Müll. Die wird jedes Mal neu gemacht.

MSE: Oh!

UH: Bei der Nase gibt es dünne Ränder, die immer dünner werden, damit sie in die eigene Haut übergehen und es keine harte Kante gibt. Wenn man die Nase einmal abgemacht hat, sind diese Ränder nicht mehr so gut. Dann muss man eine neue machen.

MSE: Dazu braucht man ja schon langjährige Erfahrung. Haben Sie mir eigentlich fertig erzählt, wo Sie zwischen Ausbildung und Berliner Ensemble gearbeitet haben?

UH: Ich habe am Theater des Westens gelernt, dann war ich ein Jahr lang freiberuflich tätig und habe bei ein paar Fil-

men mitgemacht. Danach habe ich auch bei NTV als Freiberuflerin gearbeitet, ein paar Mal an verschiedenen Theatern ausgeholfen und seit Januar 1996 bin ich hier. Zuerst war ich Maskenbildnerin. Es gab damals einen anderen Chef und er ist, glaube ich, vor acht Jahren krank geworden. Ich habe die Vertretung gemacht, er ist in Rente gegangen und so bin ich dann Abteilungsleiterin geworden.

MSE: Sie sind aus der ehemaligen DDR gekommen und am Theater des Westens gewesen.

UH: Ja, mein Freund hatte für mich einen Ausreiseantrag gestellt. Ich bin jeden Tag in Westberlin glücklich gewesen. Es war für mich einfach ein Traum, aus der DDR heraus zu sein.

MSE: Jetzt sind Sie wieder hier.

UH: Ja, aber die Umstände sind anders. Es ist nicht mehr diese Diktatur.

MSE: Viele Schauspieler und Mitarbeiter am BE sind die ganze Zeit hier gewesen.

UH: Es sind etliche, das stimmt. Also bei uns in der Abteilung ist der letzte Kollege, der hier zu DDR-Zeiten gearbeitet hat, vor fünf Jahren in Rente gegangen. Er heißt Heino Hilger. Der hat hier seine Ausbildung zum Maskenbildner gemacht und bis zum 65. Lebensjahr hier am Theater gearbeitet. Er war sein ganzes Leben am BE.

MSE: Das BE besteht nach wie vor. Meinen Sie, man kann hier am Theater von Kontinuität sprechen?

UH: Das Theater hat sich schon auch verändert. Ich war zwar damals noch nicht hier, aber ich denke, heute hat das BE mit dem Theater von Bertolt Brecht und Helene Weigel nicht mehr so viel gemeinsam. Aber das ist auch gut so. Wir können kein Theater mehr machen wie vor 50 Jahren. Das geht nicht, das Theater muss sich weiterentwickeln.

MSE: Es gibt hier aber noch immer ein

Repertoire, nicht wie in den USA, wo eine Inszenierung drei Monate oder drei Jahre an einem Stück en suite spielt. Das Repertoiresystem ist für das Theater stressig, aber für die Zuschauer wirklich anregend.

UH: Also ich finde es auch sehr schön, dass wir praktisch mehr oder weniger jeden Tag eine andere Vorstellung haben. Wenn wir viermal hintereinander ein Stück spielen, ist es schon ganz komisch. Dann wird es einem fast langweilig. Das stimmt nicht ganz, aber man freut sich drauf, wenn man dann auch mal wieder etwas anderes machen kann. Man freut sich zum Beispiel, wenn man viermal einen Wilson vorbereitet und viermal die Gesichter weiß gemacht hat, wenn man dann etwas macht, wo die Gesichter eben nicht weiß sind, sondern einen normalen Teint haben.

MSE: Aber Ihr liebstes Stück, sagten Sie, bleibt dennoch *Shakespeares Sonette*?

UH: Also, ich finde die *Sonette* von Wilson sehr toll, ja. Aber *Der aufhaltsame Aufstieg des Arturo Ui* ist auch gut, Heiner Müllers letzte Inszenierung. Es läßt sich nicht vergleichen. *Arturo Ui*, das läuft seit ewig und drei Tagen hier. Die Produktion hatte im Mai 1995 Premiere und läuft immer noch, es ist unglaublich. Der Zuschauerraum ist immer noch voll und die Leute jubeln jedes Mal.

MSE: Es ist ein Kult.

UH: Ja, schon so eine Art *Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Es war in Gastspielen überall.

MSE: Sie sind auch mit vielen Stücken überall auf Gastspielen mitgereist. Wie ist das, anstrengend oder schön?

UH: Es ist beides. Es ist anstrengend und es ist schön. Beim Gastspiel hat man natürlich nicht immer alle Sachen, die man hier in der Maske um sich hat und seine Bequemlichkeiten, sondern man muss manchmal so ein bisschen

improvisieren. Die Stühle sind niedrig, die Spiegel sind klein, das Licht ist nicht so gut, es ist vielleicht warm, es gibt kein Fenster, oder die Klimaanlage ist eiskalt.

MSE: Sie dürfen nichts vergessen.

UH: Ja, das auch. Es muss alles eingepackt werden. Aber es gibt Listen und wenn man mit einem Stück das zweite oder dritte Mal fährt, kann man auf die Liste gucken und packt einfach nach Liste ein. Es packt eigentlich auch immer derjenige ein, der dann die Vorstellung schminkt. Derjenige weiß auch, was er braucht. Die und die Farben brauche ich, diesen Klebstoff, ich brauche das Haarspray, dieses Headspray, eine Frisiercreme, ein Gel. Und das packt jeder für sich selber ein. Es ist also nicht so, dass einer eine Komplettpackung macht, sondern jeder ist für seinen kleinen Bereich verantwortlich. Aber es kann natürlich immer mal etwas fehlen. Wir waren schon auf Gastspiel und eine Kollegin sagt, komisch, mein Wimpernkleber ist weg. Ein anderes Mal sage ich, ich bin der Meinung, ich habe eine Bürste eingepackt, aber ich habe keine Bürste mit. So fehlt mir eben die Bürste. Ich habe eine andere Haarbürste genommen. Also das passiert schon immer mal.

MSE: Wie ist es mit dem Zoll? Kommt alles durch?

UH: Die Zollsachen werden von unserer technischen Leitung gemacht. Wir müssen nur die Kisten packen und es muss klar sein, dass das, was auf dem Zettel steht, auch in den Kisten drin ist, vor allem bei Auslandsgastspielen. Innerhalb von Europa ist es nicht so wichtig. Aber für die USA war es ganz wichtig. Sie wollten alles ganz kompliziert mit Foto und Gewicht haben.

MSE: Mit einem Foto von dem, was in der Kiste drin ist? Wie ist das, wenn *Die Dreigroschenoper* im Herbst nach

Südamerika geht?

UH: Das ist auch schlimm. Es wird genauso aufwendig und da gibt es noch das Problem, dass die Container wegen irgendwelcher Mikroben auf 70 Grad Celsius erhitzt werden. Das heißt, unsere Maskensachen können gar nicht drin sein, weil die Schminke kaputt geht. Es dürfen keine Lösungsmittel eingeführt werden, weil alles, was Alkohol ist, keine 70 Grad verträgt. Es muss alles anders geregelt werden, also die Schminksachen, die gehen per Luftfracht und die ganzen Lösungsmittel mit dem Alkohol werden vor Ort in Brasilien gekauft.

MSE: Gehen die Sachen, die erhitzt werden, mit dem Schiff?

UH: Ja, in den Seecontainern.

MSE: Es ist unvorstellbar kompliziert, mit so einer Produktion auf Gastspiel zu gehen.

UH: Man darf das ja nicht vergessen. Das ist schon richtig.

MSE: Wie kann es sein, dass Sie so locker sind?

UH: (lacht) Es sind auch bald Ferien, schauen Sie hier auf den Plan, in eins, zwei, drei, vier Wochen!

MSE: Und Sie können sich auch darüber freuen, dass in der Maske noch nichts unrealisierbar gewesen ist.

UH: Mit Kompromissen kommt man immer zum Ziel. Und die Kompromisse müssen eben von beiden Seiten eingegangen werden.

MSE: Das ist ein sehr schöner Schlusssatz. Vielen Dank für das zauberhafte Gespräch. Und jetzt freue ich mich auf eine Führung durch die Maskenabteilung.

Margaret Setje-Eilers, Vanderbilt University



The Radical Camera: An Interview with Catherine Evans

Writing in the catalogue to *The Radical Camera: New York's Photo League, 1936-1951*, Mason Klein, curator at New York's Jewish Museum, traces the origins of the League back to the Film and Photo League, which itself had been founded in 1930 as an offshoot of the Berlin-based Workers' International Relief. Committed to aiding striking workers worldwide, the League was shaken up in 1936 when the filmmakers and the photographers were no longer able to paper over the rift as to the relationship between the two forms of expression, and, more importantly, between both and the struggle, of which more later. The photographers around Sid Grossman and Sol Libsohn packed up their cameras and moved into a new home at 31 East 21st St. in Manhattan. Two years later the League began publication of its influential newsletter *Photo Notes* and formalized itself as a school, and the rest, as they say, is history, albeit one which has rarely been told other than fragmentarily. Although the name crops up when talk turns to the biographies of such notable members as Berenice Abbot and Weegee, or financial supporters such as Dorothea Lange, or to McCarthyism which led to the folding of the League in 1951, the all-important high-profile exhibition had yet to materialize. That has now changed thanks to *The Radical Camera*, an exhibition co-curated by Klein and Catherine Evans, the William and Sarah Ross Sotor Curator

of Photography at the Columbus Museum of Art. The exhibition started its run at the Jewish Museum in November, 2011, moved on to Columbus in April, 2012, from there it decamped to the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco, before finishing at the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach (until April 21, 2013). And then again maybe Florida is not the end of the story, as when I sat down with Catherine shortly after the Columbus opening, she was not without hope that the attention and press garnered by the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue published by Yale University Press, and to which Catherine contributes an essay on the women of the Photo League, would not result in a continuation of the tour in Europe: "It has garnered so much critical press it's shocking! I'm shocked, I'm overwhelmed!" *Time* magazine went so far as to include the catalogue "on the list of six heavyweight contenders for the best art book of 2011. We were third or fourth and Alexander McQueen was in there and the British Museum's book of a thousand objects. That's our little book! It's been so embraced from all strata: the *Wall Street Journal* (Richard Woodward's "The Working Class Revealed", December 14, 2011) to the *Nation* (Lee Siegel's "The New York Photo League's Radical Camera", June 15, 2012)." That the *New York Times* should have devoted copious column inches to the exhibition is perhaps not particularly surprising (see for example David Gonzalez' "15 Years That Changed Photography" of November 4, 2011, and "Redeeming a Life in Photography" of March 23, 2012, and Kerri Macdonald's "A Liberating League" of March 15, 2012), but

that *Art Forum* should have done the same in its April 2012 issue (J. Hoberman's "The Radical Camera: New York's Photo League, 1936-1951") was not something that Catherine would have predicted: "It's incredible, what's a review of this historical material doing in *Art Forum*?" Even more gratifying is the approach taken by the contemporary art world's go-to source for what's happening, an approach which confirms the curator's belief in the strength of the work: Hoberman wrote "about the pictures, not about the curatorial structure, what we did right or wrong or didn't get, and that's amazing to me, he leaps right over the construct and goes straight to the pictures."

At the risk of exhibiting bad faith, what about that curatorial structure? "I guess one thing that I would say about this show and which I think we really tried to do in the book and the exhibition, was to take the Photo League off the shelf. To the extent that it was known – it is an eclipsed chapter of photo history – one of the goals of the exhibition was to take it out of this pigeonhole of something that was, oh, a lot of progressives, mostly Jewish photographers who were socially engaged and shut down, end of story. And so what you see in the exhibition, I hope, and in the book, is a much more nuanced story. Within the Photo League itself there were all kinds of vigorous debates about the meaning of the social-documentary-photograph, the role of photography and the aesthetic component, and this sort of muscular modernism that we see in the pictures does, in the most successful pictures, dovetail seamlessly with the content, but there were very

different opinions within the League."

One of the things we did was to arrange the exhibition chronologically: Precursors; the Great Depression; the War; and then to the Red Scare; to the Aftermath, how the Photo League responded to the listing and the subsequent trial. So that's the axis, a time of fifteen short years, this very compressed history and then looking back on it; in those fifteen years we went from being very left of center, Great Depression, New Deal reforms, to a complete 180 in terms of the political, social, economic, cultural concerns across the country, and that's a big through-line, the American history part of it. We tried to really create some scaffolding, so that people could get that sense of time and see how that inversion happened so quickly and so decisively. And so HUAC of course, and Attorney General Tom C. Clark is a big player in all of that. We had a terrific symposium in which one of the papers was about [League member since 1942] Angela Calomiris, the "spy", and while that sounds very exciting, very 007ish, it was anything but and in fact she was only one of four informants. Scholar Lisa Davis has gone into the FBI files, which became available after the Freedom of Information Act, but they are anything but information because everything is redacted, so that three other informants are only referenced as T1, T2, and T3, and the reason that we know about Angela Calomiris is because she wanted to become known as this great patriot, and it was very much in her self-serving interest to do so, and then she wrote this book called *The Red Masquerade* which came out in 1950, published by Dut-

ton, a big press, it was a best-seller, she was on every talk show, radio show, she was a celebrity, but we also know that she was paid very well by the FBI. There were some Photo Leaguers with whom we did oral histories, they're on the touch-screens throughout the exhibition, who said that she was a lesbian and the FBI had leverage over her but that's actually not the case at all. She was a lesbian but she was very much out already and there was no pressure there at all. We know that she was basically very well paid, that's in all the FBI files and Lisa's biography will put all this forward."

Beyond introducing people for the first time to this period and this work, and beyond putting forward some names of people like Berenice Abbott and Weegee and the people that we all know about, most of the show is people you've never heard of. So it wasn't just introducing the Photo League it was bringing back, sometimes for the first time, people whose careers were destroyed by the listing and the Photo League's demise, because most of the people didn't have careers that existed outside of this particular identity. There were some people who did commercial work, there were people like Abbott who established herself outside of the framework of the Photo League and I think that's another chapter in the book, or the next show, why did some people survive the damage, the fall-out, while others did not? It's not an easy answer: a lot of the women post-war went back to their domestic roles and you can almost walk through this exhibition with so many different lenses, so to speak. One being the social history of women, you can see the shift very dra-

matically. The Photo League embraced women: Of some 300 members, it's a moving target of a number because we don't really know exactly as some didn't officially join, a third were women, so proportionate to the time, that's pretty amazing. But it all comes out of this trajectory of women and labor issues, working on the margins of society, roles that women had already moved along in, there were the suffragettes, labor, all kinds of aspects of society, so the Photo League in the 30s was very much where we were as a country in terms of solidarity and protesting social injustices. With the war people enlisted, women stepped up, and then the men come home and the women retreat, so that's definitely happening as well."

And the pictures are indeed spectacular, both as historical documents and as fully-realized works of photographic art. But isn't it asking for trouble in 2011 to include the word radical in the title? "We wanted to use that word in its broadest sense and in fact in the Columbus exhibition we put up a message board: what does radical mean to you in terms of these photographs or what's radical about these photographs? It's interesting because I was a little concerned about the title, that it was too loaded, but we worked with Yale on the book, and with the Jewish Museum, so it was a collaborative decision and instead of a very dry title, I don't know, "Photo League 1936-51", we saw deliberately provocative as okay and actually I would say that it has been the right title, I kind of grew into it after it had at first made me nervous. If you think about some of the pictures in the show, they are visually quite radical

for the time, the picture-making strategy. I see that in a number of pictures – Sid Grossman was certainly one, even when he's working on the *Harlem Document*¹ in the late '30s, seeing him capturing people in action, perhaps dancing, the beginnings of this blurred, much more participatory experience of making a photograph and therefore of viewing a photograph. In most cases we have just one photograph by each photographer we decided to include in the show, but in several cases, like Grossman, Lucy Ashjean, who's the total sleeper of the exhibition and a great discovery for us, Rebecca Lepkoff, there's a home for photographers that we show and adapt for this and show four or five pictures; Weegee, Model, not just the names but also people like Grossman who are not that familiar. You can go through the show and just look at Grossmans for a while; he of anyone most epitomizes the story of the League, he was

1. See Maurice Berger's catalogue essay, *Man in the Mirror: Harlem Document, Race, and the Photo League*: "In 1936, the Photo League was founded (...) In the same year, one of its charter members, Aaron Siskind, brought together a "Feature Group" of young photographers whose goal was to produce extended studies of the city's neighborhoods (...) One project, which preoccupied it for nearly four years, remains its largest and most comprehensive: *Harlem Document*, an unpublished book of photographs with a sociological study by the writer Michael Carter. The principal objective of the book (...) was to provide evidence of a community in peril and advocate that its rampant poverty and poor living "conditions (...) should be improved." 30.

a co-founder at 23, he was there every step of the way, he enlisted, he was in Panama in '45 and those great pictures "Black Christ Festival", next to the dancing girl, "Jumping Girl", both in Panama, take that pictorial approach even further, and those are radical pictures, radical strategies. Lisette Model brings from the Bauhaus this very full-frame, large-scale close-up kind of picture that was a new way of picture-making. There's any number of examples – so radical that way."

Radical in terms of subject matter, you can think of Alfred Stieglitz in the 20s and what he's trying to do for photography, showing people that you've never seen in a photograph. So subject matter, the marginalized, the ordinary, and yet the majority of the population really. Radical in terms of the politics; they were progressive, idealistic, pioneering, young, some in their 'teens, most of them in their early 20s, who were shaped by their immigration, the urban experience, by being first generation Americans, by not having access for the most part to college, to education. So it was a very dynamic group that way, but they were progressive, for sure. The Photo League itself was founded in 1936 by Grossman and Libsohn, these two young guys, who broke away from the Film and Photo League, which itself came out of the Workers' International Relief, the workers' movement in Berlin. So there's a connection to the leftist politics, how photographs were used as illustrations for workers, for unions, for all of those causes. Essentially the Photo League, the still photographers, broke away from the filmmakers, in some sense because they felt that



Sid Grossman, Coney Island, c.1947. Following page: Jerome Liebling, Butterfly Boy, New York, 1949.



photographs were *only* being used as illustrations and that in and of themselves they should have more autonomy, the photographs themselves, the viewer should be able to derive meaning from them in a different way, not just in a newsreel or a daily paper setting or the many ways that photography was being proliferated."

We do try to establish context with ephemera and the 1931 film

"Workers Newsreel Unemployment Special" in the first room sets the stage for how photography was used at the time – it wasn't an art commodity, it had no inherent currency. MOMA establishes its photo department in 1940, it certainly wasn't on the heels of the Photo League, trying to get that work, it was different, that wasn't the direction, even though Edward Steichen was a member of the Photo

League, likewise Beaumont and Nancy Newhall who were at MOMA, who had feet in both places. There were a lot of overlapping things, but the photographers didn't produce lots and lots of prints of every image, in some cases we have the only print, it was the exhibition print, because it was used for reproduction. We were very conscious of not aestheticizing these pictures to the extent possible in a museum setting. We are very cognizant of keeping that context at the front."

The importance of the Photo League as a school also occupies center stage. The League provided access to "five darkrooms, it cost six dollars. Vivian Cherry talks about how she got a full scholarship from Grossman and other people got help. This is another problem, they were never financially hugely solvent, but that was okay, that wasn't their goal, but the fact that it was a school, it was so many things, it was a social mecca, it was an exhibition place, photographs weren't being shown on the wall at this time and this was a place where not only could they show their own work but they were very conscious of their history. Eugène Atget was shown there, a number of people had their first exhibition at the Photo League, so it wasn't just let's do this and put it up on the wall, it was where do we fit in this bigger narrative or how do we change the narrative? It was a salon, it was all things, which certainly makes it unique. They had the first John Heartfield show in the US and we have an issue of the AIZ in the show. Certainly a lot of the Leaguers were from Germany, German Jews, I haven't parsed it quite that way but certainly that story is very much a

through-line."

Radical in the sense of the subject matter as the antithesis of Norman Rockwell's Americana. I think if you look at the pictures it's very hard to make a case that justifies what happened to the League, but it wasn't just the pictures: the FBI had a file on Grossman already because he had gone to Oklahoma and hung out with Woody Guthrie, there were all kinds of ways you could have a file devoted to you. So it wasn't any one radical moment, it was a place where we were as a country." "There were certainly card-carrying communists among the Photo Leaguers, there's no question, but for it to be accused and ultimately listed and for one man in particular, Sid Grossman, to be named as a communist by Angela Calomiris, for the Photo League to be accused of being a communist front. The whims of this very forceful thing that came down on this country. I think that one of the really telling things, if you want to talk about the HUAC thing, is the list, well one of the many lists, but it's the one that was in the *Times* and which we've reproduced here in the exhibition and in the book as well; 90 organizations from a wide spectrum of ideologies, there are eleven schools including one in Ohio, there's the KKK... really? Okay."²

2. On Dec. 5, 1947, the *Times* ran an article on the front page under the headline: "90 Groups, Schools Named on U.S. List as Being Disloyal; Clark Cites Communist Party, 'Totalitarians, Fascists' to Guide Federal Agencies; 3 New York Schools Hit; These are Among 11 Classified as Adjuncts of Soviet-Klan and Film Body Accused." The full list was published on page 18.

Interestingly, the remembrances of many of the Leaguers interviewed for the exhibition which can be pulled up on the touch-screens strategically placed throughout the exhibition, contest the radical label: "Absolutely, and those are valid, that's exactly why we really had to keep reminding ourselves to keep it open and untethered in a way, to really say that everyone had their own motivation for joining. When we started our interviews for those touch-screens it was later, so there were fewer people and they were typically the ones who had joined right after the war, so you've got these different things happening over these fifteen years. That's why we divided it into the Great Depression, the New Deal, then the war years, then the Red Scare, because it's not like there were noticeable shifts in the ideology but through the photographs you can see a shift towards a more subjective kind of photograph, the less sort of generically reportage "honest" photograph let's say. You think of Lewis Hine and Paul Strand as the two big mentors at the League and on that first wall of precursors we really try to illustrate why each of them was so revered: Hine for his witness kind of photographs which gave rise to the first child labor laws in this country by 1938, so real evidentiary kinds of pictures, and, but not versus, someone like Strand who is also working in this social documentary vocabulary, but bringing also this modernist aesthetic component, and that was the big debate throughout. There's a very interesting pairing in the Red Scare section, of the Jerry Liebling "May Day" and the N. Jay Jaffee "May Day Parade", where the former is

the subjective, symbolic, metaphoric kind of picture with the cop's hat, like you're in the parade and you just see these angles of hats and this little sliver of the cop's hat, and right next to that, and they're both from 1948, it's the same May Day parade, this N. Jay Jaffee picture, this much more reportage-style, generic content-driven picture. It's very tempting to say this is where the Photo League started with this kind of picture and it evolved to this kind of picture but they're made in the same year, so yes, Monet was a great revolutionary but a lot of his compadres stuck with that academic style, they didn't get on the bandwagon, it's just a reminder that we're very flawed as historians. We really wanted to make it a messier picture, or open up the possibilities for the many things that the League fostered and what people brought to the table and took away. But over the course of the full exhibition from '36 to '51 you do see this shift, so the kind of picture you'd see in "Autorama Top Hats", the great Dan Weiner work of 1950, four men with their top hats at a car show from the back, that wouldn't have been a picture that you would have seen in 1936. Many examples of that – the last wall, with the Leon Levinstein and the Grossman and the Arnold Eagle with the car that's coming at you ["Car Passing Car"], it all foregrounds the New School that ushers in Robert Frank and the next generation, and so that's another big, big point that we wanted to make, that these ideas, these picture-making strategies were in the water and fostered, and nurtured, and debated at the Photo League. And not to take anything away from anyone who came



Louis Stettner, Coming to America, c.1951

afterwards but this is a big screen for what comes next and I would say that there are a lot of proto-Franks in this show, indeed we could go through the show and just do that as an exercise, or Garry Winogrand, or Lee Friedlander, or Diane Arbus; Model taught Arbus so the fact that there's that big gender-bending portrait of Albert-Alberta in the show ["Albert-Alberta, Hubert's Forty-second Street Flea Circus"], that giant print, starts to make sense because Model is looking at marginalized places and people, whether they're in nightclubs or these kinds of performers, and what is Arbus' main subject matter? Right now we also have on view the twins, the girls, and we have the last series she did of the women in the institutions, mentally challenged folks, where they're dressed up for Halloween – it's one of the most famous pictures. So there's a big messy continuum."

In light of this fascinating story, one wonders why it has taken so long for an exhibition of this scale to be staged. In 2001 the Stephen Daiter Gallery in Chicago organized "This was the Photo League: Compassion and the Camera from the Depression to the Cold War", and published a companion book, the principal essay in which is written by Ann Tucker, curator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, a scholar whom Evans is quick to credit as a pioneer in the field and whom she prevailed upon to contribute an essay to the *Radical Camera* catalogue: "A Rashomon Reading", focusing on the blacklisting of the League. Already in the 70s Tucker "started interviewing Leaguers and really amassing a vast archive, which she still has." However, it was

Evans who was in a position to move forward at the curatorial level: "That's essentially the collection we purchased in 2001 from Stephen Daiter in Chicago, who had amassed a collection over some twenty years, recognizing that this was something that was missing from history. When the opportunity came along to acquire it I saw it as a great fit for us here because it could give our rather fledgling photography collection legs and identity. If you walk through the museum you'll see that we have strength in American and European modernism, but we also have very strong holdings in works that deal with social issues, the work that tells a bigger American narrative. So when we acquired the Photo League collection it really did its job, it worked to establish us as the museum with the largest and most comprehensive holding in this period. This exhibition is about partnership - what you see in the exhibition is fifty-fifty Jewish Museum and us. The Jewish Museum bought its collection subsequent to our acquisition. They came here, they learned about it because we were in the *Times* with our acquisition; some of their trustees and their curator contacted me to see what we had acquired and they subsequently bought a smaller collection of about 100 pictures from another dealer who had been putting work aside in the hope that it would one day end up in a museum. So with those things happening, my counterpart at the Jewish Museum Mason Klein and I started talking about doing a collections' based project to really flesh things out as together we're more than either collection, just like the collection we acquired was way more than the sum

of its parts. Other museums that had far deeper pockets wanted to cherry-pick the collection while we saw the value in its totality. So that's how this whole thing got going. It's been years to get to this station."

This is the first show and book in a decade, I mean not the first book but "This Was the Photo League" was the most recent thing before this. [The New York Public Library staged a smaller show in 2006-07, "Where Do We Go from Here? The Photo League and Its Legacy (1936-2006)", but without an accompanying publication]. I had done a smaller show just from our collection of about 55 pictures that I toured through Midwestern university museums and the Cedar Rapids Museum in 2010-11 because I wanted to get people to understand what this was but not go to the usual suspects like the big museums because I felt that in the museums that don't have deep collections it could be more meaningful, especially in the university museums where they can build curricula etc etc. It was called "Shout Freedom!", but this is the big project that nothing else comes close to, and of course having Yale, and having a New York City venue gives us a great partnership – we each brought something to the table. We brought our premier collection to the table and my work, and they brought the gravitas of their institutions, so that's another story in and of itself, as it's a great model. It's a lot of work but you get a lot more from that effort. I mean, we could have done this show here with our collection and we could have done a lot of the same things, but we wouldn't have gotten the national response and we wouldn't have gotten

the exposure. The people going to the show in New York City who have no connection to Columbus whatsoever."

Timing-wise we had no idea when we started out that Occupy would be unfolding at the same time and we'd be in a recession or we'd be where we are as a country so I have to say thank you Occupy. It's so sad but the resonances have certainly been something that everyone has picked up on. We didn't put that forward in the text or anything but it's pretty interesting to see the parallels."



Ida Wyman, Sidewalk Clock, New York, 1947.

All photographs, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Photo League Collection. Museum Purchase with funds provided by Elizabeth M. Ross, the Derby Fund, John S. and Catherine Chapin Kobacker, and the Friends of the Photo League.

**Exhibition: Thomas Baumhekel -
Grundkurs: Poesie eines
Lehrbuches.
Mori Ôgai Memorial Center,
Berlin 13. October, 2011 - 31.
January, 2012**

The exhibition of recent works by Thomas Baumhekel at the Humboldt University's Mori Ôgai Memorial Center in Berlin-Mitte just barely qualified for inclusion in this year's CIBS as it ran from October 2011 through the end of January, 2012, but even though the show has long since left the capital, the opportunity to revisit this fascinating, sometimes whimsical, but always considered dialog between past and present, near and far, open and closed, was simply too good to pass up. Baumhekel's starting point for the series of works exhibited was the standard Japanese language textbook used in the GDR from 1981 on, employing practice sentences from that book as the titles of his pictures. Some, such as "Soviel ich auch gesucht habe, das Haus des Lehrers war nicht zu finden", reference a very specific time and place, a memory of how the landscape used to be marked, others point to the tension between the fascination with and the unattainability of the necessarily 'exotic': "Wenn ich an gutes Schreibpapier aus Michitoku komme, auch wenn es ganz normales ist, (bin ich sehr froh.)" All of the works leave the task of constructing this dialog up to the observer, but when pressed Baumhekel was happy to shed some light on the one piece which I thought particularly appropriate for inclusion here: "Von den Brechtstücken im Berliner Ensemble bin ich einfach begeistert." But before getting to that, let's hear from Beate Wonde, Deputy Head of the Mori-Ôgai Center, and herself a former student of Japanese at the Humboldt, having completed her studies there in 1978 with a *Diplomarbeit*

entitled "Überblick über die proletarische Theaterbewegung Japans".

**Thomas Baumhekel - Grundkurs:
Poesie eines Lehrbuches**

Vor genau 30 Jahren, 1981, erschien das erste Japanisch-Lehrbuch in der DDR, Eiko Saito/Helga Silberstein: Grundkurs der modernen japanischen Sprache; Verlag Enzyklopädie Leipzig. Bis dahin hatten Generationen von Studenten der Japanologie an der Humboldt-Universität mit handschriftlichen Lektionen auf gelblichen Ormig-Abzügen diese Sprache erlernt, die sie einer fernen Kultur, einer anderen Welt und einem künftigen Berufsalltag näher bringen sollte. Jedes Wort erscheint bewusst gesetzt, nichts ist beliebig, jeder Satz wie gemeißelt nach jahrelangem fachlichem Ringen um eine fein abgestimmte didaktische Systematik von Textprosa, Grammatik und Vokabellisten. Politische Kontrolle gepaart mit Papierknappheit hat auf ihre Weise zu dieser über 600 Seiten umfassenden Komposition beigetragen.

In Berlin war von Thomas Baumhekel zuletzt 2006 die Ausstellung » Zeichensprache « im Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst zu sehen, mit chinesischen Zeichen auf Treibholz und Papier. Nun bringt er mit der Ausstellung seiner neuen Schriftbilder den » Grundkurs « an die Wiege seiner Entstehung zurück: an die Humboldt-Universität.

Aus der Konkursmasse eines Industriebetriebes gelangten die Lehrbücher zwar schon Anfang der 1990er Jahre zu dem Dresdener Künstler, aber erst 2009 widmete er sich zunächst den alphabetisch angeordneten Vokabeln im Lernwortschatz, verknüpfte sie mit Bildern. Im Grundkurs entdeckte er den gerade aus dem historischen Abstand erwachsenden Stimmungsgehalt der einzelnen Sätze und verglich sie mit Texten der klassischen japanischen Literatur, wie dem

Kopfkissenbuch der Sei Shōnagon, die er ebenfalls parallel abschrieb. Mit der Poesie dieser Lehrbuchtexte erschloss sich ihm ihr Zeit übergreifender Charakter. Es sind stilistisch schöne, einfache Texte, die aus der Notwendigkeit der Vermittlung einer bestimmten Grammatik und eines Grundvokabulars entstanden sind, so wie die japanische Poesie sich stets aus einem Regelsystem von Silbenanzahl und anderen Vorgaben bzw. Traditionen emporhob.

1992 nach dem Diplom an der Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden hatte Thomas Baumhekel begonnen, daoistische und buddhistische Quellentexte aus China abzuschreiben. Der Grundkurs mit der japanischen Silbenschrift (Kana) stellt für ihn innerhalb der Beschäftigung mit den asiatischen Zeichen den Bezug zur Gegenwart her. Nicht nur in der moderneren Schrift – in den Texten sah er darüber hinaus seine eigene Biografie gespiegelt.

Die Kanji werden automatisch Gebilde in Baumhekels druckstarker Handschrift mit dem ungespitzten Holzfarbstift. Zeichnerische Ergänzungen, umrisshaft und geometrisch, nähern sich ihrerseits formal diesem Schriftduktus an. Und auch ein wenig Augenzwinkern enthalten diese Collagen, in denen sich mehrere Zeitschichten überlagern, einschließlich jener, die der Betrachter einbringt.

» ...einer Zeile oder einem Schriftzeichen nachzugehen, das ist mein Leben. « Mori Ōgai

Those wishing to read more of Wonde's thoughts on the work can find the speech she made at the opening of the exhibition on October 13, 2011, at (www2.hu-berlin.de/japanologie/?-jp=Rede_Grundkurs), an opening, by the way, which was attended by Helga Silberstein, one of the two authors of the *Grundkurs*.

Baumhekel über seine eigene Arbeit:

Das Blatt „Von den Brechtstücken im Berliner Ensemble bin ich einfach begeistert.“ bekommt durch den Kreis mehr als nur eine japanische Anmutung. Als solcher ist er Symbol für „Geistige Armut“, dem Stadium der Leerheit, der Vollkommenheit. Am unteren Rand aber, wo in diesem Kontext eher ein Siegel zu erwarten wäre, klebt eine Briefmarke aus der SU, darauf ist ein Hund zu sehen. Im Brechttheater gibt es keinen Hund. In kyrillischer Schrift steht: „Kawkaskaja Ovtsharka“ (Caucasian Mountain Dog)

Die Spur führt in den Kaukasus, dort ist auch der Kreis. (Kreide-) Der Weg des Hundes wiederum führte von den Bergen Armeniens, Aserbaidshan, Dagestans bis nach Berlin. 1969 wurde ein solcher Hund in der DDR bekannt. Diesen brachte ein DEFA-Filmer aus Georgien mit. Nicht bekannt waren die Vertreter dieser Rasse, welche im Dienst der Sowjetarmee standen und auch an Grenze und Berliner Mauer bis 1990. Letzterer gedenkt ein finnischer Kinderfilm „Kleine Hände, große Pfoten“. Aus der Produktbeschreibung bei Amazon: „Als 1989 in Berlin die Mauer fällt, bringt ein finnischer Konzertmusiker einen jungen kaukasischen Hirtenhund, dessen Eltern bei den Grenztruppen der DDR als Wach- und Kampfhunde eingesetzt worden waren, mit nach Hause. In Hämeenlinna fühlt sich der illegal ins Land geschmuggelte Hund auf Anhieb heimisch. Vor allem Muru, die siebenjährige Tochter, hat den kuscheligen Gast in ihr Herz geschlossen. Trotzdem wirbelt Stormheart das Familienleben ganz schön durcheinander. Erst sorgt er für Aufregung in der Nachbarschaft, dann verbreitet er Angst und Schrecken in Murus Schule, so dass die Eltern sich gezwungen sehen, ihr Grundstück nun ihrerseits mit einer „Mauer“ zu umge-

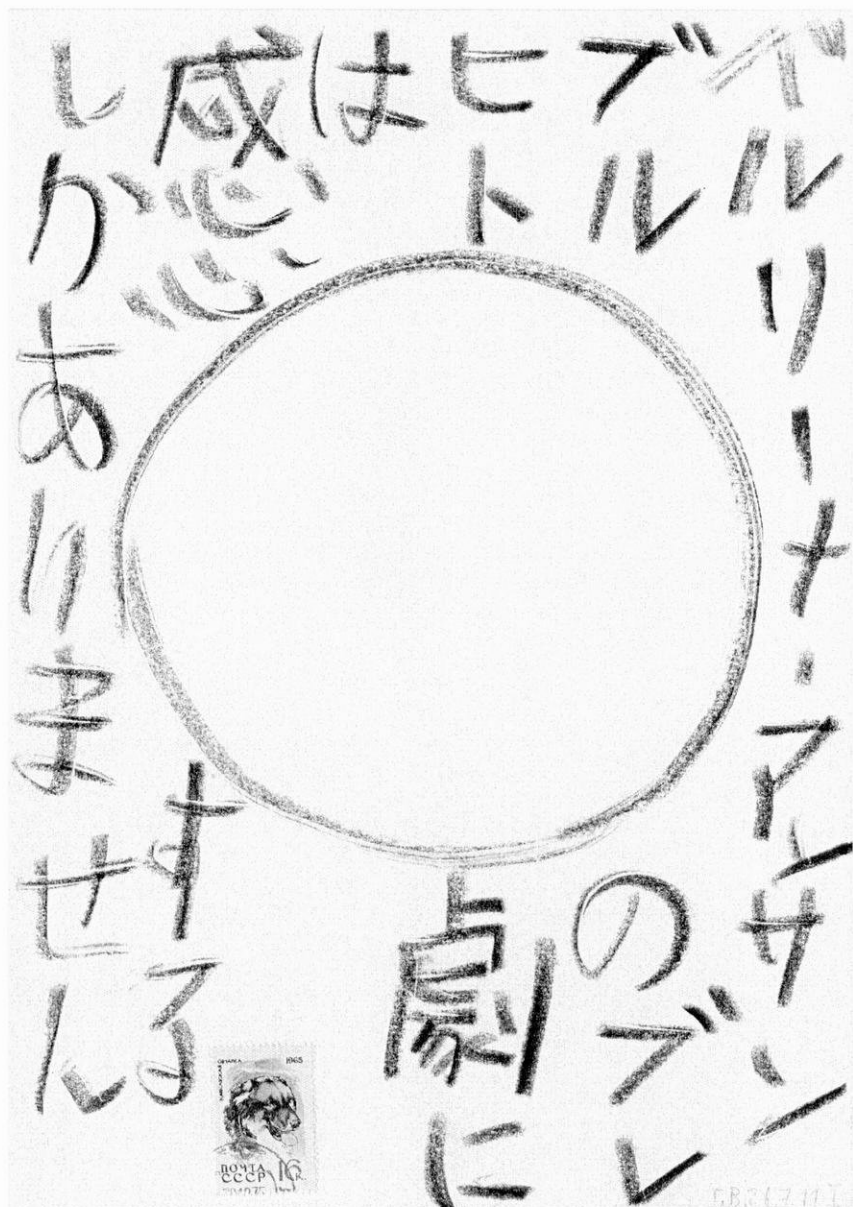
ben. Als sich dann auch noch Stormhearts „stalinistische“ Vergangenheit in Hämeenlinna herumspricht, muss Muru befürchten, dass sie ihren immer größer werdenden Freund nicht mehr lange behalten darf ... Dass auch Haustiere eine artgerechte Haltung verlangen, vermittelt dieser amüsante Familienfilm vor zeitgeschichtlichem Hintergrund.“

Auf der finnischen Webseite Stormheart.fi erfahren wir mehr über das Schicksal der Wachhunde: „Exactly one month later [November 1989], the Berlin Wall was being dismantled and a guard dog brigade of 7,000 dogs, among other things, had to be gotten rid of. The Caucasian Shepherd, with an average weight of 70 kg, is impossible to socialise if it has been living as a solitary guard dog until its adult life. There is no information available on the fate of the full-grown guard dogs of the DDR. Most of them were probably put down. Puppies

were sold dirt-cheap or given for free, and the rest were put down.“

Die in der DDR verwendete Übersetzung von kawaskaja Owtscharka in Kaukasischer Schäferhund ist nicht korrekt. Der Owtscharka hat nur soviel mit Schafen zu tun, als diese gegen Bär, Wolf und Räuber zu verteidigen. In den genetisch festgeschriebenen Eigenschaften wie Wachsamkeit, Beschützerinstinkt, Furchtlosigkeit, Größe, Wetterfestigkeit dieser seit 600 Jahren nachgewiesenen Rasse erkannte man nach der Gründung der SU ein Potential für einen Schutzhund im Allunionsmaßstab. So gelangten Industrieanlagen, Straflager, die Grenzen, militärische Objekte unter die Kontrolle dieser Kaukasier im „Jahrhundert der Wölfe“ (Nadeschda Mandelstam).





Thomas Baumhekel: Von den Brechtstücken im Berliner Ensemble bin ich einfach begeistert.
(2011, Farbstift auf Papier, 29,7 x 21 cm)

Exhibition: Phänomen Wohlstand Motorenhalle, Dresden May 16-July 14, 2012

For two months in the summer of 2012 the Motorenhalle Projektzentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst in Dresden devoted an exhibition to the broadly understood theme of "Phänomen Wohlstand". Although co-curators Frank Eckhardt (head of exhibitions at the Motorenhalle), Denise Ackermann and Eva Söhl reached back to the mid-1970s for a couple of pieces in the show, the majority of the 31 artists were represented by works dating from the 2000s, and while roughly half of the works were by contemporary German artists, also included, in just about equal measure, were Austrian, French, and Swiss participants, along with individual artists from Brazil and Israel, and a further four from Poland, underlining the Motorenhalle's strong ties to the contemporary art scene in eastern Europe.

Conceived as both a survey of recent works which could be considered as reflections on the theme and as a call to artists to directly respond to it, the show offered something of a snapshot of the contemporary state of affairs with regard to artists' engagement with this idea of "prosperity". Interesting for CIBS is that in the curators' exhibition statement no one single philosophical or theoretical approach is privileged, but the one name which does appear... is that of Brecht. Here then, in its entirety, the statement:

Phänomen Wohlstand

In Europa herrschen gleichzeitig sowohl eine tiefgreifende Krise als auch ein Grad an materiellem Wohlstand, wie es ihn so lange, so umfassend und auf so hohem Niveau bisher noch nie gab. Doch was eigentlich macht den Wohlstand aus, wenn die Grundbedürfnisse erfüllt sind? Oder, mit Brecht gefragt: Kommt wirklich mehr Moral nachdem das Fressen gesichert ist? Um ehrlich zu sein, wir wissen es nicht. Ebenso wenig wissen wir, was nach dem Wohlstand kommt. Wird er in dieser oder einer der kommenden Krisen beseitigt oder zumindest stark eingeschränkt? Oder ist jede Krise vor allem eine Chance? Ein Topos, der fest in Diskursen von Politikern und Ökonomen verwurzelt ist und der, zumindest in Bezug auf die kapitalistischen Systeme in den letzten 100 Jahren, so falsch nicht ist. Doch was verbirgt sich noch hinter dieser Worthölse? Ist sie ein schlichter Euphemismus, um die katastrophalen Auswirkungen eines Wirtschaftssystems zu verschleiern, das auf ständiges, quantitatives Wachstum ausgerichtet ist? Oder deutet die Formulierung tatsächlich auf eine fortgesetzte Chance der Erneuerung innerhalb des bestehenden demokratischen Kapitalismus hin? Wenn ja, als eine Chance worauf? Auf neuen Wohlstand oder neues Wachstum? Wäre nicht eine grundlegend neue Konzeption von Wohlstand die wirkmächtigere und lebendigere Chance für eine Gesellschaft nach der Krise?

Darüber hinaus enthält der Begriff Wohlstand in seinem Kern eine stark relationale Komponente. Wenn wir über Wohlstand sprechen, tauchen immer wieder auch Verteilungs- und Gerechtigkeitsfragen auf. Wohlstand sichert Wohlergehen, aber für wen? Wie hängen Wohlstand und Wohlergehen zusammen und sichert und befördert die gegenwärtige gesellschaftliche Konzeption von Wohlstand vielleicht

PHÄNOMEN WOHLSTAND



riesa
efau
Kultur Forum Dresden

Motorenhalle
Projektsentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst

icht nur das Wohlergehen und die Glücksvorstellungen bestimmter Gruppen? Oder befördern solcherart Fragen eher obskure Verschwörungstheorien? Und: Hat Wohlstand hier und heute notwendigerweise mit Wachstum zu tun?

In den Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften wird Wohlstand in der Regel über monetäre Kennzahlen, sprich das Bruttoinlandsprodukt (BIP) gemessen. Damit ist dieser überhaupt erst quantifizierbar. Aber diese Herangehensweise wird zunehmend kontrovers diskutiert. Unabhängig vom BIP eines Landes kann ja das Empfinden der Lebensqualität des Einzelnen erheblich abweichen. Beispiel China: das BIP wächst, aber die Chinesen werden (im Durchschnitt) nicht glücklicher. Neue Methoden der Messung der Lebensqualität, wie etwa verschiedene Glücksindizes oder die auf der Basis von menschlichen Fähigkeiten entwickelten Human development reports, lassen eine Diskrepanz zwischen den reinen BIP-Kennzahlen und dem tatsächlichen Empfinden von Lebensqualität deutlich hervortreten. Die Vielschichtigkeit des Phänomens macht eine eindeutige Messung von Wohlstand de facto unmöglich, auch in der Wissenschaft beginnt man sich deshalb von linearen oder rein monetären Formen der Darstellung zu lösen.

Auch von der Idee, Probleme würden durch zunehmenden Wohlstand automatisch verringert, musste man sich bei etwas umfassenderer Betrachtung der Umgebung lösen. Dies betrifft nicht nur die mit unserem Wissen naheliegenden Umweltprobleme, auch für den einzelnen Menschen tun sich immer neue Abgründe auf. So steigt mit zunehmender Auswahl an ähnlichen Waren von einem bestimmten Punkt an der Stress, die wirklich richtige Auswahl zu treffen. Opportunitätskosten versus Sortimentsvielfalt,

das gibt am Ende immer noch einen einen recht bequemen Saldo gegenüber denen, die bereits regelmäßiges Essen als Wohlstand erleben müssen. Meilenweit entfernt vom anderen Ende der Skala, nein, nicht dem Überfluss, vom Luxus.

Diese und weitere Fragen waren und sind für uns Motivation, das Ausstellungs-, Diskussions-, und Veranstaltungsprojekt Phänomen Wohlstand durchzuführen. Zunächst sind es allgemeine Fragen, die in verschiedenen künstlerischen Formen Eingang finden: Was lässt sich unter Wohlstand verstehen? Wie entsteht Wohlstand? Wie ist er darstellbar? Noch eine solche Frage: Benötigt Wohlstand ein ständiges Wachstum? Auch bei schrumpfender Bevölkerung? Dann werden die Fragen spezieller: Braucht es aller Ecken Supermärkte mit jeweils rund 40.000 Artikeln zum Glücklichein? Was geschieht mit den unverkäuflichen Kleidern, Hosen und Jacken bei Zara was mit denen bei H&M, was mit den Möbeln bei IKEA und bei Höffner? Wie viele neue Diätangebote erscheinen wöchentlich? Und schließlich: Wie sehe ich mich gern im Spiegel? Oder auf einem Foto? Fragen eines lesenden Bürgers im Wohlstand.

Mit dem Ausstellungs- und Veranstaltungsprojekt „Phänomen Wohlstand“ soll der allgemein positiv konnotierte Begriff mit seinen angesprochenen inhärenten Spannungen von unterschiedlichen Seiten aus betrachtet werden. Wohlstand fungiert ja immer auch als Zielvorgabe und ruft Bilder und Vorstellungen eines erstrebenswerten Zustands hervor, der aber auch immer ein Stück weit vor uns her flieht.

Die Veranstaltungen und die in der Ausstellung gezeigten Kunstwerke konzentrieren sich auf einige thematische Aspekte, wie Arbeit, Glück, Konsum, Kunst, Politik oder Wirtschaft und kreisen mit unterschiedlichsten

Ansätzen und Mitteln - Ironie, Analyse, Sarkasmus, Affirmation, Vision - letztlich um diese Fragen.

Frank Eckhardt, Denise Ackermann & Eva Söhl

As one might imagine, the broad remit of the show made for a heterogeneous affair, both in terms of approaches and media. Video-work was very much to the fore and its practitioners included perhaps the two "biggest names" in the show: Christian Jankowski, whose "The Finest Art on Water" documents his attention-grabbing exhibition of a "ready-made" speedboat at the Frieze Art Fair of 2011, and Guy Ben Ner's "Stealing Beauty" of 2007. Ben Ner's short films, all of which feature the artist himself and his family members, are alternately hysterically funny and profoundly thought-provoking. In this particular piece the family is seen "living" in the showrooms of various IKEA stores, (they apparently filmed until the stores got wise and turfed them out), going about their normal daily business as shoppers walk in and out of shot, and conducting a conversation on what it means to possess something. Despite their father's best endeavors, it is the children who have the last word in the film: "Eigentum ist wie ein Geist [...]. Man kann nichts besitzen ohne davon besessen zu sein. Deshalb ist es Zeit zu stehlen. Beklaut den Supermarkt, den Staat, eure Eltern."

The inclusion of the two earlier works opened up the way for the creation of dialogues – thus Natalia LL's seminal video work via Warhol "Consumer Art" of 1972-74, showing a young woman eating a banana, is brought into connection with Aleksandra Ska's video-installation "Fat Love" of 2009, in which a somewhat more corpulent, and now obviously topless woman, is shown eating the bulky necklace of Weiss-

wurst which she is wearing. Originally installed in a butcher's shop in Poznan, the video had to be removed when business plummeted. This is in turn brought together with a further work from Poland, the distinctly unappetizing sculpted spread "Show of Confectionery Products with Extended Expiry Dates" (1991/2012) by the group LUXUS, and the poster-art of Pawel Jarodzki depicting a smiling female shop assistant against the background of a 1950s-display of foodstuffs, pointing a handgun at the viewer with the admonishment: "wer kauft nicht ein, der soll auch nicht essen." (2012)

Likewise, Swiss artist Karin Schaub's 1974 painting "Gastarbeiter", executed in a crisp style which recalls the stylized realism of German painters of the 1920s, and depicting three generations of an immigrant family and its meager possessions against a cold, tiled background, is exhibited alongside Konrad Winter's three paintings of 2012 grouped together under the title "Camouflaged Prosperity", in which the Austrian artist depicts showroom dummies and the shoppers and homeless this side of the display windows, but through the medium of painting in glossy car-paint on aluminum he suggests the computerized image rather than the painted, for all their color there is a coldness here too, and it is for the viewer to penetrate through the camouflage. It is also for the viewer to discern what is being created by Fabienne Ballandras in the nearby photographs of "micro-landscapes" of "Impropre à l'usage" (2002). Society's detritus is modeled to suggest hovels in a landscape of the discarded.

These works aside, and given also the formal variety on view, it was perhaps not surprising that given the subject matter the exhibition should evince a pronounced documentary impulse. To list just a few examples: Alice Creischer und Andreas Siekmann ("Mo-

nopolartige Produktionen", 2006) use a visual/statistical model to document the connections between the minerals used in our cell-phones and civil wars in Africa. In "Kleiderschrankportraits" (2008, seen previously in Berlin's NGBK) Seraphina Lenz actively prods the art-consumer to leave the gallery and look into his or her own closet to determine the degree to which the wardrobe to be found there has emanated from the world's sweatshops. And then to return to the gallery with the results of the investigation and add them to the work. Beate Passow has sewn pages of the Financial times onto pink silk in "Kurse der Financial Times am 12.9.01" (2006), and Sus Zwick's videos "La danse furieuse, Teil I und II" (2002 and 2012) are composed of interviews conducted by the artist ten years apart with friends over 50 about their lives.

Perhaps, however, the most noteworthy aspect of the show was the tension created by the juxtaposition of these more specifically directed pieces, with the works, admittedly fewer in number, which ventured into enigmatic terrain. Upon leaving the space I found that it was one such work with stayed with me moreso than any other, and thus it is that I should like to close with mention of Tobias Stengel's sculpture installation "Dilemma, Wert Raum V" (pictured), created specifically for the exhibition. Defying easy categorization, the viewer is confronted with a formerly gold-painted square plate of industrial strength steel hanging on the wall as superstructure. Beneath it on the ground, straddling two further rectangular steel plates, ribbed against the danger of losing one's footing, and balanced in opposite directions on metal cylinders, a rack of antlers, also gold-tipped. The seven-line text "Dilemma", tucked away in the corner of the space, hints at the connection between the antlers, gesturing as they do to an earlier stage of

societal organization, and the circular blue silicon wafer at the other end of the downwardly tipped plate: "the blue flower of our times?" asks the exhibition guide. A wobbly construction to be sure, a result of the precarious substructure, the basis.

So much for the object itself, but as the guide goes on, it is the questions which the work poses which stay with you: "Was ist Wert? Das Gold? Das Geweih an sich oder als Verweis auf ein verzehrtes Glied der Nahrungskette? Es bleiben der Stahl und das leuchtende Blau, aus dem keine Chips mehr kommen werden. Welchen Wert sollte es noch innehaben? Worüber spannt sich der Raum? Dass das Wort Dilemma aus dem Griechischen stammt, ist in unserer Sprache ja nichts Ungewöhnliches."

Here, I believe, we see a truly imaginative reckoning with the subject matter, an inquiry which opens up onto the larger, underlying questions and looks to the roots of "Phänomen Wohlstand", not just to its manifestations.

Tobias Stengel in conversation with Carsten Ludwig



Dilemma

Eine Goldene Mitte kann es nicht geben.

Schwarze und Weiße Jäger in lebensfeindlicher Region.

Auch der Wolf bevorzugt das angepflockte Schaf.

Gewinn und Verlust bestehen zur gleichen Zeit.

Der Wettbewerb ist nicht zu entscheiden.

Wohlstand, selbst ohne Verschwendung, hat einen Preis –
die Decke bleibt zu kurz.

Tobias Stengel, April 2012

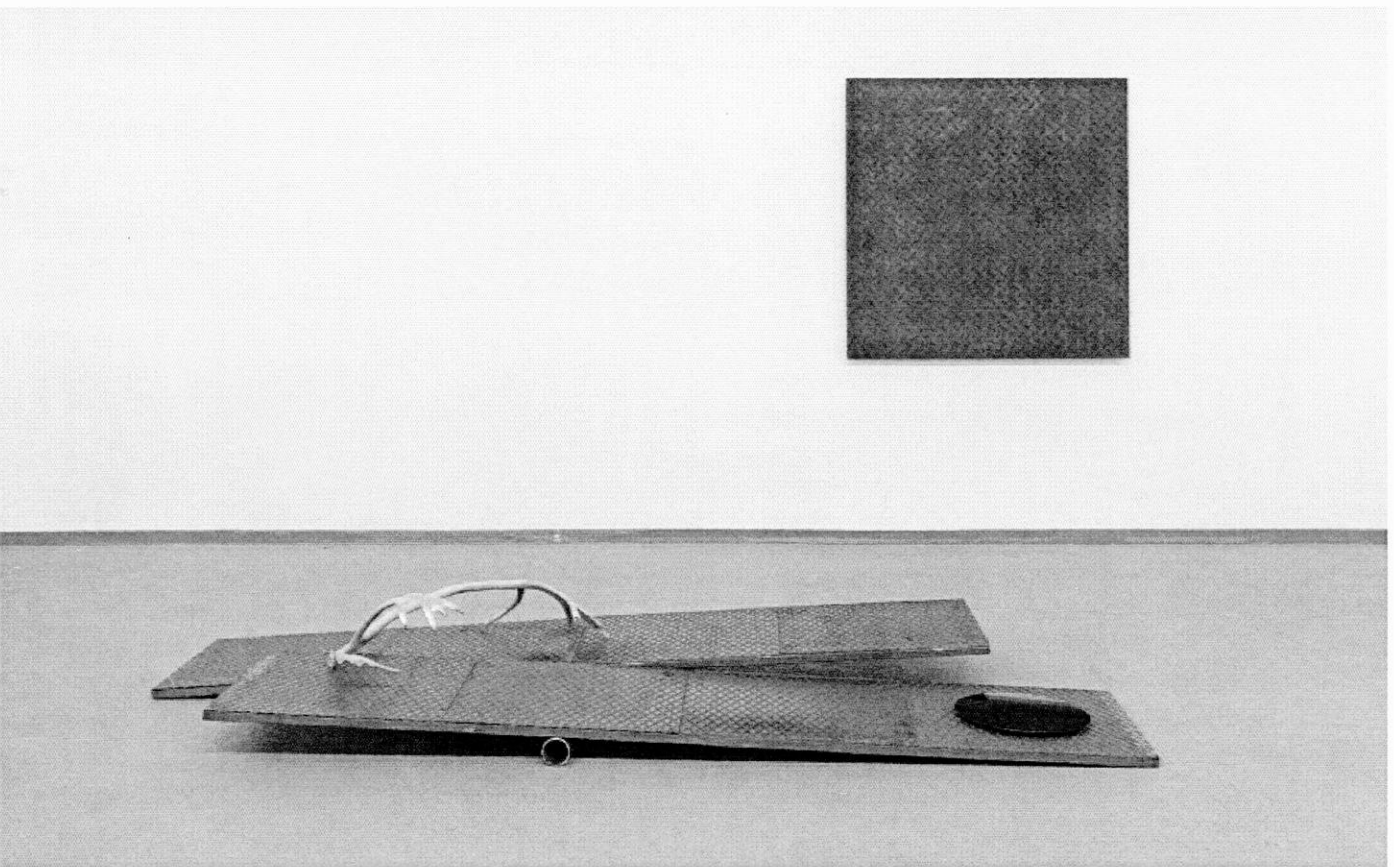


Photo: Andreas Seeliger

Ask Me More About Brecht: Hanns Eisler in Conversation with Hans Bunge: A Multi- media Dramatic Reconstruc- tion of Hanns Eisler's Con- versations with Hans Bunge

**by Sabine Berendse and Paul
Clements**

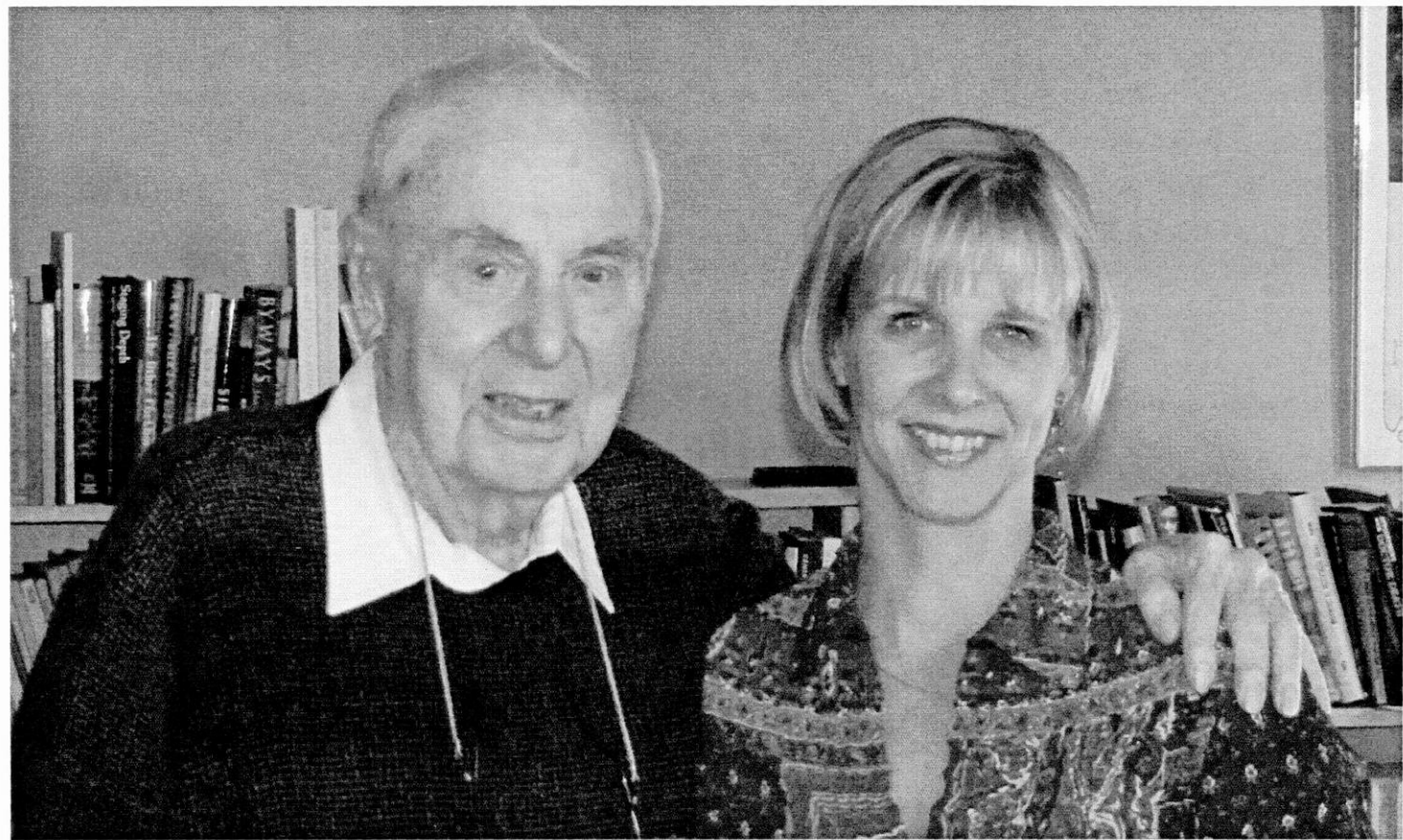
**The Ohio State University
April 26, 2012**

Announced and previewed in *CIBS* 39, Sabine Berendse and Paul Clements' translation of Hans Bunge's fourteen conversations with Hanns Eisler will soon be finally available from U.K. publisher Arc Publications under the title *Ask Me More About Brecht: Hanns Eisler in Conversation with Hans Bunge*. For Berendse this represents the happy culmination to a labor of love and discovery as Bunge was her father and when he died in 1990 she had but little connection to his recording and interviewing activities at the Berliner Ensemble and elsewhere in the 1950s and '60s. Initially conceived of as a personal project which would help the daughter get to know this side of her father, the longer she worked on it the clearer it became to Berendse that these conversations, so important to Brecht and Eisler aficionados since the first publication of two of them in 1964 in a special issue of *Sinn und Form* and particularly since the definitive complete conversations of 1975, would prove revelatory to a non-German-speaking audience. The plan to publish formed gradually, to then take on concrete form following a fortuitous chance encounter at a New Year's party with Paul Clements. Steeped in the theatre and

freshly retired from a life of teaching, directing, and theatre administration, Clements jumped at the opportunity to collaborate, to Berendse's and indeed all interested parties' abiding good fortune.

Over a two-and-a-half-year period Clements and Berendse wrestled the latter's literal translations into an additively readable form which does more than capture the flavor of the German originals. Conversations can be notoriously difficult to translate – thoughts are left hanging and digressions, while illuminating and entertaining, often only complicate matters – but between them Berendse and Clements have produced a remarkable work.

And whichever problems the conversational form might present for the translator, there is also a decided upside to it, of which the two collaborators became increasingly aware as the work of translation progressed, namely its inherent theatricality. From here it was a short step to combing the texts for excerpts which could be montaged together into a staged reading, with Berendse playing her father and Clements the composer. Readied in time for the International Feuchtwanger Society Conference in Los Angeles in September 2011, April 2012 saw the pair back in the U.S. on a thirteen-stop, coast-to-coast tour including a private performance for Eric Bentley himself! Paul Clements: "We obtained Bentley's email address thanks to Jim Miller of Cleveland who has a great interest in Hanns Eisler and who is one of the creators of an excellent website on the composer. We invited Mr. Bentley to one of our performances of *Ask Me More About Brecht* in New York. He replied at once, explaining that at the age of 95 he didn't go out any more in the evenings but that he would be interested in seeing our work if we would be prepared to come



the seasons, and everything in blossom all the time would just make you want to throw up."

Interspersed with eight musical selections and brief footage of Eisler's appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee, and of his leaving the U.S., the hour-long performance both charmed and challenged, as evinced by the extended Q & A-session which followed. My original intention had been to sit down with the two translators/performers afterwards, but by the time everybody had had their say that seemed like cruel and unusual punishment. So we continued our conversation over dinner and instead I offer in what follows a taste of the Q & A-session. For reasons of space the questions have been edited down.

Sabine on her motivation:

"To be honest, it was something that I had to do because of my connection to my father. He died in 1990 when I was only 25 years old and, well, young people forget to ask the older ones about things, and at some point then it's too late, and when I was 45 I realized that I hadn't asked all of the questions which I should have asked and I was looking for a bridge, a kind of connection to my father. 2009 would have been his 90th birthday, the Academy of the Arts in Berlin opened up his archive for the first time to the public and on that occasion there were a lot of things going on and I decided that it would be a lovely project for me and it worked out perfectly. I found a connection and it was a wonderful journey and luckily I met Paul who was living in the same town. He had retired in 2008 and therefore had time to work with me on this translation."

On her Father's Life:

"Bunge's biography starts in a very small town near Dresden. A very conservative family, a mother who wanted the Kaiser back. His education between 1925 and '39 was in a *Napola* school, one of these schools that prepared young people to be good Nazis. He then went to war and came back and said later that he hadn't actually really changed politically, that he just went to the city where his childhood sweetheart was and studied there and only then really started to begin his life. Because he was thirty then, I mean he'd been twenty when he went to war right after school, thirty when he came back, well he hadn't lived half of his life, he only made it to seventy, so it's quite a remarkable phase of his life. Then when he studied German literature he came across Bertolt Brecht and first he thought, oh that can't work, he had a real anti-Brechtian position, but then he was involved in a theatre production and met Ruth Berlau, and he describes having a 180 degree change of mind politically and he became the greatest Brecht fan and also somebody who fought for socialism. He then became an assistant at the Berliner Ensemble and made his mark by recording Brecht during rehearsals. These recordings, on which you can hear Brecht directing rehearsals, started already in 1954. Then when Brecht died he was asked by Helene Weigel to manage and build the archive, the Brecht archive. Then he got into trouble with Helene Weigel, there were some personal differences, and he was transferred, within the Academy of the Arts, because the archive belonged to the Academy, from the archive to *Sinn und Form*, the literary journal, where he produced a lot of the special issues. But he never really conformed - he was once described in an article as a

maverick, he did what he wanted, which didn't always make him friends and he was thrown out of that job too at the beginning of the sixties. This was when he did the Bunge-Eisler conversations about Brecht which later made him, well not famous, but known in certain circles. And in 1978 he became a freelance writer – he also published book about Ruth Berlau and her relationship to Bertolt Brecht - Brechts Lai-tu - which has been translated into English under the title *Living for Brecht*. In 1990 the wall had, of course, just fallen, but unfortunately my father had a lifestyle which included too much alcohol, too many cigarettes, too many intellectual discussions, and he contracted emphysema of the lung. In the eulogy which Wolf Biermann gave he said that with the fall of the Wall he lost his ability to breathe, that he couldn't live in another society, he had just seen too much."

Paul on Eisler's standing in the American music world:

"On the eve of his deportation there was a special concert at Carnegie Hall which was very well supported and there was a petition which was famously signed by Picasso, by Thomas Mann and by many other luminaries, Joe Losey, Aaron Copland, all of whom were writing on behalf of Eisler. Of course it cut no ice with the boys from HUAC. He did compose film scores and was in fact nominated twice for the Oscar for best film-score, though he never won it. The first was for Fritz Lang's *Hangmen Also Die* and the second for Clifford Odets' *None But the Lonely Heart*. He also spoke to Bunge very amusingly about some of the drivel that he had to write. There's a film called *Spanish Main*, which his son said was the worst film he'd ever seen and he farmed some of

that out to Paul Dessau because Dessau was also short of work in Hollywood at that time. He had to write a storm scene and he says somewhere in the conversations that he couldn't be bothered so he asked Dessau if he could do it and then there was a quarrel about how much Dessau was going to be paid for it, which again Eisler is very entertaining when discussing. So he has a sort of a foot in the door and he was well known among the musical cognoscenti but he was never a popular composer in the sense that Aaron Copland was."

And his standing today:

"We wrote to the BBC last year to say that we had done this translation and that this year was going to be the fiftieth anniversary of Eisler's death and that maybe the BBC should do something to commemorate this on its serious music program. I had one reply from a woman saying that she was very sorry she'd had no time to deal with this because she was so busy, and after this a kind of wall of silence has fallen. I don't know whether the BBC has any plans at all to mark the 50th anniversary of Eisler's death. So I would say that there was no real sign of a renaissance in Eisler's popularity in Britain."

And finally, on the program itself:

"It began simply as a translation but I think that we both felt that because Eisler's conversational style is so dynamic, because he's so interesting, so wide-ranging, that we would think about finding a way of bringing this to a slightly wider audience and Sabine was the prime mover in suggesting that we might actually work it up into a dramatic performance. From the entire translation we could probably have five

programs with different emphases but because this one is particularly slanted towards his relationship with Brecht and his own music we chose the extracts which seemed to us to be appropriate to that. There are extracts which we still argue about that I want included: He's terribly funny when he's talking about religion in the GDR, or the oppressive nature of the Roman Catholic Church. He is such an original, practical, down-to-earth thinker and articulate speaker that I think it's impossible not to be touched by his ideas and we have argued many a time about these ideas, but in the end I always yield to the wishes of the greater craftsperson! The emphasis here is on Eisler's music and particularly on his relationship with Brecht. And I suppose that we've gone also for those things which we found most intellectually stimulating and also entertaining in their own right, I mean when he's

talking about Hollywood it's just a side-splitter, I think, isn't it? Turn off the water, wait for three days and the jackals will come back, it's just wonderful."

Berendse and Clements are planning on returning to the East Coast in March/April 2013, and Sabine invites anybody who is interested in hosting them for a performance to get in touch with her: (sabine_berndse@hotmail.com).

At dinner after the performance: Andy Spencer, Michael Swartz, David Miller, Helen Fehervary, Sylvia Fischer, Sabine Berendse, Paul Clements. Preceding page: Sabine with Eric Bentley in his New York apartment.



The Judith of Shimoda at La Mama

At the end of September, 1940, exiled in Finland, Brecht wrote in his journal: "h.w. [Hella Wuolijoki, on whose estate Brecht was staying] gives me CHINK OKICHI by YAMAMOTO YUZO, a good play for which she holds the rights. i quickly sketch a framing action and a few stage moves on the basis of the (bad) english translation. it could be made into a japanese judith, ie a story of an heroic deed told to the end." Later that same day he added: "h.w. thinks CHINK OKICHI is too epic, and that the second half consequently tapers off. the fact is that her heroic deed takes place in the 3rd act, but her decline continues for nine more scenes. in addition to which her heroic deed is depicted with such restraint that it will be forgotten as soon as it has been told, except where it forms part of a national legend. it would be the same if i wrote a WILLIAM TELL and let him live on for 20 years after murdering gessler."

And that's really just about all the information that we had until Hans Peter Neureuter took the parts of the play found in Brecht's papers (included in the Berlin-Frankfurt Complete Works of 1997), combined them with a Finnish-language version he had discovered in Wuolijoki's papers, and essentially reconstructed the play, which, in a translation by Markus Wessendorf, received its first English-language production in 2010 at the 13th IBS symposium in Hawaii (see CIBS 39). In May of this past year it enjoyed its east coast premiere in New York thanks to the La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club. Publicity for the performances described how the play, "examines the story of a Japanese geisha, Okichi, in late

19th century Japan. Revered as national folklore, Okichi is credited with mending the relationship between Japan and the United States after Japan's refusal to enter trade agreements on American terms following the Japanese legislation to open trade with the West. (...) Brecht analyzes one country's immediate response to a woman who is destined to become a national hero and asks "what happened after the heroic deed".

Translator Markus Wessendorf sat down with director Zishan Ugurlu to talk about the new production.

Interview with Zishan Ugurlu, director of *The Judith of Shimoda* at the Ellen Stewart Theatre of the La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, May 3-6, 2012

MW: What is the relevance of Brecht to you as a director?

ZU: I first encountered Brecht in my college years. I had spent time working on and performing in traditional theatre productions that had philosophical and political weight, but lacked the tenacity I would later discover through Brecht. His ability to "arrest" the viewer, "lifting the curtain" on our constructed reality to expose the socio-political mechanisms of life, was a major leap for me theoretically. It gave me the opportunity to ask epic questions and challenge assumptions. I believe that art as a practice can help ask and develop these questions as well as vital critical thinking and reasoning skills. I believe that one major way to accomplish this is to encourage student-actors to question. Being a good questioner is the way to foster a strong analytical and creative mind—one that is able to develop its own critique of art, life and politics. Brecht tried to present a real view of the world in his theater. Considering realism a corruption of reality, he doubted man-made rules and tried to free our

imagination with his critical attitude, which not only made him a valuable theorist, but an engaging artist as well.

MW: What intrigued you about *The Judith of Shimoda*, and why do you consider the play relevant for a contemporary audience?

ZU: If I don't fall in love with a play, I will not direct it. The content of this show gave me the opportunity to explore with my student actors the work's global implications and the idea of xenophobia. Most importantly, the "state sponsored efforts to fabricate heroes for crude political purposes." Brecht took Yamamoto Yuzo's play and, by introducing the members of the interlude, created a piece that was applicable to the times. I believe the strength of a writer is measured in longevity, and Brecht has managed to craft a piece that will stay relevant because of his ability to expose the fundamentals of the human experience. So it was enjoyable, if not easy, to stage the play "today."

MW: What was the concept of your production?

ZU: The *Okichi* story, in and of itself, follows a simple linear line and carries with it the qualities of a melodrama. These are unavoidable elements and ones that need to be embraced as well as contradicted through the Brechtian effect. I have to build up before I can break down. It was important to clearly establish the melodrama of the piece but to portray it in a way that allows the audience to question what they are watching rather than be immersed in it. For this production, the use of video projection was an asset in demarcating events on stage with their often complex themes. Using film footage from John Wayne's *The Barbarian and The Geisha*, the Hollywood version of

the *Okichi* story, helped in emphasizing the melodrama of Yuzo's original text and to add aesthetic distance as well—I projected these images against a fragmented backdrop to show the subjective nature of viewership. During the *Okichi*/Tsurumatu scenes, selected clips from the film would play against this backdrop and the actors would mime their gestures; acutely adjusting their bodies to the images on screen. So the performance of the actors, as well as the underlying emotion was, in a proverbial sense, quoted. I directed my actors to display a level of awareness on stage that created a vertical sense of thinking. This was a way of disengaging the audience from ever sympathizing with the *Okichi* character and removing them from the illusive, if not lazy traps, of horizontal story telling. I even double-cast the role, breaking any ties the viewer might have had with the first actress playing *Okichi*. In the second act scenes between the "new" *Okichi* and her estranged husband Tsurumatu, I projected video footage from a variety of soap operas to expand upon the melodrama of Yuzo's text. The actors again, taking the Brecht idea of quoting quite literally, imitated the gestures of the soap operas on screen. The written structure of *Judith* plays such an important role in how an audience digests the piece: A Japanese business mogul invites various prestigious guests to his home to view a production of "The Story of *Okichi*". These characters, titled the interlude, conversed and argued between scenes about the action unfolding "on stage". It was important for me to construct for them an environment outside of the staged *Okichi* story that would contrast the chaos being performed on stage. The Zen garden as an artistic image, with its pond and stepping stones, gave

me the freedom to explore Brecht's ideas of alienation. The master of the house, a mogul with a westernized mind, chooses to build a Japanese symbol of tranquility in his home. He then proceeds to throw a 21st century party, full of live music and video. This action works against the very intent of a Zen garden, further emphasizing the effects of alienation.

MW: How did your student performers took to Brecht, the play, and your directorial concept?

ZU: Working on a Brecht play, which requires an acting style very different from traditional ones, was fun and very challenging for them. In Brecht it is important that you don't have any empathy for the character, you have to question the situation. Brecht always believed that humans have the capacity to change their own fate and society. The emphasis is placed on reason, and not emotion. In the beginning it was very difficult for them to understand this idea. As student actors still in the process of learning their craft, the first go-to tool for them is emotion. Realism. But we spent many hours discussing the mechanics of Brecht and at the end of this complex rehearsal process really embraced his work. They were very aware of the vocabulary: interruption, the alienation affect and how it is created on stage. Brecht freed their imagination rather than occupying it.

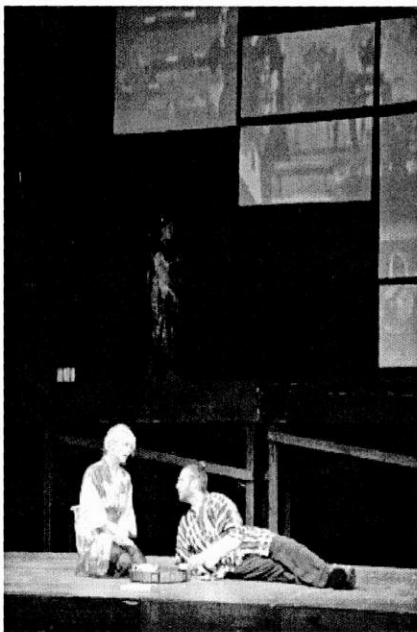
MW: Since this production happened at La MaMa, how did *Judith* fit into the larger "Brecht tradition" at La MaMa?

ZU: La MaMa, in its 50 years, has always been a hub for new and innovative ideas. It has served as a home for many artists who have been directly influenced by Brechtian theatre. It's likely that Brecht has been performed here

more often than at any other American institution. I even had the privilege of performing in a *Caucasian Chalk Circle* directed by Andrei Serban, who has directed many of Brecht plays at La MaMa. So I am proud to now be a part of that history with *Judith*.

MW: Since you were doing this production for the Eugene Lang College at the New School, any thoughts about how your production might relate to Brecht's mentor Erwin Piscator, who played such a crucial role at the New School in the 1940s and 1950s?

ZU: The New School, which has always been a progressive university, was able to give Piscator an environment to explore new and innovative modes of theater. Continuing in this tradition, Eugene Lang College, which carries with it the New School's philosophy, gave me a similar opportunity to tackle a theatre piece that would likely be dismissed or met with hesitancy at another university.





Photos of the production of *The Judith of Shimoda* by Elaine Choi



Brecht in the Raw: A Workshop Production of

Der Jasager, Der Neinsager

A report by Elena Pnevmonidou,
Department of Germanic and
Slavic Studies, University of
Victoria, Canada

On December 4 and 5, 2012, students of the *Performing German Drama* course at the University of Victoria, Canada, staged a workshop production of Bertolt Brecht's *Der Jasager, Der Neinsager*. *Performing German Drama*, now in its second year, is a unique hybrid theatre history / drama course which I launched in September 2011 with the support of the Theatre Department and the Fine Arts Faculty.

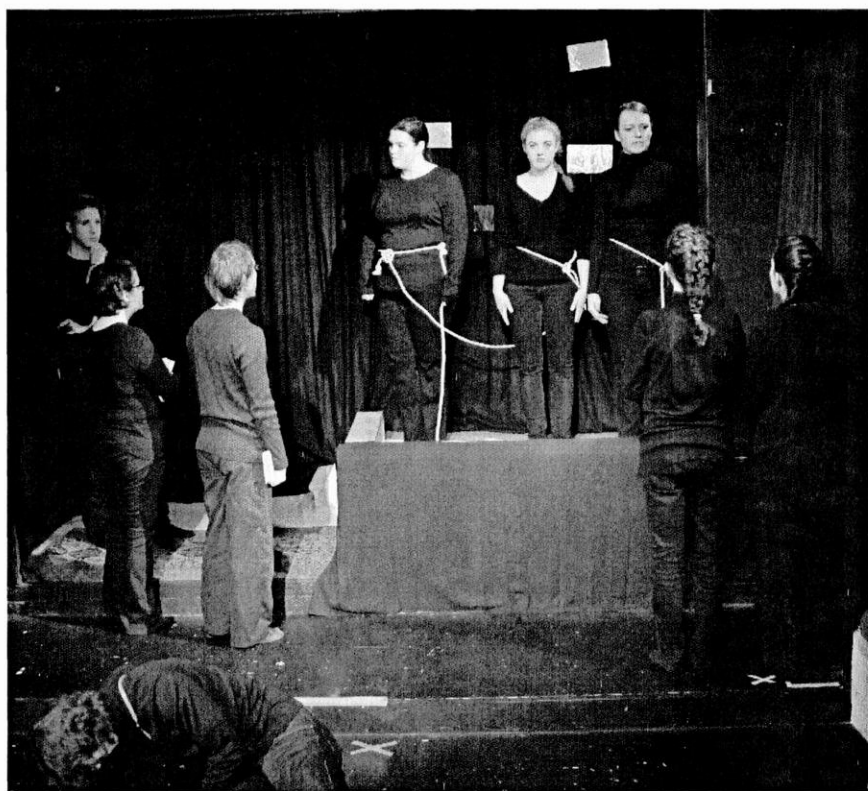
The course provides an experiential, collaborative, student-driven learning environment in which students collectively develop a dramaturgical concept for a German play based on textual analysis and research of the relevant culture, theatre and performance history, and then mount a theatrical production of the play in its German original. The course is open to both Germanic Studies and Theatre students, and while the performance of the play is in German, only the actors and language coaches need to have a command of German adequate to their task.

Regardless of which play is staged in any given year, the basic pedagogical premise of the course is Brechtian to the core. The course requires that students take active, and collaborative, ownership of all facets of the theatre history and production, but it does so in a manner that takes students out of their comfort zones: The German language and culture students engage the material as creative producers, and the theatre students, especially the co-di-

rectors who typically tend to have little or no command of German, cannot rely on language for their staging choices, but must instead have a keen sense for the bodily dynamics on the stage, that is, the choreography of movement, voice and, of course, gesture.

The students of the *Jasager/Neinsager* project embraced the spirit of the course wholeheartedly. Instead of focusing their energies mostly on the end-product, the theatrical production of a play by Brecht, they made it their ambition to apply a Brechtian ethos throughout the entire process from the theatre history through the rehearsals to the performance, and they agreed on a staging concept for the play that would ultimately also make the audience active participants in the experience.

During the four-week theatre history part of the course, students were introduced to Brecht's radical innovation of theatre and explored especially core Brechtian theatre concepts such as *Verfremdung*, epic theatre and *Gestus*; they researched the political and historical context of 1920s Weimar Germany; they examined film footage of historical Brecht productions, such as, for example, the film *Kuhle Wampe* or the *Dreigroschenoper* as well as song performances of Lotte Lenya, Ernst Busch and others; and they analyzed footage of performances of the *Jasager, Neinsager*, both Western productions and Eastern productions that re-appropriate the play for Japanese Noh theatre. The theatre history component also included a unit on traditional Japanese Noh theatre. The casting having been done in the first week of the semester, the students were encouraged to approach and discuss the materials from the perspective of and with view to the role or task they would perform in the production of the play. As such, the discussions during the the-



atre history component already became part of the pre-rehearsal workshop.

The students then transitioned to a two-week pre-rehearsal workshop during which they moved from theory to practice. During this period, four senior German students worked intensely with their peers on language and dialect coaching to assist them in unpacking the German text and learn their lines. One language coach was paired up with a directing major from the Theatre Department, who had no knowledge of German. They worked together as co-directors, and while the Theatre student took a leadership role in working with the actors during the rehearsals, the German student's task was to ensure that the acting and staging choices were conceptually sound and captured the nuances of Brecht's language. The co-directors emphatically rejected any traditional theatre hierarchies and encouraged feedback, debate and discussion during the workshop and the rehearsals.

The students agreed to encourage the audience's intellectual engagement with the play. They therefore decided on a "bare bones" production with a minimal set and very few props. All actors were dressed in black, their faces made up with almost white foundation in order to acquire mask-like features, and the main prop were ropes of different colours and sizes that symbolically represented the central ethical dilemma of the play as a power struggle and a tug-of-war between the different actors. To further enhance the sense of artificiality on stage, the students, who for the most part were untrained actors to begin with, worked on an acting style that was demonstrably self-aware and that visibly worked with core Brechtian concepts such as *Verfremdung* and, with reference to Walter Benjamin, *Gestus* as

an interrupted action sequence. The play itself encourages this acting style because each character consistently speaks with two voices: as an authentic or natural person who is living certain human experiences – departure, illness, empathy, conflict, life-and-death decisions, etc. – and as an agent of a tradition that demands the sacrifice of the individual for the greater good. The production of the *Jasager, Neinsager* emphasized this duality by crisply demarcating the transitions from a "plot" sequence during which the characters interact with each other more or less naturally to a "ritual" sequence during which the actors step out of character, change their posture and make declarative, ritual-evoking statements, facing the audience. A German student with a background in music composition, moreover, developed a sound plot with melodic and abstract percussive elements drawing from both German folk and Japanese musical traditions that served to further highlight the sharp shifts from the "plot" to the "ritual" sequences.

In part because of Brecht's indebtedness to Japanese theatre and in part because of the unique venue, this performance incorporated elements of Japanese Noh theatre. The venue, *Merlin's Sun Home Theatre* in the city of Victoria, is a small theatre that seats about 60 (both nights were sold out), but the stage is small, but very complex. It has three levels: A ground level front stage, a slightly elevated 4 by 12 foot centre, and a small balcony in the back right. This made it possible to work explicitly with the Japanese conceptualization of space: In Noh theatre, the stage is not merely a place on which actions occur, but it is rather a configuration of symbolically significant spaces that influence the action by demanding a specific gestural stance from the actors.

The ground level front stage was used as the *Naming Place* in Noh theatre, a locale for the characters' outward self-identification and for collective, ritual evoking declarative statements. The elevated middle section served as the *Bridge*, an intermediary threshold place of transition, indecision, and ambiguity. And the back balcony served as what is referred to in Noh theatre as the *Mirror Room*, the place of revelation of identity

power structures and societal norms – what is referred to in the play as the age-old tradition – and to engage the audience in a critical analysis and discussion of the play and its staging. To this end, there was a ten-minute intermission between the performance of the *Jasager* and of the *Neinsager* during which members of the cast and crew had a conversation with the audience, asking critical questions they had prepared



and authenticity.

Moreover, in addition to emphasizing the duality of voice in the play, the actors were also encouraged to bear in mind the complexity of characterization in Noh theatre: characterization is determined by the plot, but it is also derived from a character's position within a constellation of theatrical archetypes, which in Noh theatre are minimally the protagonist, the companion, the observer, the chorus.

There was no pretense, however, to stage the *Jasager*, *Neinsager* as a Noh play. The intention was rather to highlight the unresolved ethical conflict of the play, to emphasize that individual ethical choices are always mediated by

about the *Jasager* and encouraging a discussion about alternative choices. One significant measure of the success of this production was that, although there was no talk-back session planned after the *Neinsager*, the entire audience stayed behind after the performance and continued the discussion for another 20 minutes. The audience asked questions about the content of the play and about Brecht's theory of theatre, but this discussion remarkably led to a broader conversation about the political relevance of Brecht today, the Occupy Movement and other contemporary forms of popular resistance, as well as international conflicts and local politics in the USA and Canada.

**THE THREEPENNY OPERA:
TWO PERFORMANCES, TWO
REVIEWS, TWO INTERVIEWS
WITH THE DIRECTOR**

THE THREEPENNY OPERA.
DIRECTION: JOHN SHEARIN.
ENSEMBLE: ECU / LOESSIN
PLAYHOUSE. MCGINNIS
THEATRE. EAST CAROLINA
UNIVERSITY. GREENVILLE,
NC.

REVIEWED: APRIL 19TH, 2012
BY JILL E. TWARK

A predominantly orange- and earth-toned patchwork quilt bearing the British marketing slogan “Queen’s Bank: Save a Penny with Us,” surrounded by a proscenium frame in art nouveau style with backlit blue windows, introduced the audience of East Carolina University’s production of *The Threepenny Opera* right away to the types of contrast with which Bertolt Brecht wished to confront his Weimar Republic German audience. These contrasts begin with the playwright’s social criticisms of the dichotomy between rich and poor, and extend to characters representing leaders and followers, the loyal and the disloyal, and the earnest versus the disingenuous. They reach into a style of acting that demands a disconnect between the characters’ attitudes and speech—which may be insincere, ironic, or comical—and the serious situations in which they find themselves. And thus, while watching the fiery redheaded, sharp-nosed Joe Veale play Mac the Knife in director John Shearin’s production, wiggling

his way through the play’s inevitable criminal and amorous entanglements, the audience is compelled to love him and find him debonair and sexually attractive, despite the disgusting ways he manipulates all who dare enter his hedonistic, depraved orbit. Mr. Peachum (played by John Barnick) and Jackie “Tiger” Brown (Tyler McAulie) also fit this mold. Peachum’s thick, surround-chin beard, combined with a bright green necktie and breastpocket handkerchief gave him the hilarious appearance of a cross between Abraham Lincoln and a leprechaun, which underlined and undermined his hypocritical, preachy speeches twisting Biblical verses for his personal materialistic ends. Tiger Brown, dressed in a baggy brown frock, devolves in the course of the play from a brave, loyal, and rather stereotypical “gay” friend into a soggy pile of misery when forced to arrest and detain Mac until the bandit’s hanging. McAulie’s exaggerated, comical whiny-weepiness placed him in the tradition of one of the Three Stooges or Bert Lahr’s rendition of the cowardly lion in the 1939 film version of *The Wizard of Oz*, carrying forward a traditional, overdone pitiful sadness that one may find humorous (or not) in other film comedies or television sitcoms. Pushing his main characters to the brink of being caricatures, but not letting them fall over the precipice, was a real strength of this production, which remained true to Brecht’s desire for it to be a “splendidly entertaining performance,” while highlighting the fate of criminals, whores, and the downtrodden.

Whereas the main characters shone for their individual personality quirks, selfish demands, crass Cockney accents, and ribald language, bursting out of their ineffectual efforts at achieving Victorian propriety, the secondary characters entertained the audience with well-choreographed group scenes and

matching costumes. The London constables in their blue uniforms pranced back and forth across the stage with knees jumping like the Keystone Kops from silent films produced in the early twentieth century. The five basic types of misery included a kneeling beggar on a wheeled cart, rolling himself around the stage with his hands. Characters rarely stood still on stage, always somehow being in motion, twitching, shaking, or swaggering. Reverend Kimball was so fat he looked like the girl whose body inflated into an immense blueberry when she ate the forbidden candy in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Many scenes, song performances, and accompanying dance numbers were furthermore adapted from 1920s-style vaudeville acts, so that each scene of the play brought surprises and none lagged. The way the stage was constructed, with four distinct sections resembling building facades, three balconies, and multiple doors and other entryways, contributed to the actors' ability to appear from and disappear into all parts of the stage. The overall color scheme of the setting, costumes, lighting, and carefully arranged character constellations matched images from George Grosz's early twentieth-century paintings such as "Pillars of Society" or "Waltz Dream," with a gloomy, grey overtone punctuated with bits of bright color.

As for the famous, catchy Kurt Weill tunes, it was Emily Weber as Mrs. Peachum and Amanda Kliniowski as Jenny Diver who gave them a stark, rough-around-the-edges feeling. Shearin's retranslation of "The Ballad of Sexual Obsession" into "The Ballad of Sexual Slavery" and other such tweakings of the wording of the lyrics also granted them the necessary sardonic bite. The lyrics drove home, often with humor, the socially critical messages and trenchant, satirical character assassina-

tions, such as Mrs. Peachum's condemnation of Mac for allowing his sexual addiction get the better of him. Shearin's rare inclusion of the "Jealousy Duet" to this performance was sung vivaciously and competently by Lauren Neely as Polly Peachum and Candice Dickinson as Lucy Brown, as a parody of Mozart's "Queen of the Night" Aria from *The Magic Flute*, and drove home the director's intention for the musical to come across as a mock opera.

Two of my favorite scenes used creative props to titillate the audience by emphasizing their kitschiness in an endearing way. In the love scene between Mac and Polly following their barn wedding, a queen-size, bright red murphy bed surrounded by flashing white lights was lowered suddenly from a wall on the left side of the stage, emphasizing the fast-paced, sexual, clandestine, and likely short-lasting nature of their love, reflected also in the contents of their duet. In the "Third Threepenny Finale" the *deus ex machina* finally made sense to me when he came riding a mast horse (a horse head on a stick) down the aisle of the theatre to leap up on the stage and free Mac from his execution. Following the text of the play alone, the reader may fail to appreciate the absurd potential of this scene and how befitting an ending it is to the musical as a whole.

Maintaining and yet balancing the intensity produced by the contrasts in this more than three-hour-long play, director John Shearin, his crew, and the student actors never lost the attention of the audience, nor sight of the moral messages the show must convey. Lines like "What's breaking into a bank compared with founding a bank?" take on a new potency in the wake of the current world financial crisis. Shearin's directing style, which I witnessed firsthand by attending a dress rehearsal, is extremely

precise and demanding. His productions resemble complex orchestra performances, although he described his style to me jokingly as more like coaching a football team. He has proven that *The Threepenny Opera* possesses entertainment value and political relevance aplenty for a twenty-first century audience.

Interview with Mr. John Shearin

Director of the School of Theatre and Dance, East Carolina University

April 30, 2012

TWARK: When did you first come in contact with *The Threepenny Opera* and what were your impressions of it?

SHEARIN: I came in contact with the German recording of it in high school through my dad's record collection and knew it better than the English version by Marc Blitzstein—I studied German in high school, in college, and at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California. Something about the music and lyrics grabbed me immediately, and I've been a fan ever since, though I don't think the Blitzstein version fully captures the frankness of the lyrics. But it had to pass the censors in the 1950s, even in New York. That's why it appears watered-down.

TWARK: What about it made you want to direct a performance of it at this time?

SHEARIN: Besides loving the work, I think there is a currency to it that resonates with what is going on today—the whole “99% and 1%” dichotomy. The

time was ripe for this play to be performed. An election is coming up and this is a way of making a point to people so that they think before they vote. I didn't want to influence their voting, but encourage them to think before they vote. I'm also getting older, and this is a very difficult play, and I didn't want to wait until I was past my prime. I wanted to be good enough to do it, an aspirant who is worthy of it.

TWARK: What were your main goals as a director in staging it?

SHEARIN: They were very close to what we finally achieved. This is one of the top three, all-time favorite productions I have directed, because all elements came together so well. There were several conceptual springboards, one of which was George Grosz. I didn't want to reproduce his paintings on stage, but I asked the designers to look to his aesthetic for inspiration in terms of color, character, and design. I was also inspired by Manheim's translations of the conversations between Brecht and the Italian director Giorgio Strehler, who was staging it in 1955. Brecht thought the notion that people on stage would be so overcome by emotion that they would spontaneously burst into song was absurd. Spectators often have to buy into this when watching musical theatre, but I thought that whenever the characters sing in our production, we would break through the proscenium, engage the audience directly, and not attempt to make it seem as if the characters are singing spontaneously. Almost every song has a didactic purpose, and it should be directed at the audience. In fact, some of the songs only have a tangential relationship to the scenes in which they are sung. This is also why we constructed a backlit, stage box proscenium framing the production. It framed the setting, and everything performed in front of it was like a vaudeville act.

TWARK: Besides the alterations and additions you mention in the "Director's Notes" in the theatre program,¹ did you change any other lines or scenes?

SHEARIN: I compared several literal translations of the lyrics and then converted them into rhyme and meter. If I had known how difficult this would be, I might not have done it, but now I'm glad I did. One example of a word I translated differently in this production was "Hörigkeit" [from "Die Ballade von der sexuellen Hörigkeit"/"The Ballad of Sexual Obsession"]. The words "obsession" or "bondage" are not quite strong enough, so that's why I used the word "slavery." This goes one degree further than "Hörigkeit," but it seemed to me to be more of what Brecht was getting at. The sound of German is also different. It has an edge and harshness to it that English doesn't quite capture, so you have to go a degree further in the wording. The Blitzstein lyrics are generally not strong enough, and Jeremy Sams's from the Donmar Warehouse production were marvelous, but more contemporary in reference than our production's style warranted. I wanted to keep the faux-Victorian patina. And Ralph Manheim's lyrics seemed more literary than "theatrical"; they didn't quite fit with the music. We were lucky, because we had a student, Nicholas DeVito, who volunteered to be Assistant Musical Director, and he used most of his Spring Break to transpose my revised and adapted lyrics onto the music.

TWARK: Did you make any other alterations?

SHEARIN: I rewrote Mr. Peachum's first speech in order to set the story matrix of the show. I thought the translation we were originally using was too literary and not "actable." It didn't engage the actor with the audience directly, so I rewrote it to make it clearer.

TWARK: Did you encounter any problems during pre-production or dress rehearsals?

SHEARIN: Not really, because we had invested so much time preparing the show in advance. Ever since I first ran into Brecht, I've been a complete captive, but also a bit terrified of him, because he's really hard. I told my cast after the final dress rehearsal: "I didn't tell you guys this before, because I didn't want you to think in these terms, but we have taken on probably the most difficult playwright in the Western canon." Brecht is difficult to come to terms with because of problems of style and what seems dissociative in his work.

TWARK: The emotions don't correspond with the words, in order to produce "alienation effects." It's oxymoronic.

SHEARIN: Exactly. I said to my students: "I didn't want to tell you this, but you've met Brecht head on, and we're doing a pretty damn good job. Now, what you have to do is to keep doing this every night." The reason Brecht is so demanding for a theatre company is that everybody always has to be "on top of their moments," what we call the "doings." You cannot relax in a Brecht play; it requires constant effort and commitment. With many modern plays you can get into a groove and let the playwright carry you along. With Brecht you have to be on top of every moment, knowing exactly what you're trying to achieve, and working to achieve it.

1. The program, posters, and production photographs are available in the East Carolina University School of Theatre and Dance Production Archives at <http://www2.ecu.edu/sotdarchive/Productions/2011playhouse/index.html>.

TWARK: What is your perspective on Brecht's theory of "alienation effects"? Did you wish to emphasize or deemphasize any of them here?

SHEARIN: I had Jenny Diver sing "The Song of Pirate Jenny" in Scene 5, while Polly was given "The Bilbao Song" [from Brecht and Weill's *Happy End*] in Scene 2, because I believe the song is served better when it's sung by Jenny Diver, despite Brecht's wanting it to serve as an "alienation effect" by having Polly sing it. It seemed Weill subscribed to this idea, too, because he signed off on many productions in which Jenny sung it. In Scene 8 I also added "Lucy's Aria" and, though it's performed nearly three hours into the show, I never got the impression that the audience was asking themselves: "When is this going to be over?" All songs were performed in a presentational way, with the singers playing to the audience most of the time.

We also used the street singer as a narrative device instead of stage signs. I took the liberty of expanding on the signs with the street singer's narrative on occasion to make sure that the story was told clearly to the audience. I love this character, and it took a while to develop his role because there were no stage directions or dialogue to draw on. Although the actor playing him did not know German, I told him to listen to the original German actor from a very early recording and get a feel for how it was done in the past. The street singer was used to clarify the story.

I see my first job as a director to make sure the telling of the story is clear as a bell, so the audience does not get lost. Every aspect of the plot needs to be clear. If a director attends to the telling of the story, the intellectual content will make itself clear, as well. I don't like to dwell on the intellectual content, however; I like the audience to figure it

out themselves. I don't want to tell them how to think, but I want to make damn sure Mr. Brecht's words and story make sense and are clear, so they get it. They can reject the ideas if they want to, but I don't know how, especially when they hear the "Second Threepenny Finale." This play has influenced my outlook on life and how society works since I was a teenager. It helped me consolidate empathy for the poor and downtrodden. I had been one of them as a kid, but as I got older and became more privileged, Brecht served as a constant reminder that there are a lot of people who are much less fortunate.

TWARK: I've seen the production three times and would watch it again, if I could. What has been the public response to it?

SHEARIN: The response to it has been marvelous, way beyond my expectations. I was prepared for a negative response—not anticipating it, but prepared for it.

TWARK: I think this goes to show that the play is universal. It can appeal to any audience, anywhere. Although audiences around the world have embraced the songs, Brecht and Weill originally intended them to sound rough and gritty. Did you ask Natalie Stewart and Mollye Otis to coach students to sing in any particular way?

SHEARIN: We used the score from the Weill Foundation, which is the official, "blessed" score, so Pirate Jenny is sung in a higher key than you hear on most CDs. It is hard to achieve a high level of "grittiness" in a high soprano. We tried to make the material work in its pure state. I think Jenny Diver came the closest to achieving this, because she tried hard to suppress her beautiful soprano voice and give it an edginess. John Barnick as Mr. Peachum did that too. At times he let his cultured baritone voice go, but only

intentionally, to call attention to it as a spoof on opera. We wanted to achieve the effect of an operatic spoofing, a crudeness. Even Polly's songs were not as beautiful as they otherwise might have been.

TWARK: They were sickeningly sweet and kitschy.

SHEARIN: That is what we were trying to achieve. I told Lauren Neely, who played Polly, to listen to some 1920s musicals, where they sing in those weird little chirpy voices and carry parasols.

TWARK: It's highly entertaining and captivating. Your heart twists a little, because you think she's so sweet, yet she's in love with a criminal and so devious.

SHEARIN: And then she slaps the crap out of Matthew and kicks him in the ass. She's a very hard-headed gal. She got some nice laughs on the third verse of the "Barbara Song" by setting it up in the first two verses. Tommi Galaska gave it a real vaudeville feeling by giving her a parasol to hold, as a bawdy and phallic prop.

TWARK: How do you reconcile the need to appeal to an audience from eastern North Carolina and yet to produce a work of art that is true to its creators' intentions?

SHEARIN: We actually have a savvy and receptive audience here. Bawdiness and obscenity are well accepted. We only tend to run afoul with *profane* language. I love it here because we've been able to do basically anything for twenty-three years by establishing a high level of quality with our productions.

TWARK: What preparation do you think this audience might have for viewing and appreciating a musical that premiered over eighty years ago in the Weimar

Republic? Perhaps Monty Python?

SHEARIN: The old Keystone Kops created by Mack Sennett. My students might not be familiar with these characters today, but they can use YouTube to look up anything I suggest to them to research.

TWARK: People today are also more ironic and jaded and thus not easily offended.

SHEARIN: If I had directed this in my undergraduate days at William and Mary, I doubt I could have gotten away with many things that are taken for granted today, just with the language alone. I ended up drawing on my extensive twelve-year-old boy vocabulary for sex in doing the lyrics, because those images pop out at you. Now they appear tame, even quaint. Very little is out of bounds.

The Threepenny Opera.

Direction: Kelly Howe.

Music Direction: Jeordano Martinez.

Ensemble: North Central College Department of Theatre and Music. Madden Theater, North Central College. Naperville, IL. May 10-13, 2012.

Review by Louis Waldmeir and Gregory H. Wolf

"Education shouldn't be a debt." "Health Care, not Wealth Care." "I went to College and Can't Find a Job. Found an Occupation: The 99%." These and many other signs greeted the audience as they filed into Madden Theater at North Central College to experience an engaging and compelling production of *The Threepenny Opera*, directed by Kelly Howe. With actors already on stage milling about in a scene apparently already in motion, the audience, perhaps confused, gradually realizes that the performance has already begun and they are witnessing an Occupy Wall Street protest. Men and women move about with protest signs and some are even taking video of the events around them. In a sense, the audience also enters the protest; everyone enters into the fray of "occupy Madden Theater." There is no shortage of signs that help clearly place the setting as modern day. "End corporate Personhood," "We are all Trayvon Martin," "The 99%" make the setting instantly recognizable by matching the newsfeeds we are all by now very familiar with. As a result of the play's opening with almost no physical separation between the players and the audience, achieved with no added

dialogue or music, Brecht's concept of dramatic consciousness takes hold right away. The spectators know they have full stake in the events they witness and that they may not all be on the same side.

By setting the play within the context of the Occupy movement, the audience is forced to come to terms with the central themes of economic inequality and exploitation, how the play problematizes them, and how they relate to contemporary society. "I . . . kept hearing the voices of those who construct Occupiers as "whiners" or "crybabies" or bratty, lazy, unrealistic children," Howe said when asked about her decision to set the performance in an occupy camp. "I kept coming back to Peachum's line, '[I]f the misery is genuine, nobody believes it. Tell the world you have a gut-ache, people will only be disgusted.' It evoked so much about contemporary U.S. politics for me—not just the derision of Occupiers by many people of a variety of class positions but also how inured to human suffering so many people have seemed during the health care reform conversations in President Obama's first term." Having directed such socially critical plays as *Elephant's Graveyard* by George Brant and the *Eye & Tooth Project*, Howe, who is the current president of the global forum "Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed," does not imply a one-to-one relationship between *The Threepenny Opera* and contemporary society; rather, she asks "How does this tale of anachronistic, Victorian-ish London speak to us when literally pushed up against the most famous social movement of our moment?" The answer is her forceful production challenging the audience to think about the current economic climate and their role in producing and perpetuating it.



Photos of Tanner Smale as Mackey and Hannah Toriumi as Polly by Carin Silkaitis

As the circle and movement of inner-city hipsters come to a dramatic close, the play itself begins to take form when protesters announce the beginning of the drama. Mr. Peachum is established as our orator as he calls for a final mic check and briefly introduces Brecht's play. As the band begins their overture, costumes are handed out by members of the cast to the other members, transforming the very same set from 2012 to 1928 right before our eyes. These costumes are basic and incomplete. Mr. Peachum, for instance, wears a drab suit coat, top hat and vest that would place him in the traditional setting, however keeps his jeans and sneakers throughout the show which reminds us of his role as an occupy member. This gives the impression that the play is performed by the protestors and not the students who present the drama as a metaphor for our current economic situation.

This production ingeniously blurs the borders of times and realities. The challenge is transforming Brecht's timeless and relevant message into the context of the present day when the physical aspects of the play are so precisely dated. The culture of the 1920s economic downtrodden is constantly presented in the locations of the drama, (the brothel and the docks of London) and also in Kurt Weil's cabaret soundtrack. This particular production was not excessive, and did not hold many elements of grandiose, ornate theater that are sometimes associated with this play. It traded instead sweeping thematic backdrops and set design for simple multipurpose elements that served the small production well. It was held in the small, black box theater seating 150, with a thrust stage that left the impression of the drama melting into the audience. The stage set was

appropriately minimal: Set design was limited to the one level thrust stage, with a table, park bench, and a modest gateway that separated the musicians behind the stage from the performance itself. In addition, a simple wooden table served as the table for the wedding scene, brothel scenes, and doubled as the bed for Mackey and Polly's duet. By limiting visual effects and architectural elements on the stage, focus could be entirely directed towards the plot and corresponding messages embedded in the drama. Other artifacts carry over to remind us of the play's uniquely blurred situation of time and place. The whores are given unmistakable Starbucks cups when Mrs. Peachum serves them coffee, and the previously mentioned costume choices are present throughout in shoes, pants, and clothing accessories.

A particular strength of this production was the establishment of the Peachums as the guiding figures throughout the drama. Mr. Peachum, played by the tall and lanky Harrison Ashley, who captivated the audience with his dramatic presence, facial gestures, and clear and passionate language, effects quasi audience participation by lecturing them as sternly as the players on stage about economic realities, exploitation, and the human condition. Ashley's portrayal allowed the ruthless nature of the character to bleed through the faux guise of a savvy businessman. The self-interested and conniving Mrs. Peachum, portrayed by Colleen O'Connor, served as the perfect counterpoint to Mr. Peachum's quiet scheming with her double standards.

The seamless interaction between Mackey (Tanner Smale) and Polly (Hannah Toriumi) was distinguished by their mutual energy and sexual tension. The excellent musical arrangement by Jeordana Martinez enabled the actors

to showcase their voices and simultaneously evoke sympathy, anger, and disgust in the audience. Mackey's grand finale, his epic plea for forgiveness, was an unequivocal highlight of the performance. Exemplifying the desperateness of Mackey as he faces imminent death, this scene raised questions about the convoluted and often blatantly unjust relationship among justice, responsibility, and social class.

The end of the drama brought the time frame back full circle to the modern day. The play ends with four modern day police officers crashing into the stage and driving the players away. One final member of the chorus is left on stage to remind us of the intersecting circumstances, and serves as a final reminder of the economic realities of today. Like the beginning of the performance, the ending provided moments of insecurity for the audience as they were not sure the play was over. "It was also very important to me that our last scene not buy into the rhetoric that Occupy is over," Howe said about her decision end to conclude the play in the Occupy camp. "The movement continues on in various forms even in the face of many evictions, and saying that it's over seems to me a way for critics to sap it of its momentum. That's why we ended on the tension of one sign left behind, 'You cannot evict an idea'—both ironic and earnest at the same time."

Interview with Director Kelly Howe

Why did you choose to perform a Brecht drama? How can he speak to an audience comprised of primarily white, upper-middle class suburbanites?

To be frank, when I choose what I'll

direct each year, my students are the constituencies to which I'm loyal. My first goals are always pedagogical. While I of course set out to direct each piece in a way that will be intellectually and aesthetically arresting and speak to audiences effectively, I care about those goals primarily because I want my students to have experiences making specific, careful art. During play selection student learning is paramount. I love teaching Epic Theatre (and loved it when it was taught to me in undergraduate school). Particularly in the Chicago area, my students' experiences of theatre have so often been subject to the hegemony of realism and naturalism. When I teach Brecht and Epic Theatre in my Introduction to Theatre and my Theatre History and Literature II courses, I find that most of my students are fascinated and deeply curious. North Central has an ever-increasing number of theatre students with wonderfully activist inclinations. Most of them are middle class, some are upper class, some of them appear to have grown up occasionally hovering near the poverty line (or they actually hover there now), and across those various class positions, I've gotten to know many theatre students who are not at all fine with the world as it is. I've been struck by how much Brecht speaks to them, but most of them had never had a production experience with a Brecht play before. I wanted them to have a practical experience of how *verfremdungseffekt* works. If our majority white, middle-class audiences encountered a piece that asks important questions and punctures the assumption that capitalism is going to save us all, that seemed valuable, too.

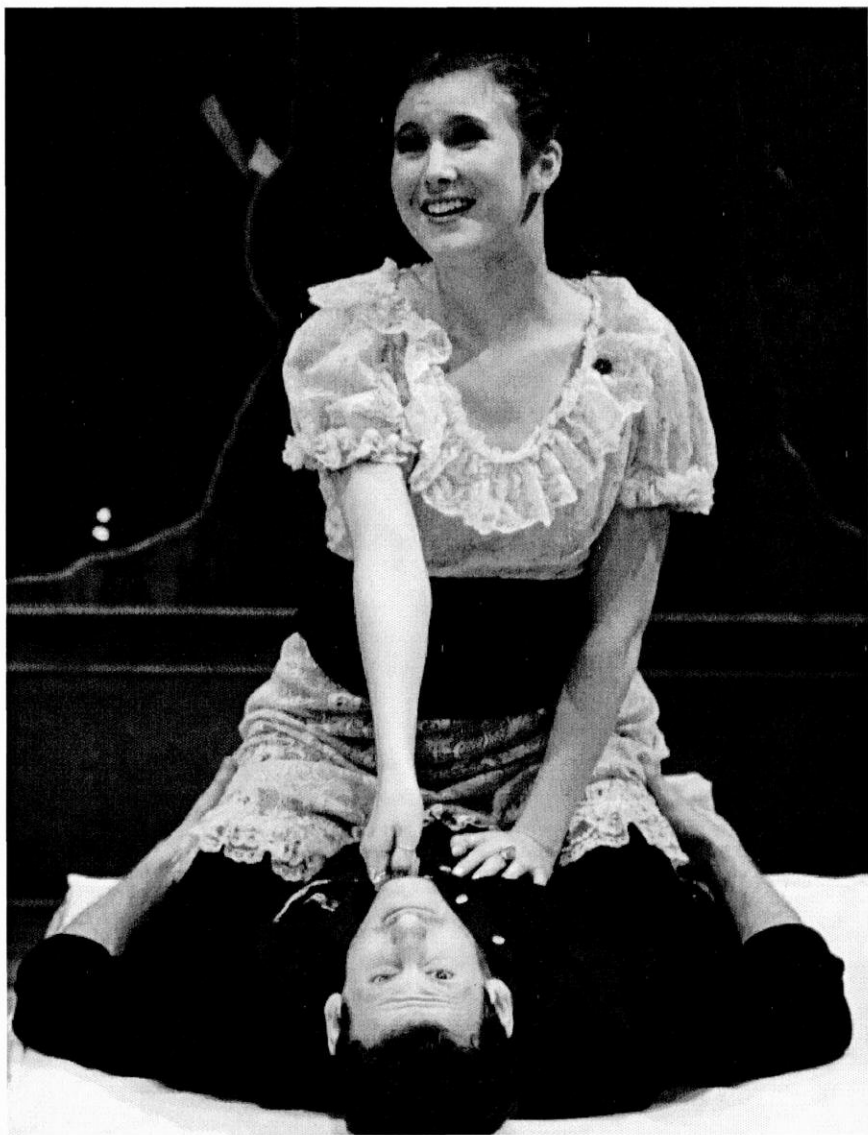
Why did you decide to set the performance at an occupy camp? Would you be able to expand on your comments?

At the heart of both the play and that contemporary movement lies a deep concern that the prevailing financial systems of their day are making it difficult for people to (a) behave humanely with each other and (b) survive. Now it's actually hard for me to remember a single reason NOT to set it at an Occupy encampment, but my initial interest arose from two factors. 1) Many of my students were very interested in and compelled by Occupy. 2) I kept hearing the voices of Occupiers in the script's economic critique—and I also kept hearing the voices of those who construct Occupiers as “whiners” or “crybabies” or bratty, lazy, unrealistic children. I kept coming back to Pea-chum's line, “[I]f the misery is genuine, nobody believes it. Tell the world you have a gut-ache, people will only be disgusted.” It evoked so much about contemporary U.S. politics for me—not just the derision of Occupiers by many people of a variety of class positions but also how inured to human suffering so many people have seemed during the health care reform conversations in President Obama's first term. That's not to say that our production uncritically celebrated Occupy or any one political position; for example, Occupy has had some deeply disturbing oppression happening within some of its encampments themselves. We wanted to represent that kind of complexity. Ultimately, I thought *Threepenny* might be able to do a lot to estrange all of those aspects of our current context. At the same time, I was never interested in implying a one-to-one relationship, through which people mapped the characters from *Threepenny* directly onto our contemporary world. In fact, it was very important to me to avoid that. Rather, I wanted essentially to stage a question: How does this tale of anachronistic, Victorian-ish

London speak to us when literally pushed up against the most famous social movement of our moment? Put more concretely, what insights would it yield if an Occupy encampment decided to stage *The Threepenny Opera*?

I especially enjoyed the last scene with the police officer dragging off an occupier. In fact, most audience members were confused and unsure if the play was over. I assume they expected a traditional ending with the protagonists receiving rounds of applause. Could you tell me how you conceived this last scene?

Sure. From the moment I thought about setting the piece at Occupy, it seemed immediately apparent to me that the production would end with everyone onstage, including the instrumentalists, evicted by police officers. Our Occupy world was really a frame for *Threepenny*, which was still the focus. We obviously didn't and wouldn't add any dialogue or songs to the script, as copyright is of course important to me and should be important to my students, so I knew the eviction sequence would be less a scene in and of itself and more of a silent coda to or exit from the last finale. As for the staging of that sequence, as in all scenes, the actors and I collaborated. When we started working on that last moment, I said to them: When the police advance, which of your characters (meaning the Occupy personas students had constructed) would scatter first? Who would be most inclined to avoid arrest? Who'd be willing to hang out for a little while but then scam when things got rough? Who has the most to lose? Who'd be there until the bitter end? I let the students choose, and then we staged it from there. We slowed it down a bit as the last Occupier was removed, partly



because the actor playing that role—she otherwise had a speaking role in the brothel ensemble—filled the moment of being dragged off with such beautifully specific gestus work. As we staged this sequence, however, we were also careful not to make the police officers seem like monsters. We chose to have them be depictions of relatively respectful, careful members of their profession. Finally, it

was also very important to me that our last scene not buy into the rhetoric that Occupy is over. The movement continues on in various forms even in the face of many evictions, and saying that it's over seems to me a way for critics to sap it of its momentum. That's why we ended on the tension of one sign left behind, "You cannot evict an idea"—both ironic and earnest at the same time.

***A Man's A Man* at the Uranium Madhouse, Los Angeles: Director Andrew Utter in Conversation with Amila Becirbegovic (UC, Davis)**

(This interview was conducted prior to the actual production of the play. Special thanks to Per Urlaub for managing this project and to Andrew Utter for his involvement and participation.)

Brecht's comedy *A Man's A Man*, directed by Andrew Utter, was staged in the Summer of 2012 at Uranium Madhouse in Los Angeles, California. The interview was originally inspired by an educational outreach and curriculum development project and website (<http://sites.la.utexas.edu/brecht/>), which was developed by a team of graduate students during a seminar on curriculum development in the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas, Austin. The interview has since been significantly adapted and changed for the format of this publication.

What drew you to the works of Brecht and his particular style of "epic theater"?

More than his theories, I love Brecht's language. His hard-bitten wit gets me every time.

Why did you pick this particular play? What was it about *A Man's A Man* that particularly resonated with you?

I really like the farcical and absurd features of this play. There's a wonderful sense of fun about it. In what other play do you get the stage direction 'they build an artificial elephant?' The bond between people in combat situations also resonated with me. More broadly,

it is the way in which the play celebrates this type of "Three Musketeers" quality of the soldiers. It's not necessarily what people see first when they look at the play. It's almost like the fun of a heist movie. Turning Galy Gay into a soldier is kind of like a heist and that idea is what appealed to me most. This concept of bonding that occurs during combat situations really resonated with me.

What was your motivation and intent behind choosing *A Man's A Man*?

My attraction to a play is primitive, it fascinates me and so I want to do it, I want to immerse myself in it and have it absorb me. I don't choose a play to make a statement. Again, I like the absurdity of the play, and I think the play has some themes which might be described as Buddhist that attract me: the insubstantial character of the self, and impermanence and the futility of striving, that appeal to me.

Are there any elements that contemporary audiences could relate to in the play? If so what are some themes, topics and developments that could resonate particularly well with audience members today?

The Buddhist themes I mentioned above are still relevant. I think actually in the play there's a deep worry about the difficulties posed by collectives. As social animals, we seem to need them, and yet they are dangerous, in all kinds of ways.

How did Brecht's social, political and/or cultural context influence his work and what aspects of its history were most important to you when developing the theatrical elements of your production of *A Man's A Man*?

The play itself has an interesting history



and though it was first produced in 1926, Brecht worked on it his whole life. As a result, there are more archival materials pertaining to *A Man's A Man* than any other Brecht play. Brecht's major works prior to *A Man's A Man* had focused on existential themes. In the period following *A Man's A Man*, Marx was a major influence on Brecht. This play is kind of situated between those two periods. You kind of see the Epic Theater come into being in this play. For example, Uriah and Galy Gay talk directly to the audience. On the other hand, you also have intensely lyrical passages. For example, the end of Widow Begbick's first scene with Bloody Five, and the long soliloquy, the one where Galy Gay finally decides to become Jeriah Jip for good. This play is really Brecht at a crossroads in many ways. The first drafts

were set in Augsburg, they weren't set in India. In some early productions of the play, the play ended with Galy Gay and the soldiers getting on the train. Brecht kept changing it to accord with his own development, so I think there's a question about how cohesive it ultimately is intellectually. Yet I think it's still a really great trip, it's really fun and provocative, which is why I chose to do it.

How will the staging handle the elephant and the battle in the closing scene?

I honestly don't know yet, we are still working on staging that and the logistics. I almost think of the creation of the Elephant as an image for theater making itself and so I really think that the Elephant itself should be something of a marvel. It should be big and there should be something impressive about it, even though Galy Gay is skeptical of it.

Can you tell us more about the look of the set and the costuming?

The fortress from the play will be something more of a toy, like a Fisher Price toy fortress. Even the question of the gun is interesting. I think that the Elephant should be impressive, but that the cannon should also be huge! A lot of war involves carrying heavy equipment uphill and we see that in the last scene of *A Man's A Man*. So I think that not only the Elephant, but also the gun is a central element...but I still don't have a definitive answer as to how it will look finalized on set.

Which are the biggest challenges in translating this play for a modern audience?

Doing justice to Brecht's wit, its force and its richness.

Were there any idioms in the language that were difficult to translate?

There's one point in the play when Galy Gay says, "With me you could steal horses." I can understand how in the boy-hood world of Brecht, reading stories of cowboys and Indians, referencing horse thieves was a way of saying, "You can do really dangerous things with me on your side." Yet, in 21st century America that kind of idiom wasn't necessarily going to be assimilated quickly, so I had to choose a different way to get the point across.

What can students at the various educational levels gain from watching your production of Brecht's work?

I think there is a lot to talk about in this play, from camaraderie and war to trust and relationships, but I think for young people the issue of belonging to a group would resonate well. An issue like having to face peer pressure is something that is often discussed, but we can't deny the fact that there is something compelling about belonging to a group. As people, we are social animals and we have this deep need to feel connected to others. For young people these connections have often been with their family for their earlier lives, but now they are moving out of that as they approach adolescence and facing questions about who they are and which group(s) they want to belong to. In that regard, the play has a lot to communicate to young people about this sense of a collective.

What do you want adults to take away from it?

Well, an appreciation for the play and for Brecht, for one thing. But I guess that's kind of begging the question. I suppose that what Widow Begbick says at the end of the prologue to Act 2, about how

Brecht wants us to see how dangerous a life on earth can be, that our identities and affiliations with various collectives and institutions in our lives are a lot less solid than we often think, and how it can easily all come apart.

Performance Reviews

Brecht: *Schweyk in the Second World War*

In the Translation by William Rowlinson

Theatre: Stage 773, Chicago

Ensemble: The Red Theatre Chicago

Director: Aaron Sawyer

Premiere: October 18, 2012

Reviewed by Anthony Squiers,

Date reviewed: November 10, 2012

Brecht's *Schweyk in the Second World War* (his adaptation of Jaroslav Hašek's classic novel) is rarely played in the US. According to, Aaron Sawyer, co-founder of The Red Theater Cooperative and director of its recent production of *Schweyk*, "It's a real shame that this play has been forgotten in the US."

One likely explanation for why this play is staged so infrequently could be its difficulty. In my mind there are two primary challenges of this play. First, one must translate the very unique conditions of life under Nazi occupation into something relevant for other epochs and places. The performance must create a practical attitude for current audiences by speaking directly to their condition. This condition has similarities to the one portrayed in the play but is, nevertheless, significantly different from it. The challenge lies in drawing out and making the similarities apparent. The second challenge is that the title character is one of those quintessentially difficult characters of Brecht's who must be completely swept up by the social forces of the times but

also demonstrate to the audience the possibility that this doesn't have to be the case. Schweyk must be presented as incapable of seeing a way out of his condition. Alternative possibilities never occur to him. However, this portrayal of Schweyk needs to be done in such a way that the possibility of alternatives *do* occur to the audience. Overcoming the challenges this play poses is essential for a successful production and unfortunately this one was unable to do that. While The Red Theater Chicago production did manage to create a Schweyk character that had the potential to be effective, this was sadly lost in its wider inability to articulate its relevance for today. In short, it was tragically misconceived, under-theorized and did not aspire to germane political theater.

The key to the character, Schweyk is that he is a little man who is swept away by the machinations of powerful men and is so focused on surviving the torrents of the social forces that engulf him that he doesn't consider the possibility that a way out exists. This point was largely understood and executed in the direction of Sawyer and by Kevin Cox, who played Schweyk. Together they resisted the temptation to make Schweyk an enlightened resistance figure. Instead, true to the necessities of the play, they saw that Schweyk's enlightenment is found in, as Brecht says, exploiting "the little opportunities that remain open to him."¹ When he steals the dog belonging to the collaborator, Undersecretary Voyta he does so because he sees it as a way out of the jam he's gotten himself into. *I. Brecht, B., Rorrison, H., & Willett, J. (1993). Journals: [1934-1955]. London: Methuen (p. 279).*

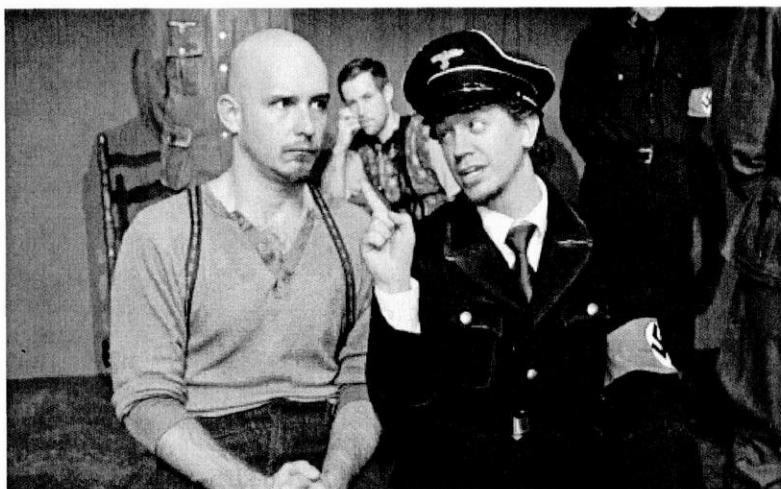
with Bullinger, the SS official. When he confuses the German soldier tasked with remembering the train number, he does so because he wants to divert the soldier's attention away from his friend Baloun. Schweyk is trying to protect his friend. Though these things could seem like cunning acts of sabotage, they are not. Schweyk is a man who produces no social viscosity. Getting this point correct is the best achievement of this production and one that cannot and should not be easily dismissed.

Still, most of what was accomplished by this characterization was lost in the background of a production which failed to translate for the ethos of our time, despite Sawyer's ambition to not reproduce a "museum piece." The Nazis and Hitler play a very different function in the mind of the audience of Brecht's time than they do today. Their function now is largely historical. Times have changed. The manifestations of exploitation and barbarism have changed. A successful production of *Schweyk* must adapt for this. It must show how the little people are swept away in the social currents and the particular interests of the ruling classes *currently*. This production did none of this. Instead it was largely a reiteration of the original with some painfully failed attempts at modernizing.

Probably the most atrocious of these attempts was Christopher Paul Mueller's brutally unimaginative and entirely thoughtless portrayal of Hitler. Mueller tried to force a comedic element out of the character by playing Hitler as if he were a silly, whimsical, wishy-washy and childish figure. The impression this left was that Mueller had studied the role by watching reruns of Hogan's Heroes. This type of attempt at comedy, in a play like this, was doomed from its conceptualization

and could be the reason that there were a conspicuous number of seats which weren't refilled after the intermission. But what is astonishing isn't how misguided Mueller's portrayal was. It is the idea that one could abstract Nazism to a sort of immature buffoonery. This is an ideological movement that threatened to allow history to collapse in on itself in a dire amalgamation of brutality and capitalistic aggrandizement. If we don't properly acknowledge these types of ideologies we could fail to notice those with similar aspirations. In a very confused and inarticulate way this point was not completely absent from the production. Using hand puppets to represent them, Hitler's minions were replaced by George W. Bush, Osama Bin Laden, Kim Jong Il and Dracula. Seemingly the idea behind this move was to draw parallels with ideologues of the present time. However, this was exceedingly ambiguous. For one, it wasn't at all clear what Dracula's role was meant to signify. Nor was it clear exactly what the ideological parallels Sawyer wanted to highlight were. Furthermore, the idea that relevant contemporary parallels can be found makes his decision of staging the play as a period piece all the more regrettable.

In sum, this production was too formalistic. Although the minimal aesthetic which was reminiscent of old time worker productions allowed the text to emerge in a manifest way, the production tried too hard to produce something true to the Brecht of the 1940s. Staying true to Brecht in this way is, of course, in no way Brechtian. The misconception lies in staying true to the formal aesthetics of Brecht. The Red Theater Chicago borrowed his words and directions, his scenes, his techniques and text. But this is simply formalistic. It appropriates readymade



forms, not ideas. It does not consider the appropriateness or effectiveness of those forms and overlooks the central tenet of Brecht's philosophy of revolutionary aesthetics—that forms need to be constantly adapted in order to defy the expectations of the audience. In this way, the theater could be used to challenge the common-sense, taken-for-granted, everyday way of seeing the world—the hegemonic *Weltanschauung*. To do something Brechtian today would probably mean doing something one would not recognize on the formal aesthetic level as being Brechtian. Brecht himself might not recognize his influence on it though he would certainly be sympathetic to its radical social and political critique.

While I was optimistic about the Red Theater Chicago decision to play *Schweyk*—my first opportunity to see it staged—the challenges of the piece proved well beyond the capabilities of director Aaron Sawyer and his cast. In no way was this production a politically relevant piece of performance art. But, it is important to note that it was a *Versuch*, an attempt, an experiment and its errors are instructive.

Photo Top - (L to R) Kevin Cox as Schweyk, Aaron Sawyer as Baloun and Jared McDardis as Bullinger

Photo Middle - The Cast of Schweyk in the Second World War. Puppets by Red Theater ensemble member Kim Chelf.

Photo Bottom - Cast with Paul Mueller as Hitler. Puppets by Red Theater ensemble member Kim Chelf.

All photos by Red Theater Chicago.

Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti

Volksstück von Bertolt Brecht

Directed by Barbara Bürk

Schauspielhaus Dresden

Reviewed by Andy Spencer,

21.6.2012

Although it certainly wasn't my intention going in, coming out I felt like the worst kind of party-pooper. Barbara Bürk's production of *Puntila*, by the time I saw it three months after the premiere, was the toast of the Dresden press, lauded in several publications for the originality of its entertaining take on things which nevertheless doesn't lose sight of an underlying seriousness. Yet by the time it was over I felt like I had spent a very long two hours in the theatre and that while there had indeed been an originality of interpretation on display, it had added up in the end to a series of choreographed set-pieces lacking any real cohesion.

Perhaps I shouldn't be so surprised: the unique status of the "*Volksstück*" *Puntila* in Brecht's work, the potential for knockabout humor, a selective reading of Brecht's own pronouncements on the primacy of entertainment in the theatre – all of these things and more can be thrown together to justify a new reading tailor-made for reviews like the one from the *Dresdner Morgenpost* which so enthused about the playfulness of the production and its liberating of the play from ideological ballast. One can't help but wonder, however, if the reviewer didn't take his cue from the leading program notes which made sure that we knew what we were in for by citing Peter Brook: "It is not by chance that in many languages the word for a play and to play is the same."

All well and good, the text is

there to serve as a springboard, but a lot of the springing here seemed motivated by ideas brought to the text, rather than derived from it. The sparsely decorated set, for example, featuring the by now mandatory sloping stage, included a ten-feet or so stretch stage front which functioned like a mini-trampoline. Perhaps I'm missing something here, but aside from the fact that it made for some amusing pratfalls and other sight-gags, I was never really sure why it was there. The cast seemed to have the most fun with it during the curtain calls.

Constant throughout is musician Sven Kaiser who moved between a grand piano on a raised platform to the rear and stage left, to a keyboard stage front and right. Decked out like a 70s *Schlager* singer, replete with obvious wig, he acts as a sort of one-man backing band for the review-concept underpinning the production. Two scenes singled out for especial praise in the press see him slip into the background as the next star-turn takes the spotlight, or, as in the case of the first of these scenes, the house lights: Puntila's (Thorsten Ranft) selection of workers for his forest plays out in the stalls. This went over famously the night I was present – Puntila makes fun of people while Matti (Ahmad Mesgarha) leans back in the sixth row and adds his commentary. Once the selection process is over a gaggle of nervously smiling audience members has been collected stage left, sekt-glasses in hand, and then, well then they are simply sent back to their seats. One woman seemed to want a little more out of her moment in the sun, but no provision had been made for this sort of engagement and thus she was quickly turned around and sent packing. This is where the party-popper in me came to the fore. I'd like to have laughed along and there were of course

amusing moments, but quite why things were staged this way and to what end other than an easy laugh remained a mystery. Likewise the scene with the four women to whom Puntila has proposed marriage. Two of the roles, those of the girl from the chemist's and the telephonist, are played by men in drag (Holger Hübner and Matthias Luckey) and it is the latter who takes the lead in a choral rendition of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody". It's all done very well and ended with a ringing ovation, but again the motivation for such a grafting on of a second text seemed tenuous at best.

Somewhat more successful is the staging of the wedding scene in front of a glittering curtain: here the idea of play and playing, of the participants donning a public face to hide the private thoughts beneath receives suggestive force, but by this point I was beginning to flag and Matti's desertion of Puntila which follows, depicted as it is as a resigned turning away from an impossible situation, lacks persuasive weight and the play somewhat fizzles out.

Of the other principal players, Rosa Enskat as Puntila's daughter Eva deserves special mention as of all cast members she is the one best able to suggest a more complicated character caught between conflicting emotions. That being said, although we know that her professed admiration for the attaché (Benjamin Pauquet) being forced on her by Puntila is a sham, it too is undercut by the impossibly idiotic diplomat. Even in a robust comedy such as this there has to be at least the suggestion that there is something to the man beyond his rank if we are to see Rosa's opting for Matti as anything more than a choice between cyanide and cake. Indeed, the simpering, effete portrayal of the attaché encapsulates, to my mind,



a fundamental flaw in the production, namely that we have actually moved from the world of comedy to that of farce, and while farce, when conceived as such, does of course possess an underlying seriousness, when grafted on it strikes an awkward, mocking tone. In this context the complicated relationship between Puntila and Matti at the heart of the play becomes secondary as

the knowingly ironic steps to the fore. Of course Brecht wanted to entertain, but in entertaining he also wanted to lay bare, and here at least what we see is a confusing of liberation from ideological ballast with comedy of the broadest variety.

Photo of Thorsten Ranft and Ahmad Mesgarha by Matthias Horn.

Brecht: *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*

In the translation by John Willet. Adaptation and Direction: Farrokh Asadi. Musician: Darlyne Cain. Multimedia Assistant: Kian Amani. Ensemble: The Epic Players of Chicago.

Recital Hall, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, IL. September 28, 29 and October 5 and 6, 2012.

Reviewed by Louis Waldmeir and Gregory H. Wolf, North Central College, Naperville, IL

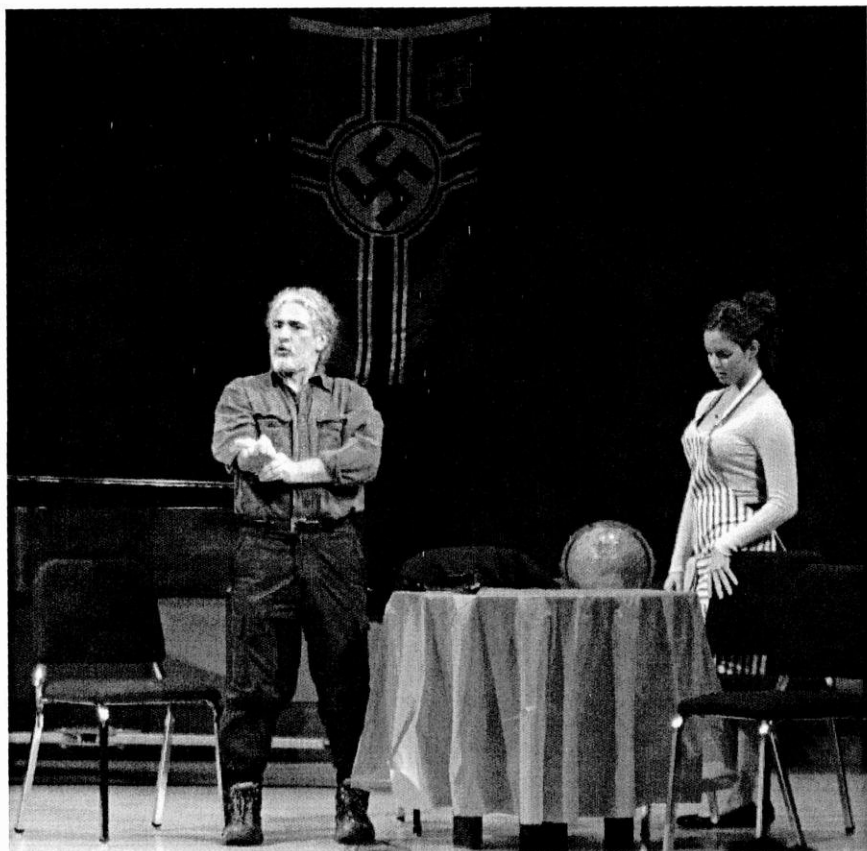
Director Farrokh Asadi's compelling and thought-provoking adaption of Brecht's *Fear and Misery in the Third Reich* transcended the time and space of Nazi-era Germany to raise questions about, and call our attention to, violence, brutality, control, suppression, and censorship in contemporary society. Instead of a complete performance of *Fear and Misery*, the Epic Players of Chicago offered selected scenes from the play (Chalk Cross, Informer, Jewish Wife, Worker's Radio Program, and Referendum) and also five of Brecht's poems and musical pieces to create a collage of Brechtian work in order to explore the universal problems and the consequences that result from societies that promote fear and misery.

Suspicion, censorship, and anxiety are not abstract notions for Asadi, who grew up in Iran. Attracted to epic theater as a vehicle to explore socially, politically, and culturally relevant issues, Asadi's first experience

with the epic theater, a 1968 production of Iranian playwright Bahram Beyzaie's *Four Boxes*, was banned by the Iranian government in 1968. "Brecht became very important to me," Asadi said, "because of the writer's political, social and anti-war commentary." Beginning with a production of Brecht's *A Man's a Man* in 1970, Asadi staged Brecht throughout the 1970s and 1980s in Iran. His production on *Fear and Misery* was banned by the government in 1984. After immigrating to the United States, he founded the Epic Players in 2005 as a non-profit theater group.

Upon walking into the small, perhaps 200-seat Recital Hall within the fine arts building at Northeastern Illinois University, the simple and stripped down setting on stage made a strong impression. The production chose to work with a minimalist design, utilizing only a grand piano and table in the background, and a Nazi flag that hung from the rear wall of the stage. The actors made their way to the stage by physically stepping through the rows of seats in order to greet individual audience members and chat for a few seconds. They clearly acknowledged one another, adding to the effect that, upon entering the stage, they emerge out of us. Their attire suggested they were no different than the members in the audience, and their behavior toward us and each other made it clear that they were entertainers who were prepared to lead the ensuing discussion.

All of these features of the production helped to emphasize that the drama can be applied to any place or any time. In an interview with the authors, Asadi, noted, "This play . . . could easily be performed without any scenery or setting. The play's characters are valuable, especially when performers allow the audience to realize that the



performance is not specifically about the Nazi Germany, but about fascism in general. To achieve this goal, I tried to alienate our audience by Brecht's techniques of the V effect, thereby destroying the illusion of reality. Throughout the five brief scenes of this production, even though the settings may change slightly, the emphasis was never on the place but rather on the characters' actions." Indeed, beyond the flag, nothing on the stage gave any indication that the series of scenes would depict Germany under National Socialism. In a similar manner, the behavior of the actors, especially in these opening moments, served to direct our attention not to a distant past but to the present. The openness of staging resulted in the hu-

manizing of the players while the audience was distanced from any feeling of empathy and prevented from escaping reality: nothing altogether unfamiliar entered the stage or was experienced.

The challenge of this production is one that many directors face when staging Brecht more than a half-century after his death, namely, how to make certain that the penetrating gaze he turned upon his own world remains just as powerful today. "Bertolt Brecht's genius," said Assadi, "is most evident in his simplicity, accessibility, and humanistic language." This production needed to (and did) deal with the difficult question of how to translate a Brechtian work that is so specifically designed for one place and time into a

series of messages that could apply to a modern and diverse audience. How does an explicit case of suppressed individuals (German citizens) by another equally unambiguous group (the Nazis) transfer into a world where the exact suppressed to suppressor relationship no longer exists? Scenes like "Chalk Cross" capture the ethos of Brecht and point out the fundamental dangers of paranoia and mistrust.

In another sense, however, this production translated the drama of Nazi suppression into the world today by focusing on the theme of social justice. Rather than extracting the Marxist themes that underlie so much of what Brecht wrote, Asadi concentrated on the civil unrest taking place throughout

the world, particularly the Middle East. Actors entered to an overture of Middle Eastern music, and after the vignette "Interview with Mr. Brecht," a slide show of photos was screened to demonstrate the similarities between suffering in Nazi Germany and suffering experienced all over the world, particularly by those who are battling injustice as part of the Arab Spring.

The astonishing part of this visual presentation was that, the more pictures that were shown, the less clear it became where and when they were taken. Black and white pictures of marching Nazi soldiers, death camps, and rallies were interspersed with pictures of modern police brutality, violent demonstration, and self-immolation.



We were shown images from many different backgrounds and histories, such as the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, and the Arab Spring. The effect was to create the overwhelming sense that the heart of Brecht's message both transcends timelines and buries us deep within them.

After all, the distance Brecht typically achieved in any his plays always suggests both the objective and subjective nature of his message. In this production, the audience experienced the balance visually through this use of photographs and dramatic scenes, but also aurally through the use of music and poetry. In an "Interview with Mr. Brecht," Asadi's attempt to allow Brecht to "explain" his concept of theater and poetry to the audience, the audience learns that Brecht's ideas are not too lofty and unreachable. Whereas his dramas strive for a sense of objectivity, poetry and songs are rooted in the principle of subjective, personal expression. The songs and video supplement Brecht's difficulty with the concept of intentional manipulation of emotion, which he saw as having no place in epic theater. While the songs were not necessarily sad, they provided an emotional depth to pair with epic pieces that were more situational.

The performances of the selected songs were split between two styles. Darlyne Cain sang "The Invigorating Effects on Money" and "Storm Trooper" in German with an eye towards Brecht's intended performance. Piano accompaniment and cabaret feel dominated these songs and added to the collage atmosphere of the entire production. Whereas this production *Fear and Misery* of stressed the timeless rather than current notion of its themes, and the ancient vibe of these selections served as a reminder that the play does

have historical context that transcends any timeline rather than defines it.

Cain performed "Cover Your Footpaths," "A German Mother," and "All of Us or None" in an entirely modern manner, the juxtaposition perfectly reflecting the struggle of modern interpretation with which the entire play dealt. Sung in English, and with modern jazz guitar accompaniment, these choices evoked thoughts of what and how Brecht would have written were he alive today. These songs were modern and accessible to a contemporary American audience, perhaps just as cabaret piano pieces would have been instantly recognizable to a German and European audience in 1938 when eight scenes were premiered in Paris.

Concluding with the epilog "The Whole World is Guilty," Asadi challenges the audience to reflect on his or her role in creating, perpetuating, and tolerating social injustice on any scale. "I see theater as a venue for methodical critical thinking that can empower its audience with the knowledge that every individual can effect change on the world," Asadi said. "This performance creates an environment for the audience that is not only entertaining, but also prepares them to question the political and social issues that the play addresses." Without being heavy-handed or pretentious, Asadi's production of *Fear and Misery* was struck a balanced chord of art and politics so that the didactic nature of the production was not lost on audience members.

Photos courtesy of Kian Amani

1. Ario Mashayekhi and Liz Mooney in the Chalk Cross scene

2. Liz Mooney and Jeff Jones in the scene A Short Dialogue with Mr. Brecht

John Hodge: *Collaborators*
Directed by Nicholas Hytner
National Theatre, London
Reviewed by Andy Spencer,
June 12, 2012

When John Hodge's first play, *Collaborators*, premiered on the National Theatre's Cottesloe stage in November, 2011, it was admired by one and all for the brilliance of the conceit at the play's centre. You don't need me to attest to the critical and commercial acclaim; by the time I got to see the play it had transferred to the much larger Olivier stage and could boast the 2012 Olivier Award for Best New Play. Thus to echo the adulation some seven months later is more than a little redundant but, well, it has to be done. Hodge, known to this point for the screenplays for such Danny Boyle-directed films as *Trainspotting*, *A Life Less Ordinary*, and *Shallow Grave*, really has come up with a strikingly original meditation on the relationship between power and art, the politician and the artist.

He does it by combining the fantastic with the frightening reality of life in Stalin's Soviet Union in 1938, and he does it in such a way that you don't see the glue. How else to explain the fact that he puts Stalin (Simon Russell-Beale) on stage and gives him hilarious lines which you tell yourself you shouldn't be enjoying while laughing out loud, and yes, this is a laugh-out-loud production, which then smacks you in the face as it reaches its terrible dénouement. Walking that line is a terribly difficult feat, but Hodge manages it.

The conceit, in case you haven't heard, is that a despondent Mikhail Bulgakov (Alex Jennings), at a loss as to what to do to get his play about Moliere

into the theatre following its de facto banning, is offered the opportunity for rehabilitation in exchange for a fawning play to mark Stalin's sixtieth birthday. The playwright is, of course, initially reluctant, but then he is whisked to a subterranean hideaway beneath the Kremlin and through the door comes ... Stalin. The dictator professes his great admiration for the writer ("Huge fan, scary really") and is fully cognizant of Bulgakov's dilemma. Thus they find a compromise, Stalin will write the play ("leave the slave-labour to me") and Bulgakov will take care of Stalin's paperwork: setting production goals and deciding upon measures to counter dissidents. Stalin revels in his new-found role: "Isn't it fun to be creative", while Bulgakov slowly finds his way into his own new position. If the angled, spiralling expressionist set had been a puzzle up until now, it all starts making sense at this point. We should have seen it coming because the play opens with Bulgakov's nightmare of being chased by a typewriter-wielding Stalin, but a real strength of the work is its slow unravelling. It's that pacing, and, of course, our own rooting for the playwright, in whose collaboration we are now firmly implicated, which means that we happily go along with the impossibly upbeat ending of the first act: Bulgakov's illness (which we know will kill him just two short years later) appears to be in remission, he now has coffee, hot water, even a car and a driver etc. Stalin is coming along with the play and the secret policeman Vladimir (Lloyd Hutchinson) who has now been installed as director of the play is so pleased with Bulgakov, whom he takes to be the author, that he gets over the fact that Bulgakov's car is in fact his own which has been requisitioned. Indeed, Vladimir still thinks that the play will be a surprise for Stalin,

but as the dictator has already let on to Bulgakov, "I don't like surprises".

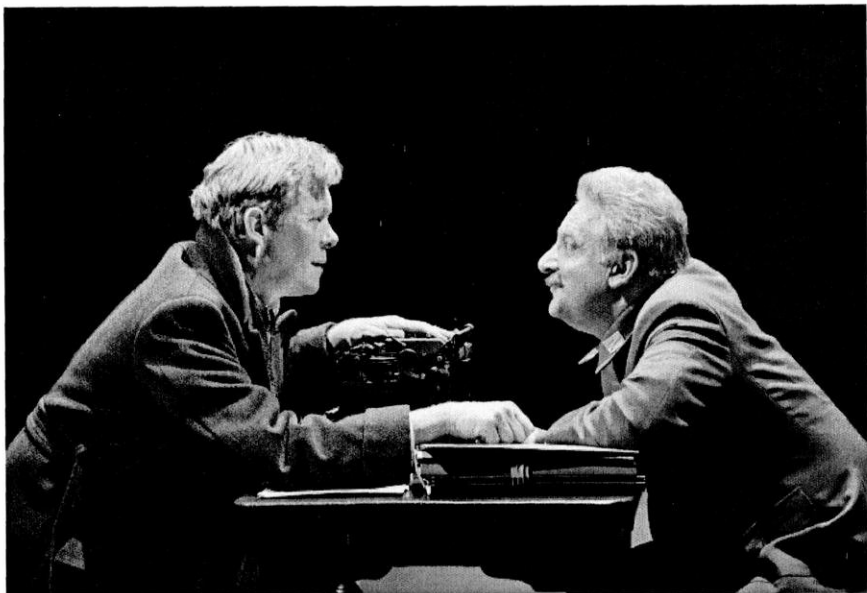
During the interval I found myself wondering how quickly things would change and the answer wasn't long in coming. The second act opens with the same dinner party which closed the first, but whereas in the first act Bulgakov and his wife (Jacqueline Defferary) dance to "their song", Josephine Baker's "I have Two Loves", now, as the tongues are loosened by the freely flowing vodka, we hear of peasants being shot and other horrors. Bulgakov, however, responds to these reports from his friends in the language of Stalin and Vladimir. His empathy for the dictator as a man who has artistic pretensions (at one point Stalin shows Bulgakov some of his poetry saying, "don't tell me, you'd rather be in the Lyublianka than reading this... I know I would") but is beset by the travails and mundanities of running a country, is now gradually exploded by the realization that these pieces of paper which he's been signing in Stalin's name affect real people. The buffoonery of the scene in which Stalin coaches the playwright in forging his signature comes back to haunt him terribly. But it is, of course, too late. Friends are killed, others commit suicide. He begs Stalin to retract an order which he has signed in the leader's name, the dictator agrees, and then calmly reneges: "It's man versus monster and the monster always wins."

Hodge has created a remarkably imaginative work: The skeleton of the play is in no way invented, which is to say Stalin was a "huge fan" of Bulgakov's play *The White Guard* (a new version of which by Andrew Upton was wonderfully staged under Howard Davies' direction as part of last year's season at the National), and Bulgakov did have troubles with *Moliere*, and did

write a hagiographic play about Stalin – here it's given the title *The Young Joseph*, but in the collected works you'll find it under *Batumi*, and of course Bulgakov did die of an illness of the kidneys. Hodge takes this framework, and knowing very well that "our" Bulgakov is the man who wrote *Master and Margarita*, makes it all so much murkier. At the same time as the action on stage unfurls, Bulgakov must have been working on his novel, but it receives no mention here.



Photos of Simon Russell Beale as Stalin and Alex Jennings as Bulgakov, Johan Person

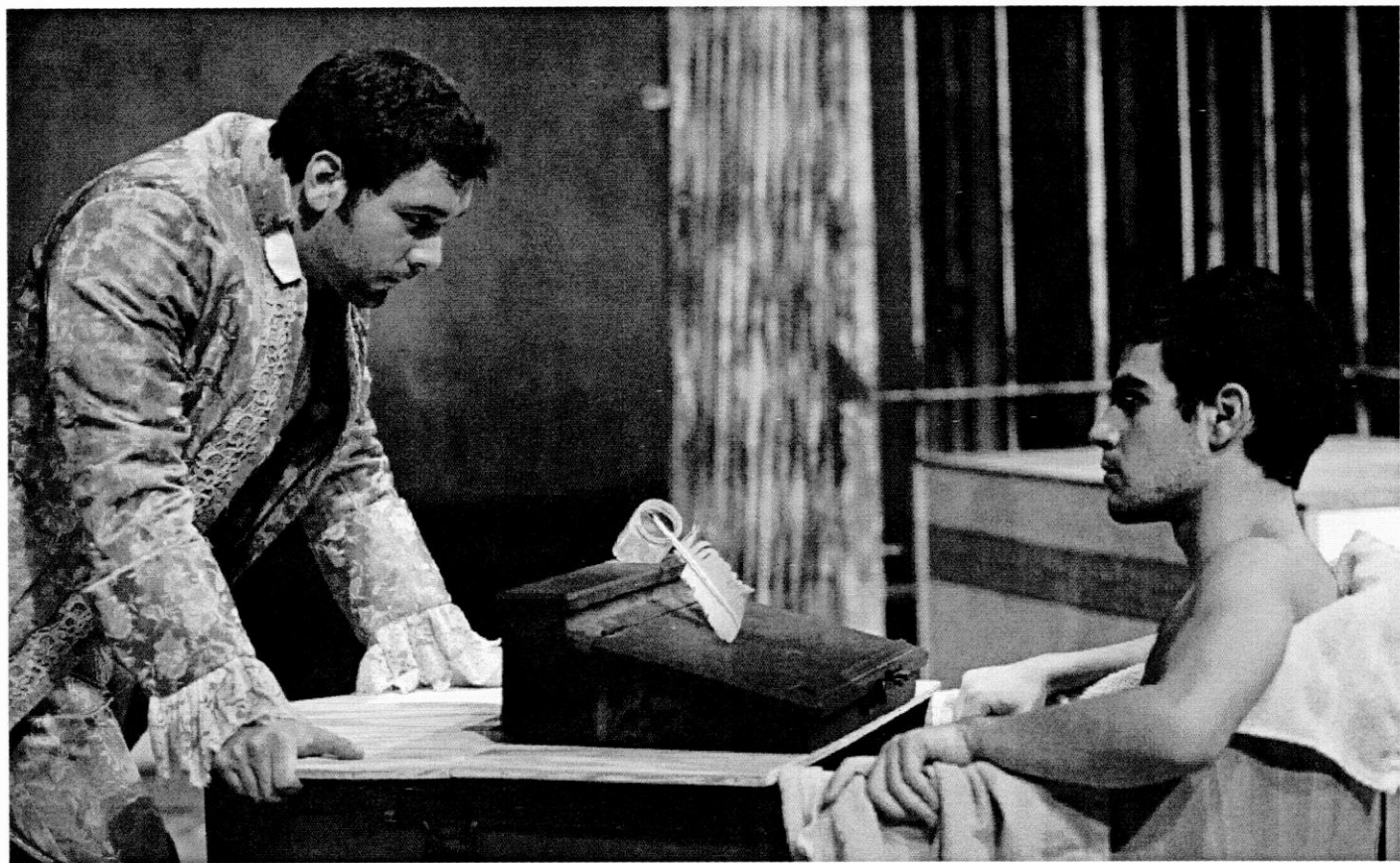


Peter Weiss: *Marat/Sade*
Directed by Mark Mann
Roy Bowen Theatre, Ohio State
University
Review by Kevin Richards
May 6, 2012

Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* (*The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*) opened the Ohio State Department of Theater's spring season of 2012 under the direction of award-winning Central Ohio theater veteran Mark Mann. With an undergraduate cast and graduate production team, Mann's *Marat/Sade* exceeded expectations and brought to the Drake Union stage a visceral and intellectual interpretation of Weiss' unique play. The blending of the Marquis de Sade's direction and performance of plays during his internment at Charenton asylum with the murder of Jacobin leader Jean-Paul Marat by the

Girondist Charlotte Corday provides a surreal mixture of historical facts that are convincingly interwoven and presented upon the stage in a spectacle of suffering and eventual execution. With strong performances by Zak Houston as De Sade and John Thomas Conner as Marat, these two roles represent the antagonism between socialist and capitalist arguments over ownership of property and the productivity of the use of force in achieving revolutionary goals. Interrupting the monologues that vacillate between praising and condemning these systems is Coulmier, the director of the asylum and defender of the status quo, who censors and redirects language that may provoke the inmates to riot. The positions of Marat and de Sade are complemented by a large supporting cast that effectively represents the oppressed masses, here as the inmates of Charenton, and who provide the ever-present threat of a violent and chaotic uprising.

The structure of Weiss' play as an exploration into competing ideologies limits the roles of those figures



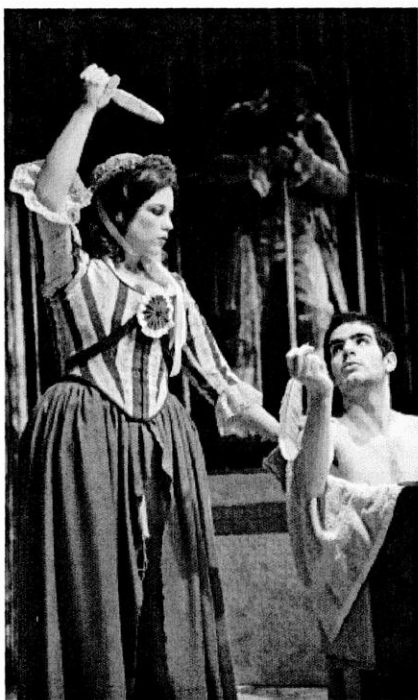
that represent such ideals, as de Sade and Marat do, to the explication of possibilities, reasoning, and justifications of social change through a series of monologues. The representative and therefore somewhat stock figures of de Sade and Marat are cleverly juxtaposed by Mann against the pathos of the large supporting cast of other inmates. Their delivery is colored by the reactions of the inmates to provide a complex emotional disconnect between the rhetoric and emotional appeal of the masses who are all too eager to indulge in violence. This collocation emphasizes the limits of an ideology to sustain revolutions fueled by emotion and desperation, the accurate portrayal of which necessitates such a large cast to serve as the masses that are both quick to enrage yet difficult to control. A further feature that these inmates bring to the play is the provision of visual and auditory distractions throughout the monologues of Marat, who remains for the most part static, seated within his bathtub and covered in powder, or those of de Sade, who strolls freely around the stage in a confident, yet inquisitively bemused boredom. It is in this sense that the play is not structured to feature one single performance that would have the potential to dominate the play, but rather it requires the culmination and interrelation of these roles to underscore the failure of revolution as another misery of the human condition, and raises a complex question as to the collaborative nature of art and the importance of the artistic genius of the individual.

As if in answer to this question, there are no less than thirty undergraduate students, who portray a vast array of maladies, ticks, and disturbances to accompany Weiss' dialog, and who produce several stand-out performances. For example, freshman

Kelly Hogan deserves special mention for her work in setting the tone of the play at the outset of the prologue. In this addition, Mann allows the audience to witness the humiliation of an inmate through a form of cold water therapy that had become popular in the late 17th and the 18th centuries. The inmate is held under a constant stream of ice-cold water by the administering nurse, who must maintain her composure amidst a crescendo of screams. This process continues until the inmate is overcome with apathy and silence replaces her screams, at which point she is removed backstage. These roles, no matter how small, were performed with consistency and a quality that enhanced the play and produced both fascination and believability that equaled the excellent production values found in Samantha Kuhn's costumes, Chelsie McPhilmy's lighting, and Lowri Sion's sound. In particular, Trenton Bean deserves high praise for the play's scenic design that, with its intelligent divisions of backstage, thrust, and rostrum, offered a thoroughly immersive experience for the audience, many of whom attested to a persistent sense of anxiety and discomfort at both how well these illnesses were imitated and how, through clever set design and the staging of a play within a play, the chaos that first spilled out onto the stage from the barred-off backstage at the beginning of the play continued to threaten to spill out into the audience as it inevitably led to Marat's murder and the inmates' subsequent calamitous insurrection.

While the complexity of this the most well-known and produced of Weiss' plays makes it difficult to reduce to a particular time or message, it is nevertheless embedded in a setting of disillusionment with the transition from monarchy to democracy and a betrayal, or rather refusal, of the romantic

ideals that clothed the rhetoric of the revolution by those whom it could most benefit. On the night I attended, the audience was treated to a subsequent panel discussion with Dramaturg Eve Nordyke, Professor Nina Berman of Comparative Studies, and Professor John C. Burnham of History, as well as several members of the cast and crew. Nordyke explained that although the events as they are presented in the play never occurred in the way presented, "Weiss used the subject in his 1964 play to allow de Sade and Marat to discuss...whether real social change can come from a political revolution" and she sees contemporary challenges in the form of the Occupy Wall Street movement to redress social and economic inequality. Weiss' infusion of the unresolved historical conflict between socialism and capitalism into the figures of Marat and Sade keeps the play relevant to our contemporary historical situation and provides important substance to the debate for future generations of theater-goers.



Photos of Zak Houston as De Sade, John Connor as Marat and Danielle Wisti as Corday by Matt Hazard



Harold Pinter: *The Caretaker*

Directed by Christopher

Morahan

A Production of the Theatre

Royal Bath/Liverpool

Everyman and Playhouse

**Southern Theatre, Columbus,
Ohio**

Reviewed by Andy Spencer,

April 27, 2012

When touring productions by U.K. companies come to town it can be a risky proposition. On the one hand, visits by the smaller, alterna-companies represent a welcome opportunity to see something new and hopefully fresh which has obviously been well-enough received at home that the trek across the Atlantic is considered a gamble worth taking. Even if it turns out to be a heaping of fashionable style over substance, one at least has the opportunity to lament the state of (the) play from a somewhat informed perspective. But when it comes to the larger-scale productions, presented in prestigious venues and often as part of a varied arts season which probably also includes comedy acts, dance, and no end of "world" music (Yanni, always Yanni), one could be courting disappointment. The standard formula for the one foray into the dramatic arts demanded of any self-respecting season is well-known: a safe-enough choice of play with at least one big-name cast member, read film-star. Remarkably, this was different. On the latter score things were very much in order with the arrival in town of Jonathan Pryce, but Pinter?? And early Pinter at that, *The Caretaker*, his second full-length play from 1960. This is the sort of production one is more used to reading about enviously in the *New*

York Times as it packs in audiences for the duration of its limited and exclusive Broadway run. As I write, James Corden is doing just that in *One Man, Two Guvnors* at the Music Box Theater, although my envy in this case is much tempered having had the opportunity to see that play last summer in London (it's very, very funny), but you take my meaning. So all credit to the Columbus Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA) for snagging a weekend's worth of *The Caretaker* between a stop at San Francisco's Curran Theatre and a seven-week run at BAM in New York.

This joint production between the Theatre Royal Bath and the Liverpool Everyman came trailing glowing reviews, not only from the U.K. but from San Francisco too, and all I can really do is take my place in line with the rest. While the stripped-down, no frills style of the production as directed by Christopher Morahan, on an unchanging set by Eileen Diss, is doubtless at odds with that of other performances reviewed elsewhere in the CIBS you're holding, it is the very assured naturalism which here proves so revelatory.

Of course, Pinter's work inherently resists overheated staging techniques. In a 1960 interview the playwright tells us what we are going to get: "Two people in a room – I am dealing a great deal of the time with this image of two people in a room. The curtain goes up on the stage, and I see it as a very potent question: What is going to happen to these two people in the room? Is someone going to open the door and come in?" Not a lot of room for pyrotechnics there. And for most of this play we do watch two people in a room, but what Pinter fashions out of "the elementary ingredients of pure, preliterate theatre", to use Martin Esslin's phrase, is truly captivating, although anybody

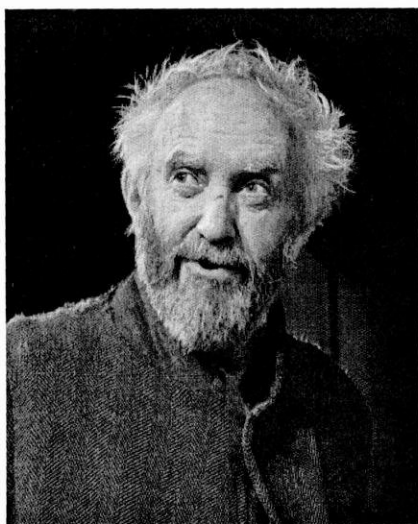


who has suffered through a second-rate production will know only too well that there is an important caveat: the actors have to be good. Perhaps not just good, really very good – and here they were.

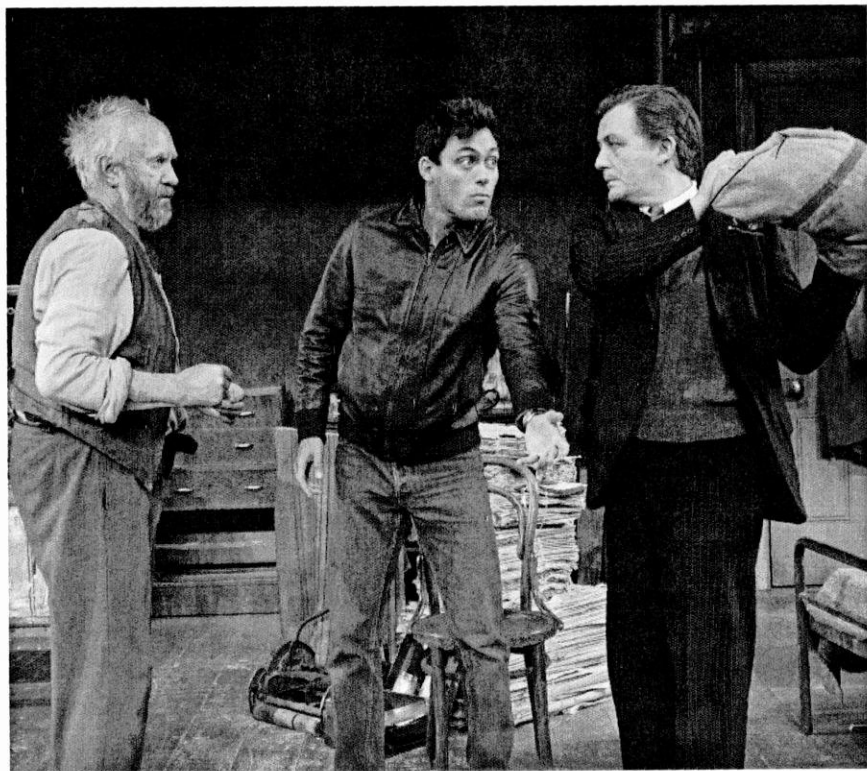
All too often Pinter's characters are portrayed as damaged misfits, as outcasts, indeed as freaks. Here they are, well, just like us. Pryce's shuffling, complaining Davies is excellent, let's just establish that at the outset, no grandstanding or affectation as one has unfortunately come to expect from the usual "star-vehicle" fare, but so too are Alan Cox's Aston and Alex Hassell's Mick. Trying to put a finger on what makes the performances so enthralling is not easy, but I think it's because as acted all three men seem so familiar as types, so natural in their quirks and inconsistencies, yet they never leave you feeling entirely comfortable. Charles Isherwood is spot-on in his review of the production in the *Times* when he writes that the distinguishing strength of this production lies in director Morahan's striving for clarity and his refusal to cloak the play in "the fog of menace that is sometimes laid on thickly in productions of Pinter's work". Something is awry, no arguments there, something is always awry, but in the most uncannily not quite, not quite recognizable of ways. Morahan's "clarity" is no comforting attempt at smoothing out the ambiguities of the piece; they are still very much present. It's rather a clarity in the delineation of the characters, a rescuing of them from the "fog" which only obscures, particularly when it comes to the play's humor, which is not only dark, and which I have never seen revealed to such effect as in this production. Mick's motor-mouth monologues are a case in point; they make sense, just, they carry you along, are absurdly funny, particularly his evocation of his dream

house, and charge ahead to a point... which never comes. People tell stories like this all the time, sometimes with a punch line, but more often not, and here there certainly is none and yet the action moves on. It's jarring to be left hanging but also somehow in keeping. Something is awry. Davies' protestation that he will definitely be going to Sidcup to retrieve his papers tomorrow, when the weather breaks, and Aston's stated aim of building a shed in the garden, begin life as statements of intent. When these eminently achievable goals are postponed for the flimsiest of reasons but the characters nevertheless reiterate their determination to realize them, they raise a wry smile; but pretty soon the insistence with which the characters try to convince themselves and each other of the earnestness of their intentions leads to the dawning recognition that they will never, ever achieve them (we find out that Davies has been heading to Sidcup for fifteen years), and introduce an unnerving undercurrent. The goals themselves, their shelving for another day, it's all entirely normal, but it really isn't. The shadow of Beckett, whose *Waiting for Godot* had premiered in Britain five years before *The Caretaker*, looms large, but so too does that of Kafka: there's a meaning there somewhere, but it's always just out of reach. And perhaps Kafka isn't really so wide of the mark, even though Pinter is more frequently connected with Dublin's difficult son than with Prague's: Even Aston's story of his institutionalization as a boy, the closest we come to a biographically revealing moment in the play, strikingly lit by Colin Grenfell, doesn't really explain anything. It's disquieting, heartbreaking, condemnatory of a ruthless drive to conformity, but it explains neither why he wants to, nor is unable to build his shed.

The overstated menace which Isherwood is so pleased to be spared is often introduced into productions, I believe, out of a desperate attempt to make sense of Aston's initial invitation to Davies to stay. There has to be method. But maybe there's only ambiguity, or the loneliness of an unpredictable character who is balancing on that thin line between coping and falling apart. A character who returns again and again to the obviously soothing activity of fixing the plug on the toaster, to the point where you just want to leap up on stage and do it for him. Pryce's Davies is alternately entirely baffled by the behavior of the brothers and cognizant of opportunities to play them off against each other. But as a long term strategy it will never work, and that's his quandary, brilliantly rendered by an actor at the top of his game.



Photos of Jonathan Pryce as Davies, Alan Cox as Aston, and Alex Hassell as Mick by Richard Termine



OLGA'S ROOM**by Dea Loher****translated by David Tushingham****Directed by Samuel Miller****January 11, 2013****Arcola Theatre, London****Reviewed by Tom Kuhn**

Dea Loher is one of the most interesting and successful contemporary playwrights working in Germany. Hers is a political, socially critical drama, very much in the Brechtian tradition. Her plays characteristically exploit a narrative mode – let us call it epic – in which characters variously introduce, remember and commentate their experience, and the action shifts between frames and levels in time and in self-consciousness, or in degrees of fictionality. *Olga's Room* (*Olgas Raum*), premiered in Germany in 1992, was one of her first successes.

In the play, Olga Benario, a German-Jewish Communist agent, confined to her cell in a concentration camp, recalls and re-enacts her experience of other prison cells, above all in Brazil, where she and her partner, a Brazilian revolutionary, were held before her rendition to Germany and to her death. The outline of the action is based on historical characters and real events. It is a crucially claustrophobic play – this is Olga's space, Olga's cell, and the horribly reduced confines of Olga's psyche – and that sense is well captured in the narrow chamber, created with just a bunk bed, mesh wall and prison lights for this first English production (directed by Samuel Miller, designed by Matt Sykes-Hooban and James Smith) at the refurbished Arcola Theatre in North London. It is brought to us by a new young company, Speaking in Tongues, who are dedicated to bring-

ing contemporary European theatre to English audiences.

But the play is also frustratingly, almost passively descriptive of its arresting story, and the production seems to struggle – as perhaps any production of this play must – with the peculiar absence of analysis. Nothing is left of Olga's Communist consciousness other than memories of her 'affair' and its issue, a girl born in captivity and taken from her mother in the course of the remembered action. Her only recollection of political thought or action is of being on the run, holed up and captured. And her Jewishness seems even more accidental. What precisely was she doing in Brazil? Why did anyone go to the trouble of shipping her back, in 1936, to imprisonment in Germany? Although this is all part of the historical record, the play leaves it in a haze. Her story is reduced to a harrowing tale of physical, sexual and psychological torture, gruesome but schematic power games with her Brazilian jailor (ably played by Pete Collis), and pathetic scenes of dependency and distrust with her fellow captives (Sheena May and Ceridwen Smith). It is somehow all rather familiar and – despite the evident fascination of the historical figure and the distressing detail of her fate – not sufficiently individual to be terribly interesting.

This otherwise competent production is also not helped by the performance of Bethan Clark as Olga. Her hunted look and rolling eyes pursue us, always at the same pitch, throughout the play. The text calls out, surely, for a cooler, more Brechtian style. Then the framework of memory would not so inhibit any sense of dramatic or character development, as it tends to with this psychological, almost naturalistic approach. It is tough on an (especially Stanislavskian) actress to narrate her

own death in the gas chambers, and Clark is just not up to it.

Having said all that, it is great to have the opportunity to see any of Dea Loher's work in Britain. The Arcola Theatre is acquiring an enviable reputation for risk-taking, progressive and mostly high-quality theatre, and it is good that they have provided an opening for this young company to experiment.

Announcements

- Our IBS website is moving back to the University of Wisconsin as Weijia Li, the editor, joins the Madison faculty.
- Methuen (Bloomsbury) will be publishing a revised and expanded edition of *Brecht on Theatre* (ed. Marc Silberman) and a new volume *Brecht on Performance* (ed. Tom Kuhn), including the "Messingkauf Dialogues" (both expected in 2014).
- The Brecht-Tage 2012 (Literaturforum im Brecht-Haus) are on "Exil Brecht."
- There is a possibility of the 15th IBS Symposium being held in the UK in +/- 2017. Tentative focus is Brecht and Translation / Translating Brecht and organizers are Tom Kuhn, Oxford, and David Barnett, University of Sussex.

Cover Art: Berry van Boekel

Berry van Boekel is a Fort Myers, Florida-based artist. His intensely obsessive on-going project documenting the bands and musicians he listens to has developed an avid following of art collectors, curators and music fans around the world.

Van Boekel writes "In February 1983, aged 18 years old—in the midst of exploring music, I made a chart of the 10 tracks that I'd enjoyed most. Then three days later I made another one and I've continued to do so every three or four days since. At the end of each year I collect all charts and compile a list of 100 songs from it. In 1986 I started to illustrate the lists, first with a copy machine but soon I started to draw. The Top 100 of 1991 was the first in which all one hundred entries were drawn by hand. I have claimed many times that a particular year was going to be the last one but instead I continue with more zeal every year."

Van Boekel marks the beginning of each year with an exhibition of paintings featuring the Top 100 songs he heard the previous year. Firmly rooted in portraiture and figure painting, his work nonetheless is able to explore a variety of stylistic approaches. The simple elegant concept of the list not only allows for experimentation with a wide range of musical tastes but also gives van Boekel license to evoke different moods and sensibilities within the paintings.

Van Boekel has exhibited with the prestigious alternative non-profit space White Columns in New York; Skylab in Columbus; Reed Gallery at the University of Cincinnati; Country Club Projects in Cincinnati, Peel Gallery in Houston, and with the NADA Art Fair in Miami. Van Boekel moved to the United States in 1993 from the Netherlands. He received an MFA from The Ohio State University.

Matt Distel, Curator and Director of Visionaries and Voices, Cincinnati, Ohio.
(updated and edited by Berry van Boekel)

Catalogue: *Top 100 2009*. Iconoclast Editions 2010 (iconoclasteditions.com)
Check out Berry's blog at: <http://berrystop100.blogspot.com/>

Front Cover: *Lotte Lenya*, 10" x 8", oil on canvas board, 2012.

My friend Sue Harshe of the band Fort Shame, and formerly with Scrawl played a concert featuring compositions by Kurt Weill. She had arranged the music for solo piano while translating some of the lyrics into English. I have quite a collection of Lotte Lenya (married to Kurt Weill, and the most important interpreter of his music) records and I decided that I would pass on the most famous of these records to Sue. It's the one featured on the sleeve to Bob Dylan's masterpiece *Bringing it All Back Home*. One of my favorite tracks on the record is "Seeräuber Jenny" from the *Dreigroschenoper*. Not having the record anymore I recorded the original 1930 version for the top 100 tape. Nothing wrong with that either.

Back Cover: *The 100 Greatest Recordings Ever: 31*, Kurt Weill. 2012.

31 KURT WEILL UND BERTOLT BRECHT DIE DREI GROSSEN OPER: OUVERTURE UND MORITAT VON MACKIE MESSER

The opera "Die Dreigroschenoper", written by Kurt Weill (music), and Bertolt Brecht (lyrics) was a giant success for the team. Since its inception in 1928 Berlin, the opera was performed 1000s of times and all over the world. By the time Weill and Brecht left Berlin for America in 1933 (we all know what happened in Germany at the time) they were world famous. In the US the "Dreigroschenoper" became "The Three Penny Opera" and "Mackie Messer" became "Watch the Knife". I own eight albums of the opera, 6 in German, and 2 in English. In six of these Lotte Lenya performs while she's in charge of two of the later recordings. Lotte Lenya was part of the original cast and performs on this 1930 version but she is not heard in this song. (Harold Krentler performs the part of Mackie Messer & Gert Lotte Lenya really deserves to be part of this list in her own right. Weill and Lenya were married).

b. Eugene Berthold Friedrich Brecht
2 February, 1898, Augsburg, Germany
d. August 14, 1956
Miké, Ezot
Berlin, East
Germany

b. Kurt Julian Weill
March 2, 1900, Dessau
Germany
d. April 3, 1950, New York
City

